CALIFORNIA

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Report on the Investigation into the Death of Ricardo Ramirez, Jr. on July 13, 2024

Los Angeles County AB 1506

November 2026

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INVESTIGATION OF OFFICER INVOLVED SHOOTING

BACKGROUND—AB 1506

Pursuant to California Assembly Bill 1506 (AB 1506), the California Department of Justice is required to investigate all incidents of an officer-involved shooting resulting in the death of an unarmed civilian in the state. Historically, these critical incidents in California had been primarily handled by local law enforcement agencies and the state's 58 district attorneys.

AB 1506, signed into law on September 30, 2020, and effective July 1, 2021, provides the California Department of Justice (DOJ) with an important tool to directly help build and maintain trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve by creating a mandate for an independent, statewide prosecutor to investigate and review officer-involved shootings of unarmed civilians across California. DOJ investigates and reviews, for potential criminal liability, all such incidents covered under AB 1506, as enacted in California Government Code section 12525.3. Where criminal charges are not appropriate, DOJ is required to prepare and make public a written report, like this one, communicating:

- A statement of facts, as revealed by the investigation;
- An analysis of those facts in light of applicable law;
- An explanation of why it was determined that criminal charges were not appropriate; and
- Where applicable, recommendations to modify the policies and practices of the involved law enforcement agency.

Recommendations to modify policies and practices of the involved law enforcement agency will be based on the facts of the incident, any known policies and practices of the relevant law enforcement agency, and the experience and expertise developed by DOJ personnel.

PRIVACY STATEMENT

This report includes redactions of the names and other identifying information of witnesses. The public interest in such information is limited as it is not necessary to gain an understanding of the incident. Thus, the interest in nondisclosure outweighs any public interest in disclosure.

For reasons related to privacy, as well as readability of this report, the witnesses will be indexed as follows:

- Witness 1 (W-1), the front passenger in the Cadillac that drove from Northern California to Los Angeles with Witness 2, Witness 3, and the decedent, Mr. Ricardo Ramirez, Jr.
- Witness 2 (W-2), the rear right-side passenger in the Cadillac that drove from Northern California to Los Angeles with Witness 1, Witness 3, and Mr. Ramirez.
- Witness 3 (W-3), the owner and driver of the Cadillac that drove from Northern California to Los Angeles with Witness 1, Witness 2, and Mr. Ramirez.
- Location 1, a private residence on W. 66th Street near S. Flower Street.
- Location 2, a private residence on W. 66th Street near S. Flower Street.

INTRODUCTION

On July 13, 2024, Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) Sergeant Michael Pounds, who was acting in an undercover capacity with the LAPD's Vice Unit in a high crime area in Los Angeles County, fatally shot Ricardo Ramirez, Jr., after Mr. Ramirez and three companions appeared to be attempting to carjack Sergeant Pounds. A car drove perpendicularly across two lanes of a street to block Sergeant Pounds's unmarked car, and then Mr. Ramirez and two companions, all wearing masks and hoodies, got out of the car and ran toward the sergeant's car. When Mr. Ramirez ran up to Sergeant Pounds's driver's side window holding his waistband area as if concealing a firearm, Sergeant Pounds fired one shot through the window, striking Mr. Ramirez.

DOJ investigated and reviewed the OIS pursuant to Government Code section 12525.3 (enacted by AB 1506 (2019-2020 Reg. Sess.)). This report is the final step in DOJ's review of the fatal OIS of Mr. Ramirez. The scope of this report is limited to determining whether criminal charges should be brought against the involved officer. An accompanying report provides potential policy and practice recommendations as required by Government Code section 12525.3, subdivision (b)(2). The review does not encompass or comment on any potential administrative or civil actions. Upon thorough examination, and as discussed in detail below, we conclude that no criminal charges will be filed because the evidence is insufficient to prove that Sergeant Michael Pounds committed a crime.

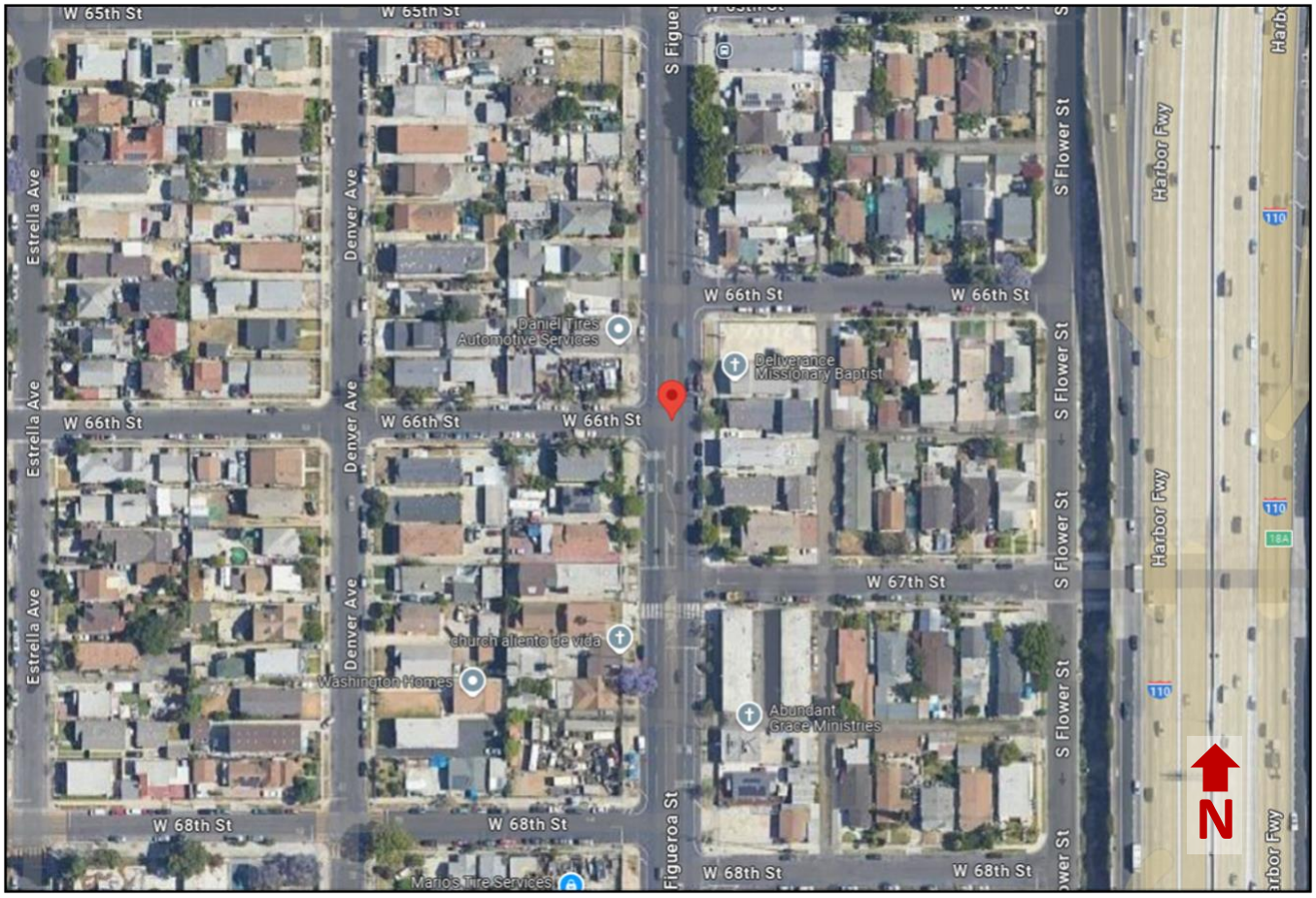
CAUTION: The images and information contained in this report may be graphic and disturbing. Therefore, discretion is advised, especially for young children and sensitive individuals.

SUMMARY OF INCIDENT

On the evening of July 13, 2024, an LAPD Vice Unit from the 77th Division conducted an operation targeting human trafficking and prostitution around the "Figueroa Corridor," which includes Figueroa Street from Manchester Avenue to Gage Avenue in South Los Angeles. The Figueroa Corridor was a high crime area known to law enforcement. Crime alerts issued by LAPD around this time documented crimes in the area such as robberies with firearms, assaults with deadly weapons, and attempted murder.

According to the Tactical Operational Plan, officers from the Vice Unit were to operate in an undercover capacity and conduct surveillance and anti-prostitution and human trafficking enforcement operations along the Figueroa Corridor and nearby motels. The operational plan documented a scheduled briefing, notifications to the 77th Division Area Watch Commander and Communications Division, and a total of 10 participants, including Sergeant Michael Pounds, another sergeant, and eight officers.

