

# Chaos in Virginia as white supremacist rally takes deadly turn

Charlottesville erupts in violence as car plows into peaceful counterprotesters, killing one and injuring at least 19. Two state police were killed in a helicopter crash as they responded to the unrest.

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CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA.—Chaos and violence turned to tragedy Saturday as hundreds of white nationalists, neo-Nazis and Ku Klux Klan members — planning to stage what they described as their largest rally in decades to “take America back” — clashed with counterprotesters in the streets and a car plowed into crowds, leaving one person dead and 19 others injured.

Hours later, two state police officers died when their helicopter crashed at the outskirts of town. Officials identified them as Berke M.M. Bates of Quinton, Virginia, who was the pilot, and H. Jay Cullen of Midlothian, Virginia, who was a passenger. State police said their Bell 407 helicopter was assisting with the unrest in Charlottesville. Bates died one day before his 41st birthday; Cullen was 48.

Gov. Terry McAuliffe (D), who had declared a state of emergency in the morning, said at an evening news conference that he had a message for “all the white supremacists and the Nazis who came into Charlottesville today: Go home. You are not wanted in this great commonwealth.”

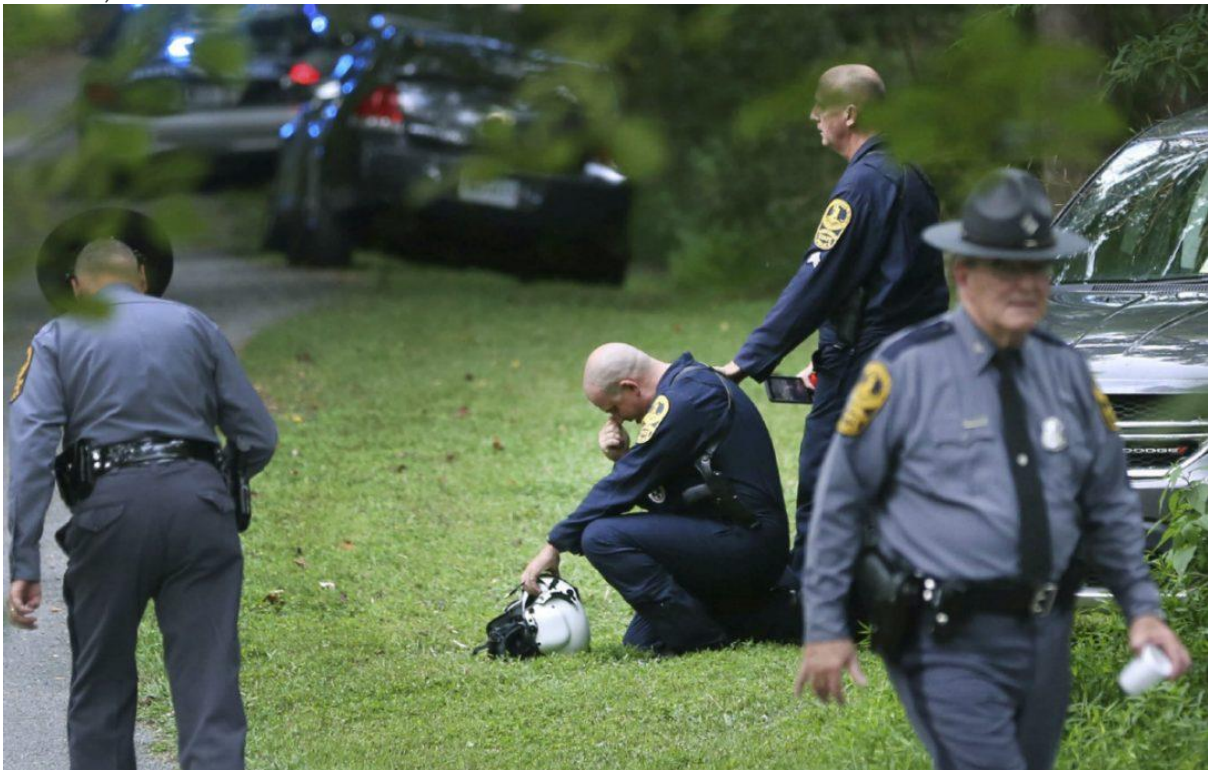
Maurice Jones, Charlottesville’s African-American city manager, looked stricken as he spoke. “Hate came to our town today in a way that we had feared but we had never really let ourselves imagine would,” he said.

State and local officials declined to take reporters’ questions and abruptly left after making statements.

In an emergency meeting Saturday evening, the Charlottesville City Council voted unanimously to give police the power to enact a curfew or otherwise restrict assembly as necessary to protect public safety.

