

# **Fatal Officer Involved Shooting of Jesse Medrano**

## **Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department**

**Deputy Chase Morales, #606656, Deputy Jorge Fajardo, #602971**

## **California Highway Patrol**

**Officer Brian Winter, #22453 Officer Luis Murillo, #21094 Officer Abe Kim, #20548  
Officer Ryan Grimes, #21141 Officer Ramon Silva, #19056 Officer Craig Latschar, #17943**

**J.S.I.D. File #21-0421**



**GEORGE GASCÓN**

**District Attorney**

**Justice System Integrity Division**

**November 13, 2024**

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: CHIEF CHRIS MARGARIS  
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ACTING CAPTAIN ARTURO R. SPENCER  
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FROM: JUSTICE SYSTEM INTEGRITY DIVISION  
Los Angeles County District Attorney’s Office

SUBJECT: Fatal Officer Involved Shooting of Jesse Medrano  
J.S.I.D. File #21-0421  
C.H.P. File #228-509-21  
L.A.S.D. File #021-133354-2115-013

DATE: November 13, 2024

The Justice System Integrity Division of the Los Angeles County District Attorney’s Office has completed its review of the October 5, 2021, fatal shooting of Jesse Medrano by Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department (LASD) Deputies Chase Morales and Jorge Fajardo along with California Highway Patrol (CHP) Officers Brian Winter, Abe Kim, Luis Murillo, Ryan Grimes, Craig Latschar, and Ramon Silva. We have determined that the evidence supports a reasonable belief by the deputies and officers that the use of deadly force was necessary in self -defense when they each fired their duty weapon.

The District Attorney’s Command Center was notified of this shooting on October 5, 2021, at approximately 10:30 p.m. The District Attorney Response Team responded to the scene and was given a briefing and walk-through by Sergeant Sergio Perez of LASD.

The following analysis is based on reports and other materials, including recorded interviews, photographs, video recordings, and radio communications submitted to this office by LASD Homicide Bureau and CHP Investigative Services Unit (ISU) on April 3, 2023. No compelled statements were considered in this analysis.

## FACTUAL ANALYSIS

On October 5, 2021, at approximately 8:09 a.m., CHP Officer Luis Contreras responded to a report of a stalled Toyota Sienna minivan located on the transition ramp of the Westbound I-105 freeway and the Northbound I-710 freeway. Upon arrival, Contreras contacted the driver and sole occupant Jesse Medrano. Contreras conducted a check of the vehicle's license plate which indicated the vehicle was stolen, Medrano was wanted for murder, and that he was considered "armed and dangerous."<sup>1,2</sup> Contreras instructed Medrano to exit the vehicle. As Medrano exited, he (Medrano) reached into his waistband and removed a semiautomatic handgun. Contreras drew his duty weapon, pointed it at Medrano, and commanded him to drop the gun. Medrano did not comply. Contreras continued to point his gun at Medrano and called for backup.

Minutes later, additional CHP officers along with LASD deputies arrived on scene. CHP Air Operations (Air Ops) provided tactical surveillance from the air via helicopter. Deputies Morales and Fajardo, and Officers Winter, Kim, Murillo, Grimes, Latschar, and Silva were present and took tactical positions near patrol vehicles facing Medrano.<sup>3</sup> At this point, Medrano was standing in the empty roadway with the gun in his hand.

CHP officers attempted to contact Medrano using the public address (PA) system of their vehicles. They directed Medrano to "put the gun down" and surrender. Medrano refused to comply with law enforcement commands.

After approximately 29 minutes, Medrano raised his right hand, pointed the gun, and fired five rounds towards the officers and deputies. In response, Deputies Morales and Fajardo, and Officers Winter, Kim, Murillo, Grimes, Latschar, and Silva fired a cumulative 57 rounds striking Medrano and causing him to fall to the ground and drop the gun. Officer Latschar was injured during the gunfire.

Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) personnel immediately responded to render medical aid. Medrano was subsequently transported to the hospital where he succumbed to his injuries. The Los Angeles County Coroner's Office determined Medrano sustained 13 gunshot wounds.

