

Non-Fatal Officer Involved Shooting of Carlos Zepeda, Jr.
Los Angeles Police Department

Officer Adam Sandoval, #36347

J.S.I.D. File #24-0074



NATHAN J. HOCHMAN

District Attorney

Justice System Integrity Division

July 16, 2026

MEMORANDUM

TO: CAPTAIN OMAR BAZULTO
Los Angeles Police Department
Force Investigation Division
100 West First Street
Los Angeles, California 90012

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

SUBJECT: Non-Fatal Officer Involved Shooting of Carlos Zepeda Jr.
J.S.I.D. File #24-0074
L.A.P.D. File #2419-06615

DATE: July 16, 2026

The Justice System Integrity Division of the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office has completed its review of the March 9, 2024, non-fatal shooting of Carlos Zepeda Jr. by Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) Officer Adam Sandoval. We have concluded Officer Sandoval acted in lawful self-defense when he fired his service weapon.

The District Attorney's Command Center was notified of the shooting at approximately 8:45 p.m. on March 9, 2024. The District Attorney Response Team responded to the location. They were given a briefing regarding the circumstances surrounding the shooting and a walk-through of the scene.

The following analysis is based on investigative reports, recorded interviews, firearm analysis reports, recorded 9-1-1 calls, photographs, dispatch recordings and Body Worn Video (BWV) submitted to this office by the LAPD Force Investigation Division on April 7, 2025. Compelled statements were not considered in this analysis.

FACTUAL ANALYSIS

On March 9, 2024, at approximately 11:30 a.m., Carlos Zepeda Jr. (Zepeda) entered his parent's 2nd story apartment without permission by climbing over a short wall and forcing a sliding door open. Zepeda's parents, [REDACTED] ([REDACTED]) and [REDACTED], along with [REDACTED] ([REDACTED]), and [REDACTED] ([REDACTED]), Zepeda's adult siblings, were home at the time. Upon Zepeda's arrival, [REDACTED], [REDACTED], and [REDACTED] left the apartment. [REDACTED] stayed in the apartment and spoke with Zepeda, who was "irrational" and spoke of "being a vampire."¹ [REDACTED] said he offered to take Zepeda wherever he wanted to go or to give him food, but Zepeda declined and demanded to stay in the apartment in order to rest. [REDACTED] was aware Zepeda was homeless at the time, suffered from schizophrenia and was not taking his

¹ [REDACTED] gave a recorded statement after this incident. [REDACTED] spoke to the first responders but refused to give a statement after the shooting.

medication. [REDACTED] waited approximately 30 minutes for [REDACTED] to return home, then took a shower while [REDACTED] spoke to Zepeda. While in the shower, he heard Cavaleta scream. He exited the shower to see Zepeda holding an approximately three foot long tree branch, and [REDACTED] crying. [REDACTED] told [REDACTED] that Zepeda had hit her with the tree branch. Both [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] fled the apartment. Each independently called 9-1-1 and reported the incident.

Date	
3/9/24 12:58:02	Comments: SEE THE PR AND HIS WIFE OUTSIDE LOC, WILL DIRECT TO SUSP/SON *CARLOS* M/H 29YRS, SUFFERS FROM SCHIZOPHRENIA, ASSAULTED HIS MOTHER W/A STICK, SUSP STILL INSIDE RESD, RA REFUSED,

Figure 1: Broadcast of Call from LAPD Dispatch Describing a Schizophrenic Male who had Assaulted his Mother with a Stick

Initial response

LAPD Officers Roberto Torres and Alberto Barrigan responded to the initial call for service. They met with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], who gave them the keys to the front door and requested assistance in getting Zepeda to leave the apartment. [REDACTED] told them Zepeda “did not like the police” and currently had a warrant for his arrest, so they should wait for backup to arrive.²

[REDACTED] told Torres Zepeda was “totally out of his mind” and she was concerned he might arm himself with one of the kitchen knives in the apartment.

Torres and Barrigan, alongside Sergeant Matthew Gale and Officers Rodolfo Ruiz and Alondra Franco-Rodriguez, approached the front door of the apartment via an inner courtyard stairwell.



