

**Fatal Officer Involved Shooting of Angela Meloncon
Huntington Park Police Department**

Officer Carlos Rodriguez, #5196

J.S.I.D. File #22-0217



GEORGE GASCÓN

District Attorney

Justice System Integrity Division

May 9, 2024

MEMORANDUM

TO: CHIEF COSME LOZANO
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FROM: JUSTICE SYSTEM INTEGRITY DIVISION
Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office

SUBJECT: Fatal Officer Involved Shooting of Angela Meloncon
J.S.I.D. File #22-0217
H.P.P.D. File #22-03309
L.A.S.D. File #022-00064-3199-013

DATE: May 9, 2024

The Justice System Integrity Division of the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office has completed its review of the July 2, 2022, fatal shooting of Angela Meloncon by Huntington Park Police Department (HPPD) Officer Carlos Rodriguez. We have determined that the evidence supports a reasonable belief by the officer that the use of deadly force was necessary in self-defense and/or the defense of others when he fired his duty weapon.

The District Attorney's Command Center was notified of this shooting on July 2, 2022, at approximately 6:08 p.m. The District Attorney Response Team responded to the scene and was given a briefing and walk-through by Lieutenant Vincent Ursini of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) Homicide Bureau.

The following analysis is based on reports and other materials, including 9-1-1 calls, video recordings, recorded interviews, and photographs submitted to this office by LASD Homicide Bureau on March 1, 2023. HPPD officers were not issued body worn cameras at the time of the officer involved shooting. No compelled statements were considered in this analysis.

FACTUAL ANALYSIS

On July 2, 2022, at approximately 3:20 p.m., HPPD received a 9-1-1 call from an employee at Public Storage located at 6911 South Alameda Street in Huntington Park. The employee told the dispatcher that a woman was chasing a man inside the Public Storage building, a multi-story

storage facility, in a possible domestic violence incident on the third floor. The employee was heard on the recording asking the couple to leave the location. The woman was later identified as Meloncon and the man was later identified as Meloncon's boyfriend. Meloncon had also called 9-1-1 and stated that her boyfriend was "bullying" her.¹ On the recording, Meloncon is heard yelling profanities at her boyfriend and not responding to the dispatcher's questions. Then, it appeared as though Meloncon abruptly ended the call.

HPPD Officer Rodriguez responded to the call and was directed to the third floor by another employee. At approximately 3:27 p.m., surveillance video from the facility showed that Rodriguez exited an elevator on the third floor. According to all the witness statements, summarized in detail below, Meloncon was chasing her boyfriend with scissors in her hand in an apparent attempt to stab him when Rodriguez exited the elevator. Rodriguez ordered Meloncon to stop, but Meloncon continued to chase her boyfriend into an empty storage unit with the scissors in her hand after having already struck him one time in the back of the arm.

Rodriguez followed Meloncon into the storage unit and fired two rounds from his service weapon, a 9mm semiautomatic handgun, at Meloncon. Meloncon was struck by the gunfire and died at the scene.



Investigators photographed the scissors in Meloncon's hand at the scene.

On July 7, 2022, an autopsy was conducted, and the medical examiner determined that the cause of Meloncon's death was multiple gunshot wounds to the neck and chest. A toxicology report confirmed the presence of amphetamine and methamphetamine in Meloncon's blood.

