



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



2024-1814
Officer Involved Critical Incident – 8401 South Dixie Highway,
Rudolph, Ohio 43462

Investigative Activity: Interview with Officer
Involves: Deputy Samuel M Miller (S)
Date of Activity: 06/21/2024
Activity Location: Wood County Sheriffs Office – Business – 1960 East Gypsy Lane
Road, Bowling Green, OH 43402
Author: SA Joshua S. Rammel, #175

–Narrative:

On June 21, 2024, Special Agent (SA) Josh Rammel (Rammel) and SA Jason Snyder (Snyder) conducted an interview with Deputy Samuel Miller (Miller) of the Wood County Sheriff's Office (WCSO) regarding the Officer Involved Critical Incident (OICI) involving the WCSO and deceased individual George Eric Taylor (Eric) that occurred on June 16, 2024, at 8401 South Dixie Highway, Rudolph, Ohio.

The interview was conducted at the WCSO located at 1960 East Gypsy Lane Road, Bowling Green, Ohio. Also present during the interview was George Gerken (Gerken) of the Ohio Patrolman's Benevolent Association (OPBA).

The interview was recorded using a digital audio recorder. A copy of the recording was attached to this investigation.

The interview began with all individuals present identifying themselves. Miller was then provided a Criminal Investigation Notification form advising Miller the reason for the interview and clarifying that the interview was voluntary and not a Garrity Interview, conducted for internal investigation purposes. Miller advised that he understood, signed the Criminal Notification Form, and agreed to proceed with the interview.

Miller provided basic identification information such as his full name, date of birth (November 20, 1995), unit number (W75), and his phone number [REDACTED]. Miller stated that he had been a Deputy with the WCSO for four and a half years, with the last year being on the road. Miller advised that he has six years total in law enforcement. Miller indicated that he has a body camera and a cruiser assigned specifically to him. Miller mentioned that he is currently working a 6pm–6am schedule and was working the days Friday–Sunday (June 14–16); part of his schedule during the timeframe when the OICI occurred. Miller informed SA Rammel that he

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07/29/2024

worked a 16-hour shift on Friday June 14, starting his shift at 2pm instead of 6pm; and then worked the normal 6pm-6am on Saturday June 15. Miller advised that he is right-handed and carries the WCSO issued Springfield XD 45 caliber handgun. Miller described additional items on his duty belt including magazine pouches, keys, handcuffs, taser, glove pouch, and a tourniquet. Miller stated that he did not utilize any additional firearms or less lethal weapons during the OICI involving Eric. Miller advised that during the night of June 16, 2024, he was assigned the "area 3" district in Wood County. Miller clarified that this was the southwest corner of Wood County and that each day they rotate the districts they are assigned to. Miller indicated that he had never had any past involvement with Eric, nor had Miller ever responded to a call-for-service at 8401 South Dixie Highway.

Miller informed SA Rammel that he does not wear corrective lenses, and that the house was well lit during the altercation. Miller stated that he had not consumed any alcoholic beverages prior to his shift nor was he on any form of medication. Miller stated that he has no military or Special Response Team (SRT) training. Miller is certified in Crisis Intervention Training (CIT).

Miller began to describe the night leading up to responding to Eric's residence. Miller stated that around 12:30-1am on June 16, 2024, two calls for a wellness check came in regarding Eric. The complainant advised that he lost contact with Eric as he was previously talking to him on the phone. Eric was identified as being a veteran with [REDACTED] and other health issues. Eric was described as "not acting right" and that Eric's house had multiple firearms in it. Miller mentioned that he was responding from the Weston area and Deputy Michael Shaffer (Shaffer) was also responding.

Miller stated that the first wellness check call-for-service was called off as Miller was responding, but around 15-20 minutes later the second call alerted WCSO that Eric was "suicidal" and that a deputy needed to respond. It was reported that Eric may also be "standoffish with law enforcement".

Miller indicated that he attempted to make contact at the front door of the residence and there was initially no contact from inside. Eric eventually spoke through the Ring camera back to Miller as Eric's friend Matt Patton (Patton) also arrived on scene. Patton identified himself to Miller as Eric's friend and told Miller that Eric was his preferred name.

