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Timeline: The days and hours surrounding Hernandez's death

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Aaron Hernandez.

By [Matt Rocheleau](#)

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The following timeline about the death of former New England Patriots star Aaron Hernandez is

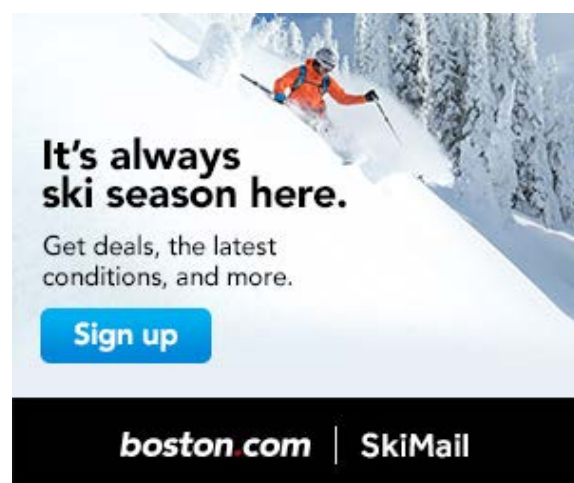
based on accounts provided both before and after his death by various sources, including law enforcement, prosecutors, state officials, attorneys, experts, family members, and the Globe's reporting:

Tuesday, Feb. 14, 2017:

- Hernandez [goes on trial](#) for murder in the 2012 killings of Daniel de Abreu and Safiro Furtado.
- Throughout the seven-week trial, Hernandez [appeared alert and engaged](#). He would smile or wave when he looked at Shayanna Jenkins Hernandez, his longtime fiancée and the mother of his 4-year-old daughter.

Hernandez often joked with court clerks, told them to enjoy their day and teased one clerk in particular about his haircut — because the man is bald and has nothing to cut.

During lunch breaks, the tall former athlete would devour the egg salad sandwiches he was provided by the court, several clerks said.



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“The happiest defendant I ever saw,” one courthouse employee, who asked not to be identified by name, recalled after Hernandez’s death.

- But beneath the surface, his true feelings may have been much more complicated.

A person with direct knowledge who spoke on condition of anonymity after Hernandez’s death said that while many observers of Hernandez’s recent trial remarked on his confident demeanor, within

prison walls he was insecure and clung to gang members for approval.

He was not aloof with other inmates, this person said. Instead, he appeared eager to be “one of the boys.” He often sat and laughed or played basketball with gang members. Hernandez was briefly put on suicide watch immediately after he was convicted for the 2013 murder of Odin L. Lloyd, the person said.

And a former state worker, briefed on Hernandez's history in prison, [said](#) some clinicians believed Hernandez needed counseling, given the depths to which he had fallen, and the likelihood his sentence would end only with his death behind bars.

Friday, April 14:

- A jury [acquits](#) Hernandez of committing the double murder, handing him his first significant legal victory since his shocking arrest for a third slaying in 2013.

When the verdict came down, he [nodded and choked back tears](#). He turned toward Shayanna Jenkins Hernandez, his longtime fiancée and the mother of his daughter, and said, “I love you.”

Later, after Hernandez's death, a psychology expert would [say](#) he was struck by video showing Hernandez's reaction to his acquittal, saying it may have been “a sign of depression that was starting to rear its head.”

While cleared on the most serious charges in the case, the jury found Hernandez guilty of illegal gun possession, for which he was sentenced to serve four to five years in prison.

- But Hernandez, 27, was already serving a life sentence without a chance of parole for his earlier conviction for fatally shooting Odin L. Lloyd in June 2013.

Hernandez' appeal of that earlier conviction was before the Supreme Judicial Court and had not yet been scheduled. The court could either uphold his conviction in the Lloyd case or order a new trial in Bristol Superior Court in Fall River.



Ronald Sullivan, one of Hernandez's lawyers, [said](#) the acquittal in the double-murder case would have no direct impact on the appeal of the Lloyd case.

