

**In-Custody Death of Tramoi Springate
Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department**

Deputy Jose Fuentes, #618145

Deputy Joshua Jones, #623656

Deputy Mario Ramirez, #615122

Deputy Jaime Gallegos, #628507

Deputy Andrew Morse, #600078

Deputy Dalia Gonzalez, #625090

J.S.I.D. File #21-0203



GEORGE GASCÓN

District Attorney

Justice System Integrity Division

September 8, 2022

MEMORANDUM

TO: CAPTAIN ANDREW D. MEYER
Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department
Homicide Bureau
1 Cupania Circle
Monterey Park, California 91755

FROM: JUSTICE SYSTEM INTEGRITY DIVISION
Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office

SUBJECT: In-Custody Death of Tramo Springate
J.S.I.D. File #21-0203
L.A.S.D. File #021-05590-2825-151

DATE: September 8, 2022

The Justice System Integrity Division of the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office has completed its review of the May 18, 2021, in-custody death of Tramo Springate involving Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) Deputies Jose Fuentes, Joshua Jones, Mario Ramirez, Jaime Gallegos, Andrew Morse, and Dalia Gonzalez. We have concluded that the deputies used reasonable force under the circumstances. We further find that the deputies' use of force did not cause Springate's death.

The following analysis is based on police reports, recorded interviews, medical records, the autopsy report, body worn video (BWV), and photographs submitted to this office by LASD Detectives Michael Austin and Timothy Ruggiero. The voluntary statements of all involved deputies were considered in this analysis.

FACTUAL ANALYSIS

The Vehicle Pursuit

On May 18, 2021, at approximately 10:01 p.m., LASD Deputies Joshua Jones and Jose Fuentes were on patrol when they observed a white Acura driving recklessly. The deputies attempted to conduct a traffic stop of the Acura. The driver and lone occupant of the vehicle, later identified as Tramo Springate, sped away. The deputies initiated emergency radio traffic and pursued Springate, who drove into a parking garage, exited the Acura, and fled on foot.

The Foot Pursuit and Handgun

Jones and Fuentes stated they chased Springate and saw him throw a gun. That gun was later recovered on a rooftop and determined to be a loaded 9mm semiautomatic handgun. Springate's DNA profile was later detected on the gun, which is shown in the photograph below:



The Arrest

Jones and Fuentes were joined in the foot pursuit by Deputies Jaime Gallegos and Mario Ramirez. At 10:04 p.m., Jones, Fuentes, Gallegos, and Ramirez caught up to Springate. Ramirez put Springate in a “bear hug” and took him to the ground. The four deputies handcuffed Springate and returned him to his feet. Morse and Gonzalez walked Springate to an awaiting patrol car. The deputies stated that, at that time, Springate was talking and claimed to be asthmatic. The deputies said Springate appeared to be “okay” and out-of-breath from running. He did not appear to be injured and conversed with the deputies.

The Patrol Car

Springate was conscious and breathing when he was placed in the back of a patrol car. Approximately one minute later, Morse stated he attempted to converse again with Springate, who suddenly did not respond. Morse immediately exited the patrol car and checked Springate’s pulse, and detected he had a pulse and was breathing, but appeared to be unconscious. Deputies removed Springate from the back of the patrol vehicle and put him in a recovery position. Springate appeared to be unconscious and Morse radioed that Springate was unconscious and possibly having an asthma attack. Less than three minutes elapsed from the time Springate was

placed in the patrol car and when Morse detected Springate was having a medical emergency and radioed for the fire department to respond.

Video Footage

BWV from eight deputies captured the incident from the initiation of the vehicle pursuit to when Springate was transported to the hospital.

Collectively, and in summary, the videos show Ramirez driving his patrol vehicle, stopping, exiting, and running through the parking garage. Springate is shown running away and throwing an object (later confirmed to be a gun). Four deputies caught up with Springate and ordered him to the ground. Ramirez ran into Springate and Springate went to the ground. It does not appear that the deputies used any body weight while handcuffing Springate, who stated on several occasions he had asthma. Deputies walked Springate toward an awaiting patrol car and a deputy applied a control hold on Springate's arm. Springate yelled, "Hey! That chick's got my arm! I am not helping you! You're trying to kill me!" When Springate arrived at the patrol car he was searched. A deputy told him to, "Relax" and Springate yelled, "Let my hand go!" Deputies guided Springate into the backseat of the patrol car and he yelled, "I am going out! I can feel it!" Approximately two minutes later a deputy noticed that Springate appeared to be unconscious, radioed for the fire department to respond, and reported that Springate might be having an asthma attack. Deputies determined that Springate was breathing and had a pulse, removed him from the patrol car, and placed him in a recovery position. The fire department arrived, provided medical assistance to Springate, and transported him away from the scene. The elapsed time from the start of the pursuit to the time paramedics starting assisting Springate was approximately 16 minutes.