### Statements of Shooting Officers<sup>4</sup>

On October 5, 2021, Deputy Morales was interviewed by LASD Detectives Jason Marx and Gene Takashima. Morales explained that Medrano "paused, looked over both shoulders, raised his gun and pointed the firearm directly at [him]." In fear that Medrano would shoot him, Morales fired four rounds from his shotgun and watched as Medrano fell to the ground.

On October 5, 2021, Deputy Fajardo was interviewed by Marx and Takashima. Fajardo stated that Medrano raised his gun in a "sideways manner" and fired. Fajardo said he saw the smoke

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<sup>1</sup> Contreras conducted a check via his patrol vehicle's mobile digital computer (MDC).

<sup>2</sup> A review of the related Los Angeles Police Department crime report revealed that Medrano was [REDACTED] in [REDACTED].

<sup>3</sup> Approximately 20 additional officers and deputies were present.

<sup>4</sup> All interviews were recorded.

from the muzzle and, in fear Medrano was going to kill him or cause great bodily injury, he fired his duty weapon until Medrano fell to the ground.

On October 8, 2021, Officer Grimes was interviewed by CHP Detective Mike Yatsutake. Grimes stated that he saw a muzzle flash coming from Medrano's handgun, and in fear for his life, began returning fire with his patrol rifle until Medrano fell to the ground. After checking himself for injuries, Grimes observed that Latschar was wounded and helped move Latschar to cover.

On October 8, 2021, Officer Latschar was interviewed by Yatsutake. Latschar stated that as Medrano began to shoot, he fired back in fear for his life. Latschar explained that moments after, he looked down and noticed his face was bleeding. He was later transported to the hospital via ambulance and treated for a small abrasion. It is unclear what caused the injury.

On October 11, 2021, Officer Kim was interviewed by Yatsutake. Kim stated that Medrano raised the firearm with his right hand while pointing towards the officers. He stated he heard "three distinctive gunshots, felt something fly past [his] head and ducked." In fear for his life, Kim fired one shot back at Medrano.

On October 11, 2021, Officer Winter was interviewed by Yatsutake. Winter stated that Medrano fired his weapon. In fear for his life, Winter returned fire at Medrano, firing one round before ducking his head due to incoming shots. Winter then fired another round and watched as Medrano fell to the ground.

On October 11, 2021, Officer Murillo was interviewed by Yatsutake. Murillo stated he observed Medrano raise his weapon in his (Murillo's) direction, and "observed the gun recoil and eject a shell casing." In fear for his life, Murillo fired one round, heard Medrano fire two more rounds, and returned fire for "three to four seconds."

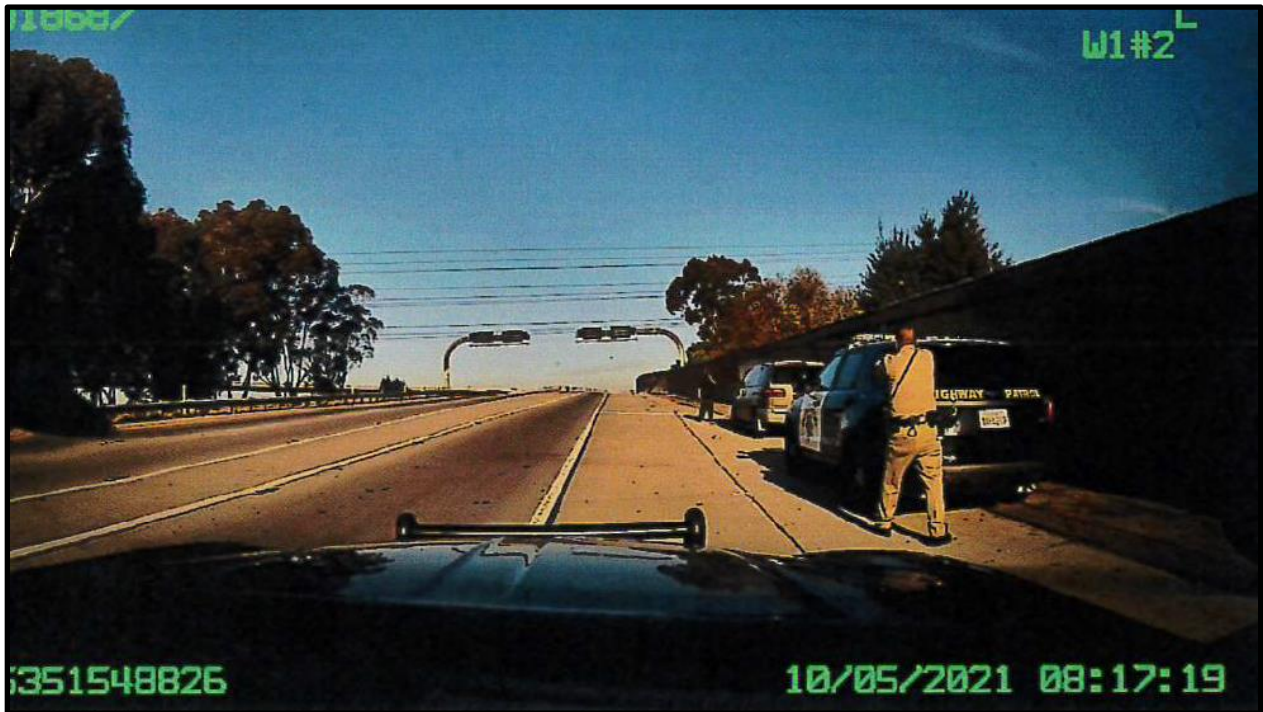
On October 11, 2021, Officer Silva was interviewed by Yatsutake. Silva stated that as Medrano raised his firearm, he (Silva) saw the barrel and "a plume of smoke came out." Silva said he returned fire in fear for his life.