Figure 2: View of the [REDACTED] Apartment at Top of Stairs (Open Door Circled). The Small Wall Zepeda Climbed in Order to Gain Entry is Visible to the Left of the Door.

² At the time of this incident, Zepeda’s criminal history included a [REDACTED]

They opened the front door and saw Zepeda standing inside the entryway holding an approximately three to four foot tree branch, raised as if to swing it at someone.³ Zepeda then pushed the door closed. Officers announced they were LAPD and were there to help him. Zepeda yelled, “I’m going to kill you!” repeatedly, and demanded the officers, “Leave me alone!”



Figure 3: Image from Officer Torres’ BWV Showing Zepeda Jr. Holding Stick (Circled) Immediately after LAPD Opened the Door to Apartment

Officers redeployed down the stairs into the courtyard and established a perimeter around the location.

Officer Todd Brooks observed Zepeda emerging from the apartment holding what appeared to be a large pair of scissors yelling, “I’m gonna kill you motherfuckers, I’m gonna kill you! I’m gonna stab you in the neck! The police, I’m gonna drink your fuckin’ blood!” Zepeda then shut the door.⁴

³ During his recorded interview, Gale described Zepeda’s posture in part, saying, “The stick was extending upwards from the fist and he raised it almost as though he was beginning a downward striking motion.”

⁴ Seen and heard on Brooks’ BWV footage.



Figure 4: Zepeda Armed with Kitchen Scissors (Circled), as Shown in Officer Brooks' BWV

LAPD Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) Response

LAPD SWAT responded to the location and assumed responsibility for the incident.

SWAT personnel attempted to convince Zepeda to come out of the apartment and end the situation peacefully through use of a Long-Range Acoustic Device (LRAD). The attempt was unsuccessful.⁵

Zepeda was observed through a window inside the apartment, now holding a knife, moving furniture and barricading windows with mattresses. SWAT used the LRAD to inform Zepeda they would be forced to use methods which would “cause you pain and discomfort” if he did not comply. Zepeda did not respond to the warning.

SWAT officers launched gas munitions into the apartment.⁶ SWAT officers then broke a window and introduced a camera. They observed a closed door with a fan activated outside of it. SWAT officers opened the front door and piloted a small robot (ICOR) into the apartment to search for evidence of Zepeda’s specific location within.⁷ Zepeda was determined to be

⁵ SWAT Officer Ethan Siller’s overture was followed by Zepeda exiting the apartment only long enough to issue threats to stab and kill any officers who approached, and saying officers would have to kill him in order to get him out of the apartment.

⁶ The gas munitions used at this juncture consisted of both a 530B Baffled Riot Chlorobenzylidene Malononitrile Smoke (CS) canister and a Ferret, containing Oleoresin Capsicum (OC) chemicals. Both munitions are designed to cause irritation to the eyes, nose, mouth, skin, and lungs.

⁷ The ICOR robot is equipped with a retractable arm and rubber tracks for locomotion. It is equipped with five cameras, and has both listening and broadcasting capabilities.

secreting himself in the master bedroom behind a closed door, which had a fan stationed outside positioned to blow any chemical agents away from the room. SWAT officers continued to try to communicate with Zepeda through the ICOR's speakers. Zepeda, through the closed door, told SWAT he would not come out, and if an officer entered the apartment he intended to kill the officer by "stabbing his eyes out." Zepeda also said he was "a vampire," and "the devil." He further stated he would "make you kill me."

SWAT officers discharged several OC rounds into the master bedroom as well as its attached bathroom. Zepeda was observed through the ICOR's cameras emerging from the master bedroom holding a skateboard and a long knife. He pushed the ICOR out of the apartment. SWAT officers discharged several more OC cannisters through the windows. Zepeda then exited the apartment onto the landing, holding a skateboard in his left hand vertically against his body in the manner of a shield, as well as the three foot long tree branch. In his right hand, he held a knife with a 9.5 inch blade, as well as a cross-style lug wrench. Officers gave Zepeda commands to drop everything in his hands. Zepeda ignored those commands and moved towards the stairs.

