

Albuquerque, New Mexico residents protest fatal shooting by US Marshals

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About 50 people gathered at the Pete V. Domenici United States Courthouse in downtown Albuquerque, New Mexico March 2 to voice their anger over the latest killing of a resident by law enforcement. Because the latest fatal shooting was committed by a US marshal, the federal courthouse, where the Marshals' headquarters is located, was chosen for the protest action.

The vigil was held to protest the predawn fatal shooting of 23-year-old Edgar Camacho-Alvarado and its aftermath, and the discrepancies between official and witness accounts of the incident.

Protesters held signs reading "Jail killer cops," "Release the autopsy now," and "End police brutality," while they chanted for transparency, truth and justice in front of the buildings' entrance.

Ten US marshals went to a mobile home park on west Central Avenue on February 20 to arrest 25-year-old George Bond, who was a suspect in a 2014 murder in a neighboring county and was believed to be hiding out in a trailer three units away from the residence where Edgar Camacho-Alvarado lived. According to his family, Camacho-Alvarado was working on his truck when the marshals showed up. In a short while, he was dead, shot to death by a marshal.

Edgar's older brother Carlos Camacho told reporters that their mother was in bed, heard a shot and ran to the front door, where Edgar was dying. Carlos said that the marshals asked her, "What's his name?" before leaving his body, lying in front of his truck, for 14 hours while they had a standoff with Bond, which ended with Bond's arrest. Camacho also said that his 11-year-old brother witnessed the incident and that the marshals confiscated his cell phone.

Carlos Camacho told reporters that his brother wanted to marry his girlfriend in a few weeks. "He was really happy; he was really excited about everything. He was young; he was getting ready for life. And they just took it

away."

Pepe Sanchez, who was at the protest, and with whom Edgar had once worked at UNM Hospital, told a *World Socialist Web Site* reporter that he was "a good guy, responsible, always on time," who "had a lot of respect for everyone."

Two days after the killing, Robert Gorence, an attorney for Camacho-Alvarado's family, held a press conference in which he accused the marshals of shooting the young man in "almost what you would call 'execution style.'"

"It's almost inexplicable, but we have evidence ... that Edgar was dragged from the house, after having been struck multiple times, taken outside, given commands to give up a weapon, as he's gurgling and flailing his arms, and shot a fourth time," Gorence stated.

Gorence called on authorities to release more information on the incident, and announced his intention to have an independent autopsy conducted—it will be a month before official autopsy results are released—and to file a lawsuit. Gorence added, "All we're asking right now is to get answers. So far that has been completely stonewalled."

At the time, as the *Albuquerque Journal's* report on the press conference put it, "New Mexico State Police, which is leading the investigation into the shooting, and other agencies have shed little light on how Camacho-Alvarado ended up being shot when officers were actually searching for Bond. They have not described what happened, commented on the family's account of the shooting nor said whether Camacho-Alvarado had a gun."

On February 24, the New Mexico Department of Public Safety published an "update" on its investigation of the case. According to the NMDPS account, Deputy US Marshal Paul Hernandez, who was gathering information at the scene, noticed a young man (Camacho-Alvarado) following him, who "brandished a handgun" before Hernandez reached for his own weapon.

The young man then fled and when Hernandez caught up with him in front of the family trailer, Camacho-Alvarado raised his gun and Hernandez fired four shots, one of which struck him fatally. Later, two other marshals “secured Mr. Camacho-Alvarado by moving him from the steps, handcuffing him, and rendering first aid.”

The marshals also claimed to have found a gun, which had been stolen a year before and with a “not visible” serial number, near Camacho-Alvarado, and ammunition in his residence, something the marshals had been tight-lipped about before.

The NMDPS also mentioned that he “was a convicted felon and was wanted on a felony warrant,” without mentioning that the convictions were for nonviolent larceny arrests.

The discrepancies in the case were disquieting enough to prompt a February 27 editorial in the *Journal*, entitled “Federal lawmen should face same rules as locals,” that bemoans the “predawn raid ... that went bad and left a man dead,” and the marshals’ “account [that] doesn’t square with the account given by the dead man’s family.”

The editors opine, “This is one case where lapel camera footage would have come in handy,” and suggest that the Department of Justice, whose recent investigation of the Albuquerque Police Department found a pattern of excessive force, constitutional violations and contempt for the public, practice what it preaches.

The editorial concludes, “This officer-involved shooting is a case where the government exercised the ultimate in police powers. It is unacceptable that the same tough standards don’t appear to apply at all levels of law enforcement.” In fact, the killing of Camacho-Alvarado is another demonstration that these standards are flouted at all levels of law enforcement—be they city, county, state or federal.



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