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Suit alleges excessive force by Lansing police in death

Oralandar Brand-Williams The Detroit News

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A Southfield law firm has filed a federal lawsuit against Lansing police in connection with the death of a man allegedly caused by excessive force by police officers, lawyers announced Monday.

Lawyers for the Buckfire & Buckfire law firm, filed the suit in the Western District of the U.S. Court allegedly that the officers used "excessive force" and the department permitted "collusive statements" by the officers in the death of Anthony Hulon.

The officers named in the lawsuit are Gary Worden, Charles Wright, Trevor Allman, Police Chief Daryl Green, Bill Windom and Edgar Guerra, plus the City of Lansing.

According to the suit, Hulon died April 11 while restrained face-down in police custody in the Lansing jail after telling officers, "I can't breathe." Hulon was handcuffed behind his back and allegedly pinned to the ground by Lansing police in the cell.

Worden had written in an incident report that Hulon "was visibly under the influence of narcotics believed to be meth. Hulon was escorted to cell 6-3 without any issues. Hulon then started taking clothes off and was pacing the cell and yelling. Hulon's behavior continued for approx. 8 hrs at which point Hulon stated he was very sweaty and hot. Sgt. Windham [sic] notified dispatch to have LFD and an Ofc transport Hulon for medical evaluation."

Hulon, 54, was arrested in connection with a simple assault complaint involving a incident with his roommate. Hulon denied any wrongdoing, according to the lawsuit. Police, according to the lawsuit, shackled Hulon's feet and he was "forcefully" held down by the three officers.

Worden, Wright and Allman are allegedly captured on video pinning Hulon to the ground on his stomach and chest, compressing his lungs and restricting his ability to breathe for more than five minutes, even as the man moaned in agony, according to the lawsuit.

Hulon suffered cardiac arrest and anoxic brain injury, according to his lawyers. The Ingham County Medical Examiner's Office ruled the cause of death as positional asphyxia and the manner of death as homicide, according to the 30-page complaint.

Hulon's family's lawyer, Jennifer Damico, said the lawsuit furthers an important conversation on the "ongoing problem of police brutality."

"This isn't the first time this has happened in the Lansing City Jail, in the same cell nonetheless," Damico said in a statement Monday. "This department knows better, and knows about the risks associated with positional asphyxia. It shows that this department turned a blind eye to the rights of citizens and has learned nothing from prior incidents."

Michigan State Police recommended that criminal charges be filed by the Michigan Attorney General's Office against four of the officers, the law firm said.

No charges have been brought in connection with the incident as of Monday, Damico said.

"At the request of the Lansing Police Department, we did conduct a criminal investigation into this incident. We have forwarded our investigative report to the Attorney General's Office for review and determination of any charges," said MSP spokeswoman Shanon Banner.

The state Attorney General's Office did not have an immediate response Monday, a spokeswoman said.

Lansing officials did not immediately respond to a message seeking comment.

The lawsuit was filed five months after the death of George Floyd sparked massive protests around the country and globe against police brutality.

Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin was videotaped kneeling on a handcuffed Floyd's neck for more than eight minutes as Floyd repeatedly said, "I can't breathe."

"It's tragic that we continue to see more and more instances of police brutality," Damico added. "This department, once and for all, needs to be held accountable."