

Fatal Officer Involved Shooting of Jose Acosta
Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department

Deputy Hector Macias #640404
Deputy Zachary Van Der Zanden #647539

J.S.I.D. File #24-0082



NATHAN J. HOCHMAN

District Attorney

Justice System Integrity Division

August 18, 2025

MEMORANDUM

TO: ACTING CAPTAIN ARTURO R. SPENCER
Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department
Homicide Bureau
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Monterey Park, California 91755

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

SUBJECT: Fatal Officer Involved Shooting of Jose Acosta
J.S.I.D. File # 24-0082
L.A.S.D. File # 024-05260-1399-013

DATE: August 18, 2025

The Justice System Integrity Division of the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office has completed its review of the March 19, 2024 fatal shooting of Jose Acosta by Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) Deputies Hector Macias and Zachary Van Der Zanden.

We have concluded the deputies acted reasonably, believing, based on the totality of the circumstances, that deadly force was necessary to defend themselves and others against an imminent deadly threat.

The District Attorney's Command Center was notified of the shooting on March 20, 2024 at 12:30 a.m. The District Attorney Response Team responded and was given a walk-through of the scene by LASD Homicide Lieutenant Michael Gomez.

The following analysis is based on 9-1-1 telephone recordings, radio calls, body worn camera video (BWV), surveillance video, investigative reports, court records, audio recordings, witness interviews, voluntary recorded statements of witness and shooting deputies, medical records, and photographs submitted to this office on September 12, 2024, by LASD Homicide Detectives Cynthia Sanchez and Daniel Gore.

FACTUAL ANALYSIS

████ and her mother █████ lived in an apartment in Paramount. On May 6, 2022, █████ obtained a restraining order against her former boyfriend Jose Acosta. This restraining order prohibited Acosta from being within 100 yards of █████ or her apartment.¹

On the evening of March 19, 2024, █████ texted her █████ █████ the numbers "911." This caused █████ to be concerned for █████'s safety. At approximately 9:18 p.m., █████ called LASD's

¹ The restraining order was issued and personally served on Acosta on May 6, 2022. The restraining order expired on May 6, 2025 and was in effect on the day of the subject shooting.

Lakewood station and requested deputies conduct a welfare check on [REDACTED] at her and [REDACTED]'s apartment. Shortly thereafter, LASD deputies, including Deputies Hector Macias and Zachary Van Der Zanden, responded to the apartment.²

[REDACTED] told deputies Acosta had come to her apartment earlier that night and demanded to enter the apartment to retrieve some of his personal items. While present at the apartment, Acosta argued with both [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] described Acosta as having been “drunk” and “crazy,” and said he had threatened to drive his car into her living room.³ [REDACTED] showed Macias video surveillance footage showing Acosta inside her apartment at approximately 9:00 p.m. that night. After speaking to [REDACTED], deputies confirmed [REDACTED]'s restraining order was still in effect.

While standing outside the apartment, deputies observed Acosta drive by them. Acosta was the sole occupant of the car he was driving. Macias and Van Der Zanden entered their marked patrol vehicle and pursued Acosta. Deputy Javier Casillas entered a separate marked patrol vehicle and joined in the pursuit. While pursuing Acosta, Macias and Van Der Zanden activated their lights and sirens in order to conduct a traffic stop on Acosta. Acosta continued driving at a normal rate of speed and did not pull over. Casillas subsequently took the lead in the pursuit and followed directly behind Acosta.

Acosta stopped at a red light when he arrived at the intersection of Artesia Boulevard and Downey Avenue. Casillas stopped his patrol vehicle approximately two-and-a-half car lengths behind Acosta's vehicle. There were no cars in between Acosta's car and Casillas' patrol vehicle. Macias and Van Der Zanden then pulled up alongside the drivers' side door of Casillas' patrol vehicle to coordinate a traffic stop of Acosta.

