

**Fatal Officer Involved Shooting of Justin Flores
El Monte Police Department**

**Sergeant Eric Sanchez, # 525
Detective Julian Urias, # 581
Officer Erick Ramos, # 679
Detective Justin Calatayud, # 684**

J.S.I.D. File #22-0191



**GEORGE GASCON
District Attorney**

**Justice System Integrity Division
October 1, 2024**

MEMORANDUM

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

SUBJECT: Fatal Officer Involved Shooting of Justin Flores
J.S.I.D. File #22-0191
E.M.P.D. File #22-021509
L.A.S.D. File #022-0060-3199-011

DATE: October 1, 2024

The Justice System Integrity Division of the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office has completed its review of the June 14, 2022, fatal shooting of Justin Flores by El Monte Police Department (EMPD) Sergeant Eric Sanchez, Detective Julian Urias, Officer Erick Ramos, and Detective Justin Calatayud. We conclude, based on the totality of the evidence, the officers reasonably believed that the use of deadly force was necessary to defend against an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury to themselves and others.

The District Attorney's Command Center was notified of this shooting on June 14, 2022, at approximately 6:20 p.m. The District Attorney Response Team (DART) responded to the scene. They were given a briefing and walk-through by Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) personnel.

The following analysis is based on investigative reports, laboratory reports, surveillance videos, body-worn camera videos (BWV), involved officers' voluntary statements, recorded witness statements, photographs, civilian dash cam footage, and physical evidence submitted to this office by the LASD Homicide Bureau on October 6, 2023, including those not individually summarized in this memorandum.

FACTUAL ANALYSIS

On Wednesday, June 14, 2022, around 4:47 p.m., [REDACTED] contacted EMPD and requested a welfare check on her daughter, [REDACTED], at a local motel, because [REDACTED]'s husband, Flores, had stabbed [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] further reported that Flores was likely armed with a gun, had

taken phencyclidine (PCP) and methamphetamine, and was on parole for a gun conviction. EMPD Sergeant Eric Sanchez, Officer Joseph Santana, and Corporal Michael Paredes responded in full uniform to the motel located on Garvey Avenue in the City of El Monte.



Figure 1: Surveillance video footage still of Officer Santana, Corporal Paredes, and Sergeant Sanchez knocking on the door of Room 103 of the Siesta Inn.

Santana heard arguing inside room 103 and told Paredes and Sanchez, “There’s fighting going on,” before knocking on the door. For nearly five minutes, Santana knocked and talked to ██████ and Flores through the door, trying to convince them to open the door. ██████ eventually opened the door and walked out of the room, into the parking lot. Santana walked into the motel room and told Flores not to go back toward the bathroom. Paredes stood in the doorway as Sanchez followed Santana. Flores, dressed only in boxers and holding a pair of pants in his hands, walked away from Santana and towards the bathroom at the back of the motel room.

Approximately 20 seconds after officers first entered the motel room, Santana began physically struggling with Flores, and Flores raised a handgun from under his pants. Santana yelled, “He’s got a gun!” and he and Flores continued to physically struggle.

Gunshots can be heard on the officers’ BWV. Paredes was shot and fell backwards onto the floor, just inside the motel room door. More gunshots were fired and Santana’s BWV showed him falling to the floor by the bathroom. Sanchez fired multiple times into the bathroom at Flores, then ran out of the motel room and broadcast over the radio requesting immediate assistance. ██████ stood outside the room screaming and asking what they did to Flores.

Flores knelt down next to Santana. Santana’s BWV showed his body being rocked from side to side while Flores said, “How the fuck is it in there so good?” indicating that Flores was trying to take Santana’s firearm. Sanchez fired several more times into the motel room from the doorway before running to the north end of the parking lot and taking cover behind a parked vehicle. Flores then ran past Paredes and stooped down to pick up something from the floor, likely Paredes’s department issued 9mm Sig Sauer semi-automatic handgun that Paredes had dropped after he fell to the floor. Flores came out of the motel room, walked toward ██████ in the parking lot, and dropped a 9mm Glock semi-automatic handgun with an obliterated serial

number onto the ground. Flores turned around and, with another handgun, fired multiple times at Sanchez across the parking lot. Sanchez returned fire.

