

In-Custody Death of Dominick Alvarado
California Highway Patrol

Officer Isaiah Townsend #22902
Officer Eduardo Quintero #22775
Officer Patrick Stafford #19031

J.S.I.D. File #23-0252



NATHAN J. HOCHMAN

District Attorney

Justice System Integrity Division

June 15, 2026

MEMORANDUM

TO: CHIEF CHRIS MARGARIS
California Highway Patrol
Southern Division – Major Crimes
411 North Central Avenue
Glendale California 91203

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

SUBJECT: In-Custody Death of Dominick Alvarado
J.S.I.D. File #23-0252
C.H.P. File #MCU-209-509-23

DATE: June 15, 2026

The Justice System Integrity Division of the Los Angeles County District Attorney’s Office has completed its review of the July 21, 2023, in-custody death of Dominick Alvarado involving California Highway Patrol (CHP) Officers Isaiah Townsend, Eduardo Quintero, and Patrick Stafford. We conclude the manner of Alvarado’s death was accidental due to the combined effects of cocaine, heart disease, and physical exertion, and the involved officers are not criminally liable for Alvarado’s death.

The following analysis is based on investigative reports and other materials, including witness interviews, video and audio recordings, and the autopsy report submitted to this office by Detective Stephen Kimble of the CHP Major Crimes Unit on May 12, 2025. The officers’ voluntary statements were considered in this analysis.

FACTUAL ANALYSIS

Hit and Run Collisions

On July 21, 2023, at approximately 7:15 am, Dominick Alvarado struck [REDACTED]’ vehicle on the I-405 northbound in Seal Beach and fled the scene. Roughly twenty minutes later, Alvarado struck vehicles driven by [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], respectively, on the I-405 North near the La Cienega boulevard off-ramp.¹ After pulling over, Alvarado ran across all north and southbound lanes of the freeway and climbed an embankment before disappearing out of sight.

Initial Officer Response

Officers Isaiah Townsend and Eduardo Quintero responded, documented the collisions, and began an inventory of Alvarado’s abandoned vehicle. Eventually, Alvarado returned to the

¹ The location of this second collision is approximately 28 miles north of the hit-and-run in Seal Beach.

southbound side of the I-405 and was observed by the officers as he walked into the lanes of traffic, where vehicles were travelling at approximately 60 miles per hour (mph).

Townsend stopped the northbound traffic lanes and crossed to the center median where he attempted to communicate with Alvarado. Alvarado ignored him and ran north on the southbound side of the freeway, away from Townsend.

Quintero drove his vehicle to the southbound lanes of the I-405 and performed a traffic break, stopping all southbound vehicles. He exited his car and approached Alvarado while repeatedly ordering him to move off the freeway to safety. Alvarado ignored his commands and continued to move in Quintero's direction. Quintero drew his department issued Electronic Control Device (ECD) in order to deter Alvarado's continued advance towards his position, but did not activate it.

Use of Force

Quintero and Townsend were eventually able to close the distance between themselves and Alvarado. They each took hold of one of Alvarado's arms. Alvarado attempted to pull away from them while refusing commands to place his hands behind his back. The officers forced Alvarado to the ground, where he continued struggling against their attempts to handcuff him. Townsend placed his knees on Alvarado's hamstrings to control his legs; Quintero applied pressure to Alvarado's back with his hands while attempting to control Alvarado's arms.

Officer Patrick Stafford arrived within minutes of Alvarado being taken to the ground and assisted in overcoming Alvarado's resistance. Townsend was then able to handcuff Alvarado. The officers rolled Alvarado into the recovery position and realized he had become unresponsive.² They began CPR, continuing until relieved by paramedics. Alvarado was transported to Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center where he was pronounced deceased at 9:24 am.

OFFICER STATEMENTS³

Officer Isaiah Townsend

Townsend stated on July 21, 2023, he was on duty, in uniform, and driving a marked patrol vehicle when he responded to a traffic collision on the northbound I-405 near the La Cienega on-ramp. He observed an apparently abandoned silver Ford Fusion and the vehicles driven by [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] on the right shoulder of the I-405 northbound. Both civilians reported being struck by the Fusion's driver, who fled on foot. [REDACTED] provided a cell phone video showing Alvarado climbing an embankment on the west (southbound) side of the freeway.

² "Recovery position" refers to placing a subject on his or her side, with one leg forward to prevent them from falling.

³ All statements made by officers were provided voluntarily and recorded.

