

**Non-Fatal Officer Involved Shooting of  
Adrian Romero and J.M.  
Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department**

**Deputy Damien Guerrero #602973, Deputy Sergio Campos #612401,  
and Deputy Justin Perez #533986**

**J.S.I.D. File #22-0063**



**GEORGE GASCÓN**

**District Attorney**

**Justice System Integrity Division**

**July 9, 2024**

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: CAPTAIN ANDREW D. MEYER  
Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department  
Homicide Bureau  
1 Cupania Circle  
Monterey Park, California 91755

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

SUBJECT: Non-Fatal Officer Involved Shooting of Adrian Romero and J.M.  
J.S.I.D. File #22-0063  
L.A.S.D. File #022-02016-0495-057

DATE: July 9, 2024

The Justice System Integrity Division of the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office has completed its review of the February 23, 2022, non-fatal shooting of Adrian Romero and J.M. by Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) Deputies Sergio Campos, Damien Guerrero, and Justin Perez. We have concluded that the deputies initially acted in lawful self-defense at the time they fired their service weapons, reasonably believing based on the totality of the circumstances that deadly force was necessary to defend against an imminent deadly threat. Additionally, it cannot be proved beyond a reasonable doubt that Deputy Guerrero acted unlawfully when he continued firing his service weapon at the fleeing sedan driven by Adrian Romero.

The District Attorney's Command Center was notified of this non-fatal officer involved shooting on February 23, 2022, at approximately 4:37 p.m. The District Attorney Response Team responded to the location and was provided a briefing and walk-through of the scene.

The following analysis is based on reports, radio transmissions, 9-1-1 calls, recorded interviews, photographs, body-worn camera video (BWV), and surveillance video submitted to this office by LASD Homicide Bureau Detective Ramon Munoz on July 27, 2023. No compelled statements were considered as part of this analysis.<sup>1</sup>

**INTRODUCTION**

On February 23, 2022, LASD Norwalk Station deputies arrived at a Whittier residence and attempted to arrest [REDACTED] on an arrest warrant. The deputies parked their marked patrol cars behind a blue sedan parked in the driveway. [REDACTED] was seated in the sedan's back seat and his brother Adrian Romero (Adrian) was in the driver's seat. The sedan's owner, J.M., was seated in the front passenger seat.

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<sup>1</sup> The deputies provided voluntary statements to LASD detectives and testified in a deposition for the civil trial, *Adrian Romero v. County of Los Angeles, et. al*, case 2:23-CV-02025-GW-PVC.

The deputies ordered Adrian to turn off the engine. Without notice, Adrian put the sedan into reverse, accelerated, and rammed it into the patrol car. The front bumper was ripped off the frame and the patrol car was forced into the middle of the street. Deputies jumped out of the way and fired their service weapons as Adrian accelerated backward. As Adrian raced forward away from the deputies, Guerrero continued shooting at the sedan. Adrian sped down the street and seconds later, lost control of the sedan and crashed into a cinderblock wall.

■■■■ jumped out of the sedan and ran. Adrian drove the sedan until it became disabled and then fled. J.M., who was shot, immediately exited the sedan and surrendered. ■■■■ ran into a backyard and was apprehended by an off-duty police officer who saw ■■■■ manipulating a gun. When LASD deputies arrived, they removed a loaded 9 mm handgun from ■■■■'s pants.

Adrian hid in the parking structure of an apartment building. He was found by LASD deputies and arrested. Adrian was shot twice in his left leg and transported to the hospital. J.M. was transported and treated at the hospital for a single gunshot wound to her upper back. None of the gunshot wounds were life-threatening injuries.

## **FACTUAL ANALYSIS**

Sergeant David Duran (Duran) and his team of five deputies, Sergio Campos (Campos), Damien Guerrero (Guerrero), Justin Perez (Perez), James Ross (Ross), and Matthew Diedrich (Diedrich) were assigned to the Norwalk Sheriff's station's Special Assignment Officer (SAO) Team. The team was tasked with policing high-crime areas in Whittier.

On January 29, 2022, at 2:32 a.m., Campos and Diedrich were on patrol in Whittier when they used a computer database to run the license of a Chevrolet truck. They received information that the truck was stolen and attempted to conduct a felony traffic stop. The driver, later identified as ■■■■), successfully evaded arrest by committing multiple traffic violations, including turning the truck's headlights off as he fled from the deputies at a high rate of speed through a residential neighborhood.

