

Aaron Hernandez Prison Death Ruled Suicide

The death of former New England Patriots player Aaron Hernandez on Wednesday at the Souza-Baranowski Correction Center has been ruled a suicide, according to Worcester County District Attorney Joseph D. Early Jr., Col. Richard McKeon, superintendent of the Massachusetts State Police, and Secretary of Public Safety Daniel Bennett.

Mr. Hernandez, 27, was found hanging from a bed sheet in his cell shortly after 3 a.m. on Wednesday. He was brought to UMass-Memorial Health Alliance Hospital in Leominster where he was pronounced dead about an hour later.

Chief Medical Examiner Dr. Henry N. Nields performed an autopsy on Mr. Hernandez on Wednesday and concluded today that the manner of death was suicide and the cause asphyxia by hanging.

An investigation into the death by the State Police Detectives assigned to the District Attorney's Office and Department of Correction investigators found cardboard jammed into the door tracks of his single-inmate cell to impede entry into the cell.

There were no signs of a struggle, and investigators determined that Mr. Hernandez was alone at the time of the hanging.

Mr. Hernandez was locked in his cell about 8 p.m. and no one entered the cell until a correction officer observed him at 3:03 a.m. and forced his way through the impeded door to render aid.

The cell was processed by State Police Detectives and Crime Scene Service Troopers. Investigators found three hand-written

notes next to a Bible in the cell.

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner released Mr. Hernandez's body on Wednesday, but withheld some tissue including his brain until the cause and manner of death was determined. Now that the cause and manner of death have been determined, the brain will be released to Boston University's Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy Center as Mr. Hernandez's family wishes. The center studies a progressive degenerative brain disease found in some athletes who have experienced repetitive brain trauma.

Mr. Hernandez was serving a life sentence after being convicted of first-degree murder in 2015 in the 2013 shooting death of Odin Lloyd in North Attleboro.