Moments later, Acosta placed his car in reverse and drove at a high rate of speed, colliding into the front of Casillas' patrol vehicle, causing the airbags to deploy. As a result of this collision, the rear of Acosta's car came to rest on the hood of Casillas' patrol vehicle.



Fig. 1: Photo Depicting Position of Acosta's Car After Collision with Casillas' Patrol Vehicle.

² When Macias received the call, he recognized the names of the involved parties because he had responded to the same apartment numerous times previously regarding claims by [REDACTED] that Acosta had assaulted her.

³ Acosta can be heard making this threat on one of the surveillance videos which [REDACTED] provided to deputies.

Casillas emerged from his vehicle dazed and feeling pain in his hands and arms. He stumbled to the rear of his vehicle while Macias and Van Der Zanden held Acosta at gunpoint.

While still seated in the driver's seat of his car, Acosta used a knife to strike the driver's side window. Deputies repeatedly ordered Acosta to put his hands up and drop the knife, but Acosta did not comply. Acosta then exited his car and fell to the ground. Still carrying the knife in his right hand, Acosta stood up and charged towards Macias and Van Der Zanden. Both deputies fired their service weapons, killing Acosta.



Fig. 2: Photo Still from BWV showing Acosta Charging Towards Deputies with Knife in Right Hand.

WITNESS DEPUTIES

Deputy Javier Casillas

Casillas told investigators on the night of March 19, 2024, he was working patrol, dressed in his full uniform and driving in a marked LASD patrol vehicle. He received a radio call requesting a welfare check on [REDACTED] at [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]'s apartment on Indiana Ave.⁴

⁴ Casillas had responded to this apartment on two prior occasions regarding [REDACTED].

Casillas, along with Macias, Van Der Zanden and Deputy Javier Ochoa responded to [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]'s apartment and confirmed [REDACTED] was safe. [REDACTED] told deputies Acosta, her ex-boyfriend, had shown up unannounced at her apartment earlier that night to retrieve some of his belongings. She showed Casillas surveillance video with audio depicting Acosta within the apartment earlier that night.⁵ [REDACTED] described Acosta as having been intoxicated and verbally aggressive, and having threatened to drive his car into her living room. She also stated she had an active restraining order against Acosta.

When Casillas stepped out of the apartment, he saw Acosta drive by in his vehicle. Based on the restraining order violation, Casillas directed Macias and Van Der Zanden to initiate a traffic stop on Acosta. Macias and Van Der Zanden entered their patrol vehicle and began to pursue Acosta.

Casillas entered his patrol vehicle and joined the pursuit, following behind Macias and Van Der Zanden. Casillas took over the lead position and began following directly behind Acosta, who stopped at a red light at the intersection of Downey Avenue and Artesia Boulevard. Casillas stopped in the number one lane approximately three car lengths behind Acosta's vehicle. There were no other vehicles between them.

Macias and Van Der Zanden pulled up along the driver's side of Casillas' patrol vehicle to coordinate a plan to conduct a traffic stop on Acosta with Casillas.⁶ While speaking to Macias and Van Der Zanden, Casillas heard the screeching of tires and saw Acosta backing up in his direction at a high rate of speed. Casillas closed his eyes and braced for the impact by grabbing hold of the steering wheel with both hands. After the collision, Casillas opened his eyes and saw Acosta's vehicle resting on the hood of his patrol vehicle, with Acosta's vehicle's rear right tire in front of his windshield.

Casillas felt dazed from the impact of the collision.⁷ He saw Acosta inside his vehicle striking the driver's side door window with a knife. Casillas exited his patrol vehicle and stood behind his vehicle for protection. From approximately 12-14 feet away, he could see Acosta had exited his vehicle and was facing his direction. Acosta appeared to be covered in blood.

Acosta shifted his attention to Macias, who was ordering Acosta to drop the knife. While still holding the knife, Acosta advanced towards Macias and Van Der Zanden. Casillas heard gunfire and saw Acosta fall to the ground. Casillas did not discharge his service weapon.