On January 31, 2022, Duran and Campos obtained a *Ramey* arrest warrant for ■■■■<sup>2</sup>. The SAO deputies had reason to believe ■■■■ was intermittently staying at a residence on Chere Drive in Whittier. The residence on Chere Drive was the source of multiple LASD calls for service and neighbor complaints.<sup>3</sup> The SAO team also had information that the residence was being used by the West Southside Whittier gang as a "crash pad."<sup>4</sup> ■■■■  
■■■■

On February 23, 2022, ■■■■, Duran observed ■■■■ enter a Hyundai Genesis sedan (sedan) parked in the driveway.

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<sup>2</sup> A *Ramey* warrant authorizes an arrest prior to the filing of formal charges by the district attorney. Seven criminal charges were subsequently filed against ■■■■ in case VA157832, for felony evading, possession of a stolen vehicle, reckless driving, and prohibited person in possession of a firearm.

<sup>3</sup> A week before the shooting incident, SAO deputies served a search warrant on the Chere Drive residence, looking for guns and drugs.

<sup>4</sup> A crash pad is a place to sleep, especially for a single night or in an emergency (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

Guerrero, Campos, Perez, and Ross drove to the location and formed a tactical plan en route.<sup>5</sup> At 2:36 p.m., Campos and Guerrero arrived at the residence in a marked patrol car with the patrol car's lights activated. Guerrero pulled up behind the sedan as the sedan reversed down the driveway. The sedan pulled forward into the driveway and Guerrero parked the patrol car in the street at the entrance to the driveway. (Figure 1)



Figure 1: [REDACTED] video of Chere Drive when Guerrero and Campos arrived at the location.

Guerrero and Campos planned to conduct a traffic stop on the sedan and arrest [REDACTED] pursuant to the warrant. Campos exited the patrol car, ran to the passenger side of the sedan and opened the passenger door while Guerrero ran to the driver's side. The sedan's windows were heavily tinted, and the deputies could not see who was driving or where [REDACTED] was seated in the sedan.

When Campos opened the sedan door, he could see J.M. in the front passenger seat. J.M. was holding an inflated balloon in her hand and had a metal cylinder commonly used to hold nitrous oxide gas on the floor next to her feet.

Guerrero and Campos gave loud verbal commands to the driver to turn off the engine and exit the sedan. Guerrero told investigators that he heard Adrian "revving" the sedan's engine, "like it

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<sup>5</sup> All four deputies activated their BWVs during the shooting incident. However, the BWV cameras were in "buffering" mode (i.e., visually recording) one minute before being activated. While the cameras were recording as the deputies proceeded to Chere Drive, the audio did not record until approximately one minute after most of the shooting occurred. The BWVs began recording at approximately 2:36 p.m. The entire incident, from when Campos exited the patrol car to Adrian speeding away, lasted approximately 24 seconds.

was going to pick up speed.” In response, Guerrero hit the driver’s side window with a metal flashlight while Campos yelled, “Stop!”

Campos was still holding onto the passenger door with his right hand when Adrian accelerated the sedan backward. Guerrero told investigators that Campos was, “Trapped on the passenger side with the door open . . . and appeared to be getting dragged backwards [sic].” Campos described how when the sedan sped in reverse, Campos “flew forward” from the momentum and was almost knocked to the ground.

Campos told investigators that he jumped away from the open sedan door to avoid getting run over or tripping and getting pulled under the door. ██████████ video showed Deputies Perez and Ross arriving in a marked black and white SUV and exiting the vehicle as the sedan accelerated backward down the driveway. Perez stepped outside the SUV and was instantly in the direct path of the reversing sedan.