After releasing the involved drivers, Townsend and Quintero began an inventory of the Ford Fusion.⁴ They saw Alvarado standing on the southbound shoulder of the freeway. Alvarado walked into the southbound lanes where traffic was moving at approximately 60 mph. Townsend stopped northbound traffic and crossed to the median to communicate with Alvarado, who turned away from him and began to run northbound in the southbound lanes of traffic.

Townsend saw Alvarado approach numerous southbound vehicles, and feared Alvarado might attempt to enter a car or cause collisions between the numerous vehicles which were being forced to maneuver around him. Townsend pursued him on foot heading north. Quintero re-entered his police cruiser and drove to the southbound lanes of the I-405 where he stopped the freeway traffic, exited his vehicle, and began walking south towards Alvarado. Alvarado eventually stopped running when he was between the two officers.

Townsend attempted to de-escalate the situation by using a “conversational tone,” and asking Alvarado to, “Come over here,” and directing him to stop running in traffic. Alvarado ignored him, and resumed running northbound towards Quintero. Quintero displayed his ECD, pointing it in Alvarado’s direction, and told Alvarado to stop or he would deploy it. Alvarado was not deterred. Quintero eventually holstered the ECD without deploying it.

Both officers were able to close the distance and detain Alvarado. Quintero took hold of Alvarado’s left arm and Townsend took hold of his right. Alvarado resisted the officers’ attempts to force his hands behind his back in order to handcuff him. Townsend stated he recognized they would be unable to handcuff Alvarado from their current position, and Alvarado refused to comply with their orders to “get on the ground.” The officers attempted to perform a “leg sweep” several times before successfully forcing Alvarado to the ground, facedown, where he continued resisting. To gain control of Alvarado, Townsend placed both his knees onto Alvarado’s hamstrings.

Quintero called for backup and Stafford arrived. Around this time, Townsend recalled Alvarado saying, “I can’t breathe.” With Stafford’s assistance, the officers were able to bring Alvarado’s arms together, and Townsend applied handcuffs.

Immediately after Alvarado was handcuffed, Townsend directed Alvarado be placed in the recovery position. When Alvarado was rolled onto his side, Townsend saw Alvarado had stopped struggling and had urinated in his pants. Realizing he was unresponsive, officers placed Alvarado onto his back and initiated CPR while Quintero requested an ambulance. CPR was continued by officers until Paramedics arrived and transported Alvarado to UCLA Medical Center where he was pronounced deceased at 9:24 am.

Townsend denied intentionally placing any pressure on Alvarado’s back during his attempts to handcuff Alvarado. Townsend said his actions in detaining Alvarado were guided by his fear for the safety of himself, his partner officers, and Alvarado himself due to the risks presented by Alvarado running in and out of traffic, as well as his fear that Alvarado could overpower the officers and enter traffic again, given his personal knowledge of vehicles frequently driving past

⁴ [REDACTED]

traffic breaks, causing the detention of Alvarado in the lanes of traffic on a busy freeway to pose a danger to the officers as well as Alvarado.

Officer Eduardo Quintero

Quintero stated when he arrived at the scene he assisted Townsend with interviewing the hit-and-run victims before beginning an inventory of Alvarado's abandoned Ford Fusion. Quintero then saw Alvarado on the southbound side of the freeway.

Traffic was moderate to heavy, moving 40 to 50 mph. Quintero observed Alvarado running through lanes, causing multiple near-miss traffic collisions. Alvarado crossed the center divider into northbound lanes, causing additional near-misses, then crossed back into southbound traffic. Quintero returned to his patrol vehicle and drove to the next exit, re-entered the freeway southbound, and performed a traffic break.

Upon stopping his vehicle, Quintero saw vehicles swerving around Alvarado. Quintero approached Alvarado, issuing approximately ten separate commands for Alvarado to move towards Townsend; Alvarado ignored those commands and appeared to be nervous, scanning both sides of the freeway with clenched hands. As Alvarado advanced northbound towards him, Quintero drew his ECD in an attempt to gain Alvarado's compliance but chose not to deploy it and re-holstered the ECD when Alvarado continued coming towards him.

Quintero grabbed Alvarado's left arm as Townsend grabbed the right. Alvarado resisted, and despite repeated commands and their best efforts, the officers were unable to gain control of Alvarado's arms. Both officers attempted several times to bring Alvarado to the ground. Once they succeeded, Alvarado continued to resist; pulling his upper arms close to his sides with his elbows bent.

