

**Non-Fatal Officer Involved Shooting of  
Stephanie Anne Lopez  
California Highway Patrol**

**Officer Matthew Erickson, #22626  
Officer Ryan Parrish, #21955**

**J.S.I.D. File #21-0352**



**GEORGE GASCÓN**

**District Attorney**

**Justice System Integrity Division**

**April 16, 2024**

## **MEMORANDUM**

TO: CAPTAIN JEFF LOFTIN  
California Highway Patrol  
Southern Division  
Investigative Services Unit  
437 South Vermont Avenue  
Los Angeles, California 90004

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

SUBJECT: Non-Fatal Officer Involved Shooting of Stephanie Anne Lopez  
J.S.I.D. File #21-0352  
CHP File MCU-204-509-21

DATE: April 16, 2024

The Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office Justice System Integrity Division has completed its review of the August 28, 2021, non-fatal shooting of Stephanie Anne Lopez by California Highway Patrol Officers Matthew Erickson and Ryan Parrish. We have concluded that the shooting was not unlawful.

The District Attorney's Command Center was not notified of this shooting. Consequently, the District Attorney's Response Team did not respond to the scene.

The following factual analysis is based on California Highway Patrol communications recordings, evidence collected, interviews of witnesses and reports submitted January 23, 2024, by the California Highway Patrol Major Crimes Unit. Both officers provided voluntary statements to investigators. No compelled statements were reviewed as part of this analysis.

### **FACTUAL ANALYSIS**

The officer involved shooting took place on transition ramp from the south bound State Highway Route 2 (SR2) to the eastbound State Highway Route 134 (SR134). Except where otherwise stated, the following factual analysis is based exclusively on the audio recordings of the California Highway Patrol (CHP) communications frequencies, the transcripts of the Mobile Display Terminal (MDT) communications by CHP personnel and the photographs taken at the scene immediately after the incident.

## **The Shooting**

On Saturday morning, August 28, 2021, officers Matthew Erickson and Ryan Parrish were traveling west on Interstate 210 near SR2. According to the officers, Officer Erickson was driving, and Officer Parrish was in the right front passenger seat.

At approximately 9:12 a.m. officers Erickson and Parrish were dispatched to the junction of SR134 and SR2 to handle an “active 31 party” with firearms in the trunk of their car (code 31 is code for “attempt suicide” and is commonly used to describe any incident involving the threat of suicide whether or not there has been a completed attempt).

The officers stated that in response, the overhead lights and sirens were activated, and they transitioned onto the southbound SR2. The SR2/SR134 junction is 4.9 miles south of the I210/SR2 junction.

While the officers were traveling south on SR2, multiple callers to 9-1-1 were reporting a woman with a rifle at the junction of SR2 and SR134. As they were enroute, the officers received updates by radio broadcast and on their MDT. At 9:16 a.m. radio dispatch advised that the subject was brandishing a rifle. At the same time, the officers’ MDT displayed “[8] VEH IS EB 134 JEO 2 ON RS - WHI HOND XRAY OUT OF HER CAR W/TRUNK OPEN HOLDING A RIFLE” and “SHE ADVD HER GUNS AREN’T LOADED.”

Officer Parrish armed himself with his department-issued AR-15 rifle and placed a round in its firing chamber.

At 9:16 a.m. and 20 seconds an unidentified officer broadcast that the subject (Ms. Lopez) was on the right shoulder [of the southbound SR2 to eastbound SR134 transition overpass) and that they were “enroute.”

According to the video captured by their patrol car Mobile Video Audio Recording System (MVARs), when Officers Parrish and Erickson arrived at the overpass Ms. Lopez was at the front of her car. She threw into the air what later was determined to be multiple \$100 bills and walked toward the officers with a rifle in each arm. As she approached their patrol unit, both officers shouted at her to drop the guns. Both officers fired at her when she continued to walk toward them holding both rifles. During a pause in the gunfire, she leaned over the guardrail and fell to the roadway below. Before falling she discarded one of the rifles on the shoulder of the overpass. She retained the other rifle in her possession as she fell.

At 9:16 a.m. and 58 seconds Officer Parrish broadcast “Shots fired! Shots fired!” Eighteen seconds later, Officer Erickson broadcast that Ms. Lopez had fallen into the westbound lanes of SR134 (below the transition overpass).

(Note: The times used are from the CHP communications logs. There is a discrepancy of approximately 75 seconds between the time as recorded by the communications log and the images captured from the officers’ MVARs.

## **Statements of Officers**

Officers Erickson and Parrish each provided voluntary statements in separate interviews.

Officer Parrish stated that when they arrived at the location, Ms. Lopez's car was parked adjacent to the overpass bridge rail partially obstructing the number two traffic lane. The trunk was open.