At approximately 10:17 PM, Vice Unit officers were conducting surveillance near 66th Street, between Denver Avenue and Figueroa Street, monitoring a white BMW with California temporary "paper" plates. The officers were positioned near Figueroa Street and 66th Street when they observed two females near the BMW, which was stopped on 66th Street facing east, just west of Figueroa Street.

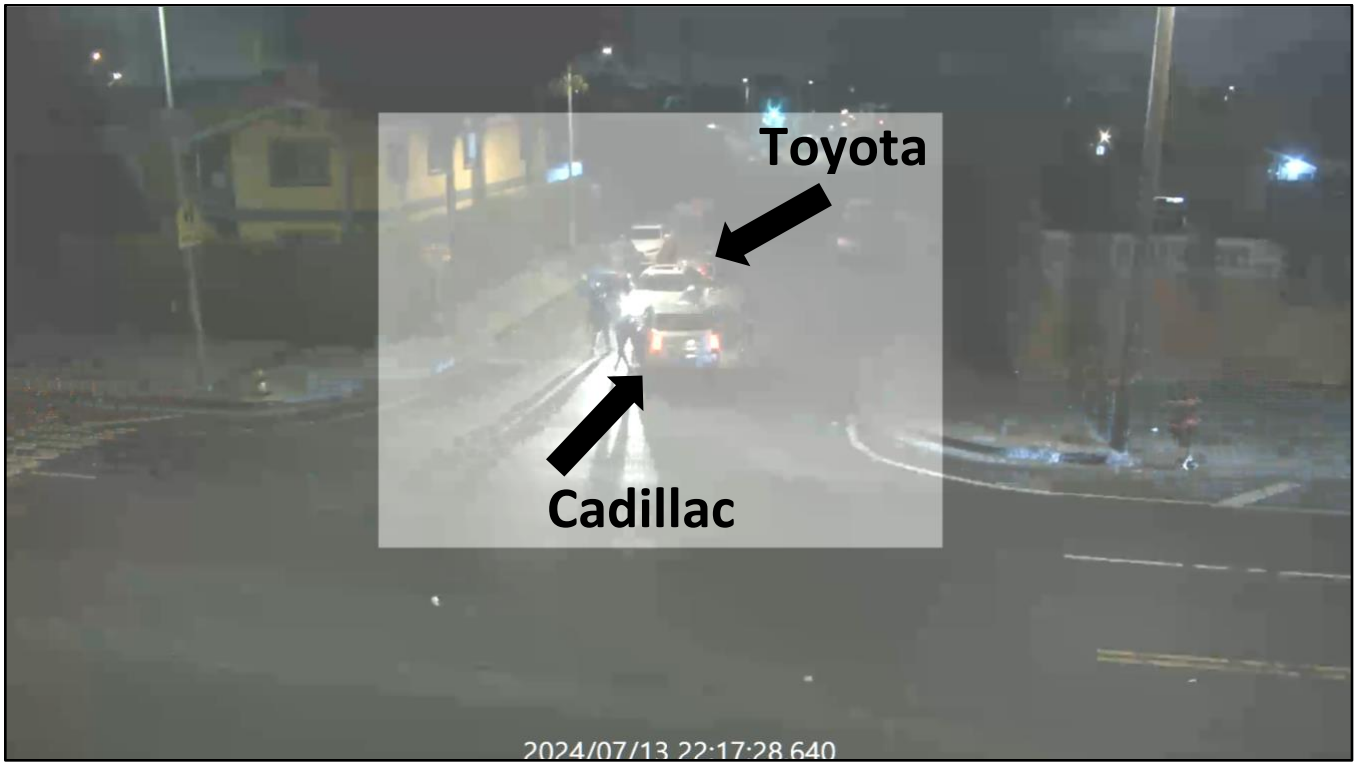


Google Maps image of Figueroa Street & 66th Street

As the officers monitored the white BMW, a light-colored, four door, Toyota Camry traveling east on 66th Street approached Figueroa Street and stopped at a stop sign at the intersection. Suddenly, a gray

Cadillac CTS traveling south on Figueroa Street turned right on 66th Street and drove head-on toward the Toyota Camry as if to block the car from moving. The officers observing the white BMW described the incident over the tactical radio communication channel used during the undercover operation. Additionally, a city surveillance camera located on the east side of Figueroa Street, facing 66th Street, recorded the incident.

The video surveillance camera on Figueroa Street recorded four individuals quickly get out of the Cadillac and surround the Toyota Camry. One of the four individuals opened the front passenger door of the Toyota, while another appeared to reach for the driver's side door. An undercover officer broadcast over the tactical radio, "What's up with this vehicle at the intersection? It looks like they fucking TC into each other, or something. Is there black and white available?"[1] Moments later, an officer broadcast, "Camry going southbound, taking off from a gray Cadillac CTS." An undercover officer broadcast, "Yeah, it was kind of strange. Uh, I don't know if they were together, but they pulled in front of that car, that Toyota Camry and then, uh, they jumped out and they were masked up."



Still image city surveillance video from camera located on Figueroa Street at 66th Street, showing the Cadillac stopped in front of the Toyota and occupants of the Cadillac surrounding the Toyota

The Toyota maneuvered around the Cadillac and turned right, traveling south on Figueroa Street. The four masked individuals returned to the Cadillac and drove west on 66th Street, making a left turn traveling south on Denver Avenue and out of the camera frame. An undercover officer broadcast, "Follow that car 'cause they were all masked up. Follow that car."

1 "TC" is a police shorthand reference to a traffic collision.

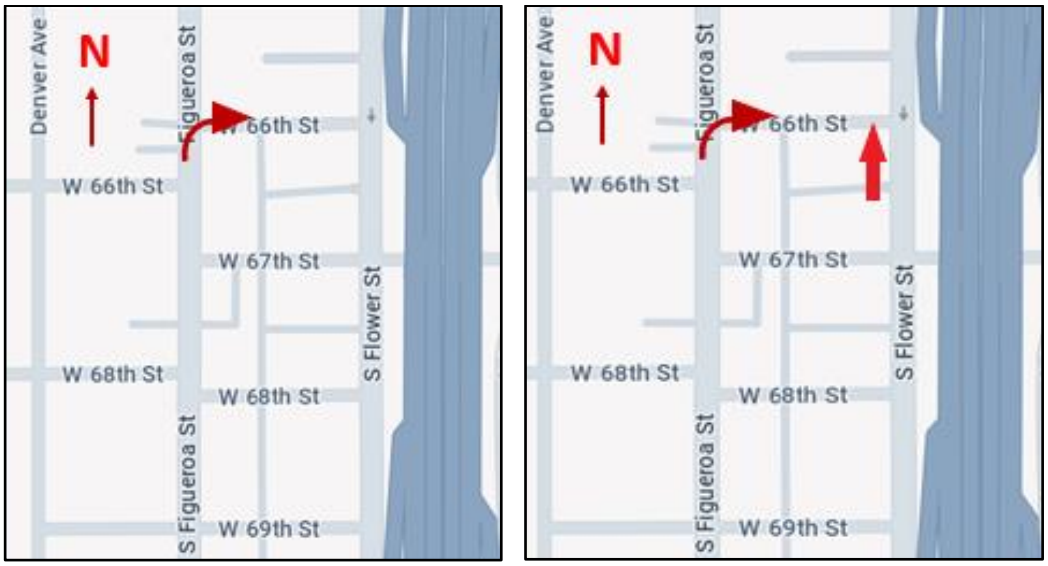
Based on their observations, Vice Unit officers focused on the Cadillac and several undercover officers in unmarked cars followed it. In a radio broadcast, an undercover officer pondered whether the prior interaction with the Toyota was a "road rage" incident.



Google Map image of North Figueroa

The Cadillac traveled north on Figueroa and then seconds later turned east on 67th Street. At approximately 10:19 PM, the Cadillac continued south on Flower Street from 67th Street. Sergeant Pounds, who was driving an unmarked gray Honda Accord, began following the Cadillac as it traveled west on 68th Street from Flower. Sergeant Pounds notified the other Vice Unit officers that the Cadillac "went around a car through the stop sign, northbound Figueroa." Sergeant Pounds continued to follow the Cadillac as it traveled north on Figueroa Street.

At approximately 10:20 PM, Sergeant Pounds broadcast that the Cadillac was traveling east on 66th Street from Figueroa Street and then appeared to stop at the curb just before South Flower Street.



