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Mark Leimbach / NBC 7/39

A police officer used a taser on an hysterical woman outside this home in Chula Vista. Four days later, to woman's baby was stillborn.

Fetus stillborn after cops use taser on pregnant woman

by Lynn Stuart

CHULA VISTA, Dec. 19 – Investigators are trying to determine whether the shock of a police taser caused a pregnant woman to miscarry her 6-month fetus.

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According to police, 36-year-old Cyndi Grippi lost her baby four days after a Chula Vista patrolman gave her a 50,000-volt taser shock during a confrontation outside the home of the baby's father.

The incident began at about 11 p.m. Dec. 11 when police were called to a home in the 700 block of Monterey Avenue to investigate a report of a family fight. Officer said that when they arrived, Cyndi Grippi was arguing with one of her brothers who had come to her boyfriend's home to convince her to leave with them.

"He was asking her to go home, that she deserved better," said Lt. Don Hunter of the Chula Vista Police Department. "She kept saying, 'But I love him and I want to stay.'"

When the woman saw the officers, she tried to run into the house, but one of her brothers blocked her and they began pushing each other.

"She was hysterical. She was screaming and yelling and running around," Lt.

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Hunter said. "They were unable to control her. They ordered her to stop she refused."

One of the officers, a three-year member of the Chula Vista Police Department, pointed his stun gun at her and repeated the command to halt.

"She turned, looked at the officer, said 'no' and ran toward the residence," Hunter said.

The officer shot her with his taser, sending two small barbs into her back and shocking her. Hunter said that someone yelled that Grippi was pregnant, so the officer called an ambulance. They were not aware that she was carrying a baby until that point, he said.

Days later, the Chula Vista Police Department was notified the woman's fetus had been stillborn on Saturday and the Medical Examiner had performed an autopsy, Lt. Hunter said. The autopsy showed no trauma to the fetus. "At this time, the cause of death is unknown," he said.

Neonatal experts don't believe the shock would be enough to hurt the child, Hunter said. They say much stronger defibrillators are often used to revive pregnant women without harming the fetus. Hunter said that the officers might have handled the situation in the same way even if they had known the Grippi was pregnant.

"If the officer had known the woman was pregnant, I don't know if that would have made a difference in his decision," Hunter said. "It's difficult to tell after the fact."

A cause-of-death ruling is on hold pending further tests, a coroner's investigator said. Police withheld the names of the officers involved and said they are not the subject of a criminal investigation.

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