

Ex-NFL Star Aaron Hernandez Hangs Self in Jail Cell

Former New England Patriots tight end Aaron Hernandez hanged himself in the jail cell where he was serving a life sentence for murder, just days after being found not guilty of killing two other people, state prison officials said on Wednesday.

Hernandez, 27, was a rising star in the National Football League when he was arrested in June 2013 and accused of murdering an acquaintance near his Massachusetts home. He was convicted of that killing and sentenced to life in prison in 2015, but on Friday he was acquitted of a separate 2012 double murder.

Staff at the Souza Baranowski Correctional Center in Shirley, Massachusetts, found Hernandez hanging in his prison cell at 3:05 a.m. EDT (0705 GMT). He was taken to a nearby hospital, where he was pronounced dead an hour later.

“Mr. Hernandez hanged himself utilizing a bed sheet that he attached to his cell window,” the state corrections commission said in a statement. “Mr. Hernandez also attempted to block his door from the inside by jamming the door with various items.”

A lawyer for Hernandez, who once had a \$41 million contract, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Massachusetts State Police are investigating the death, and the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner in Boston is conducting an autopsy, officials said.

A prison spokesman told the Boston Globe that Hernandez had not been on a suicide watch. That spokesman did not immediately respond to a request for comment on that issue.

Hernandez was arrested in 2013 for the murder of Odin Lloyd in an industrial park near his North Attleborough, Massachusetts, home. The following year, he was charged with gunning down two men from the Cape Verde Islands outside a Boston nightclub.

In his trial for that shooting this year, defense lawyer Jose Baez challenged the credibility of the prosecution's star witness, suggesting that he had killed the men and pinned it on Hernandez in exchange for immunity. Baez is best known for successfully defending Florida mother Casey Anthony in 2011 against charges of murdering her daughter.

Hernandez was cleared of all the charges he faced in the second case but one count of weapons possession.

After that trial ended, the athlete was expected to appeal his sentence of life in prison without possibility of parole for Lloyd's killing.

Hernandez's former teammates are due in Washington later on Wednesday to visit the White House and meet President Donald Trump, in honor of their Super Bowl win. A team spokesman said that trip would proceed and declined to comment further on Hernandez's death. {eo}

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