Ben, a 21-year-old KKK member from Harrison, Arkansas, at the rally in Emancipation Park. (EVELYN HOCKSTEIN / FOR THE WASHINGTON POST)

A vehicle drives into a group of protesters demonstrating against a white nationalist rally in Charlottesville, Va. (RYAN M. KELLY / THE ASSOCIATED PRESS)



Authorities work near the scene of a deadly helicopter crash near the site of violent protests in Charlottesville, Va., on Saturday. (SHELBY LUM/ RICHMOND TIMES-DISPATCH/AP)



Charlottesville Mayor Mike Signer, right, speaks about the white supremacist rally and violence as Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe, centre, and Virginia Secretary of Public safety Brian Moran, left, listen Saturday. (STEVE HELBER / AP)



Police ordered hundreds of people out of the downtown park after violent clashes — putting an end to the noon **"Unite the Right"** rally that hadn't even begun. (EVELYN HOCKSTEIN / FOR THE WASHINGTON POST)





Ben, a 21-year-old KKK member from Harrison, Arkansas, at the rally in Emancipation Park. (EVELYN HOCKSTEIN / FOR THE WASHINGTON POST)



A vehicle drives into a group of protesters demonstrating against a white nationalist rally in Charlottesville, Va. (RYAN M. KELLY / THE ASSOCIATED PRESS)

Video recorded at the scene of the car crash shows a 2010 gray Dodge Challenger accelerating into crowds on a pedestrian mall, sending bodies flying — and then reversing at high speed, hitting yet more people. Witnesses said the street was filled with people opposed to the white nationalists who had come to town bearing Confederate flags and anti- Semitic epithets.

A 32-year-old woman was killed, according to police, who said they were investigating the crash as a criminal homicide.





People fly into the air as a vehicle drives into a group of protesters demonstrating against a white nationalist rally in Charlottesville, Va., Saturday. (RYAN M. KELLY)

The driver of the Challenger, James Alex Fields Jr., 20, of Ohio, was arrested and charged with one count of second-degree murder, three counts of malicious wounding, and one count of hit-and-run attended failure to stop with injury, police said. He is being held without bail and is scheduled to be arraigned Monday, Albemarle-Charlottesville Regional Jail Superintendent Martin Kumer said. Police made three other arrests in connection with violence earlier in the day, on charges of assault and battery, disorderly conduct and carrying a concealed weapon.

Records show Fields last lived in Maumee, Ohio, about 24 kilometres southwest of Toledo.

Fields's father was killed by a drunk driver a few months before the boy's birth, according to an uncle who spoke on the condition of anonymity. His father left him money that the uncle kept in a trust until Fields reached adulthood.

"When he turned 18, he demanded his money, and that was the last I had any contact with him," the uncle said.

Fields, he said, grew up mostly in Northern Kentucky, where he'd been raised by a single mother who was a paraplegic. The uncle, who saw Fields mostly at family gatherings, described his nephew as "not really friendly, more subdued."

He wouldn't comment on his reaction to the charges against Fields.

"I really don't want to get into that," he said. "I'm not going to slam my nephew or anybody in my family without knowing what the hell happened."



A woman receives first aid after a car slammed into a group of people peacefully protesting a white supremacist rally. One woman was killed in the incident and at least 19 were injured. (PAUL J. RICHARDS)

Angela Taylor, a spokesperson for the University of Virginia Medical Center, said 19 others were brought to the hospital in the early afternoon after the car barreled through the pedestrian mall. Five were in critical condition as of Saturday evening. Another 14 people were hurt in street brawls, city officials said.

Earlier, police evacuated a downtown park as rallygoers and counterprotesters traded blows and hurled bottles and chemical irritants at one another, putting an end to the noon rally before it officially began.



Despite the decision to quash the rally, clashes continued on side streets and throughout downtown, including the pedestrian mall at Water and Fourth streets where the Challenger slammed into counterprotesters and two other cars in the early afternoon, sending bystanders running and screaming.

“I am heartbroken that a life has been lost here,” Charlottesville Mayor Michael Signer (D) said in a tweet. “I urge all people of good will — go home.”

Elected leaders in Virginia and elsewhere urged peace, blasting the white supremacist views on display in Charlottesville as ugly. U.S. House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., called the display “repugnant.”

But U.S. President [Donald Trump](#), known for his rapid-fire tweets, remained silent throughout the morning. It was after 1 p.m. when he weighed in, writing on Twitter: “We ALL must be united & condemn all that hate stands for. There is no place for this kind of violence in America. Lets come together as one!”



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What is vital now is a swift restoration of law and order and the protection of innocent lives. #Charlottesville

[4:23 PM - Aug 12, 2017](#)

In brief remarks at a late afternoon news conference in New Jersey to discuss veterans' health care, Trump said he was following the events in Charlottesville closely. "The hate and the division must stop and must stop right now," Trump said, without specifically mentioning white nationalists or their views. "We condemn in the strongest possible terms this egregious display of hatred, bigotry and violence on many sides. On many sides."

Former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke, a Trump supporter who was in Charlottesville on Saturday, quickly replied. "I would recommend you take a good look in the mirror & remember it was White Americans who put you in the presidency, not radical leftists," he wrote.

Dozens of the white nationalists in Charlottesville were wearing red Make America Great Again hats. Asked by a reporter in New Jersey whether he wanted the support of white nationalists, Trump did not respond.

