



Written by [C. Mitchell Shaw](#) on April 16, 2021

Officer Kim Potter Makes First Court Appearance in Shooting Death of Daunte Wright, but Should She Even Have Been Charged?

Former Brooklyn Center police officer Kimberly Potter made her first court appearance Thursday and was officially charged with second-degree manslaughter charges in the shooting of Daunte Wright. Potter will return to court on May 17, and while the courts will ultimately decide her fate, the real question is, “Should she ever have been charged in the first place?”

In the immediate wake of the shooting, the Internet exploded with memes, posts, and comments condemning Potter as a cold-blooded killer who shot Wright just for being black. They added that Potter’s defense — that she thought she had grabbed her taser, not her gun — was dishonest. A couple of typical examples are shown below: an April 13 tweet by Representative Maxine Waters (D-Calif.) and a response by one of her readers.



Image of Kim Potter: Screenshot of a YouTube video by Kare 11

Not to stir the pot, but rather to search for truth: In what alternative universe does a police officer — a training officer yet — confuse their gun for a taser? Come on! It's a lie!

BTW: Oscar Grant was lying on his stomach on ground on BART platform in California.

— Denker Dunsmuir (@denker_dunsmuir) [April 14, 2021](#)

But is it that simple? Is it beyond belief that a police officer — even a 26-year veteran who was training another officer — could make an honest mistake and draw and fire a gun, thinking it was a Taser?

Actually, no. It is not beyond belief because though it is rare, it is not unheard of nor unprecedented.

It has happened [at least 15 times in the past 20 years nationwide](#). In fact, one of those instances was in Minnesota. In 2002, Minneapolis Police Officer Gregory Siem and his partner were attempting to arrest Christofar Atak. Atak was resisting arrest and the officers were unable to get handcuffs on him. Siem mistakenly drew his Glock sidearm, announced that he was going to Taser Atak, and then shot him once before realizing his mistake. So far, that case from nearly 20 years ago sounds almost exactly like the Wright shooting. The only notable differences are that Atak was shot in the back and he survived.

So, yes. It happens. Police officers do occasionally confuse their gun and their Taser.



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But *how* could a police officer with so much training make such a terrible mistake? Tasers are bright yellow and made of plastic. They have rubber-coated triggers. They are lighter than guns.

The New American spoke with retired Henrico, Virginia Police Sergeant John Slater and asked him that question. Slater — a 34-year veteran who spent his last years in a supervisory and training capacity — said that the reason it is hard for the average civilian to imagine making that mistake is that they have never been in a tense situation dealing with a criminal who is resisting arrest.

“A Taser functions like a handgun. You hold it like a gun.”

“An officer will go to the range twice a year to qualify, and will typically fire 250 rounds during each of those trips to the range.” Slater said that in his department, that meant drawing and reholstering the weapon nearly that many times. By comparison, Slater said that Taser training typically does not include time at the range. Furthermore, officers typically unholster their weapons once they return home. The weapon is then secured and reholstered before their next tour of duty. “So the officer is handling that handgun on a daily basis.”

All of that drawing, handling, and reholstering leads to both familiarity and “muscle memory.” All of that together means that in a “high-stress situation” dealing with a combative suspect who is resisting arrest, an officer’s muscle memory might lead him to draw his handgun when he thinks he is drawing his Taser. “If you’re wrestling with somebody, all of your instincts — especially the survival instinct — will tell you to go for that thing you have trained with and drawn so many times,” Slater said. “Unless a person has been in a high-stress situation, they cannot armchair quarterback what happened. What happened is a tragedy, but it appears to be a tragic accident.”

That opinion is borne out by the information that is currently available. For instance, police officers are trained to fire more than once when firing a handgun, but since a Taser only shoots once at a time before applying an electric shock, officers are trained to fire them once. Potter fired once, lending credence to her claim that she intended to fire her Taser. Furthermore, the first words from her mouth after firing were, “Holy sh*t, I shot him!”

Slater said, “As long as you have humans as police officers in these situations, your going to have some accidents.” And, after all, since citizens are humans, isn’t the human element exactly what we want — even with the relatively few accidents that tend to lead in the daily news. Who would want the cold indifference of a RoboCop? Slater added, “You want accidents to be infrequent — you want to eliminate them as much as possible. That is why you train. But you can make training as realistic and lifelike as possible, but things on the street do not go down the way they go down in a training scenario.”

To Slater’s point about wanting such accidents to be infrequent, the good news is that they are. While this writer wanted to make the point earlier in this article that Potter’s claim that she intended to use her Taser is credible (since it has happened many times over the past 20 years), it is noteworthy that such accidents occur less than once a year on average. In an effort to demonize police as part of their “journalistic” efforts, the *Washington Post* has been tracking (and *spinning*) the numbers of police shootings since 2015. [According to their database](#), police officers shoot and kill about 1,000 people per year. That means that if every person a police officer shot by accident while intending to use a Taser over the past 20 years had died (and most of them did not), then that would equate to a whopping one-tenth of one percent. That is the very definition of “infrequent.”

In the end, it appears that Officer Potter made one terrible mistake. One. She inadvertently deployed the wrong weapon. Everything that followed can be laid at the feet of that one mistake. But in this



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political climate — driven by the politics of race — she will not likely be held to account for her *mistake*, but for the color of the man she accidentally shot.

The likelihood of Potter receiving a fair trial appears extremely low. After all, the city manager for Brooklyn Heights was fired for saying that — like all city employees accused of wrongdoing — Potter deserves due process.

And while this writer wishes to avoid blaming the dead, it is noteworthy that the mainstream media and liberal politicians who are already stoking the fires to burn Potter at the stake for what appears to have been an honest mistake conveniently ignore the multiplicity of deliberate actions on Wright's part that led to his death. First, he had an outstanding warrant for armed assault. Second, he had posted bail to remain free while awaiting trial on that charge, but had violated the terms of his release by *again* illegally possessing a firearm. Third, when Officer Potter and her colleagues attempted to arrest him on that outstanding warrant, he resisted and attempted to flee in his car.

Perhaps Wright had been drinking too deeply from the poisoned well of BLM and the false narrative that by being in police custody, he would be in danger of bodily harm or even death (though having been arrested for the armed robbery and making it out in one piece, that is unlikely). Or perhaps he just didn't want to go to jail. So, he resisted arrest. Now, none of that makes his death all right, but it does add to the mix of *how* he died. He was not an innocent man, minding his own business who was killed by police for driving while black, as Representative Waters would have us believe. In fact, all available evidence points to a simple fact: If he had not broken the law and then resisted arrest, Officer Potter would not have needed to restrain him — would not have needed to attempt to use her Taser on him — and he would likely be alive today.



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