

Notes on police violence in America

Man shot to death by police in San Antonio, Texas while trying to surrender

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Police officers from the Bexar County Sheriffs' Office shot and killed 41-year-old Gilbert Flores Friday after responding to a domestic disturbance call in the northwest section of San Antonio, Texas. In a video recorded by a passerby showing the final moments of the incident and given to a local news outlet, Flores can be seen pacing in his front yard while being confronted by officers Greg Vasquez and Robert Sanchez. Though the recording is partially obscured by a telephone pole, it is possible to see Flores raise his arms in an attempt to surrender before being gunned down by both officers simultaneously.

A spokesperson for the Bexar County Sheriff's Office alleged that Flores had grabbed a Taser from an officer after an attempt had been made to subdue him with nonlethal force, as well as having been in possession of a knife at the time he was shot. Both Sanchez and Vasquez, who along with Flores were of Hispanic origin, have been placed on paid administrative leave while an investigation into the incident is ongoing.

An emergency dispatcher recording states that Flores had assaulted a woman and a young child in his residence and that he had threatened "suicide by cop" at the time that he was confronted. This claim was asserted despite Flores having been the person who had called the police.

"He put his hands in the air and they just shot him twice," said Michael Thomas, a 20-year-old passerby who recorded the incident on his cellphone. "I don't understand why he was shot," Thomas continued. Thomas, who was working in the area at the time of the killing, spoke to *CNN* reporters of his decision to record the confrontation: "I thought with everything

going on in the world, with police shootings and everything, I thought I would record what was happening."

Another video of the shooting, also recorded by an eyewitness and which police have refused to release to the public, is alleged to show a closer, unobstructed view of the incident. "There's actually another video with a better view that is very close," said Bexar County District Attorney Nicholas LaHood of the second video, adding that the video was "troubling."

Though the Bexar County Sheriff's Office has received over \$1 million in funding to equip its uniformed officers with body cameras, only eight deputies in the department are reported to be wearing them.

Baltimore judge refuses to drop charges against police officers involved in killing of Freddie Gray

On Wednesday, Baltimore Circuit Judge Barry Williams refused to drop charges against Caesar R. Goodson Jr., Garrett E. Miller, Edward M. Nero, William G. Porter, Brian W. Rice and Alicia D. White, five Baltimore police officers implicated in the death of 25-year-old Freddie Gray last April. Gray died after suffering a grievous injury to his spinal cord while in police custody, sparking weeks of protests against police brutality across the city and the world.

Judge Williams dismissed defense attorney's aims to drop charges against the accused as well as wishes to have state prosecutor Marilyn Mosby recused from the

prosecution due to alleged unprofessionalism and conflicts of interest. Mosby is the spouse of Nick Mosby, a city councilman representing the region of the city where Gray was killed.

While admitting that he had been “troubled” by some of Mosby’s comments, he declared that the defense’s allegations “didn’t come close” to making the case for her removal. Andrew Graham, an attorney representing Officer Caesar R. Goodson Jr., had stated that while announcing charges, Mosby had “adopted and encouraged the public’s cry of ‘no justice, no peace’” and behaved “as though it was some sort of pep rally” while “urging everyone, including potential jurors, to exact vengeance.”

In statements to the court, Chief Deputy State’s Attorney Michael Schatzow stated the defense had presented a “gross distortion of what she [Mosby] said,” and pointed out that the efforts taken by the city’s political leadership to disperse the protests served “legitimate” law enforcement aims.

Baltimore police have been placed on alert in preparation for a September 10 hearing, in which it will be decided if the trial will be moved to a different location or remain in the city. It was reported by the *Baltimore Sun* that all leave time for Baltimore City police has been canceled due to fears of unrest.

Man in Riker’s Island jail dies after being refused diabetes medication

A video obtained by the *New York Times* shows footage of 45-year-old Brooklyn man Carlos Mercado moments before he died in Riker’s Island prison in August of 2013. The video stems from an investigation into the incident, conducted by the Department of Corrections.

In the video, Mercado, a diabetic, is seen barely able to stand and at one point collapses in front of a prison guard. The guard, identified as Correction Officer Eric Jacobs, is shown callously stepping over the prone body of Mercado and ignoring him.

“He was tripping, laying down on the floor and throwing up constantly,” Richard Saul, an inmate at the facility, told investigators. “He was twisting and

turning, moaning and shaking and didn’t seem to know what was going on,” he added.

Rather than attempting to aid the dying man, the report notes that guards refused Mercado any help due to their belief that he was going through heroin withdrawals. Detailing the utter contempt for human life on the part of the facility’s guards, the report notes “As far as contacting medical staff, CO Jacobs stated: ‘If I didn’t do it, I didn’t do it.’”

After being denied help for more than 15 hours, Mercado was admitted to the prison hospital where he died shortly after.

“Nobody should have to die like that... All he was asking for was his medicine. That’s all he needed. He would be here today,” Linda Mercado, the victim’s sister told the *New York Daily News*.

The footage of Mercado’s death comes in the wake of numerous exposures of brutality meted out by prison guards at prisons throughout the country. In 2010, 43-year-old Jose Vargas was awarded over \$17.5 million in damages stemming from brain damage he suffered after being denied insulin in a Brooklyn jail. The lack of medication caused Vargas to suffer multiple seizures, leaving him permanently disabled and confined to a wheelchair.

A separate report conducted by the *Times* found that over an 11-month period in 2013, 129 inmates sustained “serious injuries” at the hands of Riker’s Island prison guards, while an Associated Press report found that in 2014 over a third of all prisoners at the facility had received a blow to the head by guards.



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