Flores went back into the motel room. Paredes's BWV showed Flores bending over Paredes's body before standing back up. An empty 9mm Sig Sauer magazine was later found on the floor near where Flores stooped. Flores came back out of the room and stood in the doorway firing his gun toward Sanchez. Flores re-entered the motel room again for a few seconds. Based on Paredes's and Sanchez's BWV footage and Paredes's injuries, investigators believe that Flores shot Paredes an additional time in the face at this time.¹



Figure 2: Video still of Flores shooting at Sergeant Sanchez, who is taking cover behind a parked van in the north end of the parking lot.

¹ Paredes suffered two fatal gunshot wounds to his head – one centered between his eyebrows and one to his right temple that exited beneath his right ear. Sanchez's BWV shows Paredes falling to the floor during the initial gunfight with blood coming down his right temple and behind his right ear. Sanchez's BWV captured the audio of several separate volleys of gunshots from Flores. The second to last volley, approximately seven in rapid succession, followed by a pause and then a single shot, is heard as Sanchez broadcasts over the radio, "He's still inside the room."

Surveillance video footage captured the second to last volley. Flores can be seen firing several rounds at Sanchez from the doorway of room 103 before he goes back into the motel room, out of view. A few seconds later, Flores runs out of the room and out of the parking lot while firing at Sanchez (the last volley of gunshots).

The volleys of gunshots are also captured on Paredes's BWV. Paredes's BWV shows that Paredes was still breathing and moving after being initially shot and falling to the floor. Paredes's BWV shows Flores bend down next to Paredes then move toward the motel room door just before the second to last volley of gunshots is heard. Paredes's BWV shows a sudden jolting motion when the single shot is heard. Paredes's BWV shows significantly less movement after that single shot.

When Sanchez re-entered the room to render aid, his BWV showed Paredes laying face up on the floor, with a large amount of blood in the center of his face.



Figure 3: Video still of Flores shooting at Sergeant Sanchez from the doorway of room 103.

When he came back out of the motel room, Flores held a firearm in one hand and a magazine in the other. Flores shot at Sanchez several more times again while running toward the sidewalk. Just before he exited the parking lot, Flores reloaded his gun and dropped an empty magazine onto the ground. Sanchez broadcast on his radio that he needed immediate assistance, that officers were down, Flores's description, the direction Flores was running, and that Flores had a gun.

Flores ran westbound on Garvey Avenue with a gun in his hand toward [REDACTED]. When she turned and moved eastbound, Flores followed her. Almost immediately, he pointed his firearm and fired at two unmarked police vehicles which were approaching the motel with activated lights and sirens. The first vehicle carried four off-duty EMPD officers, including Detective Urias in the rear passenger seat. Detective Calatayud was the driver of the second vehicle and stopped to the left of Urias's vehicle when Flores shot at them.



Figure 4: Video still of Flores firing at the two unmarked police vehicles pulling up.

Flores turned and began running back westbound behind [REDACTED] as the two unmarked vehicles stopped in the street. Calatayud fired his gun multiple times at Flores. Flores ran a few steps and fell forward onto the ground. Urias's vehicle stopped for a few seconds before it sped westbound. Urias shot at Flores from the open back passenger door. Officer Ramos's marked patrol vehicle pulled up and stopped between Calatayud's vehicle and Flores within seconds after Urias's vehicle drove away.



Figure 5: Video still of Flores falling to the ground as the two unmarked police vehicles with EMPD detectives stop in the street in front of the Siesta Inn.

While on the ground, Flores rolled onto his back and appeared to check his handgun. Ramos and Calatayud exited their vehicles. Flores shot multiple times at Ramos, who retreated and took cover. Flores then pointed the gun at his own head and fired. Flores's body was still moving immediately after shooting himself, and Catalayud and Ramos fired multiple times at him. There were a total of 11 expended 9mm cartridge casings located near Flores's body on the sidewalk. Paredes's EMPD issued firearm was located on the sidewalk next to Flores. The magazine was empty with one live round in the chamber.



