

# Videos show handcuffed inmate beaten

## Gov. Hochul wants 14 staffers fired

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USA TODAY NETWORK

Bodycam footage shows that an inmate was handcuffed with his hands behind his back when correctional officers punched him, pushed him and more, the New York attorney general said Friday.

At a virtual press conference on Friday, New York Attorney General Letitia James released the videos showing what happened to Robert Brooks of Greece at Marcy Correctional Facility on Dec. 9, which has led Gov. Kathy Hochul to call for the firing of 14 corrections staff members.

"I don't take the release of these videos lightly," James said during a virtual news conference. "But as attorney general, I release these videos because I have a responsibility and duty to the Brooks family and their loved ones and all New Yorkers with transparency and accountability."

A sheriffs association and the correctional officers union decried the actions of the correctional officers.

During the incident, in which Brooks' hands were handcuffed behind his back, multiple officers repeatedly punched him, hit him with a shoe, lifted him up by his neck, pushed him up against a wall and stripped him of his clothing before medical professionals entered the medical examination room to assess him.

Brooks was transported to a local hospital on Dec. 9 afterward, the AG's Office said, and then pronounced dead at Wynn Hospital in Utica early Dec. 10. The New York Attorney General's Office of Special Investigation opened an investigation Dec. 16.

James said, "As attorney general, you have my word that we will use every possible tool available to us to investigate this death thoroughly and swiftly. These videos are shocking and disturbing and I advise all to take appropriate care before choosing to watch them.

"I also want to make clear that this video and the conduct of these officers should not reflect poorly on the work

and professionalism of the countless correctional officers and correctional facility nurses throughout the state who go to work every day to protect and serve those in their care."

### In the videos

Brooks, who was serving a 12-year sentence for stabbing his longtime girlfriend in 2016, was moved from Mohawk Correctional Facility in Rome to Marcy Correctional Facility near Utica on Dec. 9.

The video footage released by the Attorney General's Office can be viewed at [ag.ny.gov/osi/footage/robert-brooks](http://ag.ny.gov/osi/footage/robert-brooks).

The four released videos came from body-worn cameras of four correctional officers — Sgt. Glenn Trombley and correction officers Michael Along, Michael Fisher and Matthew Galliher. The cameras were turned on, however, since none of the officers activated their body-worn cameras, the videos were recorded in standby mode with no audio.

In Trombley's video, corrections officers can be seen carrying Brooks by his arms, his body slack, to the prison's medical facility.

Once inside, Brooks is shown sitting on a blue cushioned medical table, his hands cuffed behind his back. Five to six officers surround him as one attempts to remove his boots.

One of the officers, wearing a backward baseball cap and glasses, can then be seen punching Brooks multiple times.

When Brooks is forced by two officers to sit up, his face and nose are bloody.

At that point, one corrections officer plants his boot firmly into Brooks's stomach and pushes him back onto the bed and onto his back while the officer who hit him once before, hits him again.

The officer who put his boot into Brooks' stomach is seen struggling to take off Brooks' boots and pants.

Moments later, he takes three swings, punching into Brooks' hip and thighs.

At the same time, the officer who threw the first punch is seen punching again

One of the ways that medical professionals check to see if their patient is truly unconscious is to do something called a sternum rub. The knuckles of



Body camera footage from the incident that took place inside Marcy Correctional Facility resulting in the death of an incarcerated Greece man was released by the New York State Attorney General's Office Friday. OBSERVER-DISPATCH FILE

one's hands are used to apply pressure and rub back and forth on the sternum, causing a great amount of pain — something someone faking can't ignore.

The officer with the backward baseball cap can be seen slapping Brooks' stomach before another officer points at Brooks and says something to the first. The first officer then proceeds to apply what looks like a sternum rub to Brooks.

He does that multiple times, at which point, Brooks moves and he's brought back up to a sitting position.

Brooks' face is bloodier than before, and he starts saying something to the officers present. The officer who planted his boot into Brooks' stomach can be seen clenching and unclenching his fist for a moment as Brooks talks. The officer with the backward baseball cap then punches him in the stomach.

Trombley says something to that officer, who steps away. Brooks starts saying something to Trombley before he's hauled to his feet and dragged to a nearby corner.