Use of Force

LAPD SWAT Officer Adam Sandoval was stationed behind a bunker shield just north of the stairway leading to the [REDACTED] home. He was armed with a department-issued M4 rifle. Sandoval's BWV captured Zepeda's descent down the stairway and the subsequent use of force.

As Zepeda moved across the landing towards the stairs leading to the courtyard, Officer Oscar Cordoba discharged two less-lethal "SAGE" rounds, the second of which struck Zepeda in the left thigh.⁸ Zepeda paused briefly, then began to descend the stairs as Cordoba discharged three more SAGE rounds towards him. When Zepeda was halfway down the stairs, Officer Joshua Diaz discharged two TASER darts at Zepeda, without apparent effect. Officer Roca then discharged a Shockwave less-lethal munition, also without apparent effect.⁹ Zepeda yelled, "Die Motherfucker!" and ran down the remaining stairs. When he reached the bottom, Zepeda discarded the lug wrench and turned in the direction of Sandoval. Zepeda charged towards Sandoval while holding the knife in a reverse grip with the blade pointed down, still using the skateboard as a makeshift shield. Sandoval fired ten rifle rounds, striking Zepeda numerous times. Zepeda fell to the ground and was taken into custody.¹⁰

⁸ A SAGE round fires a Baton Impact round with a hardened polyurethane tip.

⁹ The Shockwave is a bank of six TASER cartridges with a range of four to 20 feet. The munition is designed to discharge all six TASERs at one time, and deliver a five second discharge of electrical current.

¹⁰ The investigation determined Sandoval fired 10 rounds in 1.85 seconds at a decreasing distance from 15 to four feet.



Figure 5: Still from Sandoval's BWV at Approximate Moment of Sandoval's Third Shot

Paramedics rendered aid within twelve seconds of Zepeda falling to the ground. He was taken to Holy Cross Medical Center and treated for multiple gun-shot wounds. He was subsequently released and eventually charged in case 24SFCF00358 with one count of PC §245(C), assault upon a peace officer, one count of PC §245(A)(1), assault with a deadly weapon, and five counts of PC 69, resisting an executive officer.¹¹



Figure 6: Photo of Knife Brandished by Zepeda During this Incident

¹¹ On October 27, 2025, Zepeda pled guilty to a felony violation of Penal Code §245(a)(1). As of the time of this writing, Zepeda has been accepted into the Community Collaborative Court and sentencing stayed pending successful completion of the program.



Figure 7: Photo of Stick Used by Zepeda During this Incident



Figure 8: Photo of Lug Wrench Brandished by Zepeda During This Incident

LEGAL ANALYSIS

A peace officer is justified in using deadly force upon another person when the officer reasonably believes, based on the totality of the circumstances, that such force is necessary either to: (1) defend against an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury to the officer or to another person; or (2) 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(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 § 835a(e)(2).

In assessing 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 §§ 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 § 835a(a)(4).

In this case, LAPD officers responded to a call of a man who had forced his way into his parent's home and later assaulted his mother. Officers made numerous attempts to de-escalate the situation and remove Zepeda from the property. Zepeda, however, acted erratically, made numerous verbal threats towards the officers, barricaded himself inside the home, and armed himself.

Responding officers were aware Zepeda had armed himself with a knife, a lug wrench, and an improvised shield. Numerous attempts were made by officers to subdue Zepeda using less-lethal weapons. None of those weapons successfully incapacitated Zepeda.

Both during and after the deployment of less-lethal options, Zepeda was seen by numerous officers and captured on BWV, charging down the stairs and towards Sandoval. Zepeda rapidly closed the distance between himself and Sandoval while wielding the knife, lug wrench, and skateboard-shield.

Zepeda's action of running at Sandoval while holding the knife in a downward position ready to stab, along with his prior threats, demonstrated a clear intent to cause death or serious bodily injury to Sandoval. Under these circumstances, Sandoval could reasonably conclude the use of deadly force was necessary to defend against an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury.

CONCLUSION

We find Officer Sandoval acted reasonably when he used deadly force against Zepeda in self-defense.