

# Another fatal shooting by Albuquerque police

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Albuquerque, New Mexico was the scene of another fatal police shooting Saturday evening as an Albuquerque Police Department (APD) SWAT team officer fired one shot into the chest of Armand Martin, a 50-year-old Air Force veteran, on his front porch.

The killing of Martin brings to 25 the number of fatal shootings by the APD since 2010 and is the second since a damning report April 10 from the US Department of Justice (DOJ) on the department's pattern of excessive violence. Last week, in an attempt to defuse public anger, the DOJ held three public meetings on APD violence.

The APD's Special Weapons And Tactics—better known as SWAT—team came under severe criticism in the DOJ report. In the report one finds phrases like “deficient on-scene supervisory oversight,” “had not received adequate training and appeared to lack the experience to direct a disciplined and effective SWAT unit” and “failed to conduct any pre-deployment planning and rarely coordinated with patrol officers once they arrived on the scene of incidents.”

In addition, the report slammed the SWAT team's failure to call for crisis intervention teams, a demand often made by activist critics of the APD. This time, however, a crisis intervention team was at the scene, to no avail.

According to APD Deputy Chief Eric Garcia, a SWAT team went to Martin's home following a domestic dispute, in which he allegedly threatened his wife, son and daughter. He barricaded himself inside the house and attempted to call local media outlets, but police told reporters not to take his calls, supposedly because they would interfere with negotiations.

According to Garcia, at about 5:30 p.m. Martin fired “into the neighborhood,” from the second floor of his house in Ventana Ranch West, a “master-planned community” in the city's northwest quadrant. The police fired tear gas into the second story, and more

shots were heard inside the house. At about 6:15, Martin emerged from the house “actively shooting with two handguns,” when the officer shot him fatally.

Neighbors interviewed by the *Albuquerque Journal* after the incident said that police “had negotiated over loudspeakers, fired into windows, swarmed backyards and perched a sniper atop at least one neighbor's roof during the hours-long standoff.” One neighbor “said Sunday she saw police huddled behind an armored vehicle parked in the street in front of Martin's house for much of the afternoon Saturday,” according to the *Journal* report.

Ten windows, the glass screen door and the garage door were all destroyed in the course of the standoff.

Subsequent reporting about Armand Martin revealed that he was a veteran of 27 years in the Air Force. At a candlelight vigil at Veterans Memorial Park held Sunday, Charles Powell, a veteran who did not know Martin, told KOB news, “I don't know what the facts are. I've heard something and you know... but it's a terrible loss.” Powell ventured that Martin was one of those veterans who “may have fallen through the cracks.”

Deputy Chief Garcia told reporters, “It was learned that the suspect had been treated at the VA hospital for significant mental health issues,” and that “the suspect did have a history of suicide attempts and threats.” The reportage did not elaborate on Martin's years in the military or whether he had participated in any imperial invasions in those 27 years.

APD claimed that Martin had a history of felony domestic violence charges, “but an online court records search only turned up one charge in New Mexico, which was dismissed,” a KOAT report noted.

Neighbors remembered Martin's wife as “sweet” and the children, a high school-age girl and a boy in middle school, as “very well behaved,” but rarely saw Martin.

Since APD's claims regarding recent shootings, such

as the March 16 killing of James Boyd and Mary Hawkes on April 21, have generated more questions than answers, Garcia's presentation of events did not quell suspicion and disquiet among many people.

In an email Sunday, American Civil Liberties Union of New Mexico Executive Director Peter Simonson said, "The ACLU is deeply concerned by the rising rate of officer-involved shootings... regardless of how APD rationalizes each new shooting, it is simply unacceptable that officers are shooting and killing at least one person in our community every month," Simonson said in an email. "Aggressive measures are needed to rein in this pattern of violence and they need to be implemented now."



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