Google Map images of W. 66th Street showing approximate location where Cadillac pulled to the curb

Security camera video recordings from homes on the street showed the Cadillac driving east on 66th Street and, as it approached the stop sign at South Flower Street, slowing down and stopping at the southside curb.[2]



Still image from residential video surveillance camera showing Cadillac pulled to the curb

As Sergeant Pounds began to drive past the stopped Cadillac, the Cadillac suddenly made a left turn and stopped perpendicular to 66th Street, blocking the sergeant's car. Seconds later, an individual, later identified as Ricardo Ramirez, Jr., bounded out the rear driver's side door and ran toward Sergeant Pounds's car. Mr. Ramirez wore a black hoodie and a balaclavas-type face covering.



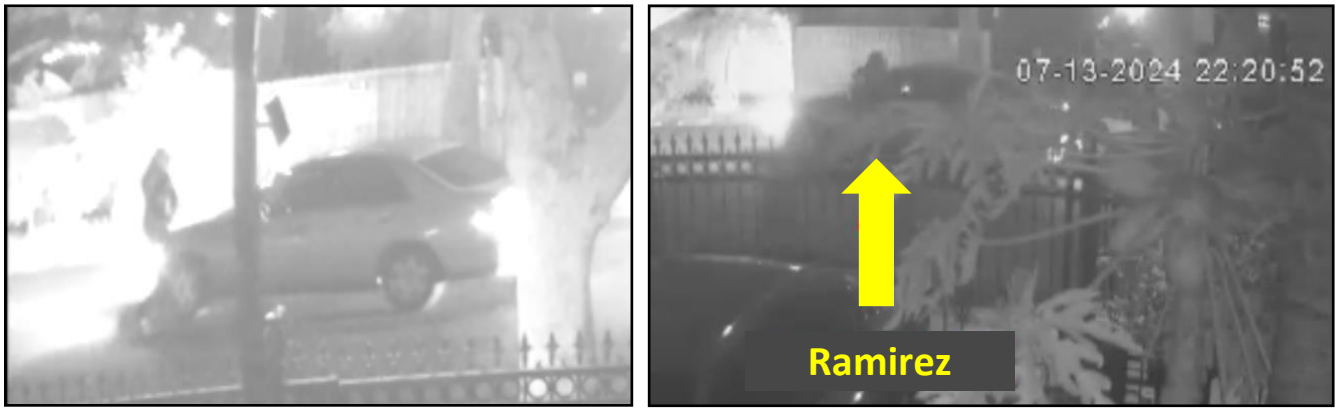
Still image from residential video surveillance camera showing Sergeant Pounds's Car driving toward the location of the Cadillac stopped at the curb

2 Much of the summary detailing the OIS is deduced from the security cameras.



Still image from residential video surveillance camera showing
Mr. Ramirez exiting the Cadillac and approaching Sergeant Pounds's car

Security video showed that Mr. Ramirez approached Sergeant Pounds's driver's side door with his right arm concealed in the mid-section of his torso. Undercover LAPD Officer Javier Heras, who was in an unmarked car approximately 15 feet behind Sergeant Pounds's car, saw that Mr. Ramirez had his right hand in the front pocket of his hoodie as if he was concealing a weapon, and he saw Mr. Ramirez attempt to open the car door or reach for the handle. Officer Heras believed that Mr. Ramirez and his companions were attempting to commit a carjacking. He believed they were armed, and Sergeant Pounds was in imminent threat of serious bodily injury or death.



Still images from video surveillance camera showing Mr. Ramirez approaching Sergeant Pounds's car
with his right hand near his waistband and then standing next to the driver's door of Sergeant Pounds's car

Two additional individuals, later identified as W-1 and W-2, respectively, got out of the front and rear passenger side of the Cadillac and quickly moved toward Sergeant Pounds's car. Officer Heras saw Mr. Ramirez and one of the other individuals approaching Sergeant Pounds's car. Both were dressed all in black with hoods over their heads and masks covering their faces just below their eyes.



Still image from residential video surveillance camera showing W-1 and W-2 approaching Sergeant Pounds's car, and Mr. Ramirez at the driver's side window of the sergeant's car

Sergeant Pounds fired one round with his duty weapon through the closed driver's side window, striking Mr. Ramirez. Officer Heras heard a single gunshot and saw Mr. Ramirez collapse to the ground. Mr. Ramirez quickly crawled to the area of the street in front of Officer Heras's car and collapsed.

W-1 and W-2 ran back to the Cadillac. The driver of the Cadillac, who was later identified as W-3, sped away heading south on Flower Street. Officer Heras got out of his car. He saw an individual hanging onto the hood of the Cadillac as it left the scene.

Officer Heras donned his tactical police vest and activated his body-worn video camera (BWC). The video showed Mr. Ramirez dressed in black with a black cloth wrapped around his neck and jaw area. A DOJ criminalist later recovered a black shirt from the scene. The sleeves of the black shirt were tied together to create a makeshift bandana that Mr. Ramirez used as a facemask.

As other officers arrived at the scene, another sergeant broadcast that shots had been fired and a suspect vehicle—a gray Cadillac—was traveling south on Flower Street. Other radio communication described the fleeing car and the "[m]ultiple suspects inside wearing black with ski masks, last seen southbound on 66th Street and Flower Street."

As part of securing the scene, Officer Heras handcuffed Mr. Ramirez and searched for weapons but found none. During the search, Officer Heras located Mr. Ramirez's gunshot wound and said to other officers, "Hey, he's shot, get an RA for him. He's shot in the chest." A radio call was made for a rescue ambulance. Sergeant Pounds removed his shirt and gave it to Officer Heras to apply to Mr. Ramirez's gunshot wound. Mr. Ramirez's handcuffs were removed and Officer



Image of black shirt used as a face covering
by Mr. Ramirez and recovered at the scene

Heras administered chest compressions with the assistance of other officers. Los Angeles Fire Department rescue personnel arrived on the scene and took over administering medical aid. Mr. Ramirez was transported to the nearby California Hospital Medical Center. Despite medical treatment, Mr. Ramirez succumbed to his injury and was declared deceased at 10:52 PM.

Meanwhile, W-3, who was driving the Cadillac, fled and took law enforcement officers on a highspeed chase, first on surface streets and then north on Interstate 110 to the South 101 then east on the 10 and north on the 15 freeways at speeds sometimes exceeding 100 miles per hour. The chase eventually ended approximately 70 miles from the shooting scene in San Bernardino County when W-3 pulled to the roadway shoulder and the occupants of the Cadillac surrendered to California Highway Patrol (CHP) officers. Officers later searched the Cadillac pursuant to a search warrant and found a black mask in the rear passenger side seat area. A canine searched the Cadillac for firearms and alerted officers to the front seat area, but they did not find any firearms or additional evidence.



Still image of black “Nike” mask collected from Cadillac

LAPD Force Investigation Detail (FID) detectives responded to the scene for the initial investigation, and upon discovering that Mr. Ramirez did not have a weapon, they notified DOJ pursuant to AB 1506 requirements.

LAPD obtained video footage from the CHP patrol vehicle involved in the highspeed pursuit of W-3's Cadillac. The video showed something possibly thrown from the Cadillac and hitting the road, causing a spark. Shortly after, W-3's car moved to the right, eventually stopping, and the three occupants surrendered to CHP. On July 25, 2024, LAPD detectives conducted an approximately one-mile search of Interstate 15 where the spark was observed. No evidence was recovered.



Still image from CHP patrol vehicle video showing possible item thrown from Cadillac

INVESTIGATION

Overview

On July 14, 2024, around 3:30 AM, the DOJ Division of Law Enforcement California Police Shooting Investigation Team (CaPSIT) received notification of an OIS in Los Angeles, California. The incident involved an LAPD sergeant from the 77th Division Vice Unit and was determined to be a qualifying event within the meaning of Government Code section 12525.3. CaPSIT agents promptly responded to the incident scene to initiate a criminal investigation on behalf of DOJ. A Deputy Attorney General also responded. When CaPSIT agents arrived, the incident location was already secured by the LAPD with the entire area blocked off with crime scene tape to preserve evidence.

