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Three Additional Officers Charged in George Floyd's Death; Prosecutors Upgrade Chauvin Murder Charge to Second Degree

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Quincy Mason, center, the son of George Floyd, and family attorney Ben Crump, left, kneel, Wednesday, June 3, 2020 as they visited the site of a memorial in Minneapolis where Floyd was arrested on May 25 and died while in police custody. Video shared onli
By. THE NEW YORK TIMES

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Prosecutors on Wednesday expanded their case against the police who were at the scene of George Floyd's death, charging three of the officers with aiding and abetting a murder and upgrading the charges against the officer who pressed his knee on Floyd's neck to second-degree murder.

The most serious charge was filed against Derek Chauvin, whose caught-on-video treatment of the handcuffed Floyd spurred worldwide protests. Three other officers — Thomas Lane, J. Kueng and Tou Thao — were charged with aiding and abetting second-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter. All four were fired last week.

The new charges were sought by Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison, who called the protests unleashed by the death “dramatic and necessary” and said Floyd “should be here and he is not.”

“His life had value, and we will seek justice,” Ellison said.

Benjamin Crump, an attorney for Floyd’s family, called it “a bittersweet moment” and “a significant step forward on the road to justice.” Crump said Ellison had told the family he would continue his investigation into Floyd’s death and upgrade the charge to first-degree murder if warranted.

Chauvin was initially charged with third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter

The move powerfully punctuated an unprecedented week in modern American history, in which largely peaceful protests took place in communities of all sizes but were rocked by bouts of violence, including deadly attacks on officers, rampant thefts and arson in some places.

Earlier Wednesday, in a visit to a makeshift shrine at the street corner where Floyd died, his family had again called for the arrests of Lane, Kueng and Thao, a demand echoed by their attorney.

“We are demanding justice,” Crump said.

Some of the rockiness of the days since Floyd’s death May 25 dissipated on Tuesday night, with demonstrations continuing around the country, but without major reports of violence.

Curfews and efforts by protesters to contain earlier flare-ups of lawlessness were credited with preventing more widespread damage to businesses in New York and other cities overnight.

“Last night we took a step forward in moving out of this difficult period we’ve had the last few days and moving to a better time,” New York Mayor Bill de Blasio said.

New York police said about 280 people were arrested on protest-related charges Tuesday night, compared with 700 a day earlier. Nationwide, more than 9,000 have been arrested in connection with unrest.

At least 12 deaths have been reported, though the circumstances in many cases are still being sorted out.

Some tense incidents continued Tuesday night, but were far less prevalent than in preceding days. Police and National Guard troops used tear gas, flash-bang grenades, nonlethal rounds and other means of dispersing crowds near a police precinct in Seattle, near Centennial Park in Atlanta and at demonstrations in Tampa and St. Petersburg, Florida.