

**Fatal Officer Involved Shooting of Mauricio Sandoval
California Highway Patrol**

**Officer Jeff Bell, #19261
Officer Robin Hienz, #17287**

J.S.I.D. File #24-0098



NATHAN J. HOCHMAN

District Attorney

Justice System Integrity Division

January 14, 2026

MEMORANDUM

TO: CAPTAIN ARTURO R. SPENCER
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FROM: JUSTICE SYSTEM INTEGRITY DIVISION
Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office

SUBJECT: Fatal Officer Involved Shooting of Mauricio Sandoval
J.S.I.D. File # 24-0098
L.A.S.D. File # 024-00025-3199-013

DATE: January 14, 2026

The Justice System Integrity Division of the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office has completed its review of the April 5, 2024, fatal shooting of Mauricio Sandoval by California Highway Patrol (CHP) Officers Jeff Bell and Robin Hines.

We have concluded the officers acted reasonably believing, based on the totality of the circumstances, that deadly force was necessary to defend themselves and others against an imminent deadly threat.

The District Attorney's Command Center was notified of the shooting at 7:06 p.m. on April 5, 2024. The District Attorney Response Team responded and was given a walk-through of the scene by LASD Homicide Lieutenant Patricia Thomas.

The following analysis is based on surveillance video, investigative reports, audio recordings of witness interviews, voluntary recorded statements of witness and shooting officers, medical records, and photographs submitted to this office on May 15, 2025.

FACTUAL ANALYSIS

On April 5, 2024, CHP's Southern Division Organized Retail Task Force (Task Force) and loss prevention officers (LPOs) from Nordstrom department store initiated a joint operation to combat retail theft at the Cerritos Mall. LPOs monitored surveillance cameras positioned within the store, and shared their observations with Task Force officers located in the parking lot

outside of the store. Task Force officers were not equipped with body worn cameras during the subject operation.

At approximately 3:21 p.m., LPOs observed █████ enter the store with his uncle, Mauricio Sandoval, and Sandoval's girlfriend, █████. LPOs monitored the suspects as they walked around the store, and observed them engaging in suspicious activity consistent with preparing to shoplift. █████ left the store and returned to the vehicle they had arrived in, which was located in the parking lot. Sandoval then walked to the north exit of the store and held the doors open.¹ █████, carrying numerous items of clothing draped over his shoulder, walked to a jewelry counter and asked an employee to place a gold bracelet on his wrist. Without paying for the bracelet or clothing, █████ then ran from the counter through the exit door Sandoval was holding open.