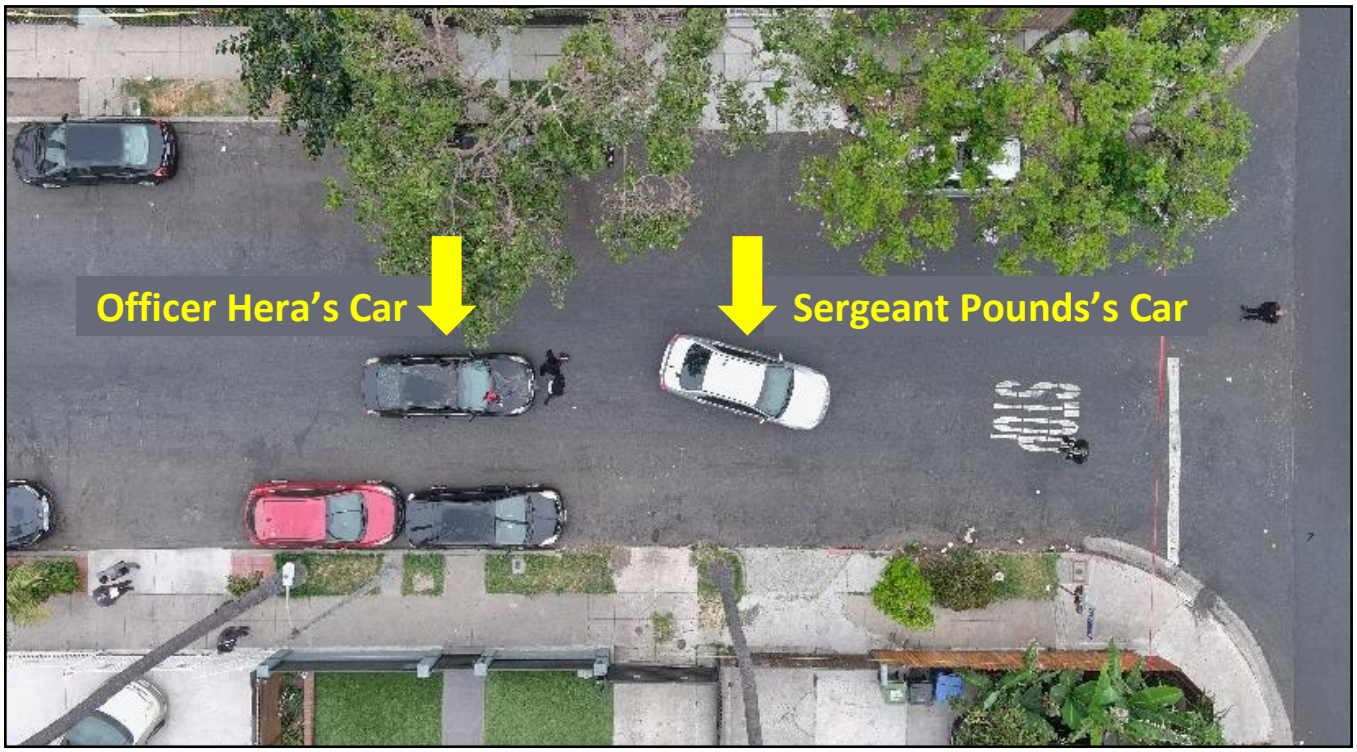
The DOJ Bureau of Forensic Services (BFS) also responded to the scene to monitor the processing of the incident scene and the collection of evidence. CaPSIT agents walked through the incident scene, reviewed the location of evidence, received a briefing on the incident from LAPD personnel, and were assigned investigative tasks. A drone was deployed to record video of the incident area.

Over the course of several months, DOJ conducted an extensive investigation and reviewed comprehensive materials regarding the incident, including the incident scene; physical evidence; 911 audio recordings; dispatch recordings and logs; BWC footage from officers after the OIS; patrol vehicle

camera footage; security camera video; cell phone video; drone video footage; interviews of civilians and first responders; BFS reports; an autopsy report; and a forensic toxicology laboratory report.

Incident Scene Description

The incident scene was a residential neighborhood on West 66th Street, Los Angeles, near the intersection of Flower Street. The OIS occurred on the street in front of two residences, Location 1 and Location 2, that were not involved in the OIS. The unmarked police car driven by Sergeant Pounds was parked in front of and between Locations 1 and 2, and the unmarked police car driven by Officer Heras was in front of Location 2.



Still image from drone video of scene showing location of Officer Heras's car and Sergeant Pounds's car on 66th Street near Flower Street

Incident Scene Evidence Recovery

BFS was notified of the OIS, and criminalists responded to process the scene. They arrived at the location on July 14, 2024, at approximately 6:00 AM. Criminalists examined the OIS scene for ballistic impacts, trajectories, and projectiles. One fired cartridge case was found on the front passenger seat of Sergeant Pounds's vehicle. In the street in front of Officer Heras's vehicle was the clothing that had been worn by Mr. Ramirez, which was removed while medical aid was being rendered, and a shirt that had been used while rendering medical aid. Mr. Ramirez's cell phone was retrieved from the pocket of pants left at the scene. Additionally, BFS collected a DNA swab from the driver's door handle of Sergeant Pounds's vehicle. These items were documented, recovered, and booked in evidence.

Officer Processing

Sergeant Pounds was processed at approximately 6:50 AM on July 14, 2024. Sergeant Pounds wore street clothes since he was working undercover.

Officer Firearm Details

Sergeant Pounds carried a department issued Smith & Wesson, 6906, nine-millimeter firearm that was carried in a holster affixed to a belt on his right hip area. As configured, the firearm had a 13-round capacity with one round in the chamber and 12 rounds in the magazine. Sergeant Pounds had two additional magazines, each with a capacity of 12 rounds. When examined, the firearm had one live round in the chamber and 11 live rounds in the magazine, consistent with one round being fired during the incident. The two additional magazines were each loaded with 12 live rounds. Based on this examination and assuming the firearm was fully loaded prior to the OIS, it appears that Sergeant Pounds fired one round.

Video and Audio Recordings

Sergeant Pounds had an assigned BWC attached to his tactical vest. Because he was undercover and in plain clothes, he was not wearing his tactical vest at the time of the OIS. Sergeant Pounds and Officer Heras put on their tactical vests and activated their BWCs shortly after the OIS. Their BWCs captured Mr. Ramirez on the ground, Mr. Ramirez being searched for weapons, the resulting discovery of a bullet wound to Mr. Ramirez's chest, and the rendering of aid to Mr. Ramirez.

Officers who responded to the OIS were also wearing their assigned BWCs, which were activated when they arrived at the scene. The events captured include officers performing chest compressions on Mr. Ramirez and firefighter rescue ambulance personnel rendering aid and transporting Mr. Ramirez from the scene.

Neither Sergeant Pounds's nor Officer Heras's undercover vehicles were equipped with in-car video. Law enforcement officers who pursued the Cadillac after the OIS were equipped with in-car video and recorded the highspeed chase.

Surveillance and Other Cameras:

On the morning of July 14, 2024, investigators canvassed the neighborhood on 66th Street. Several residences were equipped with video security cameras. The relevant video recorded around the time of the OIS was obtained by investigators. Video cameras from two addresses captured the OIS.

Additionally, videos from several city-owned surveillance cameras situated in the surrounding area along Figueroa Street were obtained by investigators. One of the cameras captured the incident that occurred on 66th Street at Figueroa Street minutes before the OIS, which caused the undercover officers to follow the Cadillac. The camera showed the gray Cadillac blocking the Toyota Camry and it showed the four occupants of the Cadillac—which included Mr. Ramirez—getting out of the car and surrounding the Camry.

Communications

DOJ obtained and reviewed copies of radio communications, and Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) logs/records related to the incident. The CAD printouts are consistent with the radio transmissions and provide a timeline of the key events.

Coroner's Investigation

The autopsy of Mr. Ramirez was conducted by Deputy Medical Examiner Kevin Young of the Los Angeles County Medical Examiner's Office on July 16, 2024. Mr. Ramirez was an 18-year-old Hispanic

male who was 5 feet, 10 inches tall, and weighed 131 pounds. The autopsy report documented one gunshot wound sustained by Mr. Ramirez on the central, right side of his chest. A bullet was recovered from the left side of his L2 vertebra. The cause of death was determined to be a "gunshot chest wound," and the manner of death was ruled a homicide. The toxicology test showed no alcohol or drugs in Mr. Ramirez's system.

Interviews of Officers

The officers involved in this incident did not provide voluntary statements. Police officers, like all individuals, have the right to remain silent and decline to answer questions in the face of official questioning. (*Spielbauer v. County of Santa Clara* (2009) 45 Cal.4th 704, 714; see generally *Miranda v. Arizona* (1966) 384 U.S. 436.)

Public employees, including police officers, may be compelled by an employer to answer questions for administrative purposes, but the use of such statements in criminal proceedings is prohibited. (*Lybarger v. City of Los Angeles* (1985) 40 Cal.3d 822, 827-828, citing *Lefkowitz v. Turley* (1973) 414 U.S. 70, 77-79, *Garrity v. State of New Jersey* (1967) 385 U.S. 493, 500.) Nevertheless, because Officer Heras was a percipient witness but not otherwise involved in the OIS, his compelled statement was reviewed for this report. No other compelled statements were considered as part of this investigation.

