

Authorities identify Kenosha cop who shot Jacob Blake, say Blake had knife

ABC News

Authorities on Wednesday night identified the police officer [who shot Jacob Blake](#), which has led to four days of protests in Kenosha, [Wisconsin](#), and renewed calls nationwide to end police violence against people of color. The Department of Justice also announced several other details, including that Blake had a knife and that officers first used a stun gun on him.

During the incident, which happened Sunday, officers attempted to arrest Blake, the DOJ said in a statement released Wednesday evening, though it did not indicate why. Officers attempted to stun Blake, "however the taser was not successful in stopping" him, according to the statement. The DOJ identified the officer who shot Blake as Rusten Sheskey, who has been with the Kenosha Police Department for seven years. He fired seven shots, and was the only officer to fire his weapon, the DOJ said.

Blake admitted that he had a knife during the DOJ's investigation, and agents recovered a knife from the driver's side floorboard of his car, officials said. No other weapons were found.

According to the Wisconsin Department of Justice Division of Criminal Investigation, which is leading the probe into the incident, officers initially responded to the scene after a woman called to report that her boyfriend was at her home but "was not supposed to be" there. The DOJ would not answer whether that person was Blake in a press conference Wednesday night.

Protests following the police shooting of Blake, who is Black, continued for a third night Tuesday into Wednesday as police deployed tear gas, flash bangs and rubber bullets against protesters and erected a fence around the local courthouse.

At least three people were shot during the protests overnight in Kenosha, some 40 miles south of [Milwaukee](#), and two of the victims died from their injuries, according to the Kenosha Police Department. The third gunshot victim was taken to a hospital with "serious, but non-life-threatening injuries," police said.

The violence prompted President Donald Trump and Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers to mobilize additional members of the National Guard to Kenosha.

Cellphone video from Tuesday night's protests showed a white man armed with what appeared to be a semiautomatic rifle running past police and being chased by demonstrators. The footage showed the man trip and fall and appear to open fire on demonstrators. He then is seen running away.

The alleged gunman surrendered himself to police in Antioch, Illinois, in the "pre-dawn hours" Wednesday, authorities said. He was identified as 17-year-old Kyle

Rittenhouse and was arrested based on a warrant issued by Kenosha County authorities charging him with first-degree intentional homicide, police said. He was also being held on a charge of "fugitive from justice," for purposes of extradition to Wisconsin, at the Lake County Juvenile Detention Center in Vernon Hills, Illinois, authorities said.

"My heart breaks for the families and loved ones of the two individuals who lost their lives and the individual who was injured last night in Kenosha. We as a state are mourning this tragedy," Evers said in a statement.

"I want to be very clear: We should not tolerate violence against any person. I'm grateful there has already been swift action to arrest one person involved. The individual or individuals whose actions resulted in this tragic loss of life must be held accountable. A senseless tragedy like this cannot happen again."

"I again ask those who choose to exercise their First Amendment rights, please do so peacefully and safely, as so many did last night." Evers added. "I also ask the individuals who are not there to exercise those rights to please stay home and let local first responders, law enforcement, and members of the Wisconsin National Guard do their jobs."

Wisconsin Attorney General Josh Kaul called the violence "despicable" and urged "opportunists" to leave.

"Kenosha residents deserve the opportunity to grieve, come together, peacefully protest, call for change, and heal. The heavily armed vigilantes, arsonists, and other opportunists who have come to Kenosha to attempt to spur chaos have interfered with that and caused drastic harm to people," he said in a statement. "If those engaging in violence and destruction of property believe they are furthering some broader goal, they are wrong. They should leave Kenosha."

Kaul said at a press briefing Wednesday night that he will make preliminary decisions on charges against Rittenhouse on Thursday.

Kenosha County officials, including the sheriff and the Kenosha police chief, announced that the start of Wednesday night's curfew would be moved up to 7 p.m. from 8 p.m.

The mother of Blake pleaded with protesters to refrain from violence.

