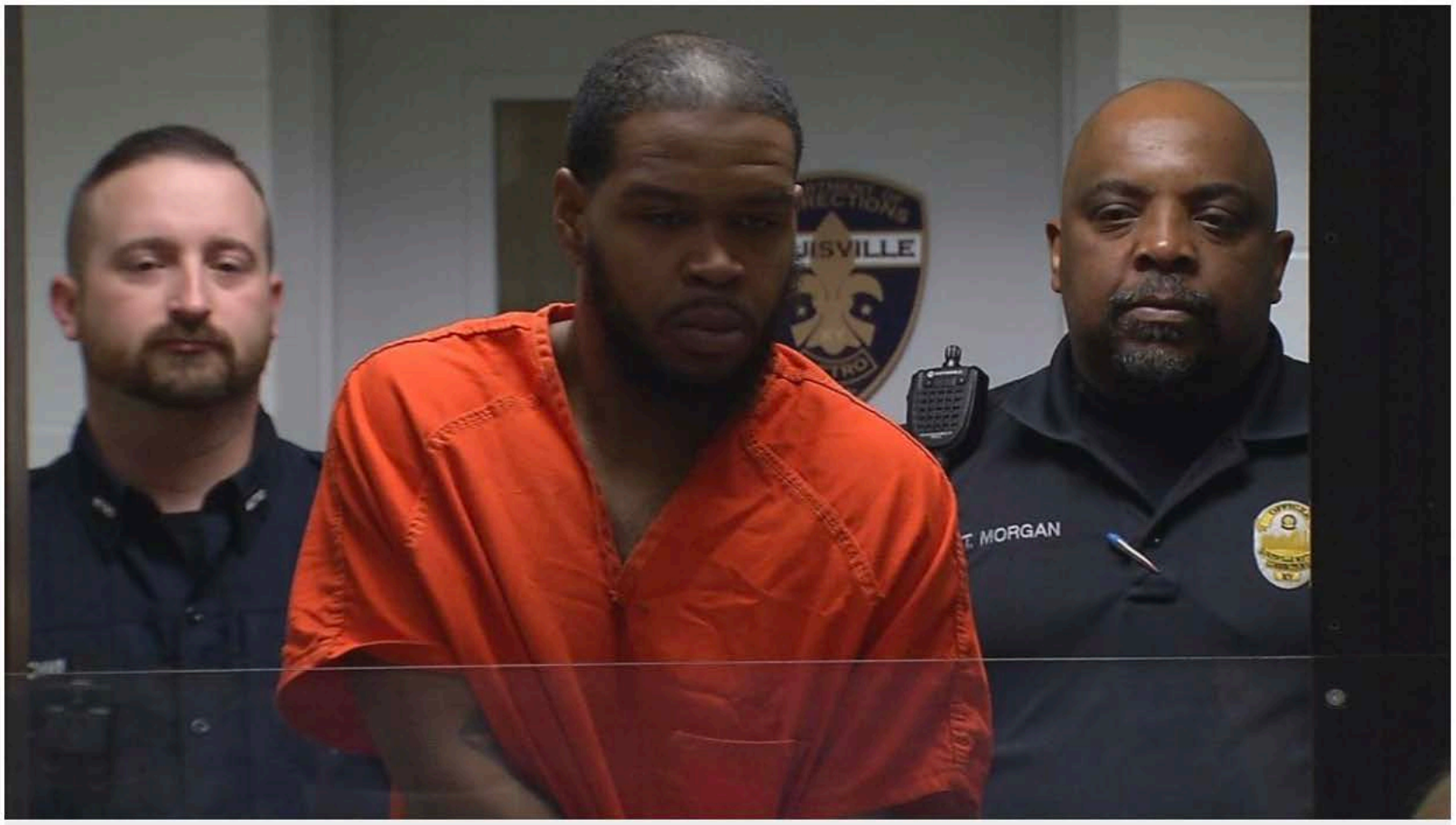
TOP STORY

Attorneys claim LMPD officers killed 26-year-old EMT in 'botched' police raid

Jason Riley Mar 27, 2020 | Updated Sep 29, 2020



Kenneth Walker pleaded not guilty to attempted murder of a police officer Saturday, March 14, 2020, in arraignment court.

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (WDRB) – The union representing Louisville Metro Police officers lashed out at a local judge Friday for releasing from jail an inmate who allegedly shot a police officer earlier this month, calling the action “a slap in the face to everyone wearing a badge.”

But an attorney for Kenneth Walker claims police conducted an improper raid, which led to officers shooting an innocent woman eight times, killing her. The woman, 26-year-old Breonna Taylor, was a certified EMT working at two local hospitals.

Defense attorney Rob Eggert said police burst in Taylor's home without announcing their presence and fired at least 22 times, with bullets going into neighboring apartments, and “it was incredible that Mrs. Taylor was the only one killed.”