Officer Javier Heras

On July 14, 2024, at 7:33 AM, LAPD 77th Unit Vice Officer Javier Heras was interviewed by FID Detectives Omar Davis and Justin Fuller at the 77th Division Station. Also present was Detective William Howell, who was assigned to the Officer Representation Section. On the evening of July 13, 2024, Officer Heras and six other officers, including Sergeant Pounds, were assigned to an undercover Vice Unit that canvassed the Figueroa Corridor—a high violent crime area known for robberies, shootings, assaults with a deadly weapon, prostitution, pimping, and human trafficking. The officers were in plain clothes and unmarked cars, and they were primarily looking for human trafficking that included juveniles and prostitution. Officer Heras and his fellow Vice officers were informed by another officer that he had attempted to stop a car a few days earlier. The occupants of that car wore ski masks, ran from the car, and discarded a firearm.

During their surveillance of the area on July 13, one of the other undercover officers, Officer Barragan, broadcast that he saw a silver Cadillac that appeared to have been involved in a minor traffic accident or a road rage incident. Officer Barragan saw that the occupants of the Cadillac were wearing ski masks, and he directed other officers to stop the Cadillac.

Officer Heras began following the older model, four door Cadillac around 67th and Flower Streets. He saw the Cadillac turn south on Flower and, near 68th Street, saw it drive around a car that was at a stop sign and merge onto Figueroa Street without stopping at the stop sign. Sergeant Pounds started following the Cadillac on Figueroa Street near 68th Street, and Officer Heras followed Pounds's car. The Cadillac turned east on 66th Street and pulled over to the south curb just before it reached Flower Street. Sergeant Pounds broadcast that the Cadillac had stopped.

The Cadillac suddenly made a left turn in front of Sergeant Pounds's car, blocking both lanes so that the sergeant's car could not pass. Officer Heras stopped his car about 15 feet behind Sergeant Pounds's car. He saw at least two people get out of the Cadillac and run toward Sergeant Pounds's car. One was later identified as Mr. Ramirez. They were both dressed in all black, with hoods over their heads, and their

faces covered by masks below their eyes. Both people had their hands concealed in the pockets of their hoodies. Based on Officer Heras's training and experience, when a suspect has one hand in a pocket, they are usually concealing a weapon.

Mr. Ramirez went to the driver's side of Sergeant Pounds's car while his companion went toward the passenger side. Mr. Ramirez appeared to have one hand concealed in the front pocket of his hoodie as if he was concealing a weapon. Mr. Ramirez either tried to open the door or reached for the door handle. Officer Heras believed that Mr. Ramirez and his companion were attempting to commit a carjacking. Officer Heras believed Mr. Ramirez and his companion were armed, and Sergeant Pounds was in imminent threat of serious bodily injury or death. Officer Heras attempted to get out of his car, but the door was locked and would not open possibly because the car was still in drive. Officer Heras did not hear any specific words spoken but believed he heard someone scream or yell.

Officer Heras heard a single gunshot. As he put his car in park, he saw the person who had been on the passenger side running back to the Cadillac. Officer Heras got out of his car and drew his firearm. Mr. Ramirez quickly moved between the back of Sergeant Pounds's car and the front of Officer Heras's car and collapsed. The Cadillac drove away with one person hanging on the hood of the car.

After other officers arrived, Officer Heras put on the tactical vest that identified him as a police officer and activated his body-worn camera. He saw that Mr. Ramirez had one gunshot wound to his chest. Officer Heras moved Mr. Ramirez's facemask and checked for a pulse but did not feel one. He started CPR chest compressions. Officer Heras used gauze from another officer's medical kit to pack the gunshot wound. Los Angeles Fire Department personnel arrived and administered medical aid.

Interviews of Civilian Witnesses

Numerous civilian individuals were interviewed by DOJ and LAPD investigators. No person interviewed, apart from Mr. Ramirez's companions, reported hearing a gunshot or witnessing the OIS. The following are summaries of the companion witnesses' interviews, which describe the incident from the point of view of each person. As with any witness, their recollections may be inconsistent with the facts ultimately determined by DOJ's independent review of the evidence, including video footage.

W-1

On July 14, 2024, at 9:41 AM, LAPD FID Detectives Gregory Halka, Jeff Martin, and Damian Creel, and CaPSIT Special Agent Paul Zurawski interviewed W-1 at the LAPD 77th Division Station after W-1 waived his *Miranda* rights. W-1 was 19 years old and lived in Richmond, California, after previously living in Pittsburg, California. W-1 knew W-2 and Mr. Ramirez from school, having met a few months prior. W-1 knew W-3 through mutual acquaintances from Pittsburg.

The four men left the Bay Area and arrived in Los Angeles on the morning of July 13, 2024. They went to Los Angeles "just to have some fun." W-3 drove, W-1 sat in the front passenger seat, W-2 sat in the back right passenger seat, and Mr. Ramirez sat in the left rear passenger seat behind W-3.[3]

They checked into a hotel room that was paid for by W-3 and then left at approximately 6:00 PM to drive around Los Angeles. W-1 maintained that they were unfamiliar with the area, and he did not

3 W-2 and W-3 also confirmed this seating arrangement in the car.

know why they were driving in the Figueroa area. W-1 "thought it was dangerous though." W-1 stated that at some point, the group noticed a light gray four-door sedan that appeared to be following them for approximately an hour.[4] He described seeing what he believed was a young Hispanic male driver wearing a hat backwards. According to W-1, the car repeatedly made U-turns and continued following them.

Eventually, when the other car came up behind them near a stop sign, W-3 stopped their car and all four men got out. W-1 described Mr. Ramirez's demeanor as upset and wanting an explanation but not looking for a fight. According to W-1, the group intended only to ask the driver why he was following them. Mr. Ramirez approached the driver's window and asked words to the effect of, "What the fuck? Why you [*sic*] keep following us?" W-1 emphasized that they were not planning to fight the driver and were simply seeking an explanation for the suspicious behavior.

W-1 stated that the driver never responded verbally, did not lower the window, and instead immediately fired a shot that struck Mr. Ramirez. W-1 estimated he was approximately 20 feet away from the shooter's car when the shot was fired. Upon hearing the gunshot, he immediately ran back toward W-3's car. W-1 and W-3 got back inside the car, but when they realized Mr. Ramirez had not returned, W-3 stated they believed that attempting to retrieve him would result in everyone being shot. The group therefore fled the scene out of fear for their lives.

W-1 further explained that W-2 was temporarily unable to reenter their car because the doors were locked. As a result, W-2 climbed onto the hood of the car as they drove away and remained there for approximately 10 seconds until the doors were unlocked. Once the doors were unlocked, W-2 got off the hood, entered the rear seat, and the group sped away.

W-1 stated that shortly after leaving, police began pursuing them. He explained that they did not immediately stop because they were panicking after witnessing Mr. Ramirez being shot. W-1 estimated they drove for approximately 15 to 20 minutes at speeds of roughly 100 to 110 miles per hour before eventually stopping.

W-2

On July 14, 2024, at 11:07 AM, LAPD FID Detectives Halka, Martin, and Creel, and CaPSIT Special Agent Zurawski interviewed W-2 at the LAPD 77th Division Station after W-2 waived his *Miranda* rights. W-2 was 18 years old and lived in Richmond, California. W-2 said that he and Mr. Ramirez had been friends since they were about 10 or 11 years old. He only recently became friends with W-1 and W-3. The four decided to drive to Los Angeles "to have fun and stuff." W-2 said this was his first visit to Los Angeles.

W-2 stated that when he and his friends first arrived in Los Angeles in the early morning, they slept on a beach. Later, they checked into a motel and then got dinner at a restaurant. While driving around the Figueroa area, they noticed a silver or gray Honda with tinted windows following them for an extended period. At one point, the four men got out of their car and confronted the driver of the other car asking

4 Initially, W-1 described the car as a light gray, older-model four-door Toyota or Honda driven by a single Hispanic male. Later in the interview, he clarified that he believed there may have been two similar gray cars. He described the second vehicle as an older gray four-door sedan with tinted windows and missing a rear spoiler or rear trim piece, while acknowledging that he was uncertain whether it was the same vehicle he had observed earlier.

why he was following them. The driver said, “No, no, no. Female. Female.” W-2 did not see the driver but believed he was Hispanic based on his accent. W-2 said they got back in their car and drove away.