Deputy Javier Ochoa

Ochoa told investigators on the night of March 19, 2024, he was working patrol and responded to [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]'s apartment regarding a potential violation of a restraining order. Ochoa arrived at the apartment as the other deputies were finishing the call. When Casillas said he believed Acosta was still in the area, Ochoa joined the other deputies in their pursuit of Acosta. Ochoa

⁵ The camera which recorded Acosta inside the apartment was mounted on the front of the apartment's front door, which had been swung open into the apartment while Acosta was inside the apartment. The reports do not indicate whether or not Casillas had ever seen Acosta prior to reviewing the video.

⁶ Macias and Van Der Zanden were in the left-hand turn lane as they pulled up alongside Casillas' patrol vehicle.

⁷ Later that night Casillas received medical treatment and was diagnosed with a concussion and various other injuries to his knee, hands and fingers.

saw Acosta stopped at a red light at the intersection of Artesia Boulevard and Downey Avenue, with Casillas stopped behind him. Ochoa stopped behind Casillas' patrol vehicle.

Ochoa heard "burning rubber" and saw Acosta drive in reverse and collide into the front of Casillas' vehicle, coming to rest on top of the hood. Ochoa saw Acosta in the driver's seat of his vehicle, hitting the drivers' side window with a knife. He then saw Casillas, who appeared to be injured and confused, exit his patrol vehicle and move to the rear of his vehicle. Ochoa considered retrieving a 40 mm less-lethal launcher from his trunk, but then saw Acosta emerge from his vehicle holding a knife in his hand.

Acosta looked at Ochoa and Casillas, then turned towards Macias and Van Der Zanden. Acosta raised his right arm while holding the knife in an overhead stabbing position. Deputies were yelling, "Drop the knife, drop the knife!" Acosta refused to drop the knife. He charged at Macias and Van Der Zanden from a distance of approximately five to six feet away. Ochoa heard gunshots and saw Acosta fall to the ground while still holding the knife in his right hand. Ochoa approached Acosta and removed the knife from his right hand.



Fig. 3: Photo Still from BWV Showing Ochoa Reaching Down to Remove Knife from Acosta's Right Hand.

SHOOTING DEPUTIES

Deputy Hector Macias

Macias told investigators on the night of March 19, 2024, he was working patrol with his partner Van Der Zanden. Driving in their marked LASD patrol vehicle, they responded to [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]'s apartment to assist Casillas.⁸ When Macias heard [REDACTED]'s name and the address of the apartment, Macias told Casillas he was familiar with the involved parties and had responded to the apartment on several prior domestic violence service calls involving [REDACTED] and Acosta. Macias also informed Casillas he believed [REDACTED] may have an active restraining order against Acosta.

When Macias arrived at the apartment, [REDACTED] told him Acosta had come to her apartment earlier that night to retrieve some of his belongings. Once inside the apartment, Acosta began arguing with both [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] described Acosta as having been “drunk” and “crazy,” and had in the past been suicidal. [REDACTED] also told Macias Acosta had threatened to drive his car into her living room. [REDACTED] texted “911” to her father, who called LASD and requested the welfare check.

After speaking to [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], Macias confirmed the restraining order [REDACTED] had obtained against Acosta was still in effect. Shortly thereafter, he saw Acosta drive by.⁹ He and Van Der Zanden got into their patrol vehicle and began pursuing Acosta. Casillas joined the pursuit in his patrol vehicle.¹⁰ Macias and Van Der Zanden attempted to conduct a traffic stop by activating their lights and sirens, but Acosta refused to stop. Casillas subsequently took over as the unit following directly behind Acosta, while Macias and Van Der Zanden continued the pursuit behind Casillas.

Macias saw Acosta's vehicle stopped at a red light at the intersection of Artesia Boulevard and Downey Avenue. Casillas' patrol vehicle was stopped approximately two-and-a-half to three car lengths behind Acosta's vehicle.¹¹ Macias drove into the left turn lane directly to the left of Casillas' vehicle and stopped immediately next to Casillas. Macias and Casillas engaged in a brief conversation about coordinating a traffic stop on Acosta.