Figure 6: Surveillance video footage still of Flores firing at officers while lying on the ground, just before shooting himself in the head.

Flores was declared dead at the scene. An autopsy determined the cause of death to be a self-inflicted gunshot. Toxicology testing showed that Flores had PCP, amphetamines, and methamphetamine in his system.

Santana and Paredes were taken to the hospital where both died from their injuries. Paredes suffered nine gunshot wounds, including two fatal gunshot wounds to the head. Santana suffered three gunshot wounds, including one fatal gunshot wound to the head.

Non-Compelled Statements

Sergeant Eric Sanchez

On June 17, 2022, Sanchez gave a voluntary statement to investigators. Sanchez responded to the Siesta Inn with Santana and Paredes to conduct a welfare check about a woman who had been stabbed by her boyfriend. As Santana knocked on the door to the motel room, he said he heard arguing inside. The door eventually opened and [REDACTED] immediately walked out of the room, saying something to the effect of, "I'm glad you're here." Sanchez saw a male, later identified as Flores, standing at the foot of the bed, holding a pair of jeans in his right hand. Santana entered the room as Flores walked toward the back of the motel room to the bathroom. Santana unsuccessfully tried to keep Flores from going to the bathroom. Sanchez followed behind Santana.

Sanchez saw Flores raise a gun in his hands from under the pants when Flores got to the doorway of the bathroom. Sanchez yelled to notify his partners that Flores was armed and stepped back to pull out his own gun. He heard gunshots being fired and returned fire several times toward Flores. As Sanchez stumbled out of the motel room to find cover, he saw Corporal Paredes laying on the floor near the motel room door with blood all over his face.

Sanchez radioed for backup. He turned around and saw Flores by the bathroom and fired more rounds at him to try to stop him. Realizing that he was standing in front of the motel room with no cover, he ran behind a parked van in the parking lot. Flores came out of the motel room and fired his gun at Sanchez "a lot," "like [Flores] was unloading his ... gun on [him]." Flores returned into the room, and Sanchez reloaded his gun. Flores came back out of the motel room and fired again toward Sanchez before running out of the parking lot and turning onto the sidewalk. Sanchez broadcast Flores's description, his location, and the fact that he still had a gun. Sanchez heard sirens from other patrol vehicles and shots being fired from the sidewalk. Sanchez went into the motel room to render aid to Paredes and Santana.

Detective Justin Calatayud

On July 12, 2022, Calatayud gave a voluntary statement to investigators. On the day of the incident, Calatayud was dressed in plain clothes in an unmarked police vehicle on his way to conduct undercover surveillance when he heard the radio broadcast that there was an officer-involved shooting at a nearby motel. He activated his vehicle's lights and sirens and headed to the location. He heard an additional radio broadcast where he heard gunfire and that an officer was down.

Within about a minute, Calatayud arrived at the motel. Almost simultaneously, Calatayud saw Flores, heard a radio broadcast, and heard a bullet impact his vehicle. The broadcast described the shooter as shirtless, running westbound, and armed with a gun. Calatayud saw a female running away from a shirtless male on the sidewalk. The male began shooting at Calatayud and another detective's vehicle also arriving.

Calatayud pulled to the left of the other detective's vehicle and saw Flores with his gun still raised. Believing that Flores was actively trying to kill him and his partners, Calatayud began firing his off-duty gun at Flores through his windshield. When Flores went down to the ground, Calatayud exited his vehicle and took cover behind a marked patrol car that had also pulled up. As he did so, Calatayud heard more rapid gunfire. He saw Flores laying on the ground on his side and firing his gun toward him and the other officers. Calatayud discharged his firearm at Flores again. After hearing additional gunfire, Calatayud and Ramos advanced toward Flores and saw that Flores was no longer moving. Calatayud immediately ran to the motel to look for the injured officers.

Detective Julian Urias

On June 27, 2022, Urias gave a voluntary statement to investigators. On the day of the incident, Urias was dressed in a department collared shirt and slacks attending a training. He and three other officers carpooled in an unmarked Detective Bureau vehicle to the training. Officer Nicole Lona was driving and Urias was seated in the rear passenger seat. As they left the parking lot from the training, he heard a radio broadcast that there was an officer involved shooting and that officers were down. They immediately drove to the location with the lights and sirens activated.