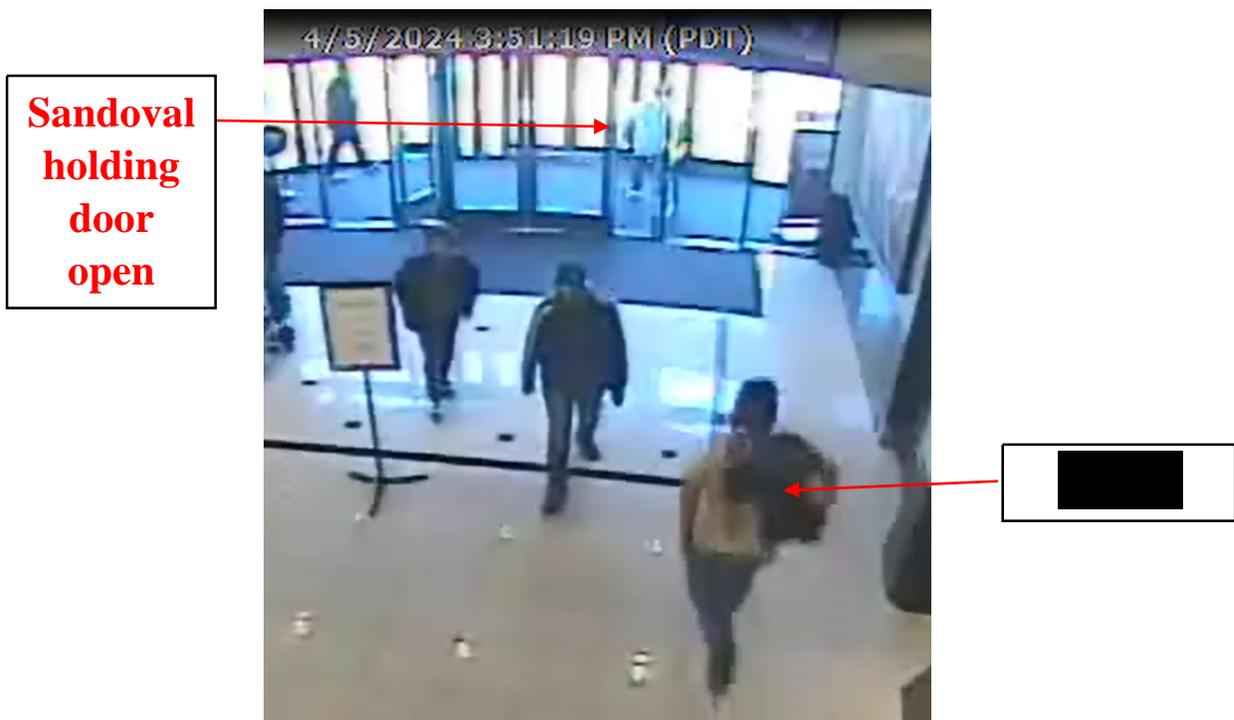


Fig. 1: Photo Still from Surveillance Camera Showing █████ Running Towards Store Exit While Sandoval Holds Door Open.

█████ ran into the adjacent parking lot and entered the vehicle █████ was waiting in. █████ and █████ fled the location and were subsequently arrested by CHP officers, who recovered the stolen bracelet and clothing. █████ later told officers he, Sandoval, and █████ had gone to the mall to shoplift.²

¹ These doors led to the exterior parking lot adjacent to Nordstrom.

² █████ was subsequently charged in case 24BFCF00239 with two felony counts of Grand Theft and Two Felony Counts of Commercial Burglary. On March 13, 2025, █████ plead no contest to one felony count of Grand Theft and was sentenced to 16 months in the State Prison.

When [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] fled the mall, they left Sandoval behind in the parking lot adjacent to Nordstrom. Several Task Force officers, including Jeff Bell and Robin Hines, chased Sandoval on foot through the parking lot. Bell and Hines were wearing tactical vests which identified them as police officers. Sandoval ran around parked cars and ignored officers' repeated orders to stop. Numerous civilians were walking and driving through the parking lot during this foot pursuit.

Sandoval



Fig. 2: Officers Chasing Sandoval in Parking Lot Prior to Shooting.

Bell caught up to Sandoval, who was standing approximately five feet away on the opposite side of a parked vehicle. Sandoval turned towards Bell, pointed a handgun towards Bell's chest or head, and fired a single shot at Bell. Just prior to Sandoval firing, Bell dropped to his knees to avoid being hit.



Fig. 3: Photo Still from Security Camera Showing Sandoval in Shooting Stance Firing at Bell.

After firing at Bell, Sandoval ran in a westward direction back towards the mall. Bell, Hines, and CHP Officer Andrew Santelices continued pursuing Sandoval. When Bell regained visual contact of Sandoval, he ordered Sandoval to, “Drop the gun! Drop the gun!” Sandoval refused to drop the gun. Instead, Sandoval extended his right arm outwards and pointed his gun in the direction of Bell, Santelices, and Hines. In response, Bell and Hines fired their service weapons at Sandoval, striking him four times.



Fig. 4: Sandoval Raising Gun Towards Officers Moments Before Officers Fired Their Weapons.

CIVILIAN WITNESSES

■.

On April 5, 2024, ■. was employed as a Senior Investigator for Nordstrom, and was working alongside Task Force officers. ■. and other Nordstrom LPO officers were in the store’s asset protection office surveilling the movements of ■., Sandoval, and ■. as they walked within the store. ■. observed ■. at a jewelry counter trying on a gold bracelet and looking to his left in the direction of Sandoval, who was holding a door open. Upon seeing this, ■. radioed undercover Task Force officers to prepare them for an arrest in case ■. attempted to steal the bracelet. Another employee told ■. that ■. had run out through the exit door without paying for the bracelet. ■. ran from the asset protection office and attempted to arrest ■. outside the store. When ■. entered the parking lot, ■. stopped chasing ■. per Nordstrom policy. ■. saw Sandoval casually walking away from the scene. Soon after, Task Force officers arrived and contacted Sandoval in the parking lot. They gave unknown commands to Sandoval, and Sandoval ran away. Moments later, ■. heard a single gunshot followed by a rapid volley of shots. ■. did not observe Sandoval or the officers firing their weapons

On April 5, 2024, [REDACTED] was employed as a Senior Investigator for Nordstrom, and was working alongside LPOs and Task Force officers. At approximately 3:50 p.m., [REDACTED] observed [REDACTED] at the store's jewelry counter asking an associate to view a bracelet. At the same time, [REDACTED] observed Sandoval walk to the store exits and hold one of the doors open. [REDACTED] saw [REDACTED] run towards the store exits as soon as the bracelet was fastened to his wrist. [REDACTED] ran to the exits but was unable to detain [REDACTED], who fled into the parking lot. [REDACTED] kept his focus on Sandoval, who stopped running and began to walk into the parking lot.