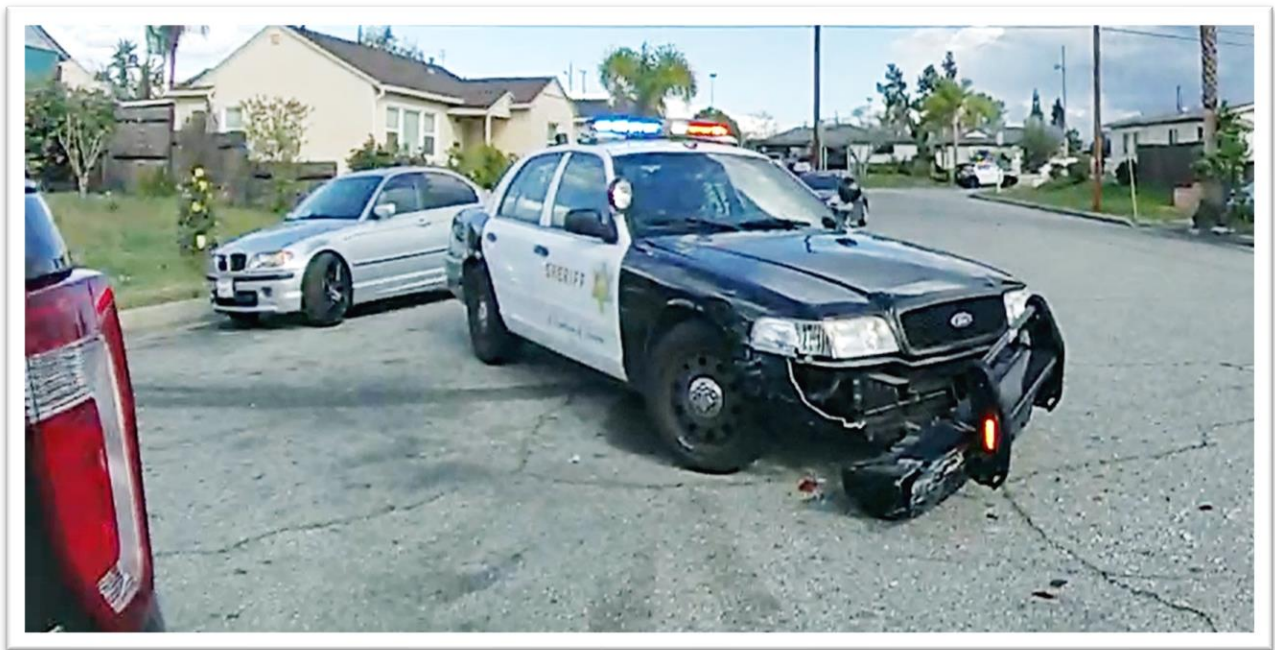
Figure 2: ██████████ footage depicting Adrian speeding backward, striking the patrol car, and almost running over Perez.

Guerrero told investigators that he saw, “out of the corner of [his] eye,” that Perez was in the driveway, trapped between the SUV and the reversing sedan. Guerrero did not believe that Perez was aware that the sedan was coming at Perez at a high rate of speed. As the sedan sped backward, Guerrero saw Perez “dive” out of view and thought, “[Perez] is gonna get killed.” Guerrero fired his service weapon at the driver to prevent Perez from being run over. (Figure 2)

Perez told investigators that he moved quickly behind the SUV to avoid getting hit as Adrian rammed into the patrol car. He told investigators, “I saw this blue sedan driving right towards [sic] me and in that split second, I thought this car was going to hit me . . . I’m either going to lose my legs or I’m gonna lose my life . . . the only thing I could do to stop this vehicle was to start shooting.”

Perez stated he was between the sedan and the SUV passenger side door when the sedan struck the patrol car. Perez estimated that he was approximately two to three feet from the sedan when he began firing his service weapon. Perez fired 18 rounds toward the driver’s side door of the sedan.

Campos told investigators that he saw Perez behind the rear bumper on the driver’s side of the sedan as Adrian reversed the sedan in Perez’s direction. Campos fired three rounds within a second as Adrian plowed through the patrol car parked behind the sedan, ripping off the reinforced bumper and pushing it into the middle of the street.<sup>6</sup> (*Figure 3*) As soon as Campos saw that Perez was out of the way of the sedan, he stopped firing.



*Figure 3: Bumper damage caused by Adrian when he rammed the sedan into the patrol car.*

Guerrero told investigators that he estimated he was approximately six to 10 feet away when he fired 16 rounds in rapid succession. Guerrero stated he saw the sedan “Turning in reverse, towards [sic] the west where my partners are somewhere in that area.” As Adrian reversed away from the deputies into the street, Guerrero lowered his service weapon at 2:36:57 p.m.<sup>7</sup> (*Figure 4*)

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<sup>6</sup> Campos described the patrol car after it was hit by the sedan as “[S]everely damaged, and it wasn’t drivable.”