Macias heard a loud revving sound and observed Acosta drive in reverse directly into Casillas' patrol vehicle. After the collision, the rear portion of Acosta's vehicle came to rest on top of Casillas' patrol vehicle.

Macias and Van Der Zanden emerged from their patrol vehicle and saw Acosta still seated in his vehicle. Acosta appeared to be trapped inside and was using a knife to attempt to break open the driver's side window. Casillas, who appeared to be unconscious, was still seated in his patrol vehicle.

⁸ Macias was the driver.

⁹ Macias had seen Acosta from a distance during prior service calls to the apartment. He recognized Acosta as he drove by because Macias had just reviewed with [REDACTED] the surveillance camera footage showing Acosta inside the apartment earlier that night.

¹⁰ Casillas was the sole occupant of his patrol vehicle.

¹¹ There were no other vehicles between Acosta's car and Casillas' patrol vehicle.

Acosta opened his door and stumbled to the ground when he emerged from his vehicle. He then stood up while holding a knife in his right hand. While holding Acosta at gunpoint, Macias gave him orders to drop the knife, but Acosta refused.¹² Instead, Acosta gripped the knife's handle, with the blade pointed downward, and began walking towards Macias and Van Der Zanden.

Afraid Acosta was going to stab him, Macias fired his service weapon at Acosta, who fell to the ground.¹³

After Acosta fell to the ground, both Macias and Van Der Zanden provided Acosta with medical assistance until the Fire Department arrived.

Deputy Zachary Van Der Zanden

Van Der Zanden told investigators on the night of March 19, 2024, he was working patrol with his partner Macias. Driving in their marked LASD patrol vehicle, Van Der Zanden and Macias responded to a call requesting a welfare check at [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]'s apartment on Indiana Ave.

While at the apartment, Van Der Zanden confirmed [REDACTED] was not in danger. Van Der Zanden walked outside to speak to Macias, who was checking the status of [REDACTED]'s restraining order against Acosta. Van Der Zanden then saw Acosta drive by. Van Der Zanden informed Casillas he and Macias were going to conduct a traffic stop on Acosta. They began pursuing Acosta and activated their lights and sirens, but Acosta did not pull over.

Acosta stopped in the number one lane at the red light at the intersection of Artesia Boulevard and Downey Avenue. Casillas, who was also pursuing Acosta in his patrol vehicle, stopped his patrol vehicle in the number one lane approximately three car lengths behind Acosta's vehicle. Macias and Van Der Zanden drove in the left turn lane immediately to the left of the number one lane and stopped next to Casillas' patrol vehicle in order to coordinate a plan to conduct a traffic stop on Acosta.

Van Der Zanden heard Acosta's tires breaking traction with the road, then saw Acosta drive in reverse approximately 30 to 40 miles per hour until colliding into the front of Casillas' patrol vehicle. Van Der Zanden exited his patrol vehicle and moved to the driver's side of his vehicle, where Macias was located. From this position, both he and Macias were facing Acosta, who was still seated in the driver's seat of his vehicle. Acosta revved the engine and attempted to break open the driver's side window with a knife.¹⁴ While holding the knife, Acosta opened the driver's side door and fell out of the car and onto the ground. Both Van Der Zanden and Macias gave Acosta several commands to put his hands up and to drop the knife, which Acosta was holding in his right hand, with the blade pointed towards Van Der Zanden and Macias. Van Der Zanden told Acosta to drop the knife, which Acosta refused to do. Acosta was approximately five to seven feet away from Van Der Zanden.

¹² Per Macias, Macias was five to six feet away from Acosta when he gave these commands.

¹³ The time from when Acosta emerged from his vehicle to the time deputies fired their service weapons was approximately two seconds.

¹⁴ Van Der Zanden noticed at this point Acosta "had some blood on him."

