

Notes on police violence

Fresno, California police shoot three people in five days

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Man shot for brandishing two-foot pipe

On September 7, a Fresno, California police officer shot and killed Casimero “Shane” Carlos Casillas, 45, for brandishing a two-foot-long pipe, which a police officer deemed as life-threatening, subsequently shooting him in the chest.

The incident occurred after a routine traffic stop in central Fresno at roughly 5 p.m. Casillas reportedly sped away, running several traffic lights before the chase was called off.

A short while later, Casillas was spotted and officers continued the chase around Fresno Yosemite International Airport until Casillas stopped and abandoned his car and hid near a home.

Officers approached him and saw that he was holding a two-foot black pipe. The original report claimed it was made of PVC, a synthetic plastic often used for plumbing. A secondary report indicated that it was metal. Casillas’ family still maintains it was PVC.

Officers allegedly demanded Casillas surrender. However, Casillas supposedly ran toward the officers, brandishing the pipe. It is reported that upon witnessing this, a Fresno police officer “feared for his life” and shot Casillas in his chest. Casillas would later die in surgery at Community Regional Medical Center in Fresno.

It is reported that Casillas had an “extensive criminal history,” including a charge of battery against a police officer. He was also sought for a felony warrant tied to violating post-release community supervision. There is no indication that the officer who shot Casillas knew

anything of his background. Moreover, it has not been made clear if Casillas suffered from any kind of mental illness.

Casillas’ sister, Josie Lewis, said of her brother, “He’s never been known for that. I mean, he’s always been a cool guy, he’s sweet.” Wondering why it was necessary to shoot Casillas, Jessica Grijalva, Casillas’s niece, said, “There’s other things they could have done, they could have pulled out a taser, they could have pulled out anything else.”

The officer who shot Casillas, who was not wearing a body camera, has since been placed on administrative leave pending a further investigation.

Responding to the incident, Jerry Dyer, Fresno Police Department chief, stated: “What we have seen this week is an increased level of aggressiveness towards officers, and when officers fear for their life, or for the life of someone else, they use deadly force, and unfortunately we’ve had three of those incidences occur in the last week.”

This comes at a time when, according to Killedbypolice.net, at least 829 people have been killed by police in the US since January 1 of this year. Last year, 1,106 people were killed. Since May 1, 2013, at least 2,703 have been killed.

Police shoot 17-year-old boy

On September 5, Fresno police shot and paralyzed a 17-year-old boy after he allegedly stole and crashed a car. The suspect, who has not been named, reportedly crashed his stolen vehicle at about 2 a.m. in West Central Fresno

after apparently carjacking a woman approximately an hour earlier.

Chief of police Dyer said, “He stuck what was described as a large handgun in her face and said, ‘If you want to live, you better give me your keys.’” The 17-year-old was subsequently chased by the police until he lost control of the car. Fresno police stated the teen ran from the crashed car with a gun in hand and police opened fire.

Dyer has stated it is unclear if the suspect fired a single round from his gun.

Man shot holding water nozzle

Freddy Centeno remains in critical condition after being shot by two police officers late Thursday morning, September 3. Police had received a call from a woman who claimed she had been threatened by a man wielding a gun.

Responding to the call, officers arrived and found Centeno on the street. Officers demanded Centeno show his hands but he refused. Instead, he reached into his pockets and pulled out a water nozzle that allegedly resembled a gun. Police responded by shooting Centeno.

The officers were wearing body cameras, but footage of the incident has not been released. Centeno’s family has stated that he suffered from mental illness and drug abuse but believed that he did not pose a threat to the police. Fresno police have said Centeno had a criminal record and was deemed a “mentally disordered parolee.”

Centeno’s brother, whom he lived with, said there were no firearms in their home. He had been repeatedly seeking assistance from the city and county to help provide care for Freddy. He was told that “something needs to happen” before he could receive help. In response, his brother said, “Is this what needs to happen?”



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