

Los Angeles County sheriff's deputies kill teenager

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24 June 2017

Early Thursday morning, Los Angeles County sheriff's deputies officers killed a 17-year-old boy named Armando Garcia-Muro in Palmdale, California. The officers were shooting at a pit bull dog and reported that Garcia-Muro was hit by a bullet that ricocheted off the pavement. Palmdale is one of several communities in the Antelope Valley, which sits in the Mojave Desert and was advertised during the 1980s as being a cheaper option than living more centrally in Los Angeles.

According to the *Los Angeles Times*, five deputies responded to a call about a loud party just after 3:00 A.M. As they arrived, a pit bull reportedly charged at them and bit one of the deputies on the knee. The teenager then attempted to restrain the animal and move it around the side of a building. The deputy who was allegedly attacked did not fire, and the deputies retreated to call for backup and a medical team.

Later, the pit bull allegedly broke free and charged at the deputies a second time. The dog has been described as weighing 60 to 65 pounds and was about 5 to 7 feet away from the deputies when they opened fire. The dog was struck by a bullet, but survived. Garcia-Muro was struck in the chest by a "skip" round that ricocheted from where it struck the ground. Investigators said that the deputies only noticed the injured boy when they attempted to corral the dog. Garcia-Muro was taken to Antelope Valley Hospital, where he died. An officer was also struck in the knee by a bullet fragment.

At a news conference at the scene a few hours after the killing, Captain Christopher Bergner of the Sheriff's Department Homicide Bureau said that five deputies were present at the time of the shooting but only two fired, discharging six to eight rounds. "He may have been struck by one of the skip rounds in what we're calling an extremely, extremely unfortunate

incident," he said.

The Los Angeles Sheriff's department has a "use-of-force" policy, which holds that deputies can fire at animals if they "reasonably believe" that they're about to be killed or seriously injured by the animal in question. According to the *Los Angeles Times* article, a deputy fired a shotgun at a dog biting his leg in 2014 and injured a resident who was struck in the legs by rebounded pellets. Another incident occurred in 2009 when a man was shot as an officer fired at a pit bull. In both cases, the district attorney's office concluded that such injuries are "accidental and unavoidable given the circumstances."

Despite these justifications coming from the district attorney's office, incidents such as this are becoming more common due to the frequency of police killings across the country. In recent weeks, the police officer who brutally shot and killed Philando Castile in Minnesota was found not guilty on all counts. Another officer, in Milwaukee, was also acquitted on Wednesday, the day before Garcia-Muro was killed, and in May the killer of Terence Crutcher was acquitted in Oklahoma.

Garcia-Muro was about to enter his senior year at R. Rex Parris High School in Palmdale. He was the eldest of four siblings. His mother, Roberta, told the media that he loved dogs. "He would give his life for anybody. He was a very loving person," she said.

The owner of the dog lives elsewhere in the apartment complex, and said she doubts that her dog attacked the deputies. Her home is a popular hangout spot for neighborhood kids, who frequently come over and listen to music. "That's not my dog," she said. "That's not his personality." The dog has since been euthanized.

As of Friday, 572 people have been killed by police

officers in the United States in 2017. In 2016, US police killed 1,161 people. Most of these, like the shooting in Palmdale, took place in working class neighborhoods by officers who were reportedly “defending” themselves. United States Attorney General Jeff Sessions has stated publicly that “law enforcement as a whole has been unfairly maligned and blamed for the unacceptable deeds of a few bad actors.”



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