Even as crowds began to thin Saturday afternoon, the town remained unsettled and on edge. Onlookers were deeply shaken at the pedestrian mall, where ambulances had arrived to treat those injured by the car.

Chan Williams, 22, was among the counterprotesters at the pedestrian mall, chanting "Black Lives Matter" and "Whose streets? Our streets!" The marchers blocked traffic, but Williams said drivers weren't annoyed. Instead, she said, they waved or honked in support.

So when she heard a car engine rev up and saw the people in front of her dodging a moving car, she didn't know what to think.

"I saw the car hit bodies, legs in the air," she said. "You try to grab the people closest to you and take shelter."

Williams and friend George Halliday ducked into a shop with an open door and called their mothers immediately. An hour later, the two were still visibly upset.

"I just saw shoes on the road," Halliday, 20, said. "It all happened in two seconds."

Saturday's Unite the Right rally was meant to protest the planned removal of a statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee. The city of Charlottesville voted to remove the statue earlier this year, but it remains in Emancipation Park, formerly known as Lee Park, pending a judge's ruling expected later this month.

Tensions began to escalate Friday night as hundreds of white nationalists marched through the U-Va.'s campus, chanting "White lives matter," "You will not replace us" and "Jews will not replace us."



Neo Nazis, Alt-Right, and White Supremacists chant at counter protestors at the base of a statue of Thomas Jefferson after marching through the University of Virginia campus with torches in Charlottesville, Va., Friday night. (SAMUEL CORUM)

They were met by counterprotesters at the base of a statue of Thomas Jefferson, who founded the university. One counterprotester apparently deployed a chemical spray, which sent about a dozen rallygoers seeking medical assistance.

On Saturday morning, people in combat gear — some wearing bicycle and motorcycle helmets and carrying clubs, sticks and makeshift shields — fought one another on downtown streets, with little apparent police interference. Both sides sprayed chemical irritants and hurled plastic bottles through the air.

A large contingent of Charlottesville police officers and Virginia State Police troopers in riot gear were stationed on side streets and at nearby barricades but did nothing to break up the melee until about 11:40 a.m. Using



megaphones, police then declared an unlawful assembly and gave a five-minute warning to leave Emancipation Park.

“The worst part is that people got hurt and the police stood by and didn’t do a g----- thing,” said David Copper, 70, of Staunton, Va.

State Del. David Toscano, D-Charlottesville, minority leader of Virginia’s House, praised the response by Charlottesville and state police.

Asked why police did not act sooner to intervene as violence unfolded, Toscano said he could not comment. “But they trained very hard for this, and it might have been that they were waiting for a more effective time to get people out” of Emancipation Park, he said.

By early afternoon, hundreds of rallygoers had made their way to a larger park two miles to the north. Duke, speaking to the crowd, said that European Americans are “being ethnically cleansed within our own nation” and called Saturday’s events “the first step toward taking America back.”

White nationalist leader Richard Spencer also addressed the group, urging people to disperse. But he promised they would return for a future demonstration, blaming Saturday’s violence on counterprotesters.

In an interview, Spencer said he was “beyond outraged” the police had declared the planned rally an “unlawful assembly.”

“I never before thought that I would have my country cracking down on me and on free speech,” he said. “We were lawfully and peacefully assembled. We came in peace, and the state cracked down.”

He said that counterprotesters attacked rallygoers but also acknowledged that “maybe someone threw a first punch on our side. Maybe that happened. I obviously didn’t see everything.”

By 11 a.m., several fully armed militias and hundreds of right-wing rallygoers had poured into the small downtown park that was to be the site of the rally.



A right-wing militia marched in the streets of Charlottesville, Va., during violent confrontations between white supremacists and counterprotesters Saturday. (EDU BAYER)

Counterprotesters held “Black Lives Matter” signs and placards expressing support for equality and love as they faced rallygoers who waved Confederate flags and posters that said “the Goyim know,” referring to non-Jewish people, and “the Jewish media is going down.”

“No Trump! No KKK! No fascist USA!” the counterprotesters chanted.

“Too late, f-----s!” a man yelled back at them.

Michael Von Kotch, a Pennsylvania resident who called himself a Nazi, said the rally made him “proud to be white.”

He said that he’s long held white supremacist views and that Trump’s election has “emboldened” him and the members of his own Nazi group.

“We are assembled to defend our history, our heritage and to protect our race to the last man,” Von Kotch said, wearing a protective helmet and sporting a

wooden shield and a broken pool cue. “We came here to stand up for the white race.”

Naundi Cook, 23, who is black, said that she came to Saturday’s counterprotests to “support my people” but that she’s never seen something like this before.

When violence broke out, she started shaking and got goose bumps.

“I’ve seen people walking around with tear gas all over their face, all over their clothes. People getting Mace, fighting,” she said. “I didn’t want to be next.”

Cook said she couldn’t sit back and watch white nationalists descend on her town. She has a 3-year-old daughter to stand up for, she said.

“Right now, I’m not sad,” she said once the protests dispersed. “I’m a little more empowered. All these people and support, I feel like we’re on top right now because of all the support that we have.”