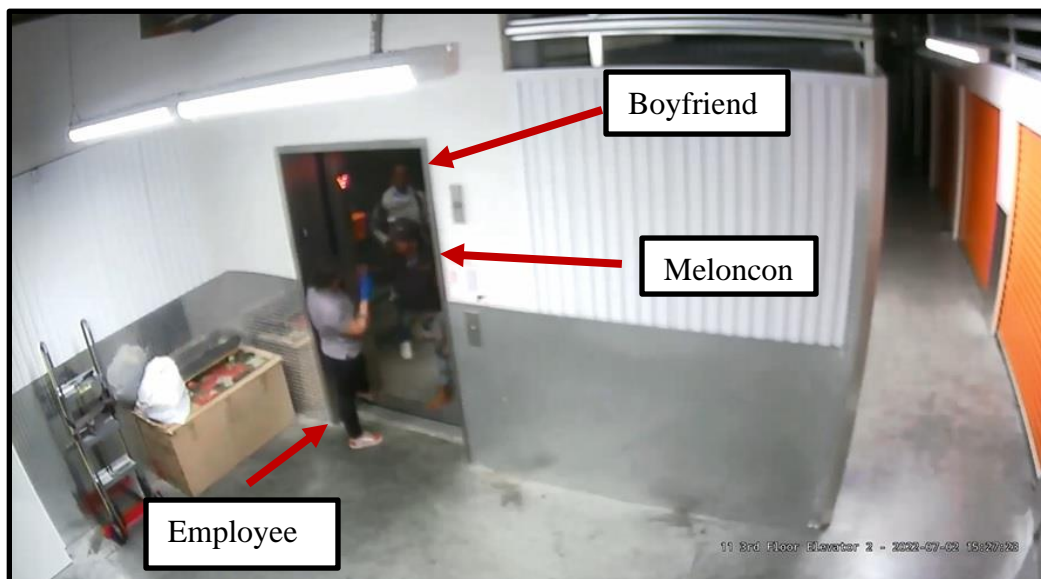
¹ Surveillance videos from in and around the building showed Meloncon and her boyfriend enter the facility through the gate on foot at approximately 11:23 a.m. They entered the building and took the elevator to the third floor. The facility is accessible by a keypad code and only tenants are allowed access.

Statement of the Employee

LASD investigators interviewed the employee who called 9-1-1. The interview was recorded. The employee stated she was checking locks around the facility when she discovered a man and a woman, later identified as Meloncon and her boyfriend, laying down in a storage unit. She saw two sets of feet when she partially lifted the gate, and she informed them that the gate needed to remain open. The employee continued walking around the same floor and returned shortly thereafter to the same unit and heard Meloncon and her boyfriend arguing “really loud.” Meloncon started screaming and saying he was hitting her. The employee also overheard Meloncon say that she was going to call the police. The employee asked them to leave the property, but they continued arguing loudly.

Eventually, the employee called 9-1-1 and reported the incident. Then, Meloncon started screaming and claimed her boyfriend had pushed her. The employee heard Meloncon asking her boyfriend for her phone. She also saw Meloncon’s boyfriend dragging her by the feet. Meloncon started using profanity against the employee and accusing her of not helping.

At approximately 3:27 p.m., the boyfriend quickly entered an elevator to evade Meloncon, but she stopped the elevator doors from closing and entered as well. The employee stated she heard him scream, “Help me! She’s trying to kill me!”² The employee stated that when she held the door open so he could exit, Meloncon presented scissors in her hand and made a stabbing motion toward the employee. Meloncon did not stab the employee. The employee walked away, and her boyfriend ran outside of the elevator. Surveillance video from the facility captured these actions preceding the officer involved shooting.



Meloncon made stabbing motions with her right hand towards the employee standing outside the elevator before her boyfriend ran out of the elevator.

² HPPD Officer Reza interviewed the employee at the scene. He wrote a police report that documented this unrecorded statement attributed to Meloncon’s boyfriend.

As the employee walked away from Meloncon toward another elevator on the floor, the employee saw an officer had arrived on the floor.³ The employee saw the boyfriend running toward her yelling that Meloncon was trying to stab him, and the employee saw Meloncon strike him with the scissors. The employee yelled at the officer that Meloncon had scissors and was trying to stab them. The officer ran towards Meloncon and repeatedly yelled, “Stop!” Meloncon did not stop. Then, she saw the officer shoot his gun one time inside a storage unit. The employee stated that no video cameras exist in the specific aisle where the shooting occurred.

