



SAN DIEGO COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

Critical Incident Review Board In-Custody Death Information Release

DATE OF INCIDENT: October 13, 2021

TIME: 10:17 p.m.

LOCATION: San Diego Central Jail

The Sheriff's Homicide Unit conducts a thorough investigation of every in-custody death. In addition to the investigation conducted by the Sheriff's Homicide Unit, the Sheriff's Critical Incident Review Board (CIRB) conducts a review of in-custody deaths. The CIRB is comprised of department leadership and the Sheriff's Legal Advisor and performs a critical review of each incident. The focus of the CIRB is to assess the department's civil exposure because of a given incident. The review may identify potential misconduct, criminal negligence or behavior, policy violations, training deficiencies, or other areas where we can improve and make our facilities safer for staff and those in our custody. This release synthesizes the reviewed incident and any resultant actions taken to improve our operations.

On October 13, 2021, at about 10:17 p.m., while conducting a safety check of a housing unit at the San Diego Central Jail, Sheriff's deputies found Incarcerated Person Rafael Hernandez Jr. unresponsive inside his assigned cell. There was another incarcerated person inside the cell asleep. Deputies entered the cell and found a sheet tied around Hernandez' neck. Hernandez did not have a pulse. Deputies removed the sheet and immediately initiated cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). They also summoned Sheriff's medical staff and requested a 911 notification for an emergency medical response. At about 10:20 p.m., Sheriff's medical staff arrived to assist with lifesaving measures, including continuing CPR, providing supplemental oxygen, and applying an Automated External Defibrillator (AED).

At about 10:31 p.m., San Diego Fire Department personnel arrived and took over lifesaving measures. Emergency Medical Technicians from American Medical Response (AMR) arrived to assist shortly thereafter. Paramedics transported Hernandez to the University of California San Diego Medical Center in Hillcrest, where hospital staff continued lifesaving treatment. Hernandez remained in the Intensive Care Unit at the hospital and his health declined over the next several days. Despite the efforts of Sheriff's medical staff, emergency responders, and hospital staff, a doctor pronounced Rafael Hernandez deceased on October 17, 2021, at 12:45 p.m.

As is the protocol for all in-custody deaths, the San Diego Sheriff's Homicide Unit investigated this incident. Through their investigation, Homicide detectives did not suspect foul play.

The San Diego County Medical Examiner's Office conducted an independent investigation and post-mortem. The Medical Examiner determined the cause of death was "hanging" and the manner was "suicide." (ME Case #2021-03473)

The CIRB conducted a review of this incident on January 19, 2022, and listed the following as action items:

- 1.) Review Detentions Services Bureau Policies and Procedures section I.64-Safety Checks of Housing and Holding Areas to determine if modifications are needed. This was completed on March 9, 2022, with no policy revisions deemed necessary.
- 2.) Reassign the existing safety check training video in the Learning Management System for all Detentions Services Bureau sworn staff. This was completed on February 8, 2022.