

Witness says man killed by police told officers ‘shoot me’

Associated Press

PASCO, Wash. — Two witnesses said an unarmed Mexican immigrant fatally shot by police in Washington state fought with an officer, threw rocks and told officers to shoot him before they opened fire, documents released Wednesday show.

Witness Miguel Estrada, who was interviewed the day after the Feb. 10 shooting in Pasco, said he saw Antonio Zambrano-Montes throw rocks at officers then run away.

In the files released by authorities, Estrada said Zambrano-Montes screamed at officers: “‘If you are gonna shoot me, shoot me.’”

The death of the 35-year-old Zambrano-Montes was captured on video and sparked months of protests in the agricultural center in Eastern Washington.

A prosecutor is deciding whether the three officers who shot Zambrano-Montes should face criminal charges, a process likely to take months.

Another witness, Chris Pirtle, also told authorities Zambrano-Montes dared officers to shoot.

“He kept on throwing the rocks, and the cop was telling him, ‘Hey, put down the rock,’” Pirtle said.

Zambrano-Montes didn’t comply, witnesses said.

“He just kept telling him, ‘Shoot me, kill me,’” Pirtle said.



Joshua Trujillo/seattlepi.com via AP, File

Marchers carry photos of police shooting victim Antonio Zambrano-Montes during a rally in Pasco on February 14. A witness said Zambrano-Montes appeared to be trying to put down a rock when three police officers shot him to death.

The newly released data included video from witnesses and raw audio files.

In one audio file, witness Benjamin Patrick told investigators he yelled at officers after Zambrano-Montes was shot.

“Why did you just shoot him?” Patrick said he shouted. “He was trying to get away. What are you guys doing?”

Patrick later said during questioning he wanted to apologize to the officers for his outburst. He did not explain why.

Authorities say Zambrano-Montes had been throwing rocks at passing motorists and police, and a stun gun failed

to subdue him before he was shot.

Cellphone video showed three officers chasing Zambrano-Montes before shooting him as he turned around.

Franklin County Prosecutor Shawn Sant issued a statement with the document release, saying he was still deciding if the three officers would be charged with any crimes.

One, Ryan Flanagan, has resigned in a move his lawyer said was unrelated to the shooting. The other two, Adam Wright and Adrian Alaniz, remain on paid leave. They have not commented publicly on the shooting.

“The right decision is more important than a quick decision,” Sant said about the possibility of filing charges.

Patrick told investigators he saw Zambrano-Montes pick up what appeared to be a dirt clod and throw it at officers.

Patrick recalled two bursts of gunfire from the officers, even though he said Zambrano-Montes “wasn’t acting very violent at that time.”

Just before the second round of shots, the officers yelled at Zambrano-Montes to put down the rock, he said.

“He looked like he was trying to put it down,” Patrick said.

New warden, security measures after prison escape

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — A range of new security measures is being put in place at a maximum-security prison to close gaps exploited by two inmates who escaped last month.

The state correction department said Wednesday that includes stepped-up searches of inmates’ cells, staffing changes to ensure bed checks are more effective and installation of security gates in the facility’s tunnels.

The department also announced that 30-year correction veteran Michael Kirkpatrick will be the new superintendent of the prison, the Clinton Correctional Facility in Dannemora. He replaces Steven Racette, who was placed on paid leave Tuesday along with two of his deputies and nine other staff members, including guards, after an internal review of how convicted killers David Sweat and Richard Matt escaped June 6.

Racette was named superintendent on May 14, shortly after the retirement of his predecessor and just before a watchdog

group released a report on violence and racial tension in the prison.

Matt was shot dead Friday after a three-week manhunt. Sweat was shot and captured on Sunday.

Authorities said they cut through their adjoining cell walls over months, climbed down catwalks to the tunnels, got hold of contractors’ tools, broke through a brick wall, cut into and out of a steam pipe and cut a chain holding a manhole cover outside the prison to get away. The inmates stuffed clothing in their beds to make it look as though they were still there.

