



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



2022-1472
Officer Involved Critical Incident – 2793 Waterpark Drive, Mason,
OH (L)

Investigative Activity: Interview with Officer
Involves: Kevin Knobbe (W)
Date of Activity: 07/13/2022
Activity Location: Warren County Sheriff's Office – Business – 822 Memorial Drive ,
Lebanon, OH 45036, Warren County
Author: SA Douglas Eveslage, #66

Narrative:

On July 13, 2022, Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) Special Agent (SA) Doug Eveslage interviewed Assistant Team Leader Kevin Knobbe (Knobbe) of the Warren County Tactical Response Team regarding his involvement with an Officer-Involved Critical Incident (OICI) under BCI investigation. Knobbe, a fulltime Clearcreek Township police officer with the rank of Corporal, was alerted to the SWAT callout during the afternoon of July 11, 2022.

In the early morning of July 12, 2022, the OICI occurred at the Baymont Inn at 2793 Water Park Road, Mason, Ohio. The Tactical Response Team was contacted by the Mason Police Department when an escaped inmate from an area detention facility took a female hostage in room #310. A Tactical Response Team member shot and killed the involved individual, Thomas Cromwell, after they breached the hotel door. The details below summarized the pertinent portions of the recorded interview with Knobbe and were not taken verbatim unless noted by quotations.

The interview began at 1321 hours. Attorney Joe Hegedus represented Knobbe for the interview. Knobbe stated that he arrived at the Baymont Inn around 2320 hours on July 11, 2022, and he made contact with management at the Baymont Inn to verify room #310 could not make out going calls on the landline of that hotel room. Management confirmed only internal hotel room calls could be conducted.

The Tactical Response Team was relieved by the Hamilton County Police Association around 2345 hours and Knobbe's team members all went to the local fire department to rest and eat until approximately 0200 hours on July 12, 2022. At this time, Warren County's Tactical Response Team responded back to the incident command post to brief the operational plan. The plan consisted of a dual breach from the adjacent rooms on each side of room #310 and at the same time breaching the front door of room #310 by "ballistic" and "mechanical"

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means. Knobbe explained that Thomas Cromwell posted a "Facebook Live" video threatening the hostage with a knife, so the Tactical Team decided they needed to "move in."

Knobbe explained that there would be an "eight count" to breach and make entry into room #310 and that he was on the team that would make entry into the room. Stanley Matuszak had the ram and James Schelldorf with the breaching shotgun, were assigned as the "breachers" to the entry door for room #310 and they received information that the door was barricaded with a piece of furniture. Knobbe recalled Chris Keene being "point", Josh Emmel was second, then himself, and finally Joseph Gray was the "team leader" and assigned as the last person to make entry into the room. Knobbe said once everyone understood their responsibility, they executed the plan when the negotiators were able to make contact with Thomas Cromwell on the phone.

Knobbe said that during the breach, the door would not "swing open" because there was something barricading it, but eventually Chris Keene and Josh Emmel were able to make entry; however, they were still in the doorway. Knobbe heard Keene and Emmel giving the verbal commands, "Stop," "don't do it," and then he heard "the suppressed round go off." As the commands were being given, Knobbe looked around Keene as the shot was being fired and witnessed Thomas Cromwell "in the process of falling over." Knobbe stated that he grabbed the female hostage as she moved toward them and he pulled her over the furniture at the entry point of room #310 and handed her off to Joseph Gray in the hallway.

SA Eveslage asked Knobbe if he could see Cromwell's hands at any point during the entry, and Knobbe advised that he could not. SA Eveslage asked if Knobbe saw any weapons inside the room, but Knobbe stated he did not see any because his attention went to the female hostage and making sure she was not a threat and was compliant with verbal commands. SA Eveslage asked if any verbal commands were given at the door before entry, and Knobbe explained that it was well established that they were the police and negotiations had been going on for hours at that point. Knobbe stated that Cromwell was looking out the windows during the stand off, waving at the Tactical Team's sniper located near the dumpster and other behaviors like that acknowledging police presence. SA Eveslage asked if Knobbe had any recording devices or body worn cameras on his person during the incident, and Knobbe advised he did not.

Knobbe further explained that Chris Keene was the person primarily giving the commands to Cromwell during entry and that he heard only one shot from Keene's rifle after commands were being given.

The interview was concluded at approximately 1336 hours. The interview was audio recorded. See audio recording for further details.

Attachments:

Attachment # 01: 2022-07-13 / Cpl. Kevin Knobbe Interview

Exhibit 1

Included as a separate file.