As they arrived at the motel, Urias heard radio traffic saying that the shooter had no shirt on and was going out of the front, armed with a gun. "As soon as we pulled up," he saw the shirtless man near the driveway of the motel "start[] firing right at us." They all ducked to take cover because they were "like in a kill zone."

Lona drove the vehicle westbound on Garvey, and Urias opened his door. Urias fired two rounds at Flores with his off duty firearm as the vehicle passed Flores because Urias saw the gun still in Flores's hands and believed Flores was kneeling or crawling on the ground. They continued down Garvey and stopped a short distance away. As Urias exited the vehicle, he could still hear gunfire.

Officer Erick Ramos

On July 12, 2022, Ramos gave a voluntary statement to investigators. On the day of the incident, Ramos was on patrol in full uniform and in a marked patrol vehicle. Over the radio, he heard clicking and someone saying, "Gun! Gun! Gun!" and gunshots in the background. As Ramos drove to the location of the call, he heard over the radio that there was an officer involved shooting and that officers were down. Hearing that there was an active gunfight still occurring, Ramos unlocked his rifle. He heard the physical description and location of the shooter.

As Ramos pulled up, he could hear gunshots. When Ramos exited his vehicle, he saw Flores pointing his gun at him and heard gunshots. Ramos took cover and repositioned himself, but when he stepped out, Flores shot at him so Ramos retreated. Ramos believed Flores was "trying to kill [him] because [Flores] was actively following [him] from [his patrol vehicle] to the front of [the other parked vehicle]." Ramos shot back at Flores with his rifle until he was out of ammunition. Ramos could see Flores was still moving, so Ramos fired at Flores again using his

department issued handgun. Ramos stopped shooting when he saw that Flores had stopped moving and there was a firearm on the ground. Ramos did not see Flores shoot himself.

Witness Statements

██████████

██████████ spoke with investigators on the day of the incident and again on September 14, 2022. ██████████ said she and Flores had been married since 2020. Since March 2022, he used PCP heavily and had been acting like a “fucking monster.” She reported several incidents of domestic violence, including Flores stabbing her two days prior. Flores came to her motel room the night before the incident high on PCP.

██████████ knew Flores carried a gun inside a gray pouch. When the police knocked on the door, Flores prevented her from opening the door, and he removed the handgun from the pouch. As she tried to open the door, Flores told her, “We’re all going to die, bitch.” She ran away from the motel because she believed Flores was going to kill her.

Coroner’s Report

On June 17, 2022, Doctor Scott Luzi performed an autopsy on Justin Flores. Flores sustained 33 penetrating trauma wounds, including one fatal, self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head. Flores sustained two other potentially fatal gunshot wounds: one to the forehead and one to the left thigh that severed the femoral artery. The wound to the forehead was inflicted post-mortem. Toxicology testing showed the presence of PCP, amphetamines, and methamphetamine in Flores’s blood. Dr. Luzi ruled Flores’s manner of death was suicide caused by a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head.

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 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 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) & (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).

In this matter, the evidence establishes that Flores murdered Officer Santana and Corporal Paredes in the presence of Sergeant Sanchez. Sanchez also saw Flores shoot at him several different times, including across the motel parking lot. In response, Sanchez fired his duty weapon at Flores. These circumstances support a reasonable belief that this use of deadly force was necessary to defend against an imminent threat to himself and others.

The evidence also establishes that Sanchez broadcast on the radio that Flores was armed and that police officers were “down.” As Calatayud and Urias arrived at the location in response to that request for assistance, Flores fired at them before they stopped their cars. While on the ground wounded, Flores continued to shoot at Calatayud and Ramos before turning the gun on himself. When each of the officers returned fire, the circumstances and evidence support a reasonable belief that their use of deadly force was necessary to defend against an imminent threat to themselves and others.

CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, we find that Sergeant Sanchez, Detectives Calatayud and Urias, and Officer Ramos acted lawfully in self-defense and defense of others when they used deadly force against Justin Flores.