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DENVER AND THE WEST

Coroner rules inmate's death was homicide

By Kirk Mitchell
The Denver Post

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The Denver Coroner has ruled that the July 9 death of an inmate at the new jail was the result of homicide.

Marvin Booker was being processed on a charge of possession of drug paraphernalia when he got into a scuffle with jail deputies. He was shocked with a Taser device and held to the floor.

Other inmates said Booker, 56, was then carried to the holding cell and dropped face first. He never recovered.



Marvin Booker

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The coroner's finding means simply that another human being caused Booker's death instead of natural

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causes, suicide or an accident. It is not the coroner's role to determine who might have caused the death, or whether the homicide was justifiable.

The coroner ruled Booker's death was caused by "cardiorespiratory arrest during physical restraint." The coroner said deputies had their body weight on Booker's back continuously for four minutes while he was face down and put him in a "sleeper hold" for more than two minutes while shocking him with a Taser for 8 seconds.

An investigation is ongoing into the actions of the jail deputies who scuffled with Booker.

Five deputies were placed on paid leave last week, Denver Director of Corrections Gary Wilson said in a news conference this afternoon.

He also said the National Institute of Corrections will conduct an independent review of Denver's restraint policies.

Inmates who witnessed the event said Booker was trying to retrieve his shoes a short distance away when a jail deputy ordered him to immediately go to the holding cell. When he refused and tried to explain, he pushed the deputy and then was held down as several others dove on top of him, according to the witnesses.

A video captured the struggle, but has not been released while the investigation is underway.

The coroner's report describes what is on the video, which confirms the inmates' accounts of the scuffle.

"When he turned to return to the holding area for his shoes, the booking officer called him towards and isolation cell, and when he failed to come to her, she went to the holding area and placed her arms on his. He swung his arms to shake her off," the coroner's report says.

"The booking deputy was joined by three other officers who forced the decedent first to a chair, and then face down on the floor. Two officers struggled to cuff his hands behind his back; another tried to control his legs; a fourth lay across his upper back and applied a carotid "sleeper" hold around his neck.

"The decedent continued to resist, and the officer applying the neck hold requested a Taser. A fifth officer applied the Taser to his leg and discharged it for 8 seconds. The decedent ceased resisting shortly after the use of the Taser."

The sleeper hold was applied to him for two minutes and 30 seconds, but deputies said it was released intermittently to check whether Booker was still resisting.

After Booker was placed face down in the holding cell, a deputy remained on his back for another 90 seconds to two minutes.

A short time later, another deputy saw he was not breathing and began CPR.

Booker, who had a long, but largely misdemeanor criminal history, had cocaine in his bloodstream, but not at levels the coroner found would have been toxic.

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coloradochik24 wrote: I'm not justifying the actions of the police, but the fact that he had a "long criminal history" and was addicted to cocaine doesn't make me think he was much of a positive contributing member of society. Therefore I don't think all this extreme public outcry is necessary.

I would disagree... life is precious... and I certainly can't judge who deserves public outcry and who doesn't... but if you can that is your decision.



but still hopeful.jesse | 3:07 PM on Monday Aug 23 | [Reply to this comment](#)



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