"For anyone who is doing anything that is violent or destructive, please stop," Blake's mother, Julia Jackson, said in an interview with ABC News. "I get your pain. I get your frustration. This is nothing new and it's not just about my son, I get that. But please find another way."

As the curfew began in Kenosha Tuesday night, police could be heard warning people to move away from the Kenosha County Courthouse where demonstrators had gathered.

A state of emergency was approved by the Kenosha Common Council on Tuesday afternoon, which will remain in place until Friday, according to Milwaukee ABC affiliate [WISN](#).

The protests were in response to [the shooting](#) of Blake, 29, who remains hospitalized in serious condition.

Cellphone video taken by a witness on Sunday evening showed three Kenosha police officers following Blake around his SUV, and at least one of them is seen shooting Blake multiple times in the back as he opened the driver's side door and entered the vehicle, where his three young children were still inside.

Jackson told ABC News that she has watched the video of her son being shot. She said her son's fiancée, Laquisha Booker, who witnessed the shooting and claimed officers threatened to shoot her, too, has offered to go over details of what she saw.

"We talked ... and I told her I'm not ready to hear the details right now," Jackson said. "I just want to focus on him and the children being better."

Prominent civil rights attorney Benjamin Crump, who is representing the family, told ABC News that family members are calling for the officers involved in the shooting to be terminated from the police force and charged with a crime.

"We believe based on the evidence, based on that video, probable cause exists to arrest and charge the officers with attempted murder," Crump said.

"Where is humanity? Where is the professionalism? Where is the training? Why is it again that we're seeing another African American who the police are supposed to protect and serve like anybody else use this brutal, excessive force?" Crump added. "It was done in front of his three little boys ... who were all sitting in the car. Eight years old, five years old, three years old. Can you imagine the psychological issues these babies are going to have?"

The officers involved in the shooting have been placed on administrative leave.

Kaul said Wednesday that he has asked the U.S. attorney to conduct an independent civil rights investigation into the shooting of Blake. Following his statements, the DOJ confirmed it has opened a federal civil rights investigation into Blake's shooting that will be conducted by the FBI in cooperation with the Wisconsin Division of Criminal Investigation and other state authorities.

"Federal authorities are committed to investigating this matter as thoroughly and efficiently as possible," the Eastern District of Wisconsin said in a statement.

Former Vice President Joe Biden, the Democratic party nominee for president, said he spoke to Blake's family members on Wednesday.

"What I saw on that video makes me sick," Biden said in a video statement. "Once again, a black man, Jacob Blake, has been shot by the police in broad daylight with the whole world watching. You know -- I spoke to Jacob's mom and dad, sister and other members of the family just a little bit earlier. And I told them justice must and will be done."

Biden also condemned the violence and destruction that has broken out in Kenosha, saying, "Burning down communities is not protest -- it's needless violence."

Kenosha County Sheriff David Beth warned protesters Tuesday night that the destruction would not be allowed to continue. He also said that while many are peacefully exercising their First Amendment rights, people from "outside" the community are coming in, looking to loot and cause destruction.

"If you want to protest peacefully, by all means go out and do it. It's your right. But don't be a part of this destructive force that's burning our community. That's not a productive path to justice," Beth said in a statement. "We are not sitting idly, watching the destruction of our community. We're making every effort to make it stop, and I hope you will too."

On Wednesday afternoon, President Donald Trump tweeted that he is sending federal law enforcement and the National Guard to Kenosha "to restore LAW and ORDER!" He said the decision came after staff spoke with Gov. Evers, a Democrat, whom the president said agreed to accept the federal assistance.

Trump's tweets came shortly after Evers released a statement saying he had authorized 500 members of the Wisconsin National Guard Wednesday night to Kenosha County to support local law enforcement after being asked to do so by local officials.

...TODAY, I will be sending federal law enforcement and the National Guard to Kenosha, WI to restore LAW and ORDER! — Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [August 26, 2020](#)

Evers also declared a state of emergency Tuesday while increasing the number of Wisconsin National Guard members activated to help local authorities.