But both Sullivan and another of Hernandez's attorney's, [Jose Baez](#), expressed confidence that the Lloyd case conviction would be overturned.

- By day's end, Hernandez was returned to Souza-Baranowski Correctional Center, a maximum security prison in Shirley.

Correction department officials would later say Hernandez was not on a suicide watch at the prison because he had not signaled he was at risk.

- A [report](#) by the state Department of Correction after Hernandez's death said he have little indication he was considering suicide. He was elated after his acquittal and began thinking he might play professional football again, "even if it wasn't with the Pats."

But Hernandez also told other prison inmates that "when you die your soul gets reincarnated," and that he learned a prisoner's convictions are erased if he dies while his appeal is pending. The report also suggested Hernandez had become increasingly religious in prison.

Tuesday, April 18, the evening before his death

- Hernandez spoke with Shayanna Jenkins Hernandez, his fiancée and the mother of his child, by telephone that evening, according to Ronald Sullivan, one of his attorneys. Telephone hours ended at about 8 p.m., Sullivan would later say.

- Hernandez's fiancée, in [an appearance later on the "Dr. Phil" television show](#), talked about that final phone call, saying that Hernandez gave her no hint of what was to come.

She said she believes she was the last person to speak to Hernandez, and their conversation ended unremarkably when the prison doors were about to close for the evening. "I honestly don't think that we said 'I love you' to each other," Jenkins Hernandez said in the [television appearance](#). "It was a normal conversation, which makes me doubt so many things."

"Everything was looking more positive than negative," Jenkins Hernandez said in a clip of the interview posted online before the television broadcast. "He was very positive, so excited to come home."

- A [report](#) by correction officials after his death also said Hernandez gave no indication to his fiancée during the call that he would kill himself in a matter of hours.

“Called [name redacted] at 7:48 p.m. and it is reported they were discussing an upcoming visit,” the report said.

- Authorities who later listened to Hernandez's last several phone calls from prison said that Hernandez did not indicate an attempt to harm himself during any of the calls.

“It is reported that he made 7 calls on the evening prior to his death and all content was future oriented and did not elicit any concerns for safety, even in retrospect,” said a report by correction officials after his death.

- At about 8 p.m., guards locked Hernandez in his cell.
- Hernandez was last seen at about 1 a.m. when guards checked on him.
- Sometime after that, authorities believe, Hernandez stuffed his cell door with cardboard to keep would-be rescuers at bay. They also believe he [covered](#) the floor to his cell with a large amount of shampoo, which made it very slippery.
- Authorities also [later said](#) they determined that Hernandez was alone when he hanged himself, as no one had entered the cell until he was found. Authorities said they later reviewed video surveillance of the G2 cell block from when he entered his cell until he was taken away in an ambulance. Authorities also said they found no signs of a struggle after Hernandez's death.

Wednesday, April 19, his death:

- At about 3:03 a.m., a correction officer found Hernandez [hanging](#) naked from a bedsheet attached to window bars in his cell, #57, in Unit G-2, the general population housing unit, of the Souza-Baranowski Correctional Center, according to the state Department of Correction.

Correction officers, after manually opening the door that had been blocked, cut the sheet Hernandez was hanging from.

“Lifesaving techniques,” including CPR, were attempted on Hernandez and he was taken by

ambulance to UMass Memorial-HealthAlliance Hospital in Leominster, [officials said](#).

He never regained consciousness. At 4:07 a.m., Hernandez was pronounced dead by a physician at the hospital. The state medical examiner's office took custody of Hernandez's body at about 6:30 a.m. and transported the body to its Boston facility to conduct an autopsy.

- When Hernandez was [found](#), a familiar biblical citation, [John 3:16](#), was scrawled in red ink on his forehead.

In the King James version of the Bible, the notation refers to the following passage: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

His right middle finger had a fresh cut, and there also appeared to be a large circular blood mark on each of Hernandez's feet. On the wall of his cell were several drawings and John 3:16 written in a substance consistent with blood.

- State Police Detectives and Crime Scene Service Troopers went to the prison that morning to investigate.

