

**Non-Fatal Officer Involved Shooting of
Manuel Fidel Chavez
Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department**

**Deputy Estevan Perez, #513902
Deputy Matthew Doud, #528104
Deputy Michael Thompson, #625460**

J.S.I.D. File #21-0485



GEORGE GASCÓN

District Attorney

Justice System Integrity Division

November 19, 2024

MEMORANDUM

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

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

SUBJECT: Non-Fatal Officer Involved Shooting of Manuel Fidel Chavez
J.S.I.D. File #21-0485
L.A.S.D. File #021-15456-0627-057

DATE: November 19, 2024

The Justice System Integrity Division of the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office has completed its review of the November 12, 2021, non-fatal shooting of Manuel Fidel Chavez by Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) Deputies Estevan Perez, Matthew Doud and Michael Thompson. We conclude that the evidence establishes that the use of deadly force by Deputies Perez, Doud and Thompson was in lawful defense of themselves and others.

The District Attorney's Command Center was notified at 8:45 p.m. on November 12, 2021, of the shooting. The District Attorney's Response Team responded and was briefed at the scene by Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Lieutenant Charles Calderaro.

The following analyses are based upon investigative reports, recordings of interviews of non-department witnesses, communications by LASD dispatchers, security videos, photographs taken by investigators, and the interviews of those deputies who provided voluntary statements received on April 5, 2022. There were no body worn camera video recordings provided.

No compelled statements were reviewed.

FACTUAL ANALYSIS

On November 12, 2021, at approximately 7:22 p.m., Manuel Fidel Chavez drove his black SUV through the closed gates of the ██████ resort, located in the ██████ block of Soledad Canyon Road in the county of Los Angeles. Chavez was fleeing from Los Angeles County Sheriff's deputies, who had been pursuing him for approximately 13 minutes after he fled from a detention.

Deputies in a Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department helicopter (airship) monitored the pursuit from air. They reported that Chavez was driving in a "reckless" manner, had collided with a "couple" of vehicles, and was traveling up to 70 miles per hour while driving in the emergency lane of California State Route 14. They subsequently told the pursuing deputies that

Chavez had entered the RV resort, but that they had lost sight of him between trailers. Four deputies, including Deputy Estevan Perez, entered the RV resort through the broken gates and walked west in the direction Chavez was last seen. Deputy Michael Thompson was just outside of the gates on the east side of the lower driveway, running toward the gate.

Suddenly, the deputy in the airship broadcast “Stop that car. I think he just carjacked a car.” As this broadcast was made, Chavez suddenly reappeared, now driving a blue Dodge Challenger.¹ He accelerated past the foot bound deputies and exited the RV resort. Deputy Thompson began to enter the driveway when Chavez suddenly made a quick U-turn and accelerated back toward the gate.

Chavez drove through the gate and steered to the right. Deputy Thompson was trapped between the gate and the car.



Image Capture # 1 – Deputies Perez and Thompson at the first shooting.

¹ No carjacking occurred. Subsequent to these events, Chavez’ wife, ■■■, told investigators that Chavez and she resided at the location. The blue Dodge Challenger belonged to her. She stated that she heard the engine to her car start. ■■■ ran outside her residence and saw Chavez driving her car away. She then heard six to seven gunshots. ■■■ also saw Chavez’ truck parked nearby. The driver’s side door was open, and the truck’s engine was running. ■■■ drove the truck back to her parking space.

Deputies Thompson and Perez fired their handguns into the Challenger. Deputy Thompson fired from the passenger side while Deputy Perez shot from the driver side. Chavez continued into the RV resort, turned east, and drove at a high rate of speed through the RV resort, scattering pedestrians. The deputies on foot followed him.

The deputy in the airship broadcast that Chavez had tried to ram deputies and had tried to ram somebody else inside of the park. Within the park, Chavez drove across the rear of the RV lot. When he was perpendicular to the exit, he veered to his left through a bank of mailboxes, drove over a berm and out the exit.

As Chavez accelerated out of the RV resort, deputies fired six more shots. Chavez then continued up the upper-west driveway to Soledad Canyon Road where he fled.