Task Force officers attempted to speak to Sandoval, but Sandoval ran from them. Officers pursued Sandoval on foot through the parking lot. During this pursuit, [REDACTED] saw Sandoval raise his arms to eye level as if he were aiming a firearm, and then heard a single gunshot. [REDACTED] did not specify in which direction Sandoval was aiming his gun, or whether Sandoval was aiming it towards any person. Seconds later, [REDACTED] heard another gunshot. Three to five seconds after the second gunshot, [REDACTED] heard a volley of shots. [REDACTED] saw Sandoval pace back and forth and then collapse to the ground.

The investigator questioning [REDACTED] did not specifically ask [REDACTED] if he had observed the officers shoot Sandoval. [REDACTED] suggested he had only heard the shooting and did not see it.

WITNESS OFFICERS

Officer Andrew Santelices

On April 5, 2024, Santelices was assigned as a K-9 officer with the Task Force at the Cerritos Mall. Santelices was wearing a blue CHP uniform consisting of an external ballistic vest indicating on the front and back that he was a CHP K-9 officer, as well as having standard blue and yellow CHP patches and a badge affixed to it.

Prior to the shooting, Santelices heard radio traffic indicating a suspect had stolen merchandise from Nordstrom and was running out of the store. Santelices then observed Bell chasing Sandoval on foot in the parking lot. Santelices yelled at Sandoval, "Police, get down! Police, stop!" Sandoval ignored these commands and continued fleeing from officers, weaving in between parked cars. Santelices pulled out and activated his Taser and, while still pursuing Sandoval, yelled, "Taser, Taser, Taser!"³ Sandoval turned around and pointed a silver gun at Santelices. Santelices heard a shot fired near him and saw Bell falling to the ground. Santelices believed Bell had been shot. Bell, however, stood up and said he was unharmed. Santelices then transitioned from his Taser to his handgun and began chasing Sandoval westbound through the parking lot. Sandoval raised his arm holding the gun in a shooting stance while pointing it in Hines' direction. Santelices heard numerous shots fired and saw Sandoval fall to the ground. Several officers approached Sandoval and recovered the weapon lying on the ground to Sandoval's left. Officers handcuffed Sandoval and began providing him with life-saving measures.

³ Santelices did not fire his Taser.

SHOOTER DEPUTY STATEMENTS

Officer Jeff Bell

On April 5, 2024, Bell was assigned as a member of the Task Force at the Cerritos Mall and was wearing a blue tactical vest with yellow lettering identifying him as a police officer. While positioned in the parking lot adjacent to Nordstrom, Bell heard radio traffic from other officers saying two males who appeared to be working together were engaged in suspicious activity inside Nordstrom. LPO officers sent Bell and other Task Force officers a surveillance photo of the suspects and indicated the heavier suspect, later identified as Sandoval, had been acting as a look out for the other suspect near Nordstrom's exit. Bell then received a radio report indicating both suspects shown in the photo were running out of Nordstrom after a suspected theft.

Bell moved towards the Nordstrom exit and saw [REDACTED] running out of the store while carrying merchandise. Bell then observed Sandoval walking directly in front of him. Bell recognized both [REDACTED] and Sandoval as the individuals depicted in the surveillance photo he had received from LPOs. Bell ordered Sandoval, "Police! Stop right there!" Sandoval ran. Bell and Santelices chased Sandoval through the parking lot while Bell continuously ordered Sandoval to, "Stop! Stop! Stop!" Sandoval continued running, ignoring Bell's orders.

At one point during the chase, Sandoval attempted to hide behind a parked SUV. As Bell approached the vehicle, Sandoval turned towards Bell, pointed a handgun at Bell's head or chest area, and fired a round. Bell estimated Sandoval fired at him from a distance of approximately five feet. Bell dropped down to the ground to avoid being hit by the round. Sandoval fled.

Santelices and Bell continued to pursue Sandoval, and were soon joined by Officer Hines. The three officers took cover behind parked cars. Bell spotted Sandoval, who was still carrying his handgun. Bell told Sandoval, "Drop the gun! Drop the gun!" Sandoval responded by raising the gun to eye level and pointing it in the direction of Bell, Santelices, and Hines. Fearing for his and his partner officers' safety, Bell fired his service weapon. Bell ceased firing when Sandoval fell to the ground.

Officer Robin Hines

On April 5, 2024, Hines was assigned as member of the Task Force at Cerritos Mall and was wearing a black vest identifying him as a police officer.⁴ LPOs sent Hines and other officers a photo of [REDACTED], Sandoval, and [REDACTED], identifying them as being engaged in suspicious behavior inside Nordstrom.⁵ LPOs told Hines Garcia had been standing near a counter looking at jewelry, while Sandoval was standing at an exit acting as a lookout. Hines monitored this radio traffic from within an unmarked vehicle in the parking lot outside Nordstrom. When Hines heard a theft had taken place, he drove towards the store where the suspects were seen exiting. Hines saw Bell and Santelices chasing Sandoval, who was weaving between parked cars in the parking lot.