As they continued to drive around, W-2 believed the same car was still following them. They stopped again. Mr. Ramirez exited the car first and approached the driver’s side of the other car. W-2 also got out of the car but kept his distance from the gray car because, as he explained to the investigators, he had a gut feeling that “something was going to happen.” W-2 thought he heard a Caucasian male voice tell Mr. Ramirez to keep his hands visible. W-2 described Mr. Ramirez as holding his hands in the air. As Mr. Ramirez asked why they were being followed, W-2 heard a gunshot and saw Mr. Ramirez fall to the ground.

W-2 attempted to get back into W-3’s car but could not open the door so he jumped on the hood as the car sped away. Shortly afterwards, they stopped so W-2 could enter the car, and they fled the area. As they were driving away, W-2 said he saw and heard police lights and sirens, but they were far behind. W-2 said he thought about telling W-3 to pullover but did not because they just wanted to get out of the area.

W-3

On July 14, 2024, at 7:56 AM, LAPD FID Detectives Halka, Martin, and Creel, and CaPSIT Special Agent Zurawski interviewed W-3 at the LAPD 77th Division Station after W-3 waived his *Miranda* rights. W-3 was 26 years old and lived in Pittsburg, California.

W-3 told investigators that he drove from Northern California to Los Angeles with W-1, W-3, and Mr. Ramirez. The group left Northern California during the early morning hours, arrived in Los Angeles around 7:00 AM, checked into a hotel near the airport in the Inglewood area, and spent the day sightseeing. Later, they drove through the Figueroa Street area “to go see like the females, just to drive them by.” (*Sic.*)

While driving through the area, an older-model, dark-colored Lexus with tinted windows began following W-3’s car. W-3 stated the Lexus followed them through several streets for approximately 10 minutes, turning wherever he turned. Eventually, both cars stopped near 66th Street and Flower Street. W-3 explained that he attempted to make a U-turn, leaving the two cars facing one another, although not directly nose-to-nose.

Mr. Ramirez, who was sitting directly behind W-3 in the rear driver’s side seat, got out of the car on his own initiative. According to W-3, Mr. Ramirez appeared intent on confronting the occupants of the other car about why they had been following them. W-3 stated that Mr. Ramirez approached the car and said words to the effect of, “Hey, why you keep following us?” W-3 said Mr. Ramirez did not have a weapon or anything in his hands. Almost immediately after Mr. Ramirez spoke, a single gunshot was fired from the other vehicle, striking Mr. Ramirez, who fell instantly to the ground. W-3 stated he heard only one shot, could not see the shooter, and was unable to identify the race or identity of the person who fired the shot because the windows were tinted and only partially lowered.

W-3 drove away because he was frightened and believed the same car continued chasing them through nearby streets. He said he did not stop to help Mr. Ramirez or call 911 because he was scared and focused on escaping. W-3 used a cell phone to activate GPS directions to drive home. Approximately 10 to 15 minutes later, he entered the freeway, where police began pursuing him. W-3

admitted he failed to stop immediately, estimated he drove approximately 100 to 110 miles per hour, and acknowledged that not stopping for police was wrong, explaining that he panicked after seeing his friend shot.

Throughout the interview, W-3 repeatedly denied that anyone in his group had guns or other weapons. When investigators questioned why the group confronted the occupants of the other vehicle instead of driving away, W-3 stated they likely felt protected because there were four of them. He acknowledged that, in hindsight, they should have driven away.

APPLICABLE LEGAL STANDARDS

Homicide is the killing of one human being by another. (*People v. Beltran* (2013) 56 Cal.4th 935, 941.) There are two types of criminal homicide, murder and manslaughter.

Murder

Murder is the unlawful killing of a human being with malice aforethought. (Pen. Code, § 187, subd. (a).) Murder is divided into first and second degrees. A willful, deliberate, and premeditated killing is murder of the first degree. (Pen. Code, § 189; *People v. Hernandez* (2010) 183 Cal.App.4th 1327, 1332.)

Second degree murder is the unlawful killing of a human being with malice aforethought but without the additional elements of willfulness, premeditation, and deliberation that would support a conviction of first degree murder. (*People v. Knoller* (2007) 41 Cal.4th 139, 151.) The malice required for second degree murder may be express or implied. (Pen. Code, § 188; *Hernandez, supra*, 183 Cal.App.4th at p. 1332.) Malice is express when there is an "intent to kill." (Pen. Code, § 188; *People v. Delgado* (2017) 2 Cal.5th 544, 571.) Malice is implied "when the killing results from an intentional act, the natural consequences of which are dangerous to life, which act was deliberately performed by a person who knows that his [or her] conduct endangers the life of another and who acts with conscious disregard for life." (*People v. Dellinger* (1989) 49 Cal.3d 1212, 1215.)

A homicide may also be reduced to second degree murder if premeditation and deliberation are negated by heat of passion arising from subjective provocation. If the provocation precludes a person from deliberating or premeditating, even if it would not cause an average person to experience deadly passion, the crime is second degree murder. (*People v. Padilla* (2002) 103 Cal.App.4th 675, 678.)

Voluntary Manslaughter

Manslaughter is an unlawful killing without malice. (Pen. Code, § 192; *People v. Thomas* (2012) 53 Cal.4th 771, 813.) Several factors may preclude the formation of malice and reduce a killing that would otherwise be murder to voluntary manslaughter including: (1) heat of passion, and (2) imperfect self-defense. (*People v. Moye* (2009) 47 Cal.4th 537, 549.)

Imperfect self-defense is the killing of another human being under the actual but unreasonable belief that the killer was in imminent danger of death or great bodily injury and that the use of deadly force is necessary to defend against that danger. Such a killing is deemed to be without malice and thus cannot be murder. (*People v. Cruz* (2008) 44 Cal.4th 636, 664.) The doctrine of imperfect self-defense cannot be invoked, however, by a person whose own wrongful conduct (for example, a physical assault or

commission of a felony) created the circumstances in which the adversary's attack is legally justified. (*People v. Booker* (2011) 51 Cal.4th 141, 182.)

Self-Defense

A homicide is justified and lawful if committed in self-defense. Self-defense is a complete defense to a homicide offense, and, if found, the killing is not criminal. (*People v. Sotelo-Urena* (2016) 4 Cal.App.5th 732, 744.) When a person is charged with a homicide-related crime and claims self-defense, the prosecution must prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the homicide was not committed in self-defense. (*People v. Winkler* (2020) 56 Cal.App.5th 1102, 1167.)

Penal Code sections 196 *et. seq*. set forth the law of self-defense in homicide cases. Penal Code section 196 provides that a homicide committed by a peace officer is justified when the use of force complies with Penal Code section 835a. (*Cf*. Pen. Code, § 197 [listing circumstances where homicide committed by "any person" is justifiable, which includes self-defense or the defense of others].)

Under Penal Code section 835a, an officer may use deadly force only when the officer "reasonably believes, based on the totality of the circumstances, that such force is necessary": (1) "to defend against an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury to the officer or to another person"; or (2) to apprehend a fleeing person who has committed a felony "that threatened or resulted in death or serious bodily injury," and the officer "reasonably believes that the person will cause death or serious bodily injury" if not immediately apprehended. (Pen. Code, § 835a, subd. (c)(1); see Pen. Code, § 835a, subd. (a)(2) [peace officers may lawfully use deadly force "only when necessary in defense of human life"]; see *People v. Randle* (2005) 35 Cal.4th 987, 994 [self-defense arises when a person actually and reasonably believes in the necessity of defending against imminent danger of death or great bodily injury], overruled on other grounds by *People v. Chun* (2009) 45 Cal.4th 1172.)

To determine whether deadly force is necessary, "officers shall evaluate each situation in light of the particular circumstances of each case, and shall use other available resources and techniques if reasonably safe and feasible to an objectively reasonable officer." (Pen. Code, § 835a, subd. (a)(2); *People v. Hardin* (2000) 85 Cal.App.4th 625, 629-630 ["only that force which is necessary to repel an attack may be used in self-defense; force which exceeds the necessity is not justified" and "deadly force or force likely to cause great bodily injury may be used only to repel an attack which is in itself deadly or likely to cause great bodily injury"].)

A threat of death or serious bodily injury is "imminent" when, based on the "totality of the circumstances," a reasonable officer in the same situation would believe that a person has the present ability, opportunity, and apparent intent to immediately cause death or serious bodily injury to the peace officer or to another person. (Pen. Code, § 835a, subd. (e)(2); see People v. Lopez (2011) 199 Cal.App.4th 1297, 1305-1306 [imminent peril is "immediate and present" and "must be instantly dealt with"; it is not prospective or even in the near future].)