<sup>7</sup> Time stamps are from Guerrero’s BWV.



Figure 4: [REDACTED] video depicting Adrian backing the sedan away from the deputies. Deputy Guerrero stopped firing and lowered his service weapons (Guerrero circled in red).



Figure 5: Muzzle flash seen from Guerrero's gun as Adrian drove forward.

When Adrian shifted the gears and began driving forward, Guerrero told investigators, “[he] could hear the engine revving and the tires squealing on the ground.” Guerrero believed that the

sedan was “going to come straight for us.” At 2:37:00 p.m., Guerrero fired two additional rounds at the sedan as Adrian drove away. (Figure 5)

As Adrian raced up the street, he lost control around a curve and slammed into a cinderblock wall in the front yard of a residence. Perez and Guerrero heard the crash and believed someone else may have been injured. They ran up the street in the direction of the crash. Despite being injured, Campos ran up the street with Guerrero and Perez to assist other possible victims.<sup>8</sup>

The sedan had extensive body damage and both right-side tires were shredded. A residential surveillance camera showed that Adrian slowed down so that [REDACTED] could jump from the backseat passenger side of the sedan. Adrian drove an additional 300 feet before the sedan became completely inoperable. When the sedan could not go any further, Adrian jumped out and ran to an apartment complex, leaving J.M. in the sedan. When the deputies arrived, J.M. exited the sedan and surrendered on the ground. She had been shot one time in the upper left back. A female deputy who came to assist applied pressure to J.M.’s wound until the paramedics arrived.

Guerrero ran to the intersection where Adrian left the sedan. As Guerrero stood on the corner of Telegraph Road, he heard people yelling and saw them waving their arms to get his attention. Guerrero ran down the street and saw two men, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], on the porch of a residence holding [REDACTED] down. [REDACTED] was straddling [REDACTED] and had a handgun pressed into [REDACTED]’s back.



Figure 6: BWV showing [REDACTED] while he was on the ground being searched. Deputies found a loaded semi-automatic pistol in his pants (circled in red).

<sup>8</sup> Campos was injured when he was struck on his right arm by the reversing sedan. He was treated by a physician for an injury to his right elbow and shoulder.



████ identified himself as an off-duty Bell Gardens Police Officer and told Deputy Alvarado (Alvarado) that █████ had a gun in his waistband. When Alvarado searched █████, he found a black tar-like substance in his pants pocket and a semi-automatic pistol tucked in █████'s underwear underneath his clothing. (Figure 6) █████ was taken into custody and arrested.

Adrian was found hiding in the parking structure of an apartment complex. He had been shot twice in the leg. The deputies ordered him to come out from behind the parked cars and show his hands. He was handcuffed and arrested.

### *Civilian Witness Statements*

Several neighbors made consistent statements regarding their observations of Adrian's arrest and detention.

████

████, an off-duty police officer, was asleep when he awoke to the sound of gunshots. His wife came into the bedroom and told him there had been a shooting. He heard his neighbor █████ yell, "He's in my backyard!" █████ ran out to the yard and saw █████ manipulating the slide of a semi-automatic handgun with his hands. As █████ approached █████, █████ told him, "Don't mess with me! I'm a dangerous man!" █████ put the gun in his waistband and jumped onto the property wall.

████ pulled him off the wall but █████ landed on his feet and attempted to pull the gun out of his waistband. █████ grabbed █████'s hand and struggled to take █████ down the ground. █████ identified himself as an off-duty police officer but █████ continued fighting for control of the handgun. █████ believed he was in a fight for his life and that █████ would use the gun against him. █████ identified himself as a police officer three more times. █████ punched █████ in the face several times but it had no effect as █████ continued to struggle to grab for the gun in his waistband.

████'s neighbor █████, arrived to help █████ as █████ struggled with █████. They flipped █████ onto his stomach and held him down on the ground. █████ told his wife to get his off-duty firearm. █████ eventually submitted, and █████ and █████ were able to hold █████ until the deputies arrived. █████ was injured during the struggle and was treated by Los Angeles County Fire Department paramedics.

