

**Fatal Officer Involved Shooting of Meyvic Arreola Jr.
Los Angeles Police Department**

Officer Jose Cuadra, #39963

J.S.I.D. File #23-0254



NATHAN J. HOCHMAN

District Attorney

Justice System Integrity Division

February 14, 2025

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: Fatal Officer Involved Shooting of Meyvic Arreola Jr.
J.S.I.D. File #23-0254
L.A.P.D. File #F032-23

DATE: February 14, 2025

The Justice System Integrity Division of the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office (LADA) has completed its review of the July 25, 2023, fatal shooting of Meyvic Arreola Jr. by Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) Officer Jose Cuadra. We have concluded that Officer Cuadra reasonably believed his use of deadly force was necessary to defend another against an imminent deadly threat.

The District Attorney's Command Center was notified of this shooting on July 25, 2023, at approximately 12:40 p.m. The District Attorney Response Team responded to the location. They were given a briefing and walk-through of the scene by LAPD Force Investigation Division (FID) Lieutenant Anthony Ljubetic.

The following analysis is based on body worn camera video (BWV), digital in-car video (DICV), cell phone video, investigative reports, transcripts of witness interviews, autopsy and toxicology reports submitted to this office by LAPD FID on July 22, 2024. Any compelled statement of Officer Cuadra was not considered in this analysis.

INTRODUCTION

On July 25, 2023, West Valley Patrol Division Officers Jose Cuadra and his partner, James Jolicoeur, responded Code 3 to an "ambulance cutting" emergency call for an assault with a knife occurring at a strip mall in Reseda.¹

¹ Code Three is an emergency response with lights and siren.

The officers arrived on scene, exited their patrol SUV, ran a short distance, and immediately engaged with Arreola. [REDACTED] lay bleeding on the strip mall walkway with Arreola behind him. Arreola was armed with a utility knife. Arreola ignored officers' commands to drop the knife and stabbed [REDACTED] in the back of the head. Cuadra fired two rounds from his service weapon. The second round struck Arreola in the forehead. Arreola was pronounced dead at the scene by paramedics at 11:33 a.m.

FACTUAL ANALYSIS

Cuadra and Jolicoeur were in a standard marked LAPD black and white Ford Explorer patrol vehicle. Cuadra was driving and Jolicoeur rode in the front passenger seat. Both officers were dressed in standard short-sleeve LAPD patrol uniforms. Cuadra and Jolicoeur were assigned the emergency call at approximately 11:11 a.m., and arrived on scene at approximately 11:15 a.m.

BWV, DICV, AND CELL PHONE VIDEO SYNOPSIS

As the officers arrive, Arreola and [REDACTED] are located on the walkway between the front of a parked white Prius and the storefronts near the center of the strip mall. [REDACTED] lies face down on the walkway and is wailing. Bloody wounds are visible on [REDACTED]'s torso and legs.

Cuadra parks their SUV ten to 15 feet behind the rear of the Prius. Arreola stands slightly crouched behind [REDACTED]. Arreola holds the utility knife at his waist in his left hand. Jolicoeur runs next to the rear passenger door of the Prius with a 40mm Less-Lethal Launcher (40mm LLL) and aims it at Arreola as he commands, "Hey! Hey! Get away from him right now." Jolicoeur stops and commands, "Drop the knife! Drop the knife!" Simultaneously Arreola kneels down over [REDACTED] and puts the utility knife to [REDACTED]'s head. Jolicoeur immediately fires the 40mm LLL, but misses Arreola. Jolicoeur reloads and continues to command, "Drop the knife!"

Cuadra reaches the driver's side mirror of the Prius, just after Jolicoeur fires the 40mm LLL, and aims his service weapon at Arreola who is leaning towards [REDACTED]'s head. Cuadra commands, "Get off!" Arreola puts the utility knife to his own throat and directs his attention to Cuadra. Cuadra commands "Drop it! Drop it! Drop the knife! Drop it now!"

Arreola calmly responds, "I ain't dropping it." Cuadra commands, "Drop it! Get away from him now!" Jolicoeur radios, "[O]fficer needs help." Cuadra commands, "Get away from him now! Stop! Stop!" The officers continue to command Arreola to drop the knife and to let [REDACTED] go.