"Totality of the circumstances" means all facts known to the peace officer at the time, including the conduct of the officer and the subject leading up to the use of deadly force. (Pen. Code, § 835a, subd. (e)(3).) De-escalation methods, tactics, the availability of less than lethal force, and department policies may be used when evaluating the conduct of the officer. However, when an officer's use of force is evaluated, it must be considered "from the perspective of a reasonable officer in the same situation, based on the totality of the circumstances known to or perceived by the officer at the time, rather than

with the benefit of hindsight, and that the totality of the circumstances shall account for occasions when officers may be forced to make quick judgments about using force." (Pen. Code, § 835a, subd. (a)(4); accord, Graham v. Connor (1989) 490 U.S. 386, 396-397 ["The 'reasonableness' of a particular use of force must be judged from the perspective of a reasonable officer on the scene, rather than with the 20/20 vision of hindsight"]; People v. Humphrey (1996) 13 Cal.4th 1073, 1082-1083 [to determine whether use of force is objectively reasonable for self-defense, trier of fact must consider all the circumstances that were known or appeared to the officer as well as consideration for what a reasonable person in a similar situation with similar knowledge would have believed]; People v. Bates (2019) 35 Cal.App.5th 1, 9-10 [knowledge of another person's prior threatening or violent conduct or reputation for dangerousness may provide evidence to support a reasonable belief in imminent harm].)

Self-defense also has a subjective component. (*Humphrey, supra*, 13 Cal.4th at p. 1082.) The subjective element of self-defense requires that a person actually believes in the need to defend against imminent peril or great bodily injury. (*People v. Viramontes* (2001) 93 Cal.App.4th 1256, 1262.)

Burden of Proof

A prosecutor bears the burden of proving a criminal defendant's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. (Pen. Code, § 1096.) Where an investigation is complete and all of the evidence is available for review, prosecutors should file charges only if they believe there is sufficient admissible evidence to prove the charges beyond a reasonable doubt at trial. (See, e.g., Nat. Dist. Attys. Assn., National Prosecution Standards (3d ed. 2009) Part IV, § 2 pp. 52-53; United States Department of Justice Manual § 9-27.220; Melilli, Prosecutorial Discretion in an Adversary System (1992) B.Y.U. L.Rev. 669, 684-685 [surveying ethical standards used in the exercise of charging discretion by prosecutors]; accord, *People v. Catlin* (2001) 26 Cal.4th 81, 109 ["A prosecutor abides by elementary standards of fair play and decency by refusing to seek indictments until he or she is completely satisfied the defendant should be prosecuted and the office of the prosecutor will be able to promptly establish guilt beyond a reasonable doubt," quotation and internal quotation marks omitted]; *People v. Spicer* (2015) 235 Cal.App.4th 1359, 1374 [explaining that a prosecutor may have probable cause to charge a crime but reasonably decline to do so if they believe there is a lack of sufficient evidence to prove the charge beyond a reasonable doubt at trial]; cf. Rules Prof. Conduct, Rule 3.8(a) [prosecutor should not initiate or continue prosecution of charge that is not supported by probable cause].)

Further, the prosecution has the burden of proving beyond a reasonable doubt that a killing is not justified. It is not a criminal defendant's burden to prove that the force was necessary or reasonable. (*People v. Banks* (1976) 67 Cal.App.3d 379, 383-384.) Thus, in an officer-involved shooting, the prosecution must prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the officer did not have an actual or reasonable belief in the need for self-defense or the defense of others.

LEGAL ANALYSIS

DOJ has completed an independent investigation and review of the facts and circumstances that led to the death of Mr. Ramirez. This analysis is based on all evidence gathered by DOJ in this matter, including law enforcement reports, witness interviews, analyses of the firearm and ballistics, physical evidence, the autopsy and toxicology reports, surveillance camera video footage, photographs, and communication evidence.

The focus of this review is whether, based on the totality of the circumstances, the evidence demonstrates beyond a reasonable doubt that Sergeant Pounds did not act in lawful defense of himself or others. This is the primary issue in determining whether criminal charges should be filed. A detailed analysis of the evidence pertaining to the OIS demonstrates that a prosecution could not prove that Sergeant Pounds was objectively unreasonable in determining that lethal force was necessary to protect himself or that the officer did not actually hold this view. Therefore, the evidence is insufficient to support criminal charges.

The totality of the circumstances known to Sergeant Pounds supported a reasonable belief that he was about to become a victim of an armed carjacking or violent assault. The Vice Unit officers were conducting a planned undercover operation in the Figueroa Corridor, an area specifically identified as a high-crime location with documented armed robberies, assaults with deadly weapons, and attempted murders. These facts formed part of the circumstances confronting the officers. Additionally, minutes prior to the OIS, the Vice Unit officers broadcast their observations of the Cadillac blocking the movement of a Toyota and four masked individuals getting out of the Cadillac and surrounding and attempting to enter the Toyota.

That suspicious encounter caused the Vice Unit officers to follow the Cadillac. A short time later, the situation escalated when the Cadillac suddenly maneuvered to block Sergeant Pounds's undercover car by turning perpendicular to the roadway and preventing his movement. Within seconds, Mr. Ramirez got out of the rear driver's side door, wearing a black hoodie and a balaclava-style face covering, and ran directly to the driver's side window of Sergeant Pounds's car. W-1 and W-2 also got out of Cadillac, both from the passenger side, and approached the sergeant's car. These actions were coordinated, rapid, and consistent with an ambush rather than an innocent encounter.

Mr. Ramirez's conduct as well as that of his companions immediately prior to the shooting was particularly significant because Sergeant Pounds was not merely confronted by an approaching individual; he was confronted in the context of a coordinated group of masked individuals who had stopped and were surrounding his vehicle, limiting his ability to retreat and creating the appearance of an organized carjacking or violent assault.

As Mr. Ramirez approached Sergeant Pounds's car, Officer Heras saw that Mr. Ramirez's right hand remained concealed inside the front pocket of his hoodie as though he was hiding a weapon. Security video further showed Mr. Ramirez approaching the driver's door with his right arm concealed against his torso. Officer Heras saw Mr. Ramirez attempt to open or reach for the driver's side door handle, and he believed the individuals were attempting to commit a carjacking. Officer Heras also believed the suspects were armed and that Sergeant Pounds faced an imminent threat of serious bodily injury or death. These contemporaneous observations strongly support the objective reasonableness of an officer in Sergeant Pounds's position perceiving an immediate deadly threat. In this context, the fact that masked individuals had minutes earlier stopped and surrounded the Toyota, combined with Mr. Ramirez's concealed hand, masked appearance, rapid approach, and apparent attempt to gain access to the driver's compartment, provided a reasonable basis for Sergeant Pounds to believe that he was facing an immediate and potentially deadly attack.

The subsequent discovery that Mr. Ramirez was not carrying a firearm does not negate the reasonableness of Sergeant Pounds's decision to fire at Mr. Ramirez because the law expressly requires evaluation without the benefit of hindsight. The pertinent question is whether a reasonable officer,

considering the totality of the circumstances as they appeared at the time, would believe the suspect had the present ability, opportunity, and apparent intent to immediately inflict death or serious bodily injury. Mr. Ramirez's disguise, rapid approach, concealed hand, and attempt to access the sergeant's car, along with the coordinated blocking maneuver by the Cadillac, all provided facts from which a reasonable officer could conclude that an armed attack was imminent. Under Penal Code section 835a, these circumstances are evaluated based on what the officer reasonably perceived, not what was later discovered after the incident.

The conduct of the remaining occupants of the car further corroborated that the officers were confronting a serious criminal event. Immediately after the shot was fired, W-1 and W-2 fled back to the Cadillac, and W-3 led officers on a high-speed pursuit exceeding 100 miles per hour before surrendering approximately 70 miles away. Officers also broadcast that multiple suspects wearing black and ski masks had fled the scene. While these events occurred after the shooting and therefore cannot justify the initial use of force, they are consistent with the officers' contemporaneous perception that they were confronting dangerous, coordinated criminal suspects rather than an innocent interaction.

While there is no information regarding Sergeant Pounds's subjective belief in the necessity to use deadly force to defend against imminent peril or great bodily injury at the time of the OIS, the facts are consistent with the sergeant having had such a belief. Sergeant Pounds fired a single shot only after the Cadillac blocked his vehicle and Mr. Ramirez rapidly advanced toward his driver's side door while appearing to conceal a weapon and attempting to gain access to the vehicle. Nothing suggests that Sergeant Pounds acted for any reason other than responding to what he perceived to be an immediate deadly threat. Following the shooting, officers immediately requested medical assistance, removed handcuffs once Mr. Ramirez's injuries were recognized, attempted lifesaving measures, and transferred care to emergency medical personnel. These actions are consistent with an officer responding to a perceived lethal threat rather than acting with unlawful intent.

