



# Sacramento County District Attorney's Office

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## MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 3, 2020

TO: Captain Charles Meeks, Commander  
Sacramento County Sheriff's Department  
Correctional Services Unit  
651 I Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

FROM: Sacramento County District Attorney's Office

SUBJECT: In-Custody Death – Juan Carlos Heras-Castro  
SSD Report No. 2018-135742  
Date of Incident: April 24, 2018

The above case was referred to this office for review of the circumstances surrounding the death of inmate Juan Carlos Heras-Castro while in the Sacramento County Mail Jail on April 24, 2018.

Heras-Castro was booked into custody at the Main Jail on February 22, 2018. On April 24, 2018, Heras-Castro was the sole occupant of his assigned cell. Sacramento County Sheriff's Department Deputy Shea Lukes was on duty and assigned as the floor/control officer. He began to conduct his hourly cell check and pill call with Registered Nurse (RN) Scott Lovell. At approximately 10:45 p.m., Deputy Lukes and RN Lovell approached inmate Heras-Castro's cell and knocked on his door to administer his pills. Deputy Lukes noticed Heras-Castro was hunched over on his knees with a noose around his neck tied to his cell light.

Deputy Lukes immediately radioed for assistance. Another deputy opened the cell door from the control booth and Deputy Lukes entered to render aid. Deputy David Pantoja also entered the cell and helped lift Heras-Castro to his bunk as the noose was removed. The noose was made from a jail-issued towel, ripped into multiple strips and tied together.

Heras-Castro was removed from his cell and placed just outside his door. No pulse was found. His shirt was removed, and Deputy Pantoja began to administer chest compressions. Deputy Blake Grinder responded with an Automated External Defibrillator (AED). RN Lovell applied the AED and chest compressions were continued. The AED cycled through multiple times and cardiopulmonary resuscitation was continued. At approximately 10:53 p.m., Sacramento Fire Department personnel arrived on the floor and, soon after, pronounced Heras-Castro deceased.

An inmate in a neighboring cell was interviewed. The inmate stated he was communicating with Heras-Castro by knocking on the wall back and forth during the last cell check the hour prior.

Surveillance video from the Main Jail was reviewed. A check of inmate Heras-Castro's cell occurred at the following times: At 6:40 p.m., a deputy walked by inmate Heras-Castro's cell and looked inside. At 8:03 p.m., Deputy Lukes walked by inmate Heras-Castro's cell and looked inside. At 8:46 p.m., a deputy walked by inmate Heras-Castro's cell and looked inside. In addition, at 8:54 p.m. an inmate walked to inmate Heras-Castro's cell and appeared to speak with him for a couple of minutes. At 9:57 p.m., another check was performed by Deputy Lukes. At 10:23 p.m., a cleaning crew entered the pod. A deputy supervising them appeared to have a conversation with an inmate in a neighboring cell. There is no indication as to whether he checked on Heras-Castro. Finally, at 10:45 p.m., Deputy Lukes approached the cell for pill call and looked inside. He discovered Heras-Castro hanged himself.

The Sacramento County Coroner's Office classified the manner of Heras-Castro's death as a suicide. Pathologist Keng-Chih Su, M.D., conducted an autopsy and concluded that the cause of death was hanging.

No evidence of criminal misconduct is presented or suggested in any of the supporting reports. The District Attorney's Office will not take any further action in this matter.

cc: Office of the Inspector General  
Sacramento County Sheriff's Department Lieutenant Gail Vasquez  
Kimberly Gin, Sacramento County Coroner's Office