While he's being examined in the corner by two corrections officers, two employees of the medical facility can be seen in Fisher's footage looking in, one of them laughing and speaking with the officer.

When Brooks returns to the medical table, he seems completely uncon-

scious. The officer with the backward baseball cap can be seen administering another sternum rub.

At this time, two medical facility employees enter and begin working on Brooks, who appears unconscious.

In the footage of Galliher, this is even more obvious. Brooks's eyes are closed, his mouth is open, and the arm an officer holds is limp.

### Who was Brooks?

Brooks pled guilty to first-degree assault, a felony, for stabbing his longtime girlfriend on April 18, 2016, and was sentenced to 12 years in state prison in 2017.

The couple, who shared a teenage child, were involved in a physical dispute at a Woodhill Drive residence that culminated in his girlfriend being stabbed numerous times in the upper torso with a knife, according to Greece Police.

He ran from the scene when confronted by neighbors and was later apprehended by police.

Brooks was originally indicted on a two-count felony indictment including attempted second-degree murder and first-degree assault, according to court records. His plea satisfied both charges.

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# Inmate

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## Brooks' family responds

Brooks' family released a statement earlier this week after viewing the video of the incident surrounding his death. "As expected, watching the horrific and violent final moments of Robert's life was devastating for his loved ones, and will be disturbing to anyone who views the video following its release by the Attorney General's Office," the family's attorney Liz Mazur of Hughes Sokol Piers Resnick & Dym Ltd. said. "We will not rest until we have secured justice for Robert's memory, and safety for the prisoners at Marcy Correctional Facility."

And after the AG's Office released the video footage Friday, the family's attorney released another statement:

"With the Attorney General's release of these videos, members of the public can now view for themselves the horrific and extreme nature of the deadly attack on Robert L. Brooks," Mazur said. "As viewers can see, Mr. Brooks was fatally, violently beaten by a group of officers whose job was to keep him safe. He deserved to live, and everyone else living in Marcy Correctional Facility deserves to know they do not have to live in fear of violence at the hands of prison staff."

## Reactions to Brooks' death

- "The brutal beating of Robert Brooks, captured in the videos released today by New York State's Attorney General, was beyond horrific," Rochester Mayor Malik Evans said Friday. "My heart goes out to Mr. Brooks' family and friends, and I call on all of Rochester to keep them in your prayers as they process this terrible incident."

Those responsible for this appalling act must be held accountable to the fullest extent of the law ... I expect justice will be served expeditiously."

- State Sen. Jeremy Cooney, a Democrat whose district includes Greece, said Friday that he was "deeply disturbed" by the videos. "The actions of these officers were completely unacceptable and an insult to the difficult work done by New York's correctional officers. Those responsible must be held accountable and I will closely monitor the attorney gen-

eral's ongoing investigation."

- "The Sheriffs of New York State are shocked, like all right thinking people, by the actions of State Corrections Officers at Marcy Correctional Facility which led to the death of Robert Brooks, as revealed by body camera footage released today," New York State Sheriff's Association president Sheriff Craig DuMond said Friday.

"No human being should be treated that way by another human being. And it is made even worse by the fact that the extreme cruelty was inflicted by those entrusted with the power of government, against those they were entrusted to guard and protect."

- The New York State Correctional Officers & Police Benevolent Association, Inc. issued a statement Sunday after some of the union's executive board members reviewed footage of the incident.

"What we witnessed is incomprehensible to say the least and is certainly not reflective of the great work that the vast majority of our membership conducts every day," the statement reads. "What transpired at Marcy Correctional Facility is the opposite of everything NYSCOPBA and its membership stand for. "This incident has the potential to make our correctional facilities even more violent, hostile, and unpredictable than ever before ... This incident not only endangers our entire membership but undermines the integrity of our profession. We cannot and will not condone this behavior."

- Hochul called Saturday for the termination of 14 individuals involved in Brooks' death.

"The vast majority of correction officers do extraordinary work under difficult circumstances, and we are all grateful for their service," Hochul said in a written statement Saturday.

But we have no tolerance for individuals who cross the line, break the law and engage in unnecessary violence or targeted abuse.

Both the New York Attorney General and the DOCCS Office of Special Investigations are conducting ongoing reviews of this incident, and I am committed to accountability for all involved."

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