Cuadra commands, "Listen to me!" Arreola responds, "Why?" and places the utility knife to [REDACTED]'s head. Cuadra commands, "Stop! What's your name? Hey!" Arreola looks towards Cuadra, puts the utility knife to [REDACTED]'s head, and says, "If you do it, I'm gonna—" Jolicoeur shoots a second 40mm sponge projectile at Arreola. The sponge projectile misses Arreola and strikes [REDACTED] on his left torso. [REDACTED]'s wails increase in intensity.

Arreola looks toward Jolicoeur who commands, “Drop the knife, now!” Jolicoeur takes a step back and splits open the 40mm LLL to reload. Arreola stands up, crouches with his right hand on ██████’s upper back, and again puts the utility knife to his own throat. Cuadra commands, “That’s enough!” With the utility knife still at his own throat, Arreola looks back at Cuadra, kneels down on his right knee, and turns his head down towards ██████. Cuadra begins to command, “Let him—”

Arreola quickly thrusts the utility knife into the back of ██████’s head and pulls it out. Cuadra fires two rounds from his Glock 22. The first round grazes Arreola’s right shoulder and impacts the wall behind him. The second round strikes Arreola in the right forehead. Arreola collapses on top of ██████



Figure 1 – Screenshot from Jolicoeur’s BWV shows Cuadra aim his Glock 22 at Arreola as Arreola uses his left hand to thrust the utility knife towards the back of ██████’s head. Jolicoeur holds a third 40mm sponge round as he inserts it into the open barrel of the 40mm Less-Lethal Launcher.

PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Cuadra carried a .40 S&W caliber Glock 22 semiautomatic pistol loaded with 15 rounds in the magazine and one round in the chamber. Cuadra fired the two rounds in less than a second from approximately 11 feet away. The first round grazed Arreola’s right shoulder. The second round struck Arreola through the right temple and was removed from the back of Arreola’s head by the Medical Examiner during autopsy.

Arreola was armed with a red Husky brand utility knife. The utility knife was seized from the sidewalk with the tip of the attached razor blade broken off.



Figure 2 – LAPD picture shows Arreola’s utility knife, with the tip of razor blade broken off, covered in blood on the sidewalk.

VICTIM [REDACTED]

Stabbing victim [REDACTED] was transported to the hospital and treated for over 10 stab wounds of the scalp, left cheek, left shoulder, left arm, left flank, and both hands. A triangular shaped piece of the utility knife’s razor blade that broke off during Arreola’s attack was removed from a wound to the back of [REDACTED]’s head at the hospital.



Figure 3 – Cropped screengrab from witness cell phone video shows Arreola thrust his utility knife into the back of [REDACTED]’s head.

AUTOPSY

On July 27, 2023, Los Angeles County Deputy Medical Examiner Dr. Vadims Poukens performed Arreola’s autopsy. Arreola was struck by a single round that entered his right temple

and came to rest in the back of his head. Toxicology results confirmed the presence of amphetamine and methamphetamine in Arreola's blood at the time of his death. Dr. Poukens attributed Arreola's cause of death to a "gunshot wound of head."

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 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) & (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, are taken into consideration. Penal Code section 835a(a)(4) & (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). Moreover, "[a] peace officer who makes or attempts to make an arrest need not retreat, or desist from their efforts by reason of the resistance or threatened resistance of the person being arrested." Penal Code section 835a(d).

LEGAL ANALYSIS

The evidence supports a reasonable belief by Cuadra that deadly force was necessary to defend ██████████ against an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury.

Cuadra was wearing an LAPD uniform and aimed his Glock 22 from approximately 11 feet away in full view of Arreola. ██████████ was visibly injured and bloody, indicating ██████████ had already been stabbed and needed immediate medical attention. Arreola alternated placing the utility knife to ██████████'s head and to his own throat. Arreola ignored commands from both officers to drop the knife and move away from ██████████. Jolicoeur fired two less lethal 40mm sponge projectiles, but both missed Arreola. Arreola still did not drop the utility knife even after the attempted use of the 40mm LLL. Instead, Arreola thrust the utility knife into the back of ██████████'s head. Cuadra fired two rounds from his Glock 22 in succession immediately after Arreola stabbed ██████████ in the back of the head.

Under the totality of these facts, it was reasonable for Cuadra to believe Arreola had the present ability, opportunity, and apparent intent to immediately cause [REDACTED] death or serious bodily injury. Officer Cuadra reasonably responded with deadly force.

CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, we find that Officer Cuadra reasonably believed his use of deadly force was necessary to defend against an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury to another.