Quintero stated he tried to force Alvarado's hand behind his back in order for him to be handcuffed but was unable to overcome Alvarado's strength. He acknowledged placing pressure on Alvarado's back, explaining, "Both my hands were trying to push...on his left hand towards the back of his back...at one point I placed my left knee, I believe, in the part in the middle back" because Alvarado attempted to stand.

The officers continued attempting to handcuff Alvarado for an additional three minutes until Stafford arrived, after which they were able to overcome Alvarado's resistance and handcuff him. Quintero stated by this point both he and Townsend were "completely out of breath." Within seconds of being handcuffed Alvarado was placed in the recovery position, but he appeared to be having difficulty breathing, then became unresponsive. Officers turned Alvarado onto his back, initiated CPR, and continued until relieved by the Los Angeles County Fire Department (LACFD) approximately 15 minutes later.

Quintero stated the only category of force used in this interaction was "control holds." No one struck Alvarado with hands, feet or implements. He said he believed a lower level of force would not have been sufficient to detain Alvarado given his resistance, extreme physical strength, and the danger he posed by repeatedly running into freeway traffic.

Officer Patrick Stafford

Stafford was working an overtime detail near the La Tijera on-ramp to the I-405 when he heard the dispatch call requesting assistance. He drove to the scene and observed Quintero and Townsend in the roadway, out of breath, with Alvarado prone but not yet handcuffed. Townsend was kneeling near Alvarado's left hip, holding his thighs; Quintero was kneeling near Alvarado's right side towards his upper shoulder, with both his hands holding Alvarado's forearms.

Stafford knelt near Alvarado's head, took control of his forearms, and directed his fellow officers to handcuff Alvarado. He stated Alvarado was conscious and resisting the officers at the time, attempting to pull free from them. After handcuffing Alvarado, the officers noticed Alvarado had voided his bladder. They placed him in the recovery position and realized he was not breathing.

Stafford immediately rolled Alvarado onto his back, confirmed he was not breathing, and began chest compressions. He observed small exhale-only breaths which he initially believed could indicate Alvarado was regaining consciousness, but Alvarado remained unresponsive, his cheeks were "pinkish, like purple," and he was staring straight ahead and not blinking.

Stafford resumed compressions until relieved by Quintero. CPR continued until the fire department arrived.

Stafford estimated less than one minute passed between his arrival, the successful handcuffing, and placing Alvarado in the recovery position.

OTHER WITNESS STATEMENTS

██████████

██████████ stated on Friday, July 21, 2023, at approximately 7:15 am, he was driving northbound on the I-405 just prior to the I-605 overpass when a silver Ford sedan with license plate ██████████ sideswiped his vehicle and continued on without stopping. The driver seemed either unable to drive straight, or was intentionally attempting to sideswipe other vehicles. Adams called 9-1-1 to report the incident.



Figure 1: Dash Cam Footage of Alvarado's Vehicle (Circled) Sideswiping [REDACTED] Car



Figure 2: Alvarado's Vehicle (Silver) Crossing Into Another Lane and Narrowly Avoiding a Second Collision

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] stated while she was driving her vehicle northbound on the I-405 near La Cienega, she was struck on the left side of her vehicle by a silver Ford Fusion. She pulled her vehicle over to the right shoulder and parked.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] stated she was driving her vehicle on the I-405 northbound near La Cienega, and felt an impact to the right rear of her vehicle. She immediately pulled over on the right shoulder. Alvarado pulled his vehicle to the right shoulder and stopped behind her. He then exited his car and ran towards her vehicle. [REDACTED] was in fear of this apparent aggression and drove forward on the shoulder until Alvarado stopped his pursuit and ran across the freeway. [REDACTED] then recorded Alvarado with her cell phone as he fled up an embankment on the southbound side of the freeway.



Figure 3: Still Shot From Video File - Alvarado Fleeing Up the Embankment

██████████ stated his home faces the freeway where Alvarado was detained. He observed a person on the ground with officers performing chest compressions on them. ██████████ stated officers on the scene took turns performing chest compressions and continuously performed compressions until the LACFD and paramedics arrived on the scene. ██████████ provided a cell phone video of the portion of the incident he observed.



Figure 4: Still shot of Officers Performing CPR on Alvarado

CORONER'S EXAMINATION

Los Angeles County Deputy Medical Examiner Kevin Young, M.D. conducted a post-mortem examination of Alvarado's remains on August 10, 2023.

Notable observations from the autopsy included the following: no conjunctival petechia were observed, no physical evidence an electroshock weapon had been used was present, no sign of trauma to Alvarado's throat or back was observed, and the hyoid bone and larynx were intact

without fractures.⁵ The only evidence of trauma Dr. Young observed were abrasions on Alvarado's extremities.

