

US Border Patrol agents shot and killed Arizona man at his home in remote border community

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On May 18, US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents shot and killed Raymond Mattia, a Tohono O’odham tribal member, after he called the agency to report several immigrants were trespassing on his property.

Mattia’s residence is located in the Menagers Dam community of the Tohono O’odham Nation, a Native American reservation home to 10,700 out of 34,000 members of the Tohono O’odham tribe.

The Tohono O’odham Nation encompasses some 3 million acres in southern Arizona on the border with Mexico and is the second-largest Native American reservation in the United States. Some members of the tribe also live just across the border in northwestern Mexico.

As of this writing none of the police agents responsible for shooting and killing Mattia have been identified, much less arrested.

Since the shooting took place on Native lands, the FBI will be overseeing the investigation into the killing. The FBI, Border Patrol and Tohono O’odham Nation police have all confirmed they will not be providing additional details pending the outcome of their investigation.

While details of the incident remain vague, according to family and witnesses, when the CBP agents showed up at Mattia’s residence some time before 10:00 p.m. Thursday, they shot and killed Mattia in a hail of gunfire.

According to family members in the house, Mattia was

two feet away from his front door when he was shot 38 times by agents of the Ajo Border Patrol Station.

“I keep hearing the gunshots and I can’t get over it,” a family member who wished not to be identified told News 4 Tucson. “It’s very sad just to know who they were shooting at you know.”

The agents involved in the shooting were assisting the Tohono O’odham Nation Police Department during the call to Mattia’s residence.

In a statement released by CBP on Monday, the agency claimed that they were responding to a call of “shots fired” west of the Menagers Dam community. The statement claims that sometime after 9:30 p.m. a tribal officer and several CBP agents encountered a “named individual” outside of a home who “abruptly extended his right arm from his body” which prompted “three agents” to shoot their guns, “striking the individual several times.”

The statement claims that due to “poor weather” a medical helicopter was not dispatched to the scene to take Mattia to the hospital and he was declared dead shortly after 10 p.m. The statement notes that there were at least seven border patrol agents wearing body cameras at the time of the incident, but no body camera footage has been released as of this writing.

Unlike in the interior of the country or on non-reservation land, US Border Patrol agents are allowed to stop and harass residents of the Tohono O’odham Nation reservation if they “suspect” any illegal activity.

Ophelia Rivas, a close family friend of Mattias,

reported to News 4 Tucson that “I have dealt with Border Patrol aggression and unmonitored behavior out here on Tohono O’odham land without any regard to the respect and to the land and to the people.”

The shooting occurred in the Border Patrol’s Tucson Sector, which, according to the CBP, has the highest number of use-of-force incidents across the agency with 158 incidents reported so far this year.

The last recorded killing in the Border Patrol’s Tucson Sector by an agent was the fatal shooting of US citizen Noe Mejia on March 14 after an officer-involved car chase.

The killing of Mattias took place mere days after a migrant child, Anadith Danay Reyes Alvarez, died in CBP custody in Texas where she was held with her parents and two siblings for several days in an overcrowded and unsanitary holding facility.

Alvarez, who had a history of sickle cell anemia and heart disease, was denied medical care even as her mother pleaded with Border Patrol agents, desperately explaining that her daughter felt pain in her bones, struggled to breathe and was unable to walk.

Although the child tested positive for influenza upon arrival, the agents in charge of the facility did not deem it necessary that the little girl receive hospital care until she went limp and unconscious with blood coming out of her mouth days later, according to the mother’s first-hand account.

“They killed my daughter, because she [went] nearly a day and a half without being able to breathe,” Mabel Alvarez, the mother of Anadith said. “She cried and begged for her life and they ignored her. They didn’t do anything for her.

The death of Alavarez in CBP custody follows another death of a child, 17-year-old Ángel Eduardo Maradiaga Espinoza, also under CBP’s custody in Florida, which occurred a week prior.

These deaths come after the expiration of the Title 42 policy earlier this month. The policy, which allowed the US government to illegally deport immigrants and asylum seekers using the pretext of the COVID-19 pandemic, was first enacted under Trump and continued under Biden until recently.

Under the new Title 8 policy, migrants, including unaccompanied children, are not supposed to be turned

away immediately, nor are they supposed to be held in migrant processing facilities for more than 72 hours, but these rules are often broken, with CBP agents citing “unusual busy times” as an excuse for violating the rights of immigrants.

The Alvarez family is now working on getting Anadith’s remains to their final destination in New York City, the same state where Democratic New York Mayor Eric Adams is considering placing migrants at Rikers Island, one of the most brutal and notorious prison complexes in the US.



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