



Missouri AG broadens inquiry into Mississippi County Jail

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JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. — Missouri Attorney General Josh Hawley is broadening his inquiry into the Mississippi County jail and the county's former sheriff.

The investigation, announced in a report released Tuesday, comes after Hawley's office decided not to charge former Sheriff Cory Hutcheson with homicide in connection with the death of inmate Tory Sanders. Sanders died in May after several officers forced their way into his cell. Medical experts concluded that Sanders died because of a medical condition known as "excited delirium," and not as a result of the officers' attempts to subdue him, according to the report.

Nonetheless, Sanders is the third person to die in the jail over the past few years, and Hawley's office said those deaths warrant a new civil and criminal inquiry into Hutcheson and the jail.

"There is a troubling pattern of deaths and inappropriate conduct at the Mississippi County Jail," Hawley said in a statement. "This office will continue to investigate to determine if charges are warranted in other instances."

This inquiry is on top of other charges the attorney general is already pursuing against Hutcheson, including assault and robbery. A press release said Hawley will also continue efforts to keep Hutcheson from acting as sheriff in the future.

Branden Caid, Mississippi County's acting sheriff, was not immediately available for comment.

Sanders' cause of death was determined by three medical experts retained by the Mississippi County Coroner, federal investigators and Sanders' family, according to the report. "Excited delirium" is known for hallucinations and agitation and can lead to a heart attack. It is also exacerbated by drug use, and Sanders' toxicology report showed recent use of methamphetamines and cocaine, according to the report.

However, Hawley's office noted that the lack of a homicide charge "does not mean that the conduct of jailers and officers responding to Mr. Sanders' health situation was justified or appropriate." As evidence, it highlighted the use of Tasers and pepper spray that were shot into Sanders' cell through a food-tray slot, after Sanders became confused and aggressive.

Sanders died soon after jailers stormed his cell.

Thomas Deering, deputy chief medical examiner for Davidson County and the doctor who examined Sanders on behalf of the family, noted that there “were numerous superficial blunt trauma injuries on the body,” according to the report.

The investigation into Sanders’ death was conducted by the attorney general’s office and the Missouri State Highway Patrol.