Acosta then stood up with the knife and lunged towards Van Der Zanden and Macias.

Van Der Zanden fired his service weapon at Acosta because he believed Acosta was going to stab him. Acosta collapsed to the ground, still clenching the knife in his right hand.

Because the distance between Van Der Zanden and Acosta was so close, Van Der Zanden did not believe there was sufficient time to use less-lethal options.

Deputies waited for additional units to arrive before approaching Acosta. A deputy removed the knife from Acosta's hand and handcuffed him. While rendering aid to Acosta, Van Der Zanden noticed Acosta had a large gash on his throat.

The Knife

The knife held by Acosta had a metal blade approximately three and a half inches long. The total length of the knife including the handle is approximately eight inches.



Fig. 4: Blood-stained Metal Folding Knife Held By Acosta.

Firearms Evidence

Macias and Van Der Zanden were armed with 9mm semi-automatic service weapons. Based on a rounds count of the deputies' firearms, BWV and casings recovered at the scene, the deputies fired a total of 13 rounds at Acosta.¹⁵ Van Der Zanden fired eight rounds and Macia fired five rounds.

Next of Kin Notification

On March 20, 2024, Gore interviewed [REDACTED], Acosta's [REDACTED]. Gore informed [REDACTED] about the death of his son. [REDACTED] told Gore Acosta had struggled with drug addiction,

¹⁵ Van Der Zanden carries his service weapon fully loaded with 20 rounds. After the shooting, investigators recovered 12 rounds in Van Der Zanden's service weapon, suggesting that Van Der Zanden fired eight rounds. Macias carries his service weapon fully loaded with 18 rounds. After the shooting, investigators recovered 13 rounds in Macias' service weapon, suggesting that Macias fired five rounds. Investigators recovered 11 expended cartridge casings at the scene of the shooting.

specifically methamphetamine, and had a history of mental illness. [REDACTED] also provided Gore with details about a prior suicide attempt by Acosta. After Gore provided [REDACTED] with the details of his son's death, [REDACTED] told Gore he believed Acosta's actions in ramming a patrol vehicle was possibly an attempt to have somebody else take his life.

Autopsy

On March 21, 2024, Deputy Medical Examiner Lawrence Nguyen, M.D. performed a post-mortem examination of Acosta's remains and determined he died from multiple gunshot wounds. There were 11 total gunshot wound tracks with one to the head, eight to the torso, and two to the extremities.

During the autopsy, Dr. Nguyen also noted an incised wound on Acosta's neck.

A toxicology analysis was performed and determined Acosta had the presence of alcohol, amphetamine and methamphetamine in his bloodstream at the time of his death.

LEGAL ANALYSIS

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 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).

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).

Analysis

Acosta used his vehicle to commit a violent and unprovoked assault on Casillas, who was in full uniform and driving in a marked LASD patrol vehicle. The force of the collision was so great the rear of Acosta's vehicle was launched on top of Macias's patrol vehicle, which was stopped at the time of the collision. Both Macias and Van Der Zanden witnessed this assault and believed that Acosta had attempted to seriously injure Casillas. Both deputies were also aware of a history of domestic violence calls regarding Acosta and his recent threat to drive his vehicle into ■■■■■'s living room.

When Acosta emerged from his vehicle, he was armed with a knife.¹⁶ He ignored deputies' orders to put his hands up and drop the knife. From a distance of approximately five to seven feet, he abruptly charged at the deputies while holding the knife with blade pointed at them. As a result of the close distance and the imminent threat posed by Acosta, the deputies did not have sufficient time to consider less-lethal options. Based on these circumstances, Macias and Van Der Zanden reasonably believed the use of deadly force was necessary to defend against an imminent threat of death or bodily injury to themselves and other deputies that were present.

CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, we find that Macias and Van Der Zanden acted lawfully in self defense and the defense of others.

¹⁶ The evidence suggests that prior to exiting his car, Acosta was suicidal and had used the knife to cut his own throat.