

# Less than two weeks after scathing Department of Justice report Albuquerque police kill fleeing 19-year-old woman

D. Lencho  
24 April 2014

In the last five weeks, Albuquerque Police Department (APD) officers have shot three people to death, adding to an already grisly record of violence. Just since 2010, almost 40 people have been shot, 24 of whom died.

The latest lethal shooting—19-year-old Mary Hawkes—occurred just eleven days after the Department of Justice released a report blasting the APD for engaging “in a pattern or practice of excessive force that violates the Constitution and federal law.”

This latest fatal shooting also follows on the heels of the April 15 resignation of three members of the city’s Police Oversight Commission (POC), who called the POC a “rubber stamp” for APD Chief Gorden Eden and a “mockery” of civilian oversight.

According to Eden’s account of this latest shooting death, officers were looking for an auto theft suspect during the early morning of April 21 when they spotted a young woman running. A chase ensued. APD officers found her attempting to hide among some apartment buildings.

Chief Eden said that an APD dispatcher warned officers that the woman had reached into her right front pocket. “The suspect stopped, turned and pointed a handgun at close range... the officer fired at the suspect,” Eden said.

The police chief has refused to identify the shooter. Following standard procedure, the officer has been placed on administrative leave.

One neighbor in the area, Albert Lopez, told reporters, “I heard like three shots. Pow. Pow. Pow.”

Hawkes was a troubled young woman. Both her parents died while she was young, and she was confined to various institutions as a juvenile. Former

Belen police officer and retired Valencia County Judge Danny Hawkes adopted her as a teenager, as he had other youth, to “try to turn their lives around.”

Local TV news channel KRQE 13 went to a City Council meeting that evening and had this to report: “KRQE tried to ask Chief Eden at Monday night’s City Council meeting how he knew she pointed a gun at police—if that was based on lapel video or an officer’s account. He left out the back door before we could ask him.”

After the shooting was reported, a small group of protesters gathered near the site to hold a candlelight vigil. They and reporters covering the protest left the area when a shirtless man came to the scene holding an automatic weapon in each hand. He claimed to be the husband of Mary Hawkes and, according to news reports, threatened the protesters and news staff. The man was arrested that evening after being chased down by APD officers.

The April 10 Justice Department report cited a range of factors in the rash of shootings—as well as taserings, beatings, firings of beanbags and flash-bang grenades and other “nonlethal” tactics—including inadequate training, improper oversight and “systemic deficiencies.”

The report listed 44 “remedies,” including revisions in training to reduce reliance on tasers, clearer procedures for handling people with mental illness, and other suggestions to change the “culture” of the APD.

In response to the report, Mayor Richard Berry named a retired APD veteran, Robert Huntsman, assistant chief in charge of a team overseeing the changes, in particular, crisis-intervention training. The mayor has also named a former Cincinnati police chief

and a member of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) national board to the team.

However, Huntsman's friendship with APD Chief Eden, and the fact that many of the shootings took place before Huntsman's 2012 retirement, brought questions and criticisms from several quarters. Ralph Arellanes, state director of the League of United Latin American Citizens, which had called for the federal investigation early on, was quoted by the *New York Times* as saying in regard to Huntsman's tenure with the APD, "While he was there it was pretty bad."

Recent months have seen multiple police shootings, the appointment of a new police chief, protests and denunciations of the APD, a highly critical Justice Department report, resignations of Police Oversight Commission members, and the appointment of a "revision" team headed by a crony of the current police chief. The attempts at damage control continue, as do the police shootings in Albuquerque and across the nation.



To contact the WSWWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**