

Ferguson Protesters Torch Russian News Agency's Car

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National Guard soldiers board a bus outside of the Ferguson City Hall during a third night of protests following the grand jury verdict in the Michael Brown shooting in Ferguson, Missouri on Nov. 26, 2014.

Protesters in Ferguson, Missouri, have torched a car operated by journalists from Russia's major state-run news agency, shortly before Moscow issued a statement reminding Washington of its obligation to uphold freedom of expression.

The car operated by a Rossiya Segodnya news crew was set alight by demonstrators on Tuesday night, though the two reporters at the scene were not injured, reported state-run news agency RIA Novosti, which is part of the Rossiya Segodnya group.

The clash took place after the reporters — a Russian journalist working for RIA Novosti and a British reporter freelancing for the English-language branch of Sputnik — tried to approach protesters for comments.

Demonstrators have been protesting on the streets of Ferguson all week over the decision not to bring state criminal charges against local policeman Darren Wilson, who shot and killed black teenager Michael Brown in August.

"The journalists stepped out of the car to ask a group of teenagers ... about their reaction to the grand jury verdict relieving the police officer of responsibility [in the killing of Michael Brown]," RIA reported. "In response, they were attacked, with [assailants] demanding their car keys and phones."

The incident took place shortly before the Russian Foreign Ministry issued a statement accusing the U.S. authorities of relying on a the "forceful suppression of actions against police brutality and against an unpunished crime that was obviously racially based."

"We will continue to closely monitor developments in Ferguson and other U.S. cities, reminding the American side of the need to strictly abide by their obligations to ensure democratic standards and civil freedoms [are upheld]" the statement said.

Russia's state-run media have also denounced U.S. authorities' handling of the case, issuing reports sympathetic toward protesters.

On Thursday, the Sputnik news agency reported that Brown's parents had "disproved" of Wilson's account of the shooting of their son — in which he claimed he was attacked by Brown — without elaborating on how her testimony constituted hard evidence.

"I know my son far too well. He would never do anything like that," McSpadden told U.S. television network CBS, in comments that Sputnik quoted as an example of the disproof, while incorrectly identifying the news network as CNN.

Rossiya Segodnya's car is one of several targets to have been torched in Ferguson, where protesters burned down a dozen buildings during large-scale rioting on Monday, according to Reuters. Police reported 61 arrests on the day, on charges including burglary, illegal weapons possession and unlawful assembly.

The protests in Ferguson, which led to the Rossiya Segodnya car being torched, were also declared to be an unlawful assembly by St. Louis police, who added in a [Twitter message](#) on Wednesday morning that those refusing to leave the area would be subject to arrest. Arrests for unlawful assembly are common in Russia during pickets and rallies that have not been approved by the government.

Across the U.S., thousands of protesters have taken to the streets to demonstrate against the government's handling of the Ferguson rallies, including in major U.S. cities such as New York and Washington D.C.

One protester in Washington DC, where about 1,000 people gathered on Tuesday evening, told NBC that "police actually helped to shut down the street so that we could walk [and] protest without being in harm's way."

Russia's Foreign Ministry has put a different spin on the events, however, saying in its statement on Wednesday that while demonstrations for solidarity with Ferguson protesters took place in a number of states, "in a whole range of cases, people who tried to express their

civic position were met with a harsh rebuff from the police."

RIA reported that the attackers who burned the news crew's car also hit one of the reporters on the head and tried to snatch the backpack held by the other, but said the journalists managed to get away.

The journalists have filed a police report, RIA said.

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