Patton used the garage code to open up the garage and gain access to the residence. Miller followed Patton into the residence and took position in the living room near the entrance into the garage. Patton made comments at that time to Eric advising "don't do this to me". Miller told SA Rammel that when he first saw Eric, Eric was sitting in a seat on the couch with a "large black knife" to his own throat and a piece of paper attached to his chest. Miller stated that he pulled his firearm out and held it behind his back not pointing it toward Eric. Miller informed dispatch that Eric had a knife as Eric became angry that Miller was in his house. Miller began to try and convince Eric to drop the knife as Patton attempted to convince Eric of it as well. At that time Shaffer arrived through the garage entrance and pointed his firearm directly at Eric and Miller moved his firearm to the "low ready" position. Shaffer's position appeared to anger Eric, even though Shaffer proceeded to try to deescalate the situation. Miller mentioned that Eric stood up and began to press the knife into his own throat becoming very emotional. Miller advised that by looking at Eric's eyes and the strain on his face indicated to Miller that Eric wanted to cut his own throat but was not able to. Miller also

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advised that Eric had a bottle of alcohol in his possession as well during this time and continued to drink it throughout the incident.

Miller stated that Eric continued to focus only on Shaffer and became very angry. Patton was positioned between Eric and Shaffer, so Miller asked Shaffer to lower his weapon and take a few steps back. Miller was able to get Eric to focus on him instead and Eric seemed to calm down when talking with Miller, so Shaffer contacted Sergeant Chris Reynolds (Reynolds) in order for Reynolds to take Shaffer's place. Once Reynolds took Shaffer's position, he continued to try and de-escalate the situation. Reynolds remained calm and collected and did not pull his firearm out. Reynolds was able to build a rapport with Eric due to being from the same area of Wood County.

Eric eventually put his knife down on a table near him. Due to an agreement between Eric and Miller, Miller put his firearm away and took out his taser. Eric appeared to get angry that Miller pulled out his taser and became "paranoid" that someone was going to come in through the rear glass door. Eric then reached behind the closed curtains to lock the glass door.

Miller and Reynolds continued to try and calm Eric down, when Eric stated that they are "going to play this game" until he (Eric) finished his bottle of alcohol. Miller tried to convince Eric to put his knife far enough away from his reach, but Eric did not leave the table area and took possession of the knife again. Due to Eric picking the knife back up, Miller transitioned back to his firearm and secured his taser.

Eric then told Reynolds that if he followed the instructions on the paper attached to Eric's hoodie, he would put the knife down. Reynolds agreed and Eric allowed Patton to come up and take possession of the note before providing it to Reynolds. Reynolds left the living room and made a phone call to Eric's wife, Jessica Taylor (Jessica), before returning back to the living room. Patton kept telling Eric that Jessica was not worth it, and that Eric needed to put the knife down. Eric told Miller and Reynolds that he was having a "shitty day" and told them that his father was recently deceased, and it was Father's Day.

Patton then approached Miller and informed him that all of Eric's firearms were accounted for, and that Eric is not armed with a gun. Due to Patton saying that, Eric reached into the storage compartment of the couch he was sitting on giving the impression that he was looking for a gun. Miller stated that he could see Eric's hand and could tell that Eric was just moving his hand around and not actually reaching for anything. Eric eventually stood back up and inquired if he was going to be "charged for anything". Reynolds and Miller promised that Eric was not going to be charged, but that they just wanted Eric to go to the hospital to get help.

Eric then commented that they were going to "play a game" again as Eric started walking towards Miller and Reynolds with the knife to his own throat. Miller exited through the house door into the garage and took position on the opposite side of the driveway so that he could see into the house through the garage door, as Reynolds exited through the front door of the residence and took cover behind a truck in the driveway on the opposite side of Miller. Eric closed the door from the garage into the residence.

Miller indicated that he was thinking at that time that they needed to call the Special Response Team (SRT) and have them respond with a negotiator, but prior to voicing this to Reynolds,

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Eric emerged from the house holding a silver pump action shotgun. Miller pointed his firearm towards Eric and started commands advising Eric to put the shotgun down. Eric refused to put the shotgun down and tried to get Miller to come back into the house. Eric eventually put the shotgun down and gave it to Patton who removed it from the house. Eric then put his knife on a box in the garage and attempted to get Miller to come back in the house. Miller declined and told Eric that he needed to move away from the knife on the box before Miller would comply. Miller indicated that he kept trying to get Eric to leave the house and come with him to the hospital for help. Miller mentioned that Eric never pointed the shotgun at him or any other person before giving it to Patton.

Eric then said "are you ready?" and "let's play a game" again before entering back into the house and coming out approximately 30 seconds later with an "AR style black rifle with a scope on it with a magazine in the slot". Miller told SA Rammel that Eric made multiple statements about being in the military and Miller knew that Eric was well versed with the rifle. Miller also commented that he was not wearing a heavy vest at this time.

