

## 2 Ferguson Police Officers Shot During Violent Michael Brown Protest

Two police officers were shot during a protest outside **Ferguson**, Missouri, police headquarters early on Thursday, police said, just hours after the city's police chief quit following a damning U.S. Justice Department report into his force.

The shooting of the officers, who were in serious condition at a hospital, was the latest incident in months of turmoil in the St. Louis suburb of **Ferguson**, which has been at the center of an intense national debate over police use of force, particularly against black men, since a white officer killed an unarmed black teenager there in August.

St. Louis County Police Chief Jon Belmar told reporters early on Thursday that a 41-year-old officer from his department was struck in the shoulder and a 32-year-old officer from the nearby Webster Groves Police Department was hit in the face about midnight as the crowd was starting to break up.

"These police officers were standing there and they were shot, just because they were police officers," Belmar said. "I have said all along that we cannot sustain this forever without problems."

He said the officers, whom he did not identify, were both conscious and hospitalized. The department planned to release more information at 9 a.m. CDT (1200 GMT).

The shooting of 18-year-old Michael Brown by officer Darren Wilson, along with other police slayings of unarmed people in cities including New York and decisions by grand juries not to

charge the involved officers, last year sparked months of protests around the United States.

Benjamin Crump, an attorney representing Brown's parents, said on Thursday the family condemned the shooting and noted the violence seen during **Ferguson** protests had been the work of a small number of people in the crowd.

"Violence is never the solution," Crump told CNN. "There may be a few people who are misguided or confused but in large part the majority of the protesters and the majority of Americans want justice."

The violence grew out of a Wednesday night demonstration in which several dozen protesters gathered in front of the **Ferguson** police department, just hours after Police Chief Thomas Jackson resigned.

The night started peacefully but about two dozen officers clad in riot gear later faced off with the protesters. At least two people were taken into custody.

Gunshots rang out about midnight turning a scene of relative quiet into pandemonium. Many of the remaining few dozen demonstrators fled, some screaming.

The line of police scrambled, with many taking defensive positions drawing their weapons and some huddling behind riot shields, according to a video published online.

Belmar said the shooter was among the demonstrators standing across from the officers.

"I don't know who did the shooting, to be honest with you right now, but somehow they were embedded in that group of folks," he said.

Protesters at the scene, however, said on social media that the shots did not come from where they were standing.

“The shooter was not with the protesters. The shooter was atop the hill,” activist DeRay McKesson said on Twitter.

“I was here. I saw the officer fall. The shot came from at least 500 feet away from the officers,” he said.

The fatal shooting of two New York City officers on Dec. 20 by a troubled man who said he was seeking to avenge high-profile police killings in the city and **Ferguson** have put law enforcement around the country on edge.

Protesters in **Ferguson** had called for Jackson’s removal since the fatal shooting of Brown. Neither a grand jury nor the federal investigation led to charges against Wilson.

McKesson said protesters were not satisfied by Jackson’s removal and also wanted to see the city’s mayor, James Knowles, step down.

Jackson was the latest in a string of **Ferguson** officials to resign in the week since a scathing Justice Department report found widespread racially biased abuses in the city’s policing and municipal court.

The investigation found that the city used police as a collection agency, citing traffic citations to black residents to boost city coffers through fines, creating a “toxic environment.”

U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder said last Friday that the Department would use its full authority to demand police reforms in **Ferguson**, including possibly dismantling the department.

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