Statement of [REDACTED]

On November 18, 2021, Albrego was interviewed by CHP Detective Mike Yatsutake. [REDACTED] stated that she was the ex-wife of Medrano and they shared a child in common. She explained that on the date of the incident, Medrano called her around 6:40 a.m. Medrano asked her to come and help jumpstart his vehicle that was stuck on the freeway. [REDACTED] stated that while she was on the phone, she could hear officers giving commands to "put down the gun." [REDACTED] stated that Medrano said he would "make the officers shoot him" and that he would "[REDACTED]." [REDACTED] said that Medrano told her he loved her and his son before hanging up the phone.

## Video Evidence

During the incident, Deputies Morales, Fajardo, and Officer Silva wore BWV devices. Additionally, video was captured from CHP vehicles equipped with MVARs and from CHP Air Ops.<sup>5</sup> All videos depict Medrano walking back and forth across freeway lanes while holding a firearm in his right hand. At times, Medrano appeared to speak into a cellphone which he held with his left hand. At one point, Medrano threw the cellphone onto the ground, then went back to pick it up. Additionally, Medrano raised his right hand several times while holding the firearm. In the BWV, Medrano can be heard shouting profanities at officers and seen making hand gestures with his middle finger.



A still image from Contreras' patrol vehicle's MVARs. Contreras (right) is depicted pointing his firearm at Medrano (center).

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<sup>5</sup> MVARs stands for Mobile Video Audio Recording System, which is a camera mounted on a police vehicle's dashboard.



A still image from CHP Air Ops depicting Medrano (far right) moments before firing.



A still image from CHP Air Ops depicting Medrano (center) firing shots.



A still image from Silva's BWV depicting Medrano (center) firing his weapon.

## LEGAL ANALYSIS

Any peace officer who has reasonable cause to believe that the person to be arrested has committed a public offense may use objectively reasonable force to effect the arrest, to prevent escape, or to overcome resistance. 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 to defend against an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury to the officer or to another person, or 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).

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 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).

In the present case, the evidence shows that Contreras attempted to make a lawful arrest of Medrano, [REDACTED]. Medrano displayed a firearm and said he would [REDACTED]. After a lengthy standoff with CHP officers and Sheriff’s deputies, who attempted to take him into custody, Medrano pointed his gun and fired it numerous times at the responding officers. In response to Medrano’s actions, the assembled officers fired their duty weapons back at Medrano, fatally wounding him. The evidence supports a reasonable belief that the use of deadly force was necessary to defend against an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury to the officers or another person.

## **CONCLUSION**

We conclude that the deputies and officers acted in lawful self-defense.