The new security measures also include temporarily closing the prison’s honor block, where the inmates escaped, and subjecting it to the same security restrictions as other blocks. All contractor tool boxes are now to be stored in secure areas inaccessible to inmates and inspected daily. A captain or higher rank is required on every overnight shift. Staff members in remote areas are required to check in every half-hour.

California law decried after black woman’s ‘lynching’ arrest

SACRAMENTO (AP) — When Sacramento police arrested black activist Maile Hampton over her role in a Black Lives Matter protest in January, they didn’t charge her with obstructing traffic, trespassing or disturbing the peace.

They charged her with felony lynching.

No one was killed or even hurt in the demonstration. But the 20-year-old woman was booked under a 1933 section of the California penal code that applies the word “lynching” to the crime of attempting to seize someone from police custody.

While the offense was later downgraded to something more conventional, the use of the lynching charge incensed many community leaders and led California lawmakers to unanimously vote to strike the term from the books. The measure won final approval last week and

is now before Gov. Jerry Brown.

“To come full circle 2015 and have a woman of color charged with that crime — the irony was not lost on me,” said state Sen. Holly Mitchell of Los Angeles, the black legislator who introduced the bill. She said that although the code was originally designed to protect African Americans in police custody, the word “lynching” should no longer be attached to the law.

The details of Hampton’s run-in with police are murky. But cellphone video that surfaced after the demonstration shows a police officer seizing a protester in the street. A woman is seen trying to yank the protester away when another woman, who appears to be Hampton carrying a bullhorn, grabs the man’s arm and tries to pull him from the officer’s grasp. Others soon join the effort.

California cities show biggest water savings yet

SACRAMENTO (AP) — California’s drought-stricken cities set a record for water conservation, reducing usage 29 percent in May, according to data released by a state agency Wednesday.

Regulators hope the savings will last through summer as California communities are under order to cut water use by 25 percent compared to 2013 levels. Gov. Jerry Brown announced his mandatory conservation order in April.

Felicia Marcus, chairwoman of the State Water Resources Control Board enforcing Brown’s order, said the results show it’s possible to meet steep conservation targets.

“It’s gratifying that far more communities are stepping up, and we want to see this much more through the summer,” Marcus said. “It ends up putting off the need for much harsher rationing, which has

greater impacts on people and the economy.”

California is in a four-year drought that has devastated some rural communities, prompted some farmers to leave fields unplanted or tap expensive water supplies and dented fish populations. Many cities have avoided the brunt of the dry spell because of backup supplies and preparation, but the governor wanted conservation efforts ramped up with no clear end to the drought in sight.

May’s water savings were the best showing since the state started tracking conservation last summer. The report followed several months of tepid conservation, 13.5 percent in April and 4 percent in March.

Conservation may have been skewed by rain in parts of the state in May, which reduces the need to water lawns.

Episcopalians vote to allow gay marriage

By **BRADY MCCOMBS** and **RACHEL ZOLL**
Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY — Episcopalians voted overwhelmingly Wednesday to allow religious weddings for same-sex couples, solidifying the church’s embrace of gay rights that began more than a decade ago with the pioneering election of the first openly gay bishop.

The vote came in Salt Lake City at the Episcopal General Convention, just days after the U.S. Supreme Court legalized gay marriage nationwide. It passed in the House of Deputies, the voting body of clergy and lay participants at the meeting. The House of Bishops had approved the resolution Tuesday by 129-26 with five abstaining.

The Rev. Brian Baker of Sacramento said the church rule change was the result of a nearly four-decade long conversation that has been difficult and painful for many. Baker, chair of the committee that crafted the changes, said church members have not always been kind to one another but that the dynamic has changed in recent decades.