### **Forensic Evidence**

#### *Laboratory Analysis*

The item resembling black tar heroin, taken from █████'s front pocket, was booked into evidence and tested. The LASD Controlled Substances Division identified the item and determined it to be 0.5895 grams of a solid substance containing heroin.

## Firearm Analysis



While ██████ was detained, Alvarado handed ██████'s handgun to Deputy Jazel Lopez (Lopez). Lopez rendered the handgun safe and observed that it had an extended magazine with 11 unfired 9 mm Luger caliber cartridges and a live round in the chamber.

The LASD Firearms Identification Section identified the black and dark green weapon as a “Polymer80 model PF940C, semi-automatic pistol, unserialized.” The .9 mm semi-automatic pistol was assembled from an unfinished firearm, commonly referred to as a “ghost-gun” or an “80% [unfinished frame],” and did not have a serial number.<sup>9</sup> It was test-fired and determined to be functional.

## LEGAL ANALYSIS

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).

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<sup>9</sup> ██████'s handgun was classified as a “Ghost Gun” or a “Firearm Manufactured by [an] Unlicensed Subject” (FMBUS). Ghost Guns do not have serial numbers (i.e., unserialized) or other traceable markings and are generally of unknown origin or ownership.

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).

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).

Deputies Guerrero, Campos, and Perez, in possession of an arrest warrant, attempted to take ██████████ into custody. Based on their prior attempt to arrest him, the deputies were aware that ██████████ was a flight risk.

When the deputies arrived, ██████████’s brother, Adrian Romero, refused to follow the deputies’ orders to turn off the engine to the sedan and exit the vehicle. When Adrian sped backward, Campos was still holding the open sedan door and was “wedged between the door jamb [of the sedan].” Campos was knocked forward and was in danger of being seriously injured by being run over or pulled under the sedan. Guerrero immediately recognized the risk to his partner and began firing his service weapon at the driver of the sedan, hoping to prevent injury to Campos.

Both Guerrero and Campos saw Perez exit the SUV and stated they believed that Perez was also in danger of being run over by Adrian Romero. Campos and Guerrero fired their service weapons at the driver of the sedan to prevent Adrian Romero from running over Perez. Perez was only several feet away from the sedan as Adrian sped backward. Perez stated he believed that his life was in danger, and as he dove out of the way of the sedan, he began firing his service weapon at the driver. Adrian Romero sped backward with enough speed and force to rip off the bumper of the patrol car and could have seriously injured anyone standing behind the sedan.

Guerrero told investigators that he believed Adrian intentionally reversed the sedan in the direction of his partners. Guerrero feared that his partners “[were] about to get run over [and] seriously injured or killed.” Guerrero stopped firing as Adrian Romero reversed away from the deputies. However, when Adrian Romero began driving forward, Guerrero fired two additional rounds approximately three seconds later.

Guerrero stated as the sedan drove forward, he heard the “engine revving and the tires squealing,” and he told investigators that he believed that “The vehicle was going to come straight for us and either ram back into myself or my partner Campos . . .” Guerrero told investigators, as Adrian drove past the deputies in the open street Guerrero believed their lives were still in danger and that the sedan was “going to come straight for us.” Guerrero’s fear cannot be proven to be unreasonable given the rapidly unfolding events, Adrian’s dangerous retreat down the driveway, and his intentional striking of the patrol car.

Based on the evidence, Guerrero, Campos, and Perez all reasonably believed that their lives and their partners’ lives were in danger as Adrian Romero was accelerating backward out of the driveway and that the use of deadly force was necessary.

Based on the totality of the circumstances, it cannot be proved beyond a reasonable doubt that Deputy Guerrero acted unlawfully when he continued to use deadly force against Adrian Romero, ██████████, and J.M. by firing two more rounds at the sedan, three seconds later.

## **CONCLUSION**

For the foregoing reasons, we find that Deputies Guerrero, Campos, and Perez acted lawfully in self-defense when they used deadly force against Adrian Romero, ██████████, and J.M. We also find insufficient evidence to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that Guerrero did not act in self-defense when he fired two subsequent shots at ██████████, Adrian, and J.M.