

Fatal Officer Involved Shooting of Ramiro Lozano
Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department

Deputy Adonay Molina, #546540

J.S.I.D. File #22-0395



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Justice System Integrity Division

August 18, 2025

MEMORANDUM

TO: ACTING CAPTAIN ARTURO R. SPENCER
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Homicide Bureau
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FROM: JUSTICE SYSTEM INTEGRITY DIVISION
Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office

SUBJECT: Fatal Officer Involved Shooting of Ramiro Lozano
J.S.I.D. File #22-0395
L.A.S.D. File #022-14323-2842-013

DATE: August 18, 2025

The Justice System Integrity Division of the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office (LADA) has completed its review of the November 3, 2022, fatal shooting of Ramiro Lozano by Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) Deputy Adonay Molina. We have determined Deputy Molina acted in lawful self-defense and in the defense of a third party when he fired his service weapon. We further conclude, based on the totality of the circumstances, Molina reasonably believed the use of lethal force was necessary to defend against an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury to himself or another person.

The District Attorney's Command Center was notified of the shooting on November 3, 2022, at 1:54 p.m. The District Attorney Response Team responded and was given a briefing and walk-through of the scene at 5:13 p.m. by LASD Lieutenant Michael Gomez.

The following analysis is based on body worn camera video (BWV), investigative reports, forensic reports, audio recordings, surveillance videos, photographs, and medical reports submitted to this office by LASD Detective Molinero on February 8, 2024. Molina's departmentally compelled statement was not considered as part of this analysis.

INTRODUCTION

On November 3, 2022, Lozano entered an AM/PM in the City of Compton brandishing an axe. Lozano swung the axe at an employee, then quickly fled the location as a 9-1-1 caller provided Lozano's description to deputies. Deputies observed Lozano running down an embankment on Artesia Blvd. into the wash at Compton Creek, and eventually into the Gateway Towne Center shopping mall. Deputies pursued Lozano, who was running alongside a Best Buy store, still holding the axe in his right hand. Deputies gave numerous commands for Lozano to stop and drop the weapon, which were all ignored. Molina exited his patrol vehicle and gave additional commands for Lozano to stop. Lozano briefly turned his upper body toward Molina but continued to run with the axe in his hand toward multiple shoppers in the area. Before Lozano

could reach any of the shoppers, Molina fired three rounds from his service weapon, striking Lozano once in his back. Despite medical intervention, Lozano succumbed to his injuries.

FACTUAL ANALYSIS

Incident at AM/PM

█ was employed at AM/PM, located at █ Santa Fe Avenue in the City of Compton and was working on November 3, 2022.¹ At approximately 12:08 p.m., surveillance camera video shows Lozano walking along the front of the store holding an approximately 13-inch axe, wearing a sweatshirt with a hood, which he raised prior to entering the establishment. █ told investigators he knew Lozano from several other encounters in the store related to theft. Surveillance video captured Lozano's entrance into the store. After entering, Lozano approaches █ in a threatening manner near the front of the store. Lozano then raises the axe above his head and immediately swings it sharply downward, directly in front of █. █ told investigators Lozano said, "What! What!" as he swung the axe at him.²



Fig. 1: Lozano enters the AM/PM with the axe.



Fig. 2: Lozano raises the axe just prior to swinging it at █.

Surveillance video shows Lozano turning to leave, then quickly turning around, pointing, and saying something to █. Next, Lozano leaves the store as █ cautiously follows him outside. Lozano turns around and approaches █ who retreats into the store. █ told investigators Lozano sprayed █ with pepper spray outside the store after the assault with the axe, but █ was able to avoid it getting into his eyes. After using the pepper spray, Lozano walked away from the store westbound on Artesia Blvd. A 9-1-1 caller described the suspect carrying an axe as a male Hispanic with a shaved head, gray sweater, blue pants, and a backpack. Responding deputies

¹ The factual analysis of the incident at the AM/PM was derived from witness statements and surveillance video.

² At least one other percipient witness confirmed Lozano assaulted █ with the axe. That individual made a 9-1-1 call reporting the assault.

saw Lozano exit Artesia Boulevard and travel north down an embankment into the wash along Compton Creek. From there, Lozano traveled along the east side of Compton Creek until he entered the Compton Towne Center shopping mall near Towne Center Drive, which has since been renamed Eazy Street. The distance between the AM/PM and Compton Towne Center is approximately one-half mile.

Incident at Compton Towne Center Shopping Mall

Interview of Deputy Taylor Hale

Deputy Taylor Hale was interviewed by investigators on November 3, 2022. Hale received a call for service instructing deputies to respond code 3³ to the AM/PM regarding an assault suspect armed with an axe. After leaving the AM/PM to search for the subject, deputies received further information regarding the suspect's movements, which led Hale to respond to Compton Towne Center. Hale and Molina responded nearly simultaneously, each driving separate LASD patrol vehicles without partners. They encountered Lozano running eastbound along Eazy Street on the south side of Best Buy. Both Hale and Molina drove alongside Lozano in their patrol vehicles.

