

Three Injured in Shooting as Rival Armed Militias Converge on Louisville

| SHOW OF FORCE |

Hundreds of armed militia members from the all-Black NFAC marched through Louisville Saturday, far outnumbering members of the far-right Three Percenters.

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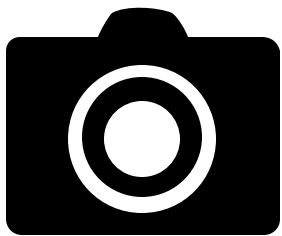
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Bryan Woolston/Reuters



Shots rang out in Louisville, Kentucky on Saturday as hundreds of members of heavily armed militia groups converged on the city for a protest against police brutality.

Louisville police confirmed three people were injured when a gun discharged as members of the “Not Fucking Around Coalition,” an all-Black militia, gathered in Baxter Park shortly before 1 p.m.

A spokesperson for the police department described the shooting to The Daily Beast as “negligent” and said there were “no charges at this time” and no outstanding suspects.

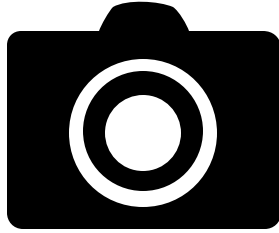
The victims, all of whom were members of the NFAC, were transferred to the University of Louisville Hospital with non-life-threatening injuries, police said.

The NFAC’s founder, Atlanta-based rapper and DJ John “Jay” Johnson, said in a YouTube video that the march was a response to the death of Breonna Taylor, a 26-year-old Black woman who was fatally shot by Louisville Metro Police Department officers serving a no-knock warrant on her apartment in March. Her death and those of other Black Americans sparked widespread protests this summer over racism and police violence.



Members of the Kentucky 'Three Percenters' militia line up as the all-Black militia group called NFAC hold an armed rally.

Bryan Woolston/Reuters



The “Three Percenter” far-right militia group also called on members to be present on Saturday to act as an ad-hoc security force during the rally, sparking fear among residents of clashes between the two militias.

The group is known for its support of gun rights and opposition to government “tyranny,” and for its presence at white supremacist rallies like Unite the Right in Charlottesville. A Kentucky-based Three Percenter group held a rally in May, over gun rights, where they hung an effigy of Gov. Andy Beshear from a tree with a noose.

The NFAC was formed this summer by Johnson, who refers to himself as the “Official Grand Master Jay.” He previously assembled about 1,000 militia members to march through Georgia’s Stone Mountain Park in protest of a confederate monument there. For Saturday’s rally, he asked members to arrive armed and dressed in black.

About 500 NFAC members—some from as far away as Oregon—answered the call, according to reporters on the

ground, gathering in Baxter Park Saturday morning before marching to Jefferson Square Park.

Dozens of Three Percenters also showed up in camouflage and carrying guns. They had a noticeably smaller turnout, with some participants referring to them as the One Percenters because of their small show of force.

Black Lives Matter protesters, unaffiliated with either group, also showed up to protest. By 11:30 a.m., before NFAC had even started their march, police in riot gear had erected a barricade to separate the Three Percenters from Black Lives

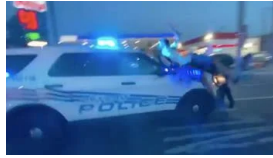
Matter protesters, which did not stop the opposing sides from chanting and yelling at each other.

One Black Lives Matter protester who tried to walk through the police barricade was arrested, according to videos posted on Twitter by *Courier-Journal* reporter Hayes Gardner.

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Shots rang out as the NFAC gathered in Baxter Park shortly before 1 p.m., and medics arrived on the scene minutes later. The NFAC ordered members to take a knee as the situation developed. Lt. Col. Bruce Himes of the Louisville Fire Department later thanked the protesters in a press conference for letting medics access the victims swiftly.

The Louisville Metropolitan Police Department said an investigation into the incident was ongoing.

“This is a tragic situation that could have been much worse,” Chief Robert Schroeder said in a statement. “I encourage anyone exercising their Second Amendment Rights to do so responsibly.”

The rest of the event continued peacefully. The NFAC continued with its planned march to Jefferson Square Park around 2:30 p.m. and dispersed about two hours later. Deputy Chief of Police LaVita Chavous said in press conference that there were “no instances of violence and damage today” besides the shooting, but also said that five people had been arrested for disorderly conduct, obstruction of highway, and menacing.

Hannah Drake, a local activist, poet, and author, said the day was peaceful and there was a minimal turnout by Three Percenters.

“It's very easy to say things behind a screen but when the rubber meets the road they didn't show up,” she told The Daily Beast.

Tensions in Louisville were already high after a 27-year-old photographer was shot and killed last month during another protest against Taylor’s death. (Officials say another demonstrator unintentionally shot the photographer, Tyler Gerth, during a disturbance at the protest. The man has pleaded not guilty to charges of murder and first degree

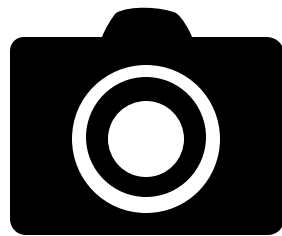
wanton endangerment.) Experts said the dueling militias would likely exacerbate the situation.

“I am deathly afraid of a street war,” extremism expert J.J. MacNab previously told [WFPL News](#). “We’ve got too many opposing factions who are all too heavily armed.”



Paramedics push a stretcher after shot rang out during the demonstration by NFAC.

Bryan Woolston/Reuters



Taylor, an EMT who worked for two local hospitals, and her boyfriend were asleep in their apartment on March 13 when three officers executed a “no-knock” search warrant looking

for a suspected drug dealer who lived in a different part of town. Her boyfriend fired a warning shot as he thought they were being burglarized. It prompted officers to return fire at least a dozen times.

Authorities obtained the warrant to raid Taylor's home because they claimed she used to date the suspected drug dealer and was receiving mail on his behalf. However, her family have argued in a lawsuit that there was no evidence to show Taylor or her boyfriend had any link to drug dealing or any criminal history of drugs of violence.

One officer has been fired for his role in obtaining the warrant and the Louisville Metro Police Department said it would no longer use "no-knock" warrants. However, protesters have demanded all three officers be charged.

In a tweet Saturday, Kentucky Attorney General Daniel Cameron said he understood the desire for truth and asked for that—not violence—to be the focus of the protests.

"We continue to work diligently in pursuit of the truth by conducting an independent investigation into the death of Ms. Taylor," he wrote.