Correction department officials said no notes were found in an initial search of the cell, but officials later announced the finding of three handwritten notes beside a Bible in his cell. The Bible was open to a page with the John 3:16 passage on it and the 16th verse marked in blood.

According to two law enforcement officials briefed on the investigation, Hernandez addressed two of the letters found in his cell to his 4-year-old daughter and to his fiancée.

Officials said that an analysis of the notes determined with a reasonable degree of certainty that Hernandez wrote the notes.

- A [copy of a letter](#) Hernandez wrote was later released by prosecutors fighting Hernandez's attorneys' attempt to overturn his murder conviction for the 2013 killing of Odin Lloyd.

In that letter to his fiancée, Shayanna Jenkins Hernandez, he wrote that his fate was preordained.

"This was the Supreme's, the Almighty's plan, not mine!" Hernandez wrote. He told her she was his soul mate, and that he had told her "what was coming indirectly."

He asked her to “tell my story fully but never think anything besides how much I love you.”

Hernandez, who addressed the note “Shay,” told his fiancée that she was an angel.

“We split into two to come change the world! Your characteristic is that of a true angel and the definition of Gods love!”

At the end of the note, he asked her to tell someone whose name was redacted that he loved them, and to look after two other people, whose names were also redacted.

He ended with a reference to a song. “I know I loved you = Savage Garden.”

- In an appearance on the “Dr. Phil” television show later, Hernandez’s fiancée said she had questions about the investigation into Hernandez’s suicide, and doubted that he truly took his own life. She cited that he had never mentioned the “John 3:16” scripture to her, and that parts of the note he left her didn’t ring true, including that it was addressed to “Shay,” rather than the more familiar “Babe” or “Bae.”

“I don’t think that things were done properly,” she said during the television appearance. “I feel like he could have been saved, or something could have been done, or whatever the case may have been. I feel like someone was in the wrong somewhere, and I want answers.”

- Souza-Baranowski Superintendent Steven Silva personally notified Hernandez’s relatives about the former professional athlete’s death.

The hours after his death

- Shortly after 6 a.m. on April 19, the state correction department announced Hernandez’s death. In the hours that followed, reaction poured in.

- Hernandez’s sports agent questioned the report that he had killed himself.

“Absolutely no chance he took his own life,” Brian Murphy, the agent, [wrote on Twitter](#), using a nickname to refer to his client. “Chico was not a saint, but my family and I loved him, and he would never take his own life.”

- Jose Baez, one of Hernandez’s attorney’s, [said](#) his office will conduct its own investigation into the

death.

“There were no conversations or correspondence from Aaron to his family or legal team that would have indicated anything like this was possible. Aaron was looking forward to an opportunity for a second chance to prove his innocence,” Baez said in a statement. “Those who love and care about him are heartbroken and determined to find the truth surrounding his untimely death. We request that authorities conduct a transparent and thorough investigation.”

- John M. Thompson, the Springfield attorney assigned by the court to handle Hernandez's appeal of his conviction for Odin L. Lloyd's murder, said he was “shocked and saddened” by his client's death.

“It's awful to see a young man to die at this age,” Thompson said in a telephone interview. “We were engaged in his case. We were dedicating to getting his appeal going.”

Thompson, citing attorney-client privilege, declined to say when he last met with Hernandez and also declined to describe his client's state of mind recently.

He said he hoped that Hernandez's death would be properly and dispassionately investigated.

Thompson [also said](#) his office planned to file paperwork to have Hernandez's [conviction voided](#) once a death certificate was available, because he died before his appeals were exhausted.

- A prisoner advocate [said](#) hanging from a cell window was an unusual way for an inmate to kill himself at the Souza-Baranowski facility, which is designed to make suicide difficult.

- Hernandez's death came on the same day that many of his former teammates were [honored at the White House](#) for winning Super Bowl 51. A Patriots spokesman said shortly after Hernandez' death that the team was aware of the reports but did not anticipate team representatives would comment that day.