Just north of Agua Dulce Canyon Road, Chavez collided with the guard rail, disabling the Challenger. He exited and fled into the Santa Clarita Riverbed where he was captured by pursuing deputies. Los Angeles County Fire Department paramedics stabilized Chavez at the scene before he was transported to Henry Mayo Newhall Hospital. Physicians determined that he suffered multiple gunshot wounds to his upper-left quadrant (shoulder) area. None of the injuries were life threatening.

Statements of Deputies

Deputy Estevan Perez

On Monday, November 15, 2021, Deputy Perez provided a voluntary statement to investigators. Perez stated that he and Deputy Doud were working a crime suppression detail when they encountered Chavez seated alone in his SUV in the Park and Ride lot at Newhall Avenue and State Route 14. Chavez told the deputies his name was J ■■■ S ■■■■, and the car was registered to his sister. Using Department resources, Perez determined the registered owner was not the person Chavez said it was. He also learned that there was a J ■■■ S ■■■■ who was a wanted person with a violent history. Deputy Doud told Chavez, who had put his car in gear, to stop and that he could not leave. Chavez fled and drove north bound on California State Route 14. The deputies followed.

After leaving the Park and Ride lot, Deputy Perez observed Chavez commit multiple traffic violations, including failure to observe traffic signs and driving erratically at high speeds in all lanes of the freeway, including the emergency lane. During this pursuit, Deputy Perez observed multiple near collisions which were avoided only due to the evasive actions of other drivers.

The pursuit terminated at Golden Valley Road after Chavez exited the freeway but continued to evade the deputies through a gas station, shopping mall parking lot and an alley. The deputies went into “surveillance” mode (following from a distance with no siren or emergency lights). An airship joined and began following Chavez.

The deputies followed Chavez to the RV resort, where the airship deputy reported that Chavez had driven inside and was now on foot. Perez entered the RV resort on foot and went to his left (west), based on directions from the airship deputy.

As Deputy Perez walked west on the road inside of the RV resort, he saw a Dodge Charger or Challenger drive out onto the road. The airship deputy broadcast that there had just been a carjacking and Deputy Perez observed a distraught woman in the area from which the Dodge had emerged. The Dodge accelerated at Deputy Perez, causing him to jump out of the roadway as the Dodge passed.

The Dodge then went out the exit. Deputy Perez followed so he could broadcast in which direction the vehicle was traveling. At that time, he saw no patrol vehicles or deputies blocking the Dodge's exit onto Soledad Canyon Road.

Immediately upon exiting, the Dodge began to fishtail and ended up facing Deputy Perez. The Dodge stopped briefly approximately 30 yards from Deputy Perez. While stopped, Chavez revved the engine twice. The headlights were directly in Deputy Perez's face, and he had no place behind which he could take cover.

The Dodge then accelerated toward Perez. Perez said he thought that there was no way he could avoid being hit by the Dodge and fired in the direction of the driver hoping to slow the driver down so that at least no one else could be hurt by him.

Deputy Michael Thompson

On Monday, November 15, 2021, Deputy Thompson provided a voluntary statement to investigators. Thompson stated that he had joined in the surveillance of Chavez and had listened to the radio broadcasts of the initial pursuit. Deputy Thompson was running down the driveway toward the entrance to the RV resort when the Dodge first drove out the entrance. As the Dodge drove by him it fishtailed and spun around. In full stride, Deputy Thompson had to take evasive action to keep from being struck by the spinning rear-end of the Dodge. The momentum from this evasive action carried him through the entrance. The Dodge immediately began to come toward Deputy Thompson. He thought it was impossible for him to avoid being struck, as his path was blocked by the gate. Thompson said he was certain he was going to be hit by the Dodge and fired at the driver through the passenger side of the car.

Deputy Matthew Doud

On Monday, November 15, 2021, Deputy Doud provided a voluntary statement to investigators. Doud stated that he drove the patrol SUV in which he and Deputy Perez followed Chavez. Upon arriving at the RV resort, he took a position west of the entrance on the outside of the RV resort in the area where the airship deputy had last reported seeing Chavez. Doud heard what sounded like gunshots and then the airship deputy broadcast that there had been a 245 (assault with a deadly weapon or by means of force likely to cause great bodily injury) on deputies and civilians within the RV resort.