Statement of the Boyfriend

LASD investigators interviewed Meloncon’s boyfriend. The interview was recorded. He stated that they were in a dating relationship and used to live together but were now homeless. He stated that they had fallen asleep in the storage unit he was renting when an employee admonished them about laying down with the gate partially closed. He stated that Meloncon became angry and their verbal argument got “loud” before the employee told them she would call the police. When he entered an elevator, Meloncon followed him inside. He did not want to be in the elevator with her because she was angry. He exited and she started chasing him with scissors in her hand. He stated he believed Meloncon was trying to stab him and eventually struck him once in the back of the arm. He also stated that Meloncon tried to stab the employee too. Immediately before the shooting, he ran into an open unit and Meloncon followed him inside. He exited the unit and then he heard two gunshots. He stated he believed Meloncon would have stabbed him if she caught him, “for sure she would have.”



The small puncture wound (circled) on the back of the boyfriend’s right arm.

³ Another surveillance camera captured Officer Rodriguez, who was in full police uniform, exit the other elevator on the floor at the approximate time Meloncon made stabbing motions with the scissors toward the employee.

Statement of Officer Rodriguez

LASD investigators interviewed Rodriguez. The interview was recorded. Rodriguez stated he had been a police officer for almost 29 years. Rodriguez responded to a “domestic dispute” at the storage facility. When he arrived, an employee directed him to the third floor via the elevators. When the elevator doors opened Rodriguez heard screaming and yelling. He quickly exited and walked through a hallway and saw a “couple” near a storage unit with the gate rolled open. Then, he saw an employee running towards him with a cell phone in her hand screaming, “She’s stabbing him!” Simultaneously, he saw Meloncon chasing closely behind a screaming man. Rodriguez saw Meloncon swinging her hand in a downward motion with a sharp object, three to five inches in length. He stated he believed that the man was being stabbed. As he approached, Rodriguez took out his duty weapon and yelled, “Police! Stop! Stop! Drop the knife!”⁴ Meloncon did not comply.

The man ran into an empty storage unit, and Meloncon ran in after him. Rodriguez momentarily lost sight of them, and as he approached the storage unit the man “pop[ped]” out screaming. He saw Meloncon with a sharp metal object over her shoulder and head in what he believed was an attempt to stab the man or himself because they were within three to five feet of each other. He fired his service weapon two times.⁵ Rodriguez stated he believed everything happened within eight seconds after he exited the elevator.

LEGAL ANALYSIS

Any peace officer who has reasonable cause to believe that the person to be arrested has committed a public offense may use objectively reasonable force to effect the arrest, to prevent escape, or to overcome resistance. A peace officer is justified in using deadly force upon another person only when the officer reasonably believes, based on the totality of the circumstances, that such force is necessary to defend against an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury to the officer or to another person, or 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 § 835a(b), (c)(1)(A), and (c)(1)(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 § 835a(e)(2).

“Totality of circumstances” means 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.

⁴ Another storage space renter was also interviewed and his account was consistent with the others – he stated Meloncon chased her boyfriend with a sharp object he believed to be a knife. The officer yelled, “Stop!” multiple times. Then, he heard two gunshots after Meloncon and her boyfriend entered the empty storage unit.

⁵ Two expended cartridge cases were retrieved at the scene indicating two rounds had been fired.

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 § 835a(a)(4) and (e)(3).

Here, the evidence shows that Meloncon and her boyfriend engaged in a verbal argument that escalated into a physical confrontation. The employee stated that at some point, Meloncon's boyfriend was dragging Meloncon by her feet. Nevertheless, Meloncon became the aggressor when she used scissors to pursue her boyfriend as he attempted to evade her and to assault the employee. The witness statements as to what ensued immediately preceding the officer involved shooting are consistent with each other and the video evidence.

When Rodriguez arrived, he was told that Meloncon was stabbing her boyfriend and he witnessed it firsthand. His commands to Meloncon were ignored and he had no more time to further attempt to deescalate the imminent threat of great bodily injury or death Meloncon posed to her boyfriend and/or himself. Also, Rodriguez was working in small spaces within the facility and ultimately the storage unit where he shot Meloncon. As such, he was unable to create safe distances from Meloncon in an effort to protect her boyfriend. He used deadly force to stop what he perceived to be a deadly and imminent threat by firing two rounds from his service handgun at Meloncon.

CONCLUSION

We conclude that the evidence supports a reasonable belief that the use of deadly force was necessary in self-defense and/or the defense of others.