Miller advised that he had his gun pointed on Eric as Eric had the rifle pointed to the ground. Eric asked Miller if he was ready and that it was time to play a game again. Miller kept telling Eric to "put the gun down" multiple times as Eric "posted up" in the doorway bladed towards Miller. Eric then "slowly raised the rifle in my (Miller's) direction and I (Miller) slowly squeezed the trigger as he raised the rifle". Miller stated that Eric had raised the rifle around halfway up towards him before Miller fired one (1) shot. Miller indicated that Eric said, "are you ready?" as he was raising the rifle towards Miller. Miller saw Eric fall backwards into the house out of view due to items in the garage. Miller ran to the front door and saw Eric lying on the ground through the front door windows. The front door was locked so Miller and Reynolds went into the house through the garage door. Miller approached Eric and removed the rifle from Eric's reach and while clearing the rifle Miller observed that the magazine was full of rounds, but there was no round in the chamber. Miller and Reynolds checked Eric for wounds and observed an entry wound through Eric's left armpit. Miller described the scene and stated that his shot went through the drywall of the garage wall, through the wall in the house, and into Eric's armpit.

Miller and Reynolds did not observe any exit wounds but started providing medical attention to Eric. Miller utilized the radio and called for Emergency Medical Services (EMS) to respond to the scene immediately from their staging location. Miller offered assistance to EMS with anything they needed. Eric appeared to be breathing for a short period as EMS continued to work on Eric. Miller stopped assisting with medical attention once additional medics arrived.

Miller then exited the residence and asked Reynolds what he (Miller) needed to do. Reynolds did not know except that WCSO command staff had been notified and were on their way. Miller stated that he just took a position in the front yard until command staff arrived on scene.

SA Rammel inquired if Miller could estimate how far away Eric was from him while they were in the house. Miller stated around 20–30 feet away. Miller also described Eric as being larger than him, wearing tactical pants and a hooded sweatshirt, with a large knife in one hand and the other hand holding a large glass bottle. Miller stated that Eric kept pointing the knife at Miller and Reynolds during the altercation, but never made any direct threats with the knife.

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Miller advised that he was not a taser instructor but knew that tasers are not usually effective that far away from a target or against in individual wearing loose clothing such a hooded sweatshirt. Gerken interjected and Miller agreed that he did not initially think about using a taser in that situation because Eric had a knife, and a knife is deemed a deadly weapon within that range.

SA Rammel asked Miller if Shaffer's actions were making Eric angrier on purpose. Miller mentioned that Shaffer was trying to de-escalate the situation and was not trying to make Eric angrier or more agitated.

Miller confirmed that he was inside the residence speaking to Eric for over an hour. During that timeframe Miller advised he provided commands to Eric to either drop the knife, put down the gun, or other commands to try and de-escalate the situation on more than 20 occasions. Reynolds and Shaffer also gave similar commands to Eric during the same time.

Miller informed SA Rammel that Patton attempted to help WCSO get Eric to go to the hospital. Miller mentioned that Patton was near Eric and deputies during the altercation, but never appeared to get in the line of fire or interfere with their duty.

SA Snyder asked what Miller was thinking when Eric was raising the rifle towards him. Miller said that he thought he "was going to get shot" and thought about his "wife and baby on the way". Miller stated that he was "scared" and did not know what was going to happen to him or any other person on scene. Miller described the rifle as being different than the shotgun because Eric did not aim the shotgun toward anyone.

Miller told SA Rammel that he did not review his body camera prior to the interview and did not want to at this moment.

Miller indicated that he did not have any additional questions at this time, nor did he have any additional information to provide.

At that time the interview was concluded.

The signed Criminal Investigation Notification form was attached to this investigation.

This report only summarizes the information deemed by the author to be of the most relevance to the investigation and does not purport to contain all questions and answers from the interview. Further, this report was placed in a chronology to aid the reader's overall understanding of the information elicited during the interview and may not be reflective of the actual sequencing of questions. It is suggested that the full recording be reviewed to clarify any content or contextual questions regarding the information from the interview.

Attachments:

Attachment # 01: miller criminal investigation notification

Attachment # 02: samuel miller interview 2024-06-21

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Criminal Investigation Notification

1. This investigation is being conducted in order to determine whether any criminal laws have been violated on the part of those involved in this incident. Specifically, to collect facts and information to be provided to the prosecutor and/or grand jury in order for them to determine whether the conduct involved is authorized or prohibited by criminal statutes.
2. Your participation in this interview is voluntary and you may decline to answer or cease the interview at any time. You are entitled to have an attorney present if you wish.
3. The criminal investigation is separate from any internal, administrative investigation which your employer may or may not be independently conducting. You are not being compelled to give any statement or answer any questions. This is not a "Garrity" interview (where you could be required to answer).

Samuel Miller
Printed Name of Interviewee

June 21, 2021 10:52
Date / Time

[Signature]
Signature of Interviewee

Josh Renner
BCI Agent (Printed)

[Signature]
BCI Agent (Signature)