

Family and community members outraged after Missouri police shoot and kill mother and 2-month-old daughter

Jacob Crosse
19 November 2024

Family and community members in Independence, Missouri, a suburb of Kansas City, are outraged after a police shooting on November 7 left a two-month old baby and her mother dead inside their own apartment. Almost two-weeks after the double-homicide, police have yet to identify the killer cop or release any body-camera footage of the incident.

There is no question that a major cover-up is underway. In a press conference held following the shooting, Independence police chief Adam Dustman claimed the mother of the child, Maria Pike, 34, was “armed” and that the deceased included a “child.” When confronted by a reporter that the child was in fact a baby “no more than a few months old” Dustman refused to comment on the alleged ages of either of the victims, or even their cause of death.

Pressed on what Pike was allegedly armed with, police have claimed a knife. This, however, is disputed by eyewitnesses, including the father of the child, Mitchell Holder, who witnessed police execute his daughter, Destinii Pike, and her mother in front of him.

According to family members, Maria and Mitchell both suffer from mental health issues, with Maria having recently been diagnosed as suffering from post-partum depression. After Destinii was born, Mitchell’s mother and Destinii’s grandmother, Talisa Coombs, who lived in the same apartment complex, would frequently visit to assist with childcare and check on Maria and Mitchell.

On November 7, Coombs alleges that Maria assaulted her while she was in the apartment with the couple and the baby. After the incident, Coombs left the apartment and called the police to report the alleged assault. In

multiple interviews, Coombs has claimed that she repeatedly told police that she was concerned about the baby and that there was a baby in the apartment.

While she wanted to press charges against Maria, she told KCTV5 that she did not instruct the cops, “to go up there and shoot them. You don’t shoot anyone with a child. They could have done anything else, but they wanted to choose to kill my granddaughter and her mother. If I had known that baby was in danger with the police officers, then I would have never said anything.”

Despite tens of millions of dollars in “de-escalation” and “mental health” training, police killings in the United States have not abated over the last decade, having in fact increased. At least 1,151 people have been killed by police in the US so far this year, according to a tracker maintained by MappingPoliceViolence.org. Mapping Police Violence notes that police have killed “31 more people in the US through October in 2024” compared to the same period in the previous year.

Police violence is endemic to the capitalist system. Imbued with immense power to kill, cops exist to serve and protect the property and privileges of the ruling class. They are not neutral guardians, but the foot-soldiers of the financial oligarchy.

This is why police overwhelmingly kill working class, poor and those suffering from mental health emergencies. And while racist and fascistic attitudes are cultivated in every police department, the highest rate of police killings are in the predominantly rural states of New Mexico, Wyoming and Montana.

In his November 8 press conference, Chief Dustman admitted that a mental-health responder was on-site, but that they didn't have an opportunity to "de-escalate" the situation. Far from "de-escalating," video obtained by the *Kansas City Defender* shows multiple police racing up the stairs of the apartment complex, guns already drawn before they even reach the door.

Police were apparently in such a rush to kill that they broke into the wrong apartment and held Bug Arnold, a resident of Oval Spring Apartments, at gunpoint. Arnold told the *Defender* that he witnessed police, "From the moment they jumped out of their cars, it was as if they were ready to kill." Arnold explained to the *Defender* that after the police opened his door they had their guns trained on him "the entire time."

"I wasn't sure what to do. I was just frantically, like waving my arms, like, Oh my God! No! No! You have the wrong house!" he recalled. Arnold said police accused him of "doing something to their officer, like 'Where's my officer! What'd you do with my officer!' I said, 'I don't know where your officer is, sir. I assume he's in the other apartment, because you have the wrong apartment.'"

Police eventually identified the correct apartment. Holder told the *Kansas City Defender*, that he asked the police "if we could talk through the door. I didn't want my baby Destinii to be around the cops with their weapons out like that. But ultimately, they came in."

Holder told the *Defender*, "I was in the room when it all happened. From what I could see, I never once saw Maria armed with anything. I honestly don't even know where that came from. I've heard crazy things like that she was holding the baby hostage in a closet, that she had a knife, all this crazy stuff that's not true. I mean, all I can say is it's possible she had a knife and somehow I didn't see it, but all I know is I never saw her holding anything—and I was right there in the room."

Holder recalled seeing his daughter shot. "I know she died instantly." He recalled, "It looked like her head exploded. Her blood splattered across my glasses and all over me. All I could do was scream. I just kept

saying three words—the same three words—'You killed her!' I was screaming it. Over and over."

After Destinii was murdered, Holder said that Maria "jumped up. And as soon as she did, I don't know if the cop got scared or something, but then he fired another shot that hit Maria. I think it hit her in the hip. And the cop didn't stop her bleeding the right way, he didn't know what he was doing. I believe she choked on her blood and bled out. That's my understanding of how she died."

A GoFundMe has been created by Felisha Holder, Destinii's aunt, to pay for Destinii's funeral expenses. Felisha wrote that the "bullet hit baby Destinii in the head. The cops didn't even negotiate with Maria (the mom)..." Felisha noted that Destinii would have been "3 months old on the 22nd."

This past Friday, November 15, family and residents of the apartment complex, and the broader community members held a vigil for Maria and Destinii. Police were banned from attending the vigil by the family members.

Attendees of the vigil held signs demanding "Justice for Destinii! The cop needs to own up to what he did!"

Amber Travis, a cousin of Destinii, told KSHB at the vigil, "It's not fair and for nobody to be like, taking accountability for it, that makes me mad too."

Travis added, "It makes me angry the body-cam footage hasn't been released. Give my family some peace."



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact