

Officer Involved Shooting of Isaac Ricks

Los Angeles Police Department

Officer Juan Lopez, #37646

J.S.I.D. File #14-0727



JACKIE LACEY

District Attorney

Justice System Integrity Division

April 7, 2016

MEMORANDUM

TO: COMMANDER ROBERT A. LOPEZ
Force Investigation Division
Los Angeles Police Department
100 W. First Street, Suite 431
Los Angeles, California 90012

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

SUBJECT: Officer Involved Shooting of Isaac Ricks
J.S.I.D. File #14-0727
FID #075-14

DATE: April 7, 2016

The Justice System Integrity Division of the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office has completed its review of the December 2, 2014, fatal shooting of Isaac Ricks by Los Angeles Police Department Officer Juan Lopez. It is our conclusion that Officer Lopez acted in lawful defense of another.

The District Attorney's Command Center was notified of the shooting on December 2, 2014, at approximately 8:33 p.m. The District Attorney Response Team responded and was given a briefing and a walk-through of the scene.

The following analysis is based on reports prepared by the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), submitted to this office by detectives with the LAPD Force Investigation Division. Officer Lopez' compelled statement was not considered as part of this analysis.

FACTUAL ANALYSIS

On December 2, 2014, Isaac Ricks and Arlene Robinson were inside their third floor apartment located at 622 South Wall Street in the City of Los Angeles.¹ Ricks and Robinson were drinking alcohol and smoking marijuana and crack cocaine. Ricks became angry with Robinson when she failed to hand over the crack cocaine in a timely manner and began attacking her with a pair of scissors. Robinson attempted to flee from the apartment, however, Ricks was able to catch her at the front door. Robinson was forced back across a sink countertop located in the front entry as Ricks stabbed her multiple times in the face and neck. In fear for her life, Robinson screamed, "Somebody help me! Just help me, please! He's trying to kill me! He's trying to kill me! He's trying to stab me!"

¹ Ricks and Robinson had been involved in an on and off dating relationship for 14 years.

Robinson was able to grab the scissors from Ricks during the assault. Ricks then retrieved a kitchen knife from beneath the sink. Robinson grabbed onto the blade as Ricks pushed the knife toward her, causing the blade to bend. Ricks overpowered her and stabbed her in the chest and arm. Ricks released the knife and grabbed the scissors back from Robinson. Ricks again overpowered Robinson and stabbed her on the left side of her face, neck and upper chest. Robinson repeatedly screamed for help.

Neighbor Jennifer Britt heard Robinson's repeated screams and called 9-1-1. Timothy Daniels heard Robinson scream, "He's stabbing me!" as she begged for someone to kick down the door. Daniels went down to the lobby and notified security and called 9-1-1. Barbara Crisler heard Robinson yell, "He's going to kill me!" and also called security. Security guard Donte Evans responded to the location and heard Robinson scream that she was being stabbed. Evans attempted to open the front door, but it was locked.

Uniformed LAPD Officers Juan Lopez and Thomas Schoonyan were the first officers to respond to the location. Schoonyan pounded on the front door multiple times and yelled, "Open the door! Open the door!" Robinson replied, "Help me! Help me! He's stabbing me! There is blood all over the place. I can't get to the door."²

Schoonyan attempted to kick the door open 10 to 15 times without success. Uniformed LAPD Officers Lloyd de Charmoy Bouchet and Andrew Paxton arrived and Bouchet took over for Schoonyan.³ Paxton heard Ricks state, "I'm not going to unlock the door," as Robinson continuously screamed for someone to open the door and help her. Paxton broadcast an urgent request for breaching tools.

Sergeants Luis Contreras and Ruben Lopez arrived with a battering ram and pry tool. Bouchet used the battering ram to hit the door multiple times before breaking a hole through the door handle. Schoonyan took over and began striking at the dead bolt. During this time, Contreras designated Paxton to use non-lethal force and Lopez to use lethal force, if necessary.⁴ Schoonyan was finally able to break open the door and stepped back. Lopez entered the apartment with his service weapon drawn while Paxton entered armed with a Taser.

Robinson stated that Ricks was stabbing her with the scissors as she lay atop the sink when the police broke through the front door. Ricks had the scissors up in the air when an officer yelled, "Halt! Move back!" Ricks ignored the commands and moved toward Robinson while bringing the scissors down in her direction. At that moment, Deputy Lopez fired one round at Ricks. Ricks fell to the ground.

As he entered the apartment with Lopez, Paxton observed Ricks covered in blood and standing in front of Robinson near her feet. Robinson was leaning back across the sink with her legs dangling over the side and also covered in blood. Ricks stood in front of her with his arm raised above his shoulder. Deputy Lopez and Paxton ordered Ricks to "Move back!" and "Get back!"

² Crisler heard Ricks respond, "Go to hell!"

³ The front door was fire-rated and constructed with an exterior steel coating material.

⁴ All references to "Lopez" refers to Deputy Juan Lopez.

Ricks took a step toward Robinson and Paxton deployed his Taser at the same time that Lopez discharged his service weapon.⁵

Bouchet was behind Lopez and Paxton and observed Ricks with his hand above his shoulder holding what he believed to be a knife with the blade pointed down. Lopez said something to Ricks followed immediately by a gunshot and the ticking sound from a Taser. Robinson was lying on the counter and bleeding profusely from the left side of her neck.⁶

Personnel from the Los Angeles Fire Department responded and transported Robinson and Ricks to the Los Angeles County USC Medical Center. Robinson was treated for multiple stab wounds and lacerations to her face, neck, upper chest, upper left arm and right hand. She remained hospitalized until December 11, 2014. Ricks was pronounced dead shortly after arrival. An autopsy conducted on December 13, 2014, ascribed his death to a single gunshot wound to the chest. The toxicology report revealed that Ricks tested positive for the presence of cocaine and marijuana.

LEGAL ANALYSIS

The use of deadly force in self-defense or in defense of another is justifiable if the person claiming the right actually and reasonably believed the following: (1) that he or the person he was defending was in imminent danger of being killed or suffering great bodily injury; (2) that the immediate use of force was necessary to defend against that danger; and (3) that he used no more force than was reasonably necessary to defend against that danger.

See, *CALCRIM No. 505*.

CONCLUSION

The evidence examined shows that while under the influence of cocaine and marijuana, Ricks brutally attacked Robinson with a pair of scissors and a knife. Neighbors called police to the apartment after hearing Robinson's screams for help. Officers also heard Robinson's pleas for help as they attempted to break open the front door. When the officers finally breached the door, Ricks was stabbing a bloody Robinson as she lay across the sink countertop. Ricks ignored the officers' commands to move away from Robinson. Instead, Ricks attempted to stab Robinson again. Lopez responded with reasonable deadly force in order to stop the deadly attack.

We conclude that Officer Lopez acted in lawful defense of another when he used deadly force against Isaac Ricks. We are therefore closing our file and will take no further action in this manner.

⁵ Paxton did not know if he struck Ricks with the Taser, however, paramedics removed two probes from Ricks.

⁶ After breaking open the door, Schoonyan stepped back to allow Lopez and Paxton access into the apartment. Schoonyan observed Ricks standing over Robinson. Seconds later he heard one gunshot.