

Non-Fatal Officer Involved Shooting of Julie Anne Archer
Los Angeles Police Department

Officer Sean Steelmon, Serial #40131

J.S.I.D. File #20-0405



GEORGE GASCÓN

District Attorney

Justice System Integrity Division

August 31, 2023

MEMORANDUM

TO: CAPTAIN OMAR BAZULTO
Los Angeles Police Department
Force Investigation Division
100 West First Street, Suite 431
Los Angeles, California 90012

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

SUBJECT: Non-Fatal Officer Involved Shooting of Julie Anne Archer
J.S.I.D. File # 20-0405
L.A.P.D. File # F047-20

DATE: August 31, 2023

The Justice System Integrity Division of the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office has completed its review of the October 15, 2020, non-fatal shooting of Julie Anne Archer by Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) Officer Sean Steelmon. We find that Steelmon acted in lawful self-defense and in defense of others.

The District Attorney's Command Center was notified of the shooting on October 15, 2020, at approximately 3:00 a.m. The District Attorney Response Team responded to the location. They were given a briefing of the circumstances surrounding the shooting and a walk-through of the scene.

The following analysis is based upon the recorded interviews of involved parties and witnesses, body worn camera footage, photographs, and reports prepared by the LAPD submitted to this office by Officer Rodriguez on November 22, 2021. Complete body worn video camera footage and audio of interviews were provided on July 18, 2023. Compelled statements of Officer Steelmon were not considered in this analysis.

FACTUAL ANALYSIS

On October 15, 2020, at approximately 12:49 a.m., LAPD received an emergency call for service from Julie Archer. Archer stated that, "a violent and crazy" person was armed with a gun and was banging on the window. She described the person as a white male, 52 years of age, wearing a light blue T-shirt and blue jeans. At approximately 12:58 p.m. the call was assigned to Topanga Patrol Division uniformed Officers Sean Steelmon and Fernando Ramirez.

According to Ramirez's body worn camera video (BWV), at approximately 1:09 a.m. Ramirez and Steelmon arrived at the Best Western Hotel on Vanowen Street. They were met by Officers Thomas Grogan and Gian Guenther. Officers asked [REDACTED] ([REDACTED] a hotel employee, if any guest had reported seeing someone with a gun. [REDACTED] said no guest reported seeing anyone with

a gun; however a hotel guest later identified as [REDACTED] ([REDACTED]) informed him that he had been locked out of his room by his female guest.

[REDACTED] was detained in handcuffs and questioned by Ramirez. The interview was recorded on Ramirez's BWV. [REDACTED] said that a female he recently met locked him out of his hotel room. [REDACTED] advised officers that there were no weapons in the hotel room.

According to [REDACTED] on October 14, 2020 at approximately 2:00 p.m., he was on his way to a Home Depot when he saw Archer. [REDACTED] said he felt bad for Archer because she was barefoot and was in possession of many bags. He asked her if she wanted something to eat but she said no. He asked her if she wanted a shower and she said yes. Archer got into [REDACTED] vehicle and they rented a room at the Best Western Hotel located on Vanowen Street.

At approximately 1:00 a.m. [REDACTED] left the hotel room and drove to a nearby 7-Eleven to get some food while Archer remained in the room. When [REDACTED] returned he could not gain access into the room. After several attempts to unlock the door with his key, he walked to the front lobby and spoke with a hotel employee. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] walked back to the room with [REDACTED] and they tried the key again several times unsuccessfully. They eventually concluded that the reason the door would not open is that the deadbolt had been engaged from inside the room.

As [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were attempting to open the door, Archer called 911 and stated there was a man with a gun banging on her window. She described the individual as a white male that was approximately 51 years of age.

According to Ramirez's body worn camera video (BWV), officers spoke to Archer for approximately seven minutes through the hotel door. During that time, Archer refused to open the door. Archer called the officers, "fucking liars," when they identified themselves as police.

At approximately 1:47 a.m., the officers walked to the front lobby and Steelmon informed [REDACTED] that they were unable to convince Archer to open the door or exit the room. Archer did say that she would leave in the morning. Steelmon advised [REDACTED] to call the police again if he needed further assistance.

At approximately 2:16 a.m., [REDACTED] called 911 and asked that the same officers who had responded to the Best Western earlier come back to assist so they could bypass the lock and open the door. All four officers returned. [REDACTED] told officers that his general manager wanted Archer removed from the room because she was not a registered guest and she was trespassing. The general manager instructed [REDACTED] how to bypass the electronic door lock and said to give that information to the police.

According to Ramirez's BWV, the officers arrived at Room 106 at approximately 2:29 a.m. Ramirez inserted the key but was unable to unlock the door. Steelmon stepped in and was successful at unlocking the door. As Steelmon pushed the door open, it suddenly stopped due to the chain lock. Ramirez tried to unhook the chain lock, but the door suddenly slammed from someone on the inside pushing it closed. [REDACTED] left to get bolt cutters.

