



MARTINSBURG POLICE DEPARTMENT

TO SERVE, PROTECT, AND RESPECT

232 NORTH QUEEN STREET MARTINSBURG, WV 25401
(P) 304.264.2100 | (F) 304.264.2110 | MARTINSBURGPD.ORG

Chief George Swartwood
Martinsburg Police Department
(304) 264-2100 EXT 226 | g_swartwood@martinsburgpd.org

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MPD Prevents Violence at Martinsburg Protest

The Martinsburg Police Department has released the following statement regarding two protests which occurred within the City on Sunday, May 31st regarding the recent killing of George Floyd by a Minneapolis, Minnesota police officer.

Yesterday at 2:30 p.m. a group of approximately 100 persons assembled in the parking lot of the Berkeley County Sheriff's Office on South Raleigh Street to begin a protest march through Martinsburg which stopped at the City Square and the parking lot behind City Hall. The march was orderly and peaceful with all marchers walking on City sidewalks. Before the march, MPD Chief Maury Richards and Deputy Chief George Swartwood met with protest organizers to discuss the route of the march and the importance of remaining on the sidewalks to ensure public safety. Richards and Swartwood also assigned several MPD Patrol Units to assist the marchers with traffic control at busy intersections to further protect the safety of the protesters. The event ended at approximately 3:30 p.m. without incident.

Later, at approximately 5:00 p.m. another group of protesters assembled in front of City Hall. Richards and Swartwood also met with this group. The crowd, which grew to approximately 60, walked down Queen Street to the City Square and then on King Street to the Midtown 7-11. Police made several arrests of persons from the group who walked into the street to impede the flow of traffic. After marching for several hours, the group returned to City Hall and then marched again southbound on Queen Street. At the intersection of Queen and Martin Street the crowd became disruptive and in order to preserve public safety and welfare, MPD Chief Maury Richards issued an order to disperse at 9:10 p.m.

When individuals refused to comply with Chief Richards' dispersal order, several adults were arrested for Obstructing a Police Officer. One man was also charged with Resisting Arrest and an MPD police officer sustained a knee injury while placing the resister in custody. The Officer was transported to Berkeley Medical Center where he was examined and treated by Emergency Room personnel.

At 9:16 p.m., multiple gunshots were fired approximately 100 feet away on West Martin Street by an unknown suspect that police believe was a member of the protesting group. No injuries were reported. Eight shell casings were recovered at the scene and a description of the shooter was provided by a witness. A criminal investigation is on-going. Officers from the Berkeley County Sheriff's Office and the West Virginia State Police also responded to assist. On the 100 block of West Martin Street, the rear window of a parked Deputy Sheriff's vehicle was smashed with a rock.

Eight individuals were arrested and charged during the course of the disorderly protest: Shade Millian Melbourne, Female/19, Charged with Obstructing an Officer; Eric Travis Calhoun, M/25, Charged with Obstructing an Officer and Possession of Controlled Dangerous Substances; Trey Deandre Henry, M/19, Charged with Obstructing an Officer; Javier Castanon, M/20, Charged with Obstructing an Officer; Susan E. Lefeged, F/52, Charged with Obstructing an Officer; Robert Dalby Gillette, M/32, Charged with Resisting Arrest and four counts of Obstructing an Officer; Naim Robert Carter, M/25, Charged with three counts of Obstructing an Officer; and Jerry Enrique Carballo, M/23, Charged with Obstructing an Officer.

MPD Chief George Swartwood addressed the issues. "The killing of George Floyd was terrible and wrong. The Minneapolis police officer has been arrested, criminally charged, and our system of justice will take its course," the new Chief stated. Referring to protests, Swartwood stated, "Freedom of Speech is one of our most cherished American rights and the Martinsburg Police Department will ensure every citizen's right to peacefully protest. We have always done that and will continue to do so," Swartwood added. "Violence is not free speech. Threats to public safety, shooting, the destruction of property, and the injuring of police officers—the types of behavior we saw last night in Martinsburg, cannot be permitted," Chief Swartwood said.

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