“Had Breonna Taylor been killed by anyone except police, the person or persons responsible for her death would have been charged with a homicide,” Eggert said in a court document, also alleging Walker is a “victim of police misconduct.”

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LMPD sees influx of illegal Glock switches on Louisville streets, advocates for state law

“Had Breonna Taylor been killed by anyone except police, the person or persons responsible for her death would have been charged with a homicide,” Eggert said in a court document, also alleging Walker is a “victim of police misconduct.”

Taylor’s family says neither Walker nor Taylor was involved in drugs and believe police were looking for someone else.

“These are two good kids,” said Bianca Austin, Taylor’s aunt. “This is incompetent police work. My niece lost her life over this.”

Austin said LMPD has not given the family any answers as to what happened.

An attorney representing the family, Sam Aguiar, said police were actually looking for someone else and other officers had picked the suspect up at his home in a separate raid shortly before the shooting.

“Something went terribly wrong,” he said. “This was clearly a botched execution of a warrant.”

In an email, Chief Steve Conrad said he could not talk about the "incident that resulted in Ms. Taylor's death" because there is a pending Public Integrity investigation.

But he also criticized the release of Walker:

“I certainly understand the need to make sure we are releasing those people who don’t pose a risk to our community from the jail, especially as we face the outbreak of COVID-19. However, it’s hard for me to see how a man accused of shooting a police officer falls into that low-risk category and I am very frustrated by Mr. Walker’s release to home incarceration.

Prosecutors argued to the judge that Eggert's "version" of events are "irrelevant."

"One person is dead, and one person was almost killed due to Mr. Walker's actions," Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney Ebert Haegele argued in a court motion.

Walker, 27, was charged with attempted murder of a police officer after he shot Sgt. John Mattingly in the leg as police were serving a search warrant during a narcotics investigation at an apartment on Springfield Drive at 1 a.m. on March 13, police have said.

A female suspect was shot and killed after three LMPD officers returned fire, Chief Steve Conrad has said.

On Thursday, Jefferson Circuit Court Judge Olu Stevens lowered Walker’s bond from $250,000 cash to home incarceration.

Courts have been mostly closed and there is no document in online court records explaining Stevens' rationale for changing the bond.

The move prompted outrage from the police union.

“Not only is he a threat to the men and women of law enforcement, but he also poses a significant danger to the community we protect!” River City FOP president Ryan Nichols wrote in a Facebook Post Friday. “Home incarceration was not designed for the most violent offenders!” “I call on the public to condemn the actions of Judge Olu Stevens.”

The FOP for Metro Corrections also condemned Stevens' actions in a post, noting that the inmate population is as low as it has been since the 1990s.

"So an overcrowded jail did not figure into Judge Steven's decision to release an alleged, attempted cop killer back into the community without even so much as requiring bail," according to the post. "Our community, which is full of voters, needs to carefully examine decisions such as these made by our public officials".

But Walker’s attorney, Eggert, claims police did not announce themselves as they exploded through the door of the apartment around 1 a.m., while the couple was sleeping.

Eggert acknowledges that Walker fired a shot, hitting Sgt. Mattingly in the leg, but claims Walker did not know he was shooting at police, according to a motion filed in court.

Police then returned fire, killing Taylor, Eggert wrote.

There were no drugs found in the home, Eggert said.

And Walker was not the target of the search warrant and if he had known police were outside, he would have let them in, Eggert said in the motion.

Eggert declined to comment for this article.

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Police have said they repeatedly knocked on the door and announced their presence but were eventually forced to bust through a door, where they were met with gunfire.

Mattingly was shot in the leg and taken to University of Louisville Hospital, where he underwent surgery.

A woman who lives next door said she woke up to the sound of gunshots and Walker yelling for help, according to an affidavit filed in court records. The woman said she never heard police announce themselves.

“All she heard was a ram (breaking through the door) and gunfire,” the unidentified neighbor said.

In asking for a lower bond, Eggert said Walker played football at Valley High School, attended Western Kentucky University and has only a driving while intoxicated conviction on his criminal record.

Bianca Austin, Taylor’s aunt, said Walker had just accepted a job to work at UPS.

“These two were not drug dealers,” she said. “It just don’t make sense to us at all.”

Haegele, the prosecutor, wrote in a motion to Stevens that the judge shouldn't take the affidavits and other arguments about a bad raid into consideration.

"Disputed facts will be for the jury to decide," he wrote.

Eggert wrote that Walker “wishes to exonerate himself. His girlfriend was killed in a hail of police bullets while naked and he himself simply acted to try to protect himself.”

Police have said there is no body camera footage of the shooting because the officers involved were members of the department’s Criminal Interdiction division, who do not wear body cameras.

The officers involved in the shooting, including Det. Myles Cosgrove and Det. Brent Hankison, have been placed on administrative reassignment.

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