According to Steelmon's BWV, at 2:33 a.m., Ramirez unholstered his Taser as Steelmon cut the chain lock with bolt cutters. Archer used her body weight against the inside of the door to keep it from opening all the way. Ramirez told Archer, "We're going to tase you if you try to fight us." Steelmon told Archer, "Listen, open the door now, back up so nobody gets hurt. Do it now!"

Archer responded, "No, cause you're not cops bitch." A few seconds later Archer said, "You're not forcing me to shoot Brennen." A few seconds later, Archer reached around the slightly opened door and pointed a semiautomatic pistol at the officers.

According to Steelmon's BWV, upon seeing the gun, the officers yelled, "Whoa! Fire! Gun! Gun! Gun!" Steelmon appeared to lower his body position and quickly move to his left, while he unsuccessfully attempted to close the room door.

According to Grogan's BWV, Grogan placed both his hands on Steelmon's right side and pushed him out of the path of the gun.

According to Steelmon's BWV, at 2:33 a.m., Steelmon appeared to fire three rounds at Archer's weapon through the partially open door. The rounds perforated the hotel room door. After firing the third round, the hotel door swung open. Steelmon took a position of cover outside of the door and attempted to communicate with Archer. Steelmon ordered Archer to exit the hotel room with her hands up, but she refused to do so. Grogan advised Steelmon that the handgun was inside the entryway of the hotel room on the floor. Steelmon stepped into the room, put his left foot on top of the gun, and moved it behind him into the hallway.



Still photograph from Steelmon's BWC depicting Steelmon preparing to use the bolt cutters to cut the chain lock.



Still photograph from Steelmon's BWC depicting the gun Archer pointed at the officers.



Still photograph from Steelmon's BWC depicting Archer pointing the gun upwards.



Photograph of the door to room 106 that Steelmon fired three shots through.



Photograph of the gun that Archer pointed at the officers.

Steelmon ordered Archer to show her hands several times so he could make entry into the hotel room. Archer refused to comply. At 2:40 a.m., Officers Ortega-Romero entered the hotel room using a ballistics shield as a cover. Ortega-Romero used the steel shield to pin Archer against the bathroom sink. Guenther and Steelmon assisted in handcuffing her.

Archer was treated by Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) paramedics for a gunshot wound to her left wrist. She was ultimately transported to Northridge Hospital and was admitted for the wound.

Archer was charged with four violations of Penal Code section 245(D)(2) commonly known as assault on a peace officer with a semi-automatic weapon and one violation of Penal Code section 29800(A)(1) commonly known as possession of a firearm by a felon in case LA093634. The case was dismissed on April 14, 2022.

LEGAL ANALYSIS

Any peace officer who has reasonable cause to believe that the person to be arrested has committed a public offense may use reasonable force to effect the arrest, to prevent escape or to overcome resistance. Penal Code section 835a.

A peace officer is justified in using deadly force upon another person when the officer reasonably believes, based on the totality of the circumstances, that such force is necessary for

either of the following reasons: (1) to defend against an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury to the officer or to another person; or (2) to apprehend a fleeing person for any felony that threatened or resulted in death or serious bodily injury, if the officer reasonably believes that the person will cause death or serious bodily injury to another unless immediately apprehended. Penal Code section 835a(c)(1)(A) and (B).

A threat of death or serious bodily injury is imminent when, based on the totality of the circumstances, a reasonable officer in the same situation would believe that a person has the present ability, opportunity, and apparent intent to immediately cause death or serious bodily injury to the peace officer or another person. An imminent harm is not merely a fear of future harm, no matter how great the fear and no matter how great the likelihood of the harm, but is one that, from appearances, must be instantly confronted and addressed. Penal Code section 835a(e)(2).

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 deadly 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).

The jury instructions for self-defense say that a person acted in lawful self-defense or defense of another if (1) he reasonably believed that he or someone else was in imminent danger of being killed or suffering great bodily injury and (2) he reasonably believed that the immediate use of deadly force was necessary to defend against that danger. CALCRIM No. 505.

Officer Steelmon and others attempted eject a trespasser out of a hotel room. After the officers had spent several minutes knocking on the door, cutting a chain lock, threatening nonlethal force and trying unsuccessfully to reason with Archer, Archer opened the door and brandished a firearm at them. Steelmon was the closest to the door. Archer's firearm was moving and momentarily was pointed in the direction of Steelmon, who was still trying to get inside the room. The circumstances support a reasonable belief that the use of deadly force was necessary to defend against an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury.

CONCLUSION

We find that Officer Steelmon acted in lawful self-defense and in the defense of others at the time he fired his weapon.