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Grand jury made right call in Flores case

Therese Huntzinger, Mark Stevens and Patrick Hancock, For the Express-News

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A video frame grab shows Gilbert Flores and two Bexar County deputies, guns drawn, attempting to arrest Flores. Less than a second later, Flores would be shot and killed by the deputies. The video was shot by a neighbor and was released by the sheriff's department last week.

From the beginning, District Attorney **Nico LaHood** promised to release the so-called "second video" as soon as his investigation into the death of **Gilbert Flores** was complete, and LaHood kept his promise.

Although the newly released video captures only a portion of Flores' violent and erratic behavior, it very clearly shows an enraged man brandishing various weapons, including a knife, a Taser and a pair of folding chairs, who was desperate not to return to prison and

who repeatedly disobeyed the reasonable and lawful orders of two deputies sent to rescue a terrorized family from a dangerous domestic disturbance.

LaHood also released the 911 tapes that caused the deputies to be dispatched to the Flores home, and they provide an invaluable contemporaneous account of what Gilbert Flores was doing to his own family and of his determination to commit “suicide by cop.”

For all that the video and 911 tapes prove, there is much that happened on Aug. 28 that has yet to be fully reported. We were the lawyers for deputies **Greg Vasquez** and **Robert Sanchez**, and are convinced, first, that the Bexar County grand jury that no-billed these officers acted correctly, and, second, that District Attorney LaHood’s office discharged its ethical responsibility to present all the evidence that made the grand jury’s correct decision possible. Recent stories and columns in the Express-News have questioned what was presented to the grand jury and suggested that this body may have somehow been “manipulated,” although they have not presented a shred of evidence to support the hints of impropriety.

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Now that the investigation is complete, it should be a simple matter for the Express-News to make the appropriate public information requests for other evidence collected in the case but not yet released. Then it could publish a story that is factually based.

We suggest the Express-News request the written and recorded statements obtained from members of the Flores household, and statements made by paramedics from the **Leon Springs Fire Department**. Ask for photographs showing what Flores did to his wife and infant child, and the damage inflicted when he stabbed Deputy Vasquez’s Plexiglas shield.

The Express-News reported that Gilbert Flores served prison time for attempted aggravated assault on a peace officer and aggravated robbery with a deadly weapon. Obtain the details contained in court records, police reports and witness statements concerning these offenses.

It is common practice for the Bexar County medical examiner to perform comprehensive toxicological examinations of people who die violently. The results of such examinations would reveal whether Flores was under the influence of controlled or dangerous drugs at the time he was shot, and experts could be consulted to give opinions on the effects such substances would likely have had on him.

In the last two years, much media attention has focused on alleged police misconduct in places like Chicago, Baltimore, New York City and Ferguson, Missouri. The public is right to be concerned about lawlessness committed by those responsible for law and order, and the media have the duty to report on it.

San Antonians, though, have the right to know that the shooting of Gilbert Flores was nothing like the killings that have received so much recent attention.

Here, when all the evidence is examined, it will reveal that two veteran lawmen acted reasonably and with remarkable restraint and moderation, and did everything possible to avoid tragedy. In the end, they did what they had to do to stop a lawless man who would not be stopped any other way.

Greg Vasquez and Robert Sanchez acted heroically on Aug. 28 and did exactly what we expect of law enforcement. It is right that they were not prosecuted, and we should all look forward to the day they are back on our streets to continue doing the job they have sworn to do: to protect and serve the people of Bexar County.

Therese Huntzinger and **Mark Stevens** represented Greg Vasquez. **Patrick Hancock** represented Robert Sanchez.

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