Dr. Young noted Alvarado had "severe coronary artery disease" with blockages, including 80-85% in his proximal left anterior descending artery, and 90% in his proximal diagonal branch.

Additionally, Alvarado had cocaine in his system at the time of his death.

Dr. Young determined the cause of death to be "the combined effects of cocaine, coronary artery disease, and exertion during law enforcement restraint," and deemed the manner of death accidental.

AUDIO/VIDEO

None of the officers involved were issued body worn cameras. Townsend was the only officer who had a functioning Mobile Video/Audio Recording System in his vehicle. His vehicle was not positioned in a way which captured images of Alvarado in lanes of traffic or the subsequent use of force. However, the audio portion, relayed from a microphone on Townsend's uniform, recorded most of the engagement including audio from all the officers present.

The audio recording largely corroborates the officers' statements. Quintero and Townsend issue repeated commands to, "Stop!" "Move to safety," and "Stop resisting!" Alvarado is heard saying, "Help me," to which Quintero responds, "We're trying to help you!" and "Go over there with him" three times, consistent with his statement he was ordering Alvarado to move towards Townsend. Alvarado was non-responsive to the officers throughout this incident, ignoring their commands, and the officers can be heard struggling after they make contact with Alvarado.⁶

PRIOR REPORT

Kimble located a prior report involving subject Alvarado where he similarly ran into traffic, ignored officers' commands, displayed extreme resistance, and required multiple officers and a Taser deployment to restrain him. One officer noted during their attempt to detain Alvarado, he (Alvarado) had "near super-human strength" and broke free of the officers' grasp several times during their encounter.⁷

LEGAL ANALYSIS

A peace officer may use objectively reasonable force to effect the arrest, to prevent escape, or to overcome resistance. Penal Code section 835a(b). The decision by a peace officer to use force "shall be evaluated from the perspective of a reasonable officer in the same situation, based on the totality of the circumstances known to or perceived by the officer at the time, rather than with the benefit of hindsight, and the totality of the circumstances shall account for occasions when

⁵ Conjunctival petechia are "pinpoint-sized spots of bleeding under the skin or mucous membranes" and are present in 78% of the victims of...asphyxiation. The forensic significance of conjunctival petechiae. Am J Forensic Med Pathol. 1988 Mar; 9(1):32-4.

⁶ During the entire three minute and 20 second encounter, officers issued roughly 93 commands to, "Stop!" "Stop resisting!" or for Alvarado to turn onto his stomach.

⁷ Beaumont Police Department DR#1907B-2488, incident date July 21, 2019.

officers may be forced to make quick judgements about using force.” Penal Code section 835a(a)(4).

An act causes death if the death is the direct, natural, and probable consequence of the act and the death would not have happened without the act. CALCRIM No. 582.

Application

The officers lawfully detained Alvarado with probable cause to believe he was a danger to himself or others after colliding with several cars and fleeing the scene without exchanging information in violation of California Vehicle Code §20002 and witnessing him crossing into and out of multiple lanes of traffic on a busy freeway.

There is no evidence officers used unreasonable force against Alvarado. After Alvarado refused officers’ numerous commands to stop running in traffic, the officers attempted to detain him by handcuffing him while he was in a standing position. Due to Alvarado’s resistance, they were unsuccessful. They then forced him to the ground in order to gain sufficient leverage to handcuff him. Alvarado continued to resist their efforts, and eventually a third officer was required to overcome Alvarado’s strength and successfully force his hands behind his back and handcuff him. Alvarado was rolled into the recovery position within seconds of being handcuffed, and the officers commenced life-saving efforts as soon as they became aware Alvarado was in respiratory distress.

The force used during this incident consisted entirely of control holds, the minimum amount of force necessary to safely control Alvarado. The officers had a duty to detain Alvarado, both to conduct an investigation into the VC §20002 violations and for Alvarado’s safety until he could be evaluated by medical professionals. The minimal amount of force used against Alvarado was therefore reasonable.

Furthermore, there is no evidence the officers’ actions caused Alvarado’s death. Rather, all available evidence indicates Alvarado died of cardiac arrest as a result of running from police, after having ingested drugs, while he had substantial blockages in his arteries. The autopsy findings do not support attributing criminal liability for Alvarado’s death to the involved officers.

CONCLUSION

Based on the foregoing, we find the officers did not cause Alvarado’s death and any force used by them was reasonable based upon the totality of the circumstances.