Officer Parrish saw Ms. Lopez standing next to her car on the driver's side, with a rifle in each hand. He commanded that she drop the rifles. Instead, using her right hand she threw what looked like cash into the air, placed her right hand back on the rifle and walked toward the officers. Officer Parrish did not describe, and the MVARs recording is not clear enough to discern, how she held the rifle on her right as she did this.

Officer Parrish opened his door and commanded her to "Stop moving. Drop the gun. Drop the gun. Drop the gun." She kept moving and started to bring up her arms. As he exited his car, he fired two or three shots at her. A car passed by between the officers and Ms. Lopez, so he paused shooting. He then fired two more shots and went to the back of the patrol car, where he reloaded his rifle. When he looked back to where Ms. Lopez had been, she was not there, but a rifle was lying in the shoulder area. He asked Officer Erickson where she went. Officer Erickson told him "She went over."

Officer Erickson stated that when they first observed Ms. Lopez, she was standing in front of her car holding two rifles, leaning over the guard rail pointing the rifles in a westerly direction toward the SR134. He stopped the car, applied the parking brake, retrieved his weapon, and took cover at the left rear corner of his car.

Ms. Lopez turned and walked toward her car, and he then saw a "cloud" of money. She then started walking toward the officers with both rifles in her hands, parallel to the ground. He commanded, "Drop the weapon. Drop the gun." She walked toward the officers, and he shot a "few" rounds at her. He did a "tactical reload" and when he looked up, she was still approaching. He shot again and saw her wince. As he told Officer Parrish that he thought he had hit her, she turned toward the guard rail and went headfirst off the overpass to the ground below.

Both officers stated they blocked traffic and then crossed to the west side of the overpass. From that vantage point they saw Ms. Lopez lying beneath them, between the exit lanes of the Harvey Street exit and the westbound traffic lanes of the SR134.

## **Gunshot Injuries**

Ms. Lopez was treated at the scene by emergency medical technicians from the Glendale Fire Department and transported to Huntington Hospital in Pasadena. Medical staff treated Ms. Lopez for her injuries from the fall and for two gun-shot wounds to her left arm. These gunshot wounds were not life threatening.

## **Evidence Collected**

Eighty-nine \$100 bills and two rifles were recovered from the roadway. One rifle was recovered on the overpass near where Ms. Lopez went over the guardrail and another, badly damaged, was recovered from the SR134 in traffic lanes. Neither rifle was loaded. Multiple firearms were also recovered from the trunk of Ms. Lopez's car.

## **LEGAL ANALYSIS**

California law provides the use of deadly force by a peace officer is not unlawful when the officer reasonably believes, based on the totality of the circumstances, that such force is necessary for either of the following reasons:

(A) To defend against an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury to the officer or to another person. Penal Code sections 196 and 835a(c)(1)(A) and 197.

(B) 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 sections 196 and 835a(c)(1)(B).

In a criminal prosecution of a peace officer for the use of deadly force, the People have the burden of proving that the force was unlawful. 1 CalCrim 507 (2021).

When the officers first confronted Ms. Lopez, she showed no signs of surrendering. She walked toward the deputies carrying two rifles. She ignored commands that she drop them. The use of deadly force at this point was legally justified, whether or not Ms. Lopez actually fired at the officers.

In a prosecution of officers Erickson and Parrish, the prosecution would be required to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that no reasonable officer in the same situation would believe that Ms. Lopez posed an immediate threat, either to their safety or the safety of others. Ms. Lopez appeared to have the opportunity and the ability to shoot either the officers or members of the public who were in the vicinity of this well-traveled corridor through a densely populated urban area.

There is no evidence in this case from which an inference can be drawn that the officers' belief Ms. Lopez posed an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury to the officers or others was an unreasonable belief.

Although neither rifle was loaded, and dispatch relayed by MDT the message that Ms. Lopez claimed her guns were not loaded, this analysis does not change.

At trial, a trier of fact would be instructed pursuant to California law that "The [officers'] belief that [they or others] [were] threatened may be reasonable even if [they] relied on information that was not true. However, the defendant must actually and reasonably have believed that the information was true." 1 CalCrim 505 (2021).

Under these circumstances, the only information available to the officers that Ms. Lopez's rifles may not be loaded was the MDT transmission which read "SHE ADVD HER GUNS AREN'T LOADED." The information upon which the officers relied was she was armed with two rifles, she alternately pointed them in their direction and the direction of traffic on the SR134, and she refused to drop them when commanded to do so, but instead continued to brandish them. Under these circumstances it cannot be proved beyond a reasonable doubt that it was not reasonable for the officers to discount or ignore the MDT transmission, when reliance could have proved deadly to them or others.

## **CONCLUSION**

The direct and the circumstantial evidence here and the inferences which can be drawn from that evidence establish that the use of deadly force by officers Erickson and Parrish was not unlawful.