Medical Treatment

The fire department found Springate in cardiac arrest and started CPR. Springate was transported to the hospital. At 10:58 p.m., the hospital medical team reported that Springate was unconscious and possibly having an asthma attack. The team resuscitated Springate. At 11:12 p.m., Springate's pulse was lost again, he went into cardiac arrest, could not be revived, and expired at 11:22 p.m.

Vehicle Search

Deputies searched Springate's vehicle and located drug paraphernalia, methamphetamine, and PCP, as shown in the photograph below:



Autopsy

On May 20, 2021, Deputy Medical Examiner Paul Gliniecki, M.D. performed a postmortem examination and ordered a toxicology analysis. Springate had the presence of PCP and methamphetamine in his blood at the time of his death. Dr. Gliniecki issued the following opinion regarding Springate's cause of death:

“...Springate died of combined effects of methamphetamine and phencyclidine. Combination of these drugs can cause cardiac dysfunction and dysrhythmia and central nervous system dysfunction and seizures. The combination of methamphetamine and phencyclidine on a heart that is enlarged and dilated can lead to an increased propensity for cardiac dysrhythmias and dysfunction. Other contributing conditions include idiopathic dilated cardiomyopathy and medical history of asthma. The manner of death is accidental due to the combined intake of methamphetamine and phencyclidine.”

LEGAL ANALYSIS

It is axiomatic that an officer is authorized to use force in arresting or detaining a person, or to prevent escape or overcome resistance. Penal Code section 835a. The determination of the appropriate amount of force that an officer may use must be made in consideration of the totality of the circumstances. People v. Mehserle (2012) 206 Cal.App.4th 1125. When considering the

totality of the circumstances, all facts known to or perceived by the peace officer at the time, including the conduct of the officer and the subject leading up to the use of force, is taken into consideration. Penal Code section 835a(a)(4) and (e)(3). The peace officer's decision to use force is not evaluated with the benefit of hindsight and shall account for occasions when officers may be forced to make quick judgments about using force. Penal Code section 835a(a)(4).

In evaluating whether a police officer's use of force, including deadly force, was reasonable in a specific situation, it is helpful to draw guidance from the objective standard of reasonableness adopted in civil actions alleging Fourth Amendment violations. "The 'reasonableness' of a particular use of force must be judged from the perspective of a reasonable officer on the scene, rather than with the 20/20 vision of hindsight... The calculus of reasonableness must embody allowance for the fact that police officers are often forced to make split-second judgments—in circumstances that are tense, uncertain, and rapidly evolving—about the amount of force that is necessary in a particular situation." Graham v. Connor (1989) 490 U.S. 386, 396-397. An act causes death if the death is a direct, natural, and probable consequence of the act and the death would not have happened without the act. People v. Roberts (1992) 2 Cal.4th 271; People v. Skiff (2021) 59 Cal.App.5th 579-580.

Springate fled from the deputies and threw a gun. The deputies had probable cause to arrest him and to use reasonable force in doing so. Ramirez, Gallegos, Jones, and Fuentes took Springate to the ground and handcuffed him. The deputies used the minimum amount of force necessary to subdue Springate and promptly got him to his feet. Morse and Gonzalez escorted Springate to a patrol car. He was conscious and breathing, complaining loudly, and did not appear to be injured. When he lost consciousness, medical assistance was called immediately and Springate was placed in a recovery position. He went into cardiac arrest, was transported to the hospital, and approximately 80 minutes after the incident began, he was pronounced dead. The autopsy report shows that the cause of death was accidental due to the combined effects of PCP and methamphetamine use, combined with a history of asthma. There is no evidence to show that the involved deputies acted unlawfully or unreasonably, nor is there any evidence their actions caused Springate's death.

CONCLUSION

The evidence examined in this investigation shows that Deputies Jose Fuentes, Joshua Jones, Mario Ramirez, Jaime Gallegos, Andrew Morse, and Dalia Gonzalez used reasonable force in their efforts to arrest Springate. There is no evidence that the physical force used was the cause of Springate's death.