Doud took up a position behind a tree, located opposite the RV resort entrance in the mid-section of a wye in the driveway. As he faced the RV resort entrance, the leg of the driveway which went to south-bound Soledad Canyon Road was to his left and the leg of the driveway which went to north-bound Soledad Canyon Road was to his right.



Photograph 1 View from Soledad Canyon Road of the entrance to Cali Lake RV resort.

Deputy Doud could hear the Dodge driving through the park. Other deputies were arriving, and some were walking on foot down the leg of the driveway to south-bound Soledad Canyon Road. Suddenly Deputy Doud saw the Dodge come over a berm just beyond the entrance and drive directly toward the gate. The Dodge was very briefly airborne, but when traction was made with the pavement it immediately sped-up to approximately 30 miles per hour.

While this was happening, arriving deputies traveled on foot in an eastern direction along the leg of the driveway that led to the south-bound Soledad Canyon Road. There were no deputies on or obstructions to the leg of the driveway which led to north-bound Soledad Canyon Road. Doud decided that if the Dodge turned to its right (Deputy Doud's left) in the direction of the arriving deputies, he would attempt to stop the driver by shooting him. If the Dodge turned to its left (Deputy Doud's right), he would not shoot but resume the pursuit.

As the Dodge came out of the exit, it immediately turned right and headed toward the arriving deputies in the driveway. Doud quickly fired six shots, but then stopped because he no longer had a clear background. Doud said he fired at the vehicle to stop and prevent the driver from hitting his partners.

LEGAL ANALYSIS

California law provides the use of deadly force by a peace officer is not unlawful 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 “[t]o 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 sections 196 and 835a(c)(1)(A) and (B) and 197).

Under Penal Code section 196 the use of deadly force by a person is reasonable “when facts known to the person would persuade someone of reasonable caution that the other person is going to cause death or great bodily injury to another.” (See CalCrim 507 (2021); *People v. Martin* (1985) 168 Cal.App.3d 1111, 1124.)

In a criminal prosecution of a peace officer for the use of deadly force, the People have the burden of proving beyond a reasonable doubt that the force was unlawful. (1 CalCrim 507 (2021)).

Deputy Perez had observed Chavez behave with reckless indifference to human life during the pursuit, engaging in driving which threatened great bodily injury or death to innocent motorists and pedestrians. He faced Chavez in the driveway of the RV resort with no place to take cover. Chavez paused and revved the engine twice as he faced Deputy Perez. He accelerated the Dodge toward Deputy Perez. Deputy Perez’s stated fear that Chavez was about to run him over was reasonable and the use of deadly force to protect others was necessary.

Deputy Thompson had heard the radio broadcasts describing dangerously reckless driving by Chavez during the pursuit. At the RV resort entrance, he was facing Chavez with his only escape route blocked by the gate when Chavez accelerated the Dodge toward Deputy Thompson. Chavez had had an opportunity to escape, but instead steered the Dodge directly in Deputy Thompson’s direction. Under these circumstances, Deputy Thompson’s stated fear that Chavez was about to run him over was reasonable and the use of deadly force was necessary.

Deputy Doud observed Chavez behave with reckless indifference to human life during the pursuit, engaging in driving which threatened great bodily injury or death to innocent motorists and pedestrians. While positioned outside of the entrance he heard what he thought were gunshots and a broadcast by the airship deputy that Chavez had carjacked a car and assaulted both deputies and civilians with the car while inside of the RV resort. Doud observed Chavez drive recklessly over a berm directly toward the exit in an apparent attempt to escape. When Chavez exited the RV resort, he turned to his right, directly toward deputies who were on foot in the driveway. Deputy Doud’s fear that Chavez’s conduct posed an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury to arriving deputies was reasonable.

Further, Deputy Doud was aware that Chavez was a fleeing felon who had committed felonies which threatened death or serious bodily injury. Doud’s stated belief that Chavez posed an

imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury to his partners or the public unless he was immediately apprehended was reasonable, and the use of deadly force necessary.

CONCLUSION

The direct evidence here, and the inferences which can be drawn from that evidence, establish that the use of deadly force by Deputies Estevan Perez, Matthew Doud and Michael Thompson was in lawful defense of themselves and others.