

	William D. Gore, Sheriff	(858) 974-2259
	San Diego County Sheriff's Department – Media Relations	
	Lt. Ricardo Lopez, Media Relations Director	www.SDSheriff.net

February 28, 2020

Jury Determines Use of Force was Reasonable

This week, a jury in a San Diego Superior Court trial returned a verdict showing that the amount of force used by Sheriff Deputies while serving an eviction order was not unreasonable.

The family of James Henry Lacy sued the County of San Diego and two deputies for alleged wrongful death and negligence after the District Attorney's Office reviewed the case and found the shooting was justified for reasons of self-defense and the protection of others. The District Attorney said the deputies bore no criminal liability for their actions.

On August 4, 2017, Sheriff's Deputies, accompanied by a landlord representative, attempted to evict and serve Mr. Lacy with a lockout order. Mr. Lacy was present at the prior court hearing and had notice of the eviction order.

Deputies arrived at the apartment with a court order to enter the premises. At the landing, the deputies announced that they were Sheriff's Deputies there to affect an eviction. Mr. Lacy spoke to them through a screen door but refused to allow them to enter. As the three stood on the small second story landing, Mr. Lacy threatened to get a gun and shoot them. The deputies, the landlord agent, and a neighbor all heard this threat.

Deputies pulled the security screen door open and entered the apartment. Mr. Lacy yelled a second time that he was going to get his gun and kill them and then ran out of sight into a rear bedroom, reappearing with a handgun, which he raised and pointed at the deputies. Recognizing a threat to their lives, the two deputies discharged their firearms and struck Mr. Lacy. Mr. Lacy then retreated into his bedroom where deputies located him and a replica of a semi-automatic handgun. Paramedics transported Mr. Lacy to a hospital where he succumbed to his injuries.

In April of 2018, Mr. Lacy's adult children filed a lawsuit against the County of San Diego and the deputies involved in the incident. A trial began last week and concluded with a verdict in favor of the County and deputies. Specifically, the jury found that the amount of force used by the deputies was not unreasonable.

Deputies were faced with a difficult decision when confronted by an individual who pointed what anyone would believe is a firearm at them. This jury verdict acknowledges that.

Sheriff's Deputies are trained in de-escalation techniques, but law enforcement encounters can often be unpredictable where lifesaving decisions must be made in split-seconds.

###