"We cannot forget the reason why these protests began, and what we have seen play out over the last two nights and many nights this year is the pain, anguish and exhaustion of being Black in our state and country. But as I said yesterday, and as I'll reiterate today, everyone should be able to exercise their fundamental right -- whether a protester or member of the press -- peacefully and safely," Evers said in a statement Tuesday. "We cannot allow the cycle of systemic racism and injustice to continue. We also cannot continue going down this path of damage and destruction."

The Kenosha County Board of Supervisors sent a letter to the governor on Tuesday requesting more National Guardsmen and other assistance from the federal government.

"We are respectfully requesting that you contact President Trump and solicit a least an additional 2,000 National Guardsmen to supplement our Kenosha law enforcement agencies," board members wrote in the letter. "In addition, please request President Trump help Kenosha by enacting additional tools, such as low interest SBA loans and FEMA funds, to help rebuild local businesses hurt by the domestic terrorists."

The protests over Blake's shooting haven't been confined to Wisconsin. In Georgia, Atlanta ABC affiliate [WSB](#) reported demonstrations turning violent there Tuesday night when protesters allegedly threw fireworks at police officers and spray-painted a police precinct. Officers in riot gear ultimately dispersed the crowd, according to

WSB.

During an emotional press conference in Kenosha on Tuesday afternoon, where Blake's mother, father and three sisters were in attendance, one of the family's attorneys, Patrick Salvi Jr., said Blake was shot seven times at point-blank range in the back. Salvi said at least one bullet tore through his spinal cord and other shots damaged his kidney, liver and arm.

Crump, who's also representing Blake, said his client was attempting to de-escalate a domestic incident when police drew their pistols and stun guns on him. Crump said Blake was walking away to check on his children when police shot him.

Blake's family [said he is currently paralyzed from the waist down](#) but that there's hope the paralysis is temporary.

"I'm not a doctor but what they're saying is that the inflammation was challenging to his mobilization, being mobile, and that they're hoping that when the pressure reduces and things go back to normal within his body that he will be able to move again with his lower legs," Justin Blake told ABC News in an interview that aired Wednesday on "Good Morning America."

Justin Blake said he hasn't been able to see his nephew yet, as only the parents have been in the hospital room. He said he spoke to Blake's mother recently who reported that he is still in "a lot of pain" as he had just come out of surgery and isn't out of the woods yet but is "doing better."

Despite his condition, Blake has been the one trying to comfort family from his hospital bed.

"That tells you what kind of man he is," his uncle said.

Blake's shooting has attracted a wave of national attention and has become part of the sustained wave of civil unrest protesting police brutality and systemic racism in the United States, which was reignited by the death of George Floyd in May.

The NBA's Milwaukee Bucks decided not to play in Wednesday's playoff game against the Orlando Magic, triggering a postponement of all three playoff games. The WNBA also postponed its Wednesday schedule and the MLB's Milwaukee Brewers and Seattle Mariners chose not to play, triggering postponements.

Following Tuesday night's win over the Dallas Mavericks, Los Angeles Clippers coach Doc Rivers discussed why unarmed Black men continued to be shot by police.

"What stands out to me is, just watching the Republican convention, they are spewing this fear. All you hear is Donald Trump and all of them talking about fear. We're the ones getting killed," Rivers said, speaking with reporters after the game. "We're the ones getting shot. We're the ones that were denied to live in certain communities. We've been hung, we've been shot, and all you do is keep hearing about fear."

"It's amazing why we keep loving this country and this country does not love us back," he said, fighting back tears. "It's really so sad."

Rivers said police need better training, but he said that doesn't mean he hates police or that they should be abolished.

"My dad was a cop. I believe in good cops," he added. "We're not trying to defund them and take all their money away. We're trying to get them to protect us, just like they protect everybody else."

ABC News' Andrew Fies, Will Gretsky, Joshua Hoyos, Whitney Lloyd and Stephanie Wash contributed to this report.

This report was featured in the Wednesday, Aug. 26, 2020, episode of "Start Here," ABC News' daily news podcast.

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