



Sacramento County District Attorney's Office

ANNE MARIE SCHUBERT
District Attorney

Stephen J. Grippi
Chief Deputy

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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 – Defei Chen
SSD Report No. 2018-0109254
Date of Incident: April 4, 2018

The above case was referred to this office for review of the circumstances surrounding the death of inmate Defei Chen while in the Sacramento County Mail Jail on April 4, 2018.

On April 4, 2018, Chen was sharing a cell with another inmate. Sacramento County Sheriff's Department Deputies Lee Conley and Deelahpi Douglas were on duty in Chen's housing unit. At approximately 2:38 a.m., Deputy Douglas conducted cell checks and discovered nothing unusual in Chen's cell. At approximately 3:39 a.m., Deputy Conley conducted cell checks and discovered Chen hanging with a torn towel around his neck attached to the top of the cell door.

Deputy Conley immediately radioed for assistance. He opened the cell door with his key and Chen fell limp to the floor as the torn piece of towel that was tied around Chen's neck detached from the cell door. Deputy Daniel Vasquez responded, and the two officers were unable to remove the makeshift rope from around Chen's neck. Chen did not appear to be breathing. Deputy Vasquez radioed for medical assistance and an ambulance. Deputy Conley was unsure if he felt a pulse and requested a breathing mask from the control room.

Deputy Christian Clark arrived with a cut-down tool at approximately 3:40 a.m. and cut the tie from Chen's neck. The makeshift rope was a length of torn white jail-issued towel. Deputy Conley began to perform chest compressions. At approximately 3:42 a.m., jail medical staff arrived and placed a breathing mask and Automated External Defibrillator on Chen, as Deputies continued chest compressions.

Sacramento Fire Department medics arrived at approximately 3:49 a.m. and continued medical treatment. Chen was pronounced deceased at approximately 3:52 a.m.

Deputy Conley noted that Chen's cellmate remained lying flat on the lower bunk of the cell throughout the incident. At approximately 3:57 a.m., Deputy Steven Craft spoke with Chen's cellmate, who stated that he was asleep during this incident until being awakened by one of the deputies asking him what happened.

Surveillance video from the Main Jail was reviewed. The events as shown on the video occur in the same manner as described in the reports.

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