Hale saw Lozano holding an axe in his right hand. From his patrol vehicle, Hale issued several verbal commands for Lozano to drop the axe, including, "Stop or I'll shoot!" Lozano responded, "Shoot me then!" Hale heard Molina issued commands as well but could not make out exactly what Molina said. Lozano ignored all commands. Hale was concerned Lozano was running toward the Best Buy parking lot where Hale could see several shoppers present. Hale feared Lozano might enter the Best Buy and assault other victims with the axe if not stopped, given the initial call for service stating he had already assaulted someone with an axe.

Lozano turned left, running northbound along the front side of Best Buy. Molina drove around Hale to cut Lozano off with his patrol vehicle, however, Lozano ran around Molina's patrol vehicle. Molina exited and gave commands for Lozano to stop, but he ignored the commands and continued east. As Hale drove around Molina's vehicle to try to get in front of Lozano, Hale heard four shots. Hale did not witness the deputy involved shooting, as his view was obstructed by Molina's patrol vehicle. Hale saw Lozano on his back with the axe on the ground nearby, and radioed for a rescue ambulance. After being handcuffed, Lozano was placed in a recovery position. Compton Fire Department arrived on scene and began medical treatment.

Video surveillance from Best Buy

Best Buy had multiple surveillance cameras which captured the moments leading up to the deputy involved shooting. The only camera to capture the shooting itself is inside the store and only captured the suspect's feet. Another camera shows Lozano running along the south side of Best Buy with the axe in his hand as Molina and Hale pursue him in their patrol vehicles. A third camera records Lozano rounding the corner of Best Buy from Eazy St. and entering the main parking lot of the Gateway Towne Center. This same camera shows numerous people present in the parking lot only moments prior to Lozano turning the corner.

³ A code 3 response instructs an officer to respond to an urgent or emergency request with the patrol vehicle's lights and siren activated.



Fig. 3: Lozano runs east along Best Buy with an axe in his right hand as Molina and Hale pursue in their patrol vehicles.



Fig. 4: Lozano rounds the corner of Best Buy and runs toward the entrance of the store while still holding the axe. Customers are present in the parking lot.

Deputy Molina's Body Worn Camera Video

Molina was equipped with BWV. The video activates approximately one minute and 13 seconds prior to the deputy involved shooting, consisting mostly of Molina driving his police vehicle in pursuit of Lozano. Only the interior portion of the patrol vehicle is visible until Molina exits. The audio activates one minute into the video as Molina is about to stop his patrol vehicle and pursue Lozano on foot. At the 54 second mark, Molina removes his service weapon from his holster and opens the door to exit, then abandons the idea and continues to drive. At one minute and seven seconds, Molina stops the car and exits with his firearm in his right hand. Molina is approximately ten to 15 feet behind Lozano, who is walking and still carrying the axe in his right hand. Molina yells, "Stop! Stop! Stop! I'm going to shoot you! Hey!" Molina follows Lozano.



Fig. 5: Lozano approaching the Best Buy entrance with the axe in his right hand.

Lozano briefly turns his upper body to look back at Molina, then begins to run. There are two individuals in Lozano's immediate path. A Best Buy security guard stands approximately ten to 15 feet in front of, and to the left of, Lozano. A shopper walks across Lozano's path of travel, approximately 25 to 30 feet in front of Lozano. There are additional individuals in the distance. Once Lozano begins to run, Molina commands, "Hey! Stop right there!" When Lozano ignores the commands, Molina fires three successive rounds from his service weapon at Lozano, who collapses to the ground with the axe in his hand. Approximately five seconds elapse from the moment Molina exits his patrol vehicle to the time the deputy involved shooting occurs. During that time, Lozano moves substantially closer to the shopper. Molina kicks the axe away from Lozano, then takes a defensive position behind the patrol vehicle. Hale and Molina wait for other deputies to arrive before Lozano is handcuffed.



Fig. 6: Lozano with the axe in his right hand turning to look back at Molina while simultaneously running in the direction of two bystanders and numerous other people in the distance.



Fig. 7: Lozano immediately after being shot, still holding the axe with a shopper approximately ten to 15 feet away.

Other Witnesses

Numerous other individuals also witnessed portions of the event. None of these individuals were law enforcement officers.⁴ [REDACTED] had just arrived with her mother, [REDACTED], in the Best Buy parking lot

⁴ On the advice of his legal counsel, Deputy Molina declined to provide a statement.

when she witnessed Lozano running away from deputies with a “hatchet” in his hand outside Best Buy. ■ did not witness the shooting. ■’s mother, ■, told investigators she had just parked her car when she saw Lozano running with a “hatchet” above his head in front of Best Buy. Deputies ordered Lozano to stop. As he continued to run with the “hatchet,” deputies shot twice, and he fell to the ground.

From the parking lot, ■ saw Lozano with a “hatchet” while two deputies in patrol vehicles chased him. The deputies shouted, “Drop the weapon!” and “Stop running! Get down!” He heard three gunshots.