⁴ There was a gold CHP badge affixed to the front of the vest, and the word "Police" affixed to the front and back.

⁵ The photo of the three suspects was a still from a surveillance video camera inside Nordstrom.

Hines momentarily lost visual contact with Sandoval. While still in his vehicle, he heard a single gunshot which appeared to come from a small caliber firearm. Hines emerged from his vehicle and asked Santelices and Officer Jeff Ing if they knew where Sandoval was and “if he was shooting.” Hines told investigators either Ing or Santelices, he couldn’t remember which one, told him “he [is] shooting at us.”

Hines and the other officers continued to move towards the area of the parking lot where Sandoval was located. Hines spotted Sandoval, who was looking to his left and right “as if he’s trying to figure out where he’s going to go next.” Hines began yelling at Sandoval, “Police! Hands up!” Within seconds, Sandoval turned towards Hines. Sandoval’s right arm began to move up the side of his body to the height of his armpit. Hines then observed a firearm in Sandoval’s hand. Hines fired his service weapon at Sandoval. Hines told investigators he fired because he believed Sandoval was raising the firearm to shoot him, just as he had shot at other officers moments earlier. Hines further stated he fired at Sandoval because he was in fear for the safety of himself, his fellow officers, and several members of the public who were in the area. Hines stopped firing when he saw Sandoval fall to the ground. The firearm Sandoval had been carrying fell to the ground within arm’s reach of Sandoval’s left arm after Sandoval was struck by gunfire.

The Shooting

When Sandoval began to raise his gun in the direction of the officers, Bell and Hines fired a total of 13 rounds from their service weapons.⁶ Sandoval fell to the ground in the parking lot, with his gun landing next to his body. Officers then rendered emergency medical aid to Sandoval until the arrival of Los Angeles County Fire Department personnel. Sandoval was transported by ambulance to Long Beach Medical Center, where he was pronounced deceased at 4:32 p.m.

Sandoval’s Firearm

After the officer involved shooting, officers recovered a .22 caliber Jennings semi-automatic pistol from the ground immediately adjacent to Sandoval. At the time officers recovered the firearm, there was one live round in the chamber and five live rounds in the magazine.



Fig. 5: *Handgun Sandoval Used to Fire at Bell.*

⁶ Investigators did not provide a measurement of the distance between the officers and Sandoval at the time of the shooting.

Firearms Evidence

Both Bell and Hines were armed with Smith & Wesson .40 caliber semi-automatic service weapons. Fourteen fired cartridge casings were recovered at scene. These casings consisted of 13 casings head stamped “Federal 40 S&W,” consistent with having been fired from Bell and Heinz’s service weapons, and a single casing head stamped “REM,” consistent with having been fired by Sandoval.⁷

The round counts showing a combined total of 13 total rounds having been fired by Bell and Hines is consistent with the 13 spent Smith and Wesson cartridge casings recovered at the scene.

Autopsy

On April 9, 2024, Deputy Medical Examiner Dr. Grant Ho performed a post-mortem examination of Sandoval’s remains and determined he died from a gunshot wound to the chest. There were four gunshot wounds in total, with three to the torso and one to the upper extremity.

A toxicology analysis was performed and revealed Sandoval had the presence of methamphetamine in his bloodstream at the time of his death.

LEGAL ANALYSIS

The Law

A peace officer is justified in using deadly force 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 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) &(B).

Deadly force shall be used “only, when necessary, in defense of human life,” and officers “shall use other available resources and techniques if reasonably safe and feasible to an objectively reasonable officer.” Penal Code section 835a(a)(2).

“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).

⁷ The reports did not specify where in relation to the shooting of Bell this spent casing was recovered.

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, are 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).

Analysis

After participating in a commercial burglary, Sandoval attempted to flee by running through a busy mall parking lot. As officers chased Sandoval, he ignored their orders to stop. During the chase, Sandoval produced a handgun and fired one round at Bell. At the time of this pursuit, Bell was wearing clothing which clearly identified him as a police officer.

Moments later, Sandoval raised his firearm again, this time pointing in the direction of Bell, Hines, and Santiceles, who were taking cover behind parked cars. Sandoval did not comply with officers' orders to drop the weapon.

Sandoval was threatening officers with lethal force, had only moments earlier used his firearm to assault Santelices, and had fired his weapon at Bell at close range. The officers did not have sufficient time to consider less-lethal options, and reasonably believed the use of deadly force was necessary to defend against an imminent threat of death or great bodily injury to themselves, other officers, and mall patrons who were present at the location.

CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, we find Bell and Hines acted lawfully in self-defense and the defense of others when they fired their service weapons.