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Missouri governor deploys National Guard to Ferguson

By Thomas Gaist

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Governor Jay Nixon announced early Monday that he was calling in the National Guard to occupy Ferguson, the St. Louis suburb that has been the site of ongoing protests since the August 9 police murder of Michael Brown, an unarmed African American teenager.

The announcement by Nixon, a Democrat who has been working in close consultation with the Obama administration, was the latest escalation in a paramilitary police crackdown on the working class of Ferguson in response angry protests over the killing of Brown. On Saturday, Nixon had declared a state of emergency in Ferguson and imposed a midnight- to-5 AM curfew.

The announcement of the deployment of National Guard troops came about an hour into the curfew early Monday, following confrontations provoked by police in combat gear, escorted by armored vehicles, who began firing tear gas and rubber bullets at peaceful protesters hours before the midnight deadline to clear the streets. Missouri Highway Patrol Captain Ron Johnson, appointed by Governor Nixon to head up the state security operations in Ferguson, announced the call-up of the National Guard at a press conference at which he claimed the mobilization of troops was in response to “deliberate, coordinated and intensifying violent acts.” Johnson’s phrase, repeated uncritically by the *New York Times* in its news report, in fact describes the actions of the police and those, including himself, who are directing their actions.

Hours before, Johnson had been presented by Al Sharpton, Jesse Jackson and other Democratic Party operatives to a Sunday afternoon meeting held to honor Brown as a champion of the rights of those protesting Brown's murder. At the meeting, Sharpton called for unity with the police and praised Johnson. (See: "Democratic Party operatives seek to stifle opposition, facilitate police crackdown in Ferguson, Missouri").

On Sunday night, television news outlets including CNN carried interviews with protesters who insisted they had been the target of unprovoked attacks by riot police as they marched peacefully near the site of the killing of Brown, who was shot multiple times by police officer Darren Wilson. At least one journalist covering the event was threatened that he would be shot if he did not stop filming the police actions.

Police posted claims on Twitter around 9:15 p.m. saying that officers had been attacked by demonstrators and that "tactical units" were being deployed. Rubber bullets and sound cannons were also deployed against the crowd, according to reports.

Numerous children and youth were present at the demonstration, as confirmed by reporters from the *World Socialist Web Site* who were on site during the hours leading up to the police assault and by multiple eyewitness reports from other journalists. Live tweeting from the street, journalist Amy K. Nelson wrote that "the tear gas is relentless," saying that "multiple tear gas cops" told her they "weren't going to let up." Nelson quoted a man walking through the crowd carrying his daughter, who said, "It's not even curfew yet and they're firing tear gas and the baby almost got it."

Video posted on the Internet showed a police officer screaming "Get the f*** out of here" and demanding that a journalist from Argus Radio turn off his camera light or "you're getting shot." The reporter, Mustafa Hussein, said the cop was pointing a gun at his face when he made the threat.

An eerie tension hung over the town throughout the day, as hundreds of police officers and dozens of FBI agents patrolled the streets. A series of police checkpoints were scattered strategically throughout the working class neighborhoods of the town. At the checkpoints, police questioned and checked the identification of those attempting to pass through.

Major intersections were blockaded by rows of police vehicles with flashing lights. Large groups of officers from local and state police departments could be seen standing on guard with their hands on their holsters, or walking up and down the main thoroughfares, billy clubs in hand.

President Obama announced that he would interrupt his vacation in the wealthy resort of Martha's Vineyard. He is scheduled to meet with Attorney General Eric Holder today to discuss the situation in Ferguson.

Also late Sunday, an independent autopsy commissioned by the family of Michael Brown was released. The autopsy concluded that the youth was hit by at least six rounds to the front of his

body, including two to his head, one of which penetrated the top of his skull. This finding corresponds to eyewitness reports of the shooting, which assert that Brown was kneeling with his hands in the air when he was killed, execution style, by the police officer.