Best Buy security guard ■ heard sirens and exited the front entrance to investigate. He saw Lozano approaching him with an axe raised above his head. ■ drew his firearm,⁵ pointed it at Lozano, and stated, “Drop the weapon!” Simultaneously, two deputies exited their patrol vehicles. One deputy gave Lozano commands to drop the weapon. ■ holstered his weapon. Next, Lozano turned and moved toward the deputies with the axe raised, and ■ heard Lozano say, “Shoot me nigga! Shoot me nigga!” The deputy fired his weapon two to three times, and Lozano fell to the ground. ■ reentered the store and secured the door.

■ also saw the deputies chasing the subject and issuing commands to stop. She told investigators Lozano had nothing in his hands and believed the deputies unjustifiably shot him in the back as he was attempting to enter Best Buy. She told investigators the deputies should have Tased Lozano because “the man was not in his right mind.” Finally, she witnessed another deputy discharge his weapon after the shooting.⁶

Medical Treatment and Coroner’s Investigation

Personnel from the Compton City Fire Department began treating Lozano at 12:29 p.m. Lozano was transported to Saint Francis Medical Center where, despite life saving measures, Lozano was pronounced deceased at 12:59 p.m. Dr. Kevin Young of the Los Angeles County Department of the Medical Examiner – Coroner performed an autopsy on Lozano’s remains on November 23, 2022. He concluded Lozano died from a single gunshot wound to the middle of his back, which traveled at an upward angle, penetrating his lung and heart and exiting the right side of his chest.

Physical Evidence

Molina’s service weapon was a Berretta 9mm semi-automatic pistol. A round count was conducted at the LASD Compton station at 6:42 p.m. on November 3, 2022. The service weapon had one live round in the chamber and 12 live rounds in the 15 round capacity magazine, indicating three rounds were discharged. Three 9mm expended cartridge casings were recovered from the area in front of Best Buy. Three distinct shots were also heard on Molina’s BWV. Molina was equipped with pepper spray and a baton but did not have a Taser.

An Axe/Hatchet measuring 12-14 inches in length was recovered from the area directly in front of Best Buy.

⁵ As a security guard for Best Buy, ■ carries a firearm. ■ did not fire his weapon during the incident.

⁶ Several minutes after the deputy involved shooting had occurred, Deputy Israel Benitez was responding to the front of the Best Buy where other deputies were congregating. As he walked through the parking lot, his service weapon accidentally discharged while in his holster. This was reported to investigators who examined the circumstances surrounding the accidental discharge and included this information in their investigation report.



Fig. 8: The recovered axe collected in front of Best Buy.

LEGAL ANALYSIS

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 for either of the following reasons (1) to defend against an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury to the officer or to 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 § 835a(b), (c)(1)(A), and (c)(1)(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 the objectively reasonable officer.” Penal Code § 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 § 835a(e)(2).

“Totality of the 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. 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).

Molina responded to the Compton Towne Center to locate a suspect who had committed an assault with an axe at the AM/PM. When Molina and Hale first intercepted Lozano, he was running away from them, carrying a large axe in his right hand. While Lozano was running along the south side of Best Buy, both deputies made numerous commands for Lozano to stop and drop the weapon. Instead, Lozano ignored all commands and told the deputies to shoot him. Next, he rounded the corner, heading toward the parking lot and store entrance where many people were present. Hale told investigators he was concerned Lozano would encounter bystanders or enter Best Buy and possibly harm someone as he refused to drop the weapon. Since Molina was similarly situated to Hale, the evidence would support Molina sharing the same concerns.

Molina tried to block Lozano with his patrol vehicle. When Lozano evaded Molina's vehicle and continued towards the store entrance and shoppers, Molina exited with his service weapon drawn. The succeeding events unfolded quickly, as only five seconds elapsed from the time Molina exited the patrol vehicle until the first shot was fired. As Molina continued to issue commands for Lozano to stop, Lozano briefly turned his upper body to look back at Molina while still holding the axe in his right hand. Lozano quickly turned back around with the axe and ran in the direction of several people, including the security guard and a female shopper. Had Lozano continued in that direction, Lozano could have reached the two individuals within one to two seconds. Molina fired three quick, successive shots, striking Lozano one time and preventing him from getting within striking distance of either individual.

Deputies showed restraint and did not engage until the situation escalated with Lozano approaching several people and still wielding the axe in a menacing manner. Just prior to the shooting, Lozano had the present ability to throw the axe or deliver a potentially deadly blow to the head, neck, or chest of either potential target. Knowing Lozano had just assaulted someone at the AM/PM minutes earlier, Molina could reasonably believe Lozano was willing to strike either the security guard or the female shopper with the axe. Based on the totality of the circumstances known to Molina at the time of the incident, it was reasonable for him to believe the use of deadly force was necessary to defend against an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury to himself or other individuals present.

CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, we find Officer Molina acted lawfully in self-defense and in the defense of a third party when he fired his service weapon.