Self-defense is a complete defense to homicide, and the prosecution bears the burden of proving beyond a reasonable doubt that the killing was not justified. The facts here do not support such a finding. Instead, the totality of the evidence shows that Sergeant Pounds reasonably would have believed that deadly force was immediately necessary to defend himself against an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury, satisfying the legal requirements for lawful self-defense under Penal Code section 835a. A prosecution, therefore, could not prove beyond a reasonable doubt that his use of force was unlawful.

CONCLUSION

Based on the investigation and review of evidence, along with the applicable statutes, legal principles, and subsequent analysis, there is insufficient evidence to support a criminal prosecution of Sergeant Pounds. As such, no further action will be taken in this case.

CALIFORNIA

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Policy and Practice Recommendations for the Los Angeles Police Department Related to the Death of Ricardo Ramirez, Jr. on July 13, 2024

ISSUED PURSUANT TO CALIFORNIA GOVERNMENT CODE SECTION 12525.3, SUBDIVISION (B)(2)(B)(III)

November 2026

POLICY AND PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Attorney General is required to include "[r]ecommendations to modify the policies and practices of the law enforcement agency, as applicable" as a component of this report. (Gov. Code, § 12525.3, subd. (b)(2)(B)(iii).) Therefore, the Department of Justice (DOJ) through its Police Practices Section conducts a review of the information obtained through the criminal investigation, which may include a review of policies concerning body worn camera footage, interview recordings, video recordings, witness statements and other records, as well as the publicly available policies of the agency employing the officers who are subject to the criminal investigation. The Police Practices Section uses the review process to identify applicable recommendations, including any recommendations to modify policies and practices that may reduce the likelihood that officers use deadly force, as well as recommendations to address any other deficiency or concern related to the officers' conduct or the agency's response. The Police Practices Section's goal is that these recommendations will assist the agency and the officers involved in the incident in understanding, from an independent perspective, improvements that may be made to address what was observed through this incident.

As background, on July 13, 2024, Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) vice unit officers from the 77th Division were conducting a human trafficking and prostitution operation. There were eight officers and two sergeants, and according to the operational plan, units were to operate in an undercover capacity. Four officers were in plainclothes, driving alone in unmarked vehicles that were not equipped with a digital-in car video system (DICVS) or emergency equipment. The undercover officers had tactical vests inside their vehicles, and their body-worn cameras (BWC) were attached to the tactical vests. In addition, there were two chase units with two officers each; these officers were in plainclothes but wearing tactical vests equipped with BWC and driving marked black and white patrol vehicles.

During this undercover operation, officers observed suspicious activity involving a Cadillac at the intersection of Figueroa Street and 66th Street. Sergeant Michael Pounds followed the Cadillac at approximately 10:19 p.m. Video surveillance shows the Cadillac travel on 66th Street, approaching Flower Street. It slowed, moved to the right curb, and stopped briefly. The Cadillac then made a left turn, stopping perpendicular across 66th Street, blocking traffic. Sergeant Pounds, still following in his unmarked vehicle, stopped in the traffic lane of 66th Street.

Surveillance video shows that a person, later identified as Ricardo Ramirez, Jr., got out of the Cadillac's rear driver's side door. Mr. Ramirez quickly approached Sergeant Pounds' car, which was stopped and blocked by the Cadillac. Two more men got out of the Cadillac. With a shirt tied to cover the lower part of his face and his hand by the midsection of his torso, Mr. Ramirez reached the driver's side door of Sergeant Pounds' car and appeared to reach for the door handle. Sergeant Pounds fired one round through the window, striking Mr. Ramirez. He fell to the ground near Sergeant Pounds' car door, crawled behind Sergeant Pounds' vehicle, and collapsed. Due to the lack of BWC or DICVS, there is no audio and no additional video as to what transpired between Mr. Ramirez and Sergeant Pounds.

Officers provided first aid to Mr. Ramirez, as best they could without having a first aid kit readily available, and until emergency personnel arrived. Mr. Ramirez was pronounced dead at a hospital.

The Police Practices Section has evaluated all the facts and available evidence, and pursuant to its obligations under Government Code section 12525.3, subdivision (b)(2)(B)(iii), advises the LAPD to review and implement one recommendation:

RECOMMENDATION: REQUIRE VEHICLES USED IN UNDERCOVER OPERATIONS TO CARRY EMERGENCY FIRST AID KITS

The Police Practices Section recommends that LAPD adopt a policy requiring that all marked and unmarked vehicles used in undercover operations carry emergency first aid supplies consistent with officers' first aid training.

California law requires officers to render aid to persons injured in a use of force incident, as appropriate. Specifically, officers must "promptly provide, if properly trained, or otherwise promptly procure medical assistance for persons injured in a use of force incident, when reasonable and safe to do so." (Gov. Code, § 7286, subd. (b)(15).)

LAPD's use of force policy requires that "officers shall promptly provide basic and emergency medical assistance to … subjects of a use of force …:

- To the extent of the officer's training and experience in first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, and automated external defibrillator; and,
- To the level of equipment available to an officer at the time assistance is needed."

(LAPD Use of Force Directive, No. 1 (Sept. 2023) p. 4.) LAPD's first aid training for officers demonstrates the use of chest seals and dressings and discusses the importance of using the cleanest material available. (LAPD Training on First Aid, Session 3 – Bleeding Control and Treating for Shock (Nov. 19, 2019) pp. 1, 7, 9.)

Following the shooting of Mr. Ramirez, Officer Javier Heras handcuffed him. He soon realized that Mr. Ramirez had been shot in the chest and requested a rescue ambulance. Officer Heras prepared to render medical aid and asked other officers: "You guys have a medical kit, a shirt we can uh, render aid?" One officer replied, "I don't have anything," and another responded, "Yeah, hold on." Officer Heras began chest compressions on Mr. Ramirez and told Sergeant Pounds, "We're gonna render aid. You got a shirt or a kit or something, Sarge?" Sergeant Pounds removed his own tactical vest and shirt and handed the shirt to Officer Heras. Officers continued performing chest compressions. Officer Heras later asked another officer in a patrol uniform, "You have like a medical kit, chest seal, anything like that?" That officer ran to obtain one.

Over six minutes after the request for a medical kit was initially made, and about eight minutes after the shooting, the uniformed officer returned with what appeared to be a red first aid kit. Officers placed what appeared to be gauze in and on top of Mr. Ramirez's wound and discussed using a chest

seal, but did not appear to have one available in the first aid kit. Emergency medical personnel arrived about 11 minutes after the shooting and took over Mr. Ramirez's care.

The Police Practices Section recognizes that the undercover officers quickly recognized the severity of Mr. Ramirez's injury, called for a rescue ambulance, and rendered aid with available equipment. However, the undercover officers encountered difficulties in locating emergency first aid supplies. Because first aid supplies were not readily available, undercover officers used an unsanitary shirt to provide first aid, a first aid kit was not procured for six minutes, and the first aid kit that officers eventually obtained did not contain a chest seal. To ensure that undercover officers have the supplies they need, LAPD should adopt a policy requiring that all marked and unmarked vehicles used in undercover operations carry emergency first aid supplies consistent with officers' first aid training, unless doing so would compromise the undercover nature of the operation. Given that LAPD mandates that officers provide medical care to the level of equipment available, LAPD should ensure that appropriate equipment on which officers have been trained is reasonably available.[1] LAPD should also develop a protocol for restocking any first aid kit that is used in the field.

1 In 2025, Congress passed legislation that acknowledged the importance of equipping officers with trauma kits. The "Improving Police Critical Aid for Responding to Emergencies Act" expanded an existing U.S. Department of Justice grant program to allow for the purchase of trauma kits, which includes a bleeding control bandage that can be used for controlling a life-threatening hemorrhage. (Pub. L. No. 119-60, div. H, tit. LXXXII, § 8203, 139 Stat. 1844 (2025) (codified at 34 U.S.C. § 10202(d)).) In supporting this legislation, the Fraternal Order of Police wrote: "These kits can be placed in police vehicles … ready to be deployed immediately following any injury in which blood loss is potentially fatal. More trauma kits in the field mean more lives saved." (Fraternal Order of Police, letter to Senators John Corynn and Richard Durbin, May 6, 2025.)