

Video shows Arizona police shooting man with hands over his head

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Last week a local news station in Eloy, Arizona ran footage of police shooting an unarmed man, Manuel Orosco Longoria, in the back while he had his hands in the air, contradicting police claims that he was attempting to draw a weapon.

The video was released two weeks after the shooting. On January 14th Pinal County sheriff deputies and Eloy police officers pursued 40-year-old Manuel Orosco Longoria after he failed to pull over at a traffic stop. A 45-minute chase ensued, eventually ending with Longoria stepping out of the car. Police proceeded to shoot him to death as he had his hands up.

Following the incident, Pinal County sheriff Paul Babeu claimed that Longoria attempted to brandish a weapon after stepping out of the car. “A deputy felt the suspect was reaching for the gun he reportedly had,” he commented, “so he then fired two rounds from his department-issued patrol rifle.” Subsequent revelations have shown that there was no weapon on Longoria.

Furthermore Babeu claimed that Longoria made statements that he wanted to die in a “suicide by cop” situation. “Sadly, he forced the situation,” Babeu concluded.

The video, which can be viewed [here](#), shows the last 40 seconds of Longoria’s life. Police move in as Longoria considers returning to his car. Beanbag rounds can be heard being fired at him as he initially begins to move toward the car. Longoria then turns around and puts his hands in the air, at which time the police shoot him with two live rounds.

Longoria’s girlfriend Lynnette Casey responded to this footage by saying, “They [official police reports] say suicide by cop. How is it he wanted to die if his hands were up? Nobody with their hands up wants to die.”

Local police officials have sought to justify their

actions by claiming that Longoria had a “long criminal history.”

“Now all that doesn’t convict a person,” Babeu said, “but it paints a broader picture of what type of person we’re dealing with.” Longoria’s sister replied that he “has never been in trouble with the law before.”

Heath Rankin, the five-and-a-half year veteran sherriff’s Deputy who fired the fatal shots, was put on administrative leave for three days then returned to the patrol. Investigative reporting by local news CBS 5 revealed that Rankin was involved in at least one other shooting.

The Sheriff’s office has since issued a slew of justifications for the shooting. Spokesperson Tim Gaffney, Eloy Police sergeant Brian Jerome and Babeu himself have all responded to the surfaced video on January 29th with a categorical defense of the officer’s actions.

Babeu said it’s not appropriate to “separate the point of shooting” for examination, but rather it’s necessary to “look at everything leading up to that point. Once given the total circumstances, I think it becomes evident to most citizens that this was a bad situation that was forced by the suspect who wanted to be killed, I believe.”

Furthermore, transcripts unearthed by local news show that the sheriff supervisor issued a command to deputies who shot Longoria that they should stand down and let local police take over. “It’s getting too dangerous...It’s inside the Eloy PD. That’s their area. If they choose to continue, that’s fine. But we’re going to go ahead and back out at this point.”

The fatal shooting has been largely blacked out by the national media, and has been scantily reported on by local news.

The same day as the Eloy shooting, a court in Orange

County, California, acquitted two police officers in the beating to death of Kelly Thomas, a homeless man, in Fullerton, California.

Video footage showed police officers electrocuting him with tasers, and proceeding to beat him to death with the butt of the weapon, their boots and fists.

Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), the nation's leading private prison corporation, is the main employer in Eloy. One of the company's facilities, Saguaro Correctional Center, contracts with the State of Hawaii to house Hawaiian state prisoners. The institution came under fire when a string of immigrant deaths occurred inside the prison and were not disclosed to government officials. Thirty-two percent of Eloy residents live below the poverty line, and median household income is \$26,518, just half of the national average.

Because there is no national database that collects numbers on incidents of officer-involved shootings, official statistics do not exist. However, one independent reporter has estimated that in 2011 alone 1,146 people were shot by police officers, 607 of whom died from their wounds.



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