Thursday, April 20:

- Hernandez's body was released to Faggas Funeral Home in Watertown, where the owner said the home had no plans to hold services. The funeral home owner said Hernandez's body would be shipped soon to another location, which she declined to identify.

- Hernandez attorney Jose Baez held a press conference at which he accused the state medical

examiner's office of withholding Hernandez's brain illegally. Hernandez's attorney has said Hernandez's family wants Boston University to study his brain to see whether he had chronic traumatic encephalopathy, or CTE.

- The state medical examiner's office then [announced](#) it would release the brain to BU, saying it had withheld its release temporarily until the office had determined the cause and manner of Hernandez's death.
- The state medical examiner ruled that the manner of Hernandez's death was suicide and the cause asphyxia by hanging. A toxicology of Hernandez's blood came back negative for all substances tested, including synthetic cannabinoids, officials said.
- Governor Charlie Baker also on Thursday [expressed](#) "full faith and confidence" in Department of Correction Commissioner Thomas Turco, but also said the death of any inmate is a cause for concern that requires the state to look into the operations of the prison.

"Our response is going to be primarily to investigate and to make sure that everybody understands exactly what happened and when, and why," Baker said. "Anytime anybody kills themselves in a prison, something clearly went wrong."

He said he did not believe anybody had been disciplined in the wake of Hernandez's suicide, but the investigation continues.

- Meanwhile, as Hernandez's family grieved Thursday, his older brother, Jonathan "DJ" Hernandez, [sent out birthday wishes](#) via Facebook to their mother, Terri. "Happy B-Day Mom!" Jonathan Hernandez wrote.

"I love you and I know if Aaron was here one more day he would have said he loves you too. Keep smiling because I know Aaron & Dad are both smiling down on us right now."

Friday, April 21:

- A Bristol Superior Court judge [ordered](#) the Department of Correction to preserve [evidence](#) related to the death of Aaron Hernandez. His family's attorneys had requested evidence be preserved so they can [conduct their own investigation](#) into his death.

In a three-page order, Judge Thomas McGuire ordered the department to preserve a slew of items,

including: Hernandez's property in the cell and his writings; the sheets and ligature found in the cell; photographs of the cell; Hernandez's medical and mental health records; recordings of calls Hernandez made during the month leading up to his death; and records of forensic tests and witness interviews concerning Hernandez's death.

- George Leontirem, an attorney for Hernandez's fiancée, [said](#) she may file a negligence lawsuit against state prison officials for failing to prevent his suicide.

Leontirem said there was "no check of Mr. Hernandez's cell" between 8 p.m. and 3:03 a.m. and that the time lag between was an "extraordinary violation" of department procedure. However, authorities have said only that no one entered the cell during that time.

Leontirem also said: "There is some discussion — again, these are leaks, I don't know if they're true or not — that the guard who failed to check Mr. Hernandez during that period of time has been put on some sort of disciplinary action or leave. I don't know." The Department of Correction and the correctional officers' union did not respond on Friday to inquiries about possible discipline of the guard.

The attorney also disclosed that a second, independent autopsy was conducted Thursday, and Hernandez's family was awaiting the results.

- [Also Friday](#), Douglas K. Sheff, the lawyer for Odin L. Lloyd's mother, Ursula Ward, requested that the Patriots pay \$6 million to Hernandez's estate, a move that would make that money available to the Lloyd family. Lawyers for the family say the \$6 million may be owed to the estate under the terms of Hernandez's player contract. A spokesman for the Patriots declined to comment.

Monday, April 24:

- Hernandez's funeral was [held in his hometown of Bristol, Conn.](#) Services lasted between 1 and 3 p.m. at the O'Brien Funeral Home. Attendance will be restricted to friends and family by invitation.

In a statement, Hernandez's family asked for privacy.

"The family of Aaron Hernandez wishes to thank all of you for the thoughtful expressions of condolences. We wish to say goodbye to Aaron in a private ceremony and thank everyone in advance for affording us a measure of privacy during this difficult time," the statement read.

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