



Ohio Attorney General's Office
Bureau of Criminal Investigation
Investigative Report



2023-2210

Officer Involved Critical Incident - [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Howland Township, OH 44484 Trumbull County

Investigative Activity: Interview with Sergeant Eric Lofland
Activity Date: September 5, 2023
Authoring Agent: Special Agent Cory Momchilov #64

Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) Special Agent (SA) Cory Momchilov (SA Momchilov) was advised that two Ohio State Highway Patrol Troopers were on scene and provided assistance to the Mahoning Valley Crisis Response Team (MVCRT) regarding this incident. SA Momchilov was further advised that the troopers (Sergeant Eric Lofland and Trooper Michael Vitullo) were explosive breach operators and deployed explosives, breaching the door of the residence, just prior to the SWAT Team making entry. Both troopers were gone when SA Momchilov arrived on scene, however, SA Momchilov was provided Sergeant Lofland's phone number. It was reported that neither Sergeant Lofland or Trooper Vitullo discharged their firearms during the incident.

On August 23, 2023, SA Momchilov contact with Sergeant Lofland via phone. SA Momchilov advised Sergeant Lofland that he was investigating the shooting that occurred earlier in the day and would like to speak with him about the incident. Sergeant Lofland advised that he would contact SA Momchilov in the near future to set a date.

A few days later, SA Momchilov received a call from Sergeant Lofland. It was decided that SA Momchilov would interview Sergeant Lofland at the Richfield Office of BCI on September 5, 2023. Sergeant Lofland also advised that he would speak with Trooper Vitullo and ask if he would be willing to speak with SA Momchilov on September 5, 2023, as well.

On Tuesday, September 5, 2023 at approximately 0955 hours, SA Momchilov and SA Joseph Goudy (SA Goudy) interviewed Sergeant Lofland.

Sergeant Lofland has been a OSP Trooper since 2004 and joined the OSP SRT (Special Response Team) in 2006. Sergeant Lofland was promoted to Sergeant six or seven years ago. Currently, Sergeant Lofland is a Team Leader for "the Red Squad" (Northwest Ohio) but does respond state wide. Sergeant Lofland advised that the SRT Team has been fulltime since 2010.

SA Momchilov explained to Sergeant Lofland that it was his understanding that he responded to an incident on August 23, 2023. SA Momchilov asked Sergeant Lofland if he could explain his involvement in the incident.

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Sergeant Lofland advised that “they” (The MVCRT) was in need of “an explosive breach.” Sergeant Lofland advised that he and Trooper Vitullo then responded to the scene and assisted in “removing the door with explosives.”

SA Momchilov asked Sergeant Lofland if he knew the circumstances involving the situation. Sergeant Lofland advised, “We knew it was a hostage situation, I think we knew there were three hostages when I left and then we got the specifics once we got there.” SA Momchilov asked Sergeant Lofland if he knew what time he got the call to provide assistance. Sergeant Lofland advised that he believe it was around 0200 hours, and that he responded from his residence.

SA Momchilov asked Sergeant Lofland if he could explain what explosive breaching is. Sergeant Lofland stated, “We use the explosive, we try to use the least amount of explosive as necessary to remove a door or wall. It’s much safer for officers and it’s a for sure entry into the structure. I’ve been doing it for, I think since 2007, when I began on the breaching program.”

Sergeant Lofland advised that he received training on the use of explosives for breaching and trains quarterly and sometimes monthly, if possible.

SA Momchilov asked Sergeant Lofland if he and Trooper Vitullo used their own communications or if they were provided a radio from the MVCRT. Sergeant Lofland advised that he and Trooper Vitullo were only able to communicate with each other but that they were paired members of the MVCRT. Sergeant Lofland advised initially they started out on state wide frequency but then switched to a “talk about channel” which was not recorded.

SA Momchilov then stated to Sergeant Lofland, “Okay, you get on scene, what specifically do they brief you on?” Sergeant Lofland advised, “They told us that they had three hostages, there was a, I believed they said girlfriend was upstairs, was unable to get out. They said that the boyfriend wasn’t going to leave without the girlfriend and the mother wasn’t going to leave without her son. So, that’s what we knew, they talked about what they tried to do, make communications, they said they talked to him, I think for a short time early on, when they got there, on the phone. But they have been seeing him walking back and forth with a gun the entire time.”

Sergeant Lofland also advised that “they” deployed a drone that captured the rear door which allowed troopers to determine what kind of charge (explosive) was needed.

SA Momchilov asked Sergeant Lofland if he recalled at what point, the decision was made to use explosives to make entry into the residence. Sergeant Lofland replied, “Well they wanted to move up to the door, place the charge, however we just can’t leave the initiator because once the

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charge is on the door it is, it is ah, if someone was to hit the cap it would go. So, we basically had to keep eyes on it. We moved, it was just before, just before light, I mean was almost, beginning, becoming light. We moved to place the charge, I asked to do that because we were better under darkness to move up to the door and place it and then we got into position. After the charge was placed, Mike placed the charge, he handed me the initiator, they came around to the side of the building, which we call the two side. I handed the initiator back to Mike and I moved to the back of the yard, just to make sure that that the units back there were in a safe place once the charge went.”

SA Momchilov asked Sergeant Lofland who he was referring to when he said, “They moved to the two side.” Sergeant Lofland responded, “It was the tac units”

Sergeant Lofland continued, “I was standing in the back, I had told, I think there were four units behind a tree, I said that I needed them to be in a position where they couldn’t see the charge and they would give me a thumbs up when the decision was made to do it. I was back behind the small shed with another unit, he pulled his ear piece away from his ear and I could hear a countdown, so then I knew that they were, had made the decision to blow the door.”

Once the charge was blown, Sergeant Lofland advised that other units moved up to the door and that he and Trooper Vitullo remained outside. Sergeant Lofland stated he heard units yelling, “Shotgun, show me your hands, show me your hands” and then shots began to be fired.

SA Momchilov asked Sergeant Lofland if he could tell who was firing. Sergeant Lofland advised at that moment he did not know. Sergeant Lofland did state, “But just by the voice inflection I could tell that the guy was probably raising it up though. I mean it was, you could hear the difference in the voice as they were giving him commands.”

SA Momchilov asked Sergeant Lofland if he took any action after the shooting. Sergeant Lofland advised that he had units get out of the backyard.

Sergeant Lofland advised that he was wearing a body-worn camera during the incident. SA Momchilov was later provided a copy of that footage.

The interview with Sergeant Lofland was audio recorded. That recording is attached to this investigative report.

Attachments

Audio interview of Sergeant Lofland

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