“We have learned to not only care for, but care about one other,” Baker said. “That



AP Photo/Coke Whitworth, File

Bishop Gene Robinson addresses the congregation at Christ Church in Philadelphia, Sunday, May 1, 2005. Robinson, now retired, said he is breathless about how quickly the gay rights movement has progressed since he was getting daily death threats and forced to wear a bulletproof vest to his consecration 12 years ago.

mutual care was present in the conversations we had. Some people disagreed, some people disagreed deeply, but we prayed and we listened and we came up with compromises that we believe make room and leave no one behind.”

Baker said the House of Bishops prayed and debated the issue for five hours earlier this week before passing it on to the House of Deputies.

The Rev. Bonnie Perry of Chicago, a lesbian married to a fellow Episcopal priest, hugged fellow supporters on Wednesday and said, “We’re all included now.”

“For the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in our congregations now know under the eyes of God and in every single state in this blessed country, they are welcome to receive all the sacraments,” she said.

The Rev. Jose Luis Mendoza-Barahona of Honduras gave an impassioned speech, saying the new church law goes against the Bible and would create a chasm in the church.

“The fight has not ended, it’s starting,” he said. “Those of us in the church who are loyal followers of Christ are going to remain firm in not

recognizing what happened today.”

The vote eliminates gender-specific language from church laws on marriage so that same-sex couples could have religious weddings. Instead of “husband” and “wife,” for example, the new church law will refer to “the couple.” Under the new rules, clergy can decline to perform the ceremonies. The changes were approved 173-27. The deputies also approved a gender-neutral prayer service for marriage on a 184-23.

The measures take effect the first Sunday of Advent, Nov. 29.

Many dioceses in the New York-based church of nearly 1.9 million members have allowed their priests to perform civil same-sex weddings, using a trial prayer service to bless the couple. Still, the church hadn’t changed its own laws on marriage until Wednesday.

The Episcopal Church joins two other mainline Protestant groups that allowed gay marriage in all their congregations: the United Church of Christ and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The 3.8-million-member Evangelical Lutheran Church in America lets its congregations decide for themselves, and many of them host gay weddings.

BRIEFLY

Major airlines may have colluded to keep fares high

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. government is investigating possible collusion among major airlines to limit available seats, which keeps airfares high, according to a document obtained by The Associated Press.

The civil antitrust investigation by the Justice Department appears to focus on whether airlines illegally signaled to each other how quickly they would add new flights, routes and extra seats.

A letter received Tuesday by major U.S. carriers demands copies of all communications the airlines had with each other, Wall Street analysts and major shareholders about their plans for passenger-carrying capacity, or “the undesirability of your company or any other airline increasing capacity.”

The Justice Department asked each airline for its passenger-carrying capacity

both by region, and overall, since January 2010.

Justice Department spokeswoman Emily Pierce confirmed that the department is looking into potential “unlawful coordination” among some airlines. She declined to comment further or say which airlines are being investigated.

U.S., Cuba to open embassies, fully restore diplomacy

WASHINGTON (AP) — After more than a half-century of hostility, the United States and Cuba declared Wednesday they will reopen embassies in each other’s capitals this month, marking a historic full restoration of diplomatic relations between the Cold War foes.

For President Barack Obama, the opening of the U.S. Embassy in the heart of Havana is one of the most tangible demonstrations of his long-standing pledge to engage directly with U.S. adversaries. Heralding the embassy agreement, Obama

declared: “This is what change looks like.”

Cuban television broadcast Obama’s statement live, underscoring the new spirit. In a letter to Obama, Cuban President Raul Castro praised the embassy announcement as a way to “develop respectful relations and cooperation between our peoples and governments.”

Greek leader presses on with vote on austerity

ATHENS, Greece (AP) — The Greek government vowed Wednesday to go

ahead with plans to have the people decide whether they want more austerity measures in exchange for a rescue deal. Greece offered more concessions to its creditors, but was rebuffed — Eurozone finance ministers refused to negotiate any more aid until the referendum clears up what the country wants.

The moves came on a fast-paced day of zigs-and-zags that saw the Greek prime minister back off his earlier refusal to consider creditors’ belt-tightening demands, yet hold firm on putting the measures to a popular vote.

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