



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



2025-2000
Officer Involved Critical Incident - Tiedeman Road at I-480
West, Brooklyn, OH 44144, Cuyahoga County

Investigative Activity: Witness Officer Interview
Involves: Tim Rhoden (W)
Activity Date: 08/08/2025
Activity Location: BCI - Richfield
Authoring Agent: SA Allison Fletcher

Narrative:

On Friday, August 8, 2025, Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) Special Agent (SA) Allison Fletcher and SA Darien Spann (Spann) interviewed Cleveland Metroparks Police Department (CMPD) Officer Tim Rhoden (Rhoden) who was accompanied by his attorney Beth Ligget of the Fraternal Order of Police. The interview took place at BCI - Richfield located at 4055 Highlander Parkway, Richfield, Ohio 44286. The interview was audio and video recorded. The recordings have been saved to Axon Justice as Reference Item J.

Officer Rhoden was identified as being a police officer who witnessed and/or had some level of involvement in the June 24, 2025, officer-involved shooting which occurred in the area of Tiedeman Road and Interstate 480 West in Brooklyn, Ohio. Reportedly, Officer Rhoden did not discharge a firearm during the course of the incident. The purpose of the interview was to obtain all relevant information of the incident known or observed by this officer.

Officer Rhoden prepared a written statement for his interview. Officer Rhoden read his statement out loud during the interview. Follow-up questions were then asked at the conclusion of his written statement. Below is a summary of Officer Rhoden's written statement, direct quotes of portions of the written statement, and a summary of the follow-up questions. For additional information, refer to the audio/video recordings and the written statement.

Officer Rhoden has been employed by the CMPD for about 18 years and has been employed with CMPD for the entirety of his law enforcement career. During the incident, Officer wore his standard police uniform with a police badge affixed to it. He also wore an external ballistic vest and duty belt. He drove CMPD Unit 261, an SUV, marked with CMPD emblems and emergency lights. He considered himself to be well-represented as a police officer during the incident. He stated that he was not under the

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Investigative Report



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influence of any substance that would impair his memory or judgment during the incident or during the interview with BCI. He does wear corrective lenses.

Officer Rhoden was identified as a negotiator during the shooting incident. After receiving an alert via the Active Alert app on his phone at 1128 hours, Officer Rhoden responded to the incident location arriving approximately seven minutes later. The alert received by Officer Rhoden indicated there was a suicidal male in a vehicle with a gun to his head. The incident began after a traffic crash occurred in the same location.

The following is an excerpt from Officer Rhoden's written statement describing what he participated in and observed during the incident:

"The situation was fluid and required tactical teams, command staff, and negotiators to react to the scenario as it unfolded. As I recall, there was not a specific plan in place (that I was told) for managing the incident. The incident was very fluid, and tactics changed as the subject's demeanor changed, as the needs of the scene changed (i.e. removal of the injured/deceased driver that had been struck by Mr. Kerr's vehicle), and as additional equipment and personnel came on scene. My support members were in contact with scene command and relayed information to me as necessary. My tactics and engagement with Mr. Kerr were based upon my training and experience as a law enforcement officer and Crisis Negotiator.

Initially when I arrived on the scene, I gathered information from the sisters of the subject. Mr. Kerr was engaged in communication with the responding patrol officer, Parma Heights Police Department Officer Molnar. Mr. Kerr was holding the gun to his head and appeared agitated. When the OSP armored vehicle (bearcat) arrived, the Negotiator Team of Lt. Cindy Eschweiler (Brooklyn Police Department), Lt. Stephen Howard (Cleveland Metroparks Police Department), and myself transitioned into the bearcats and began communicating from there. Brooklyn Lt. Cindy Eschweiler attempted communication when we transitioned to the OSP bearcats.

The OSP bearcats were stationed approximately 10-15 feet away from Mr. Kerr. I had direct line of sight with Mr. Kerr and he could see me through the window of the bearcats. Though the bearcats windows were tinted, due to the open roof hatch, the sunlight shining on me allowed Mr. Kerr to see the Cleveland Metroparks Police Department patch on my ballcap. He commented on the patch to clarify which department I worked for.

I became the primary negotiator at this time after providing my Cleveland Metroparks Police Department issued cell phone to Mr. Kerr (The specific time of

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this action should be in the after-action report drafted by Lt. Cindy Eschweiler, Brooklyn Police Department). I made contact with Mr. Kerr via a separate cell phone, which was issued to Lt. Cindy Eschweiler by Brooklyn Police Department, and then I remained Mr. Kerr's point of contact for the remainder of the incident.

Mr. Kerr had lost the use of his personal cellphone because it was on the ground outside of his vehicle. I am unaware of the circumstances that caused his phone to end up away from his physical control. Initial communication by the responding patrol officer (I am unfamiliar with which officer this was) attempted direct person-to-person contact with the subject with both parties attempting to shout over the environmental noise.

Due to the noise from the highway, the influx of patrol vehicles arriving on scene with lights and sirens, the engine noise from the bearcat, etc. communication was difficult. Mr. Kerr struggled to understand the patrol officer's instructions and the patrol officer had difficulty understanding Mr. Kerr. Communication over the LRAD (Long Range Acoustical Device) system was utilized but proved ineffective because we could not hear what the subject was saying back to us. I provided my assigned department cell phone as an alternative to establish direct communication with the subject. This was not a recorded conversation. A recorded line was not used because it was not available to us in the OSP bearcat.

Mr. Kerr initially was uncooperative and not willing to discuss the circumstances any further other than stating that he wanted to die that day. He did not appear to be in any physical distress. His initial communication was aggressive and direct. As I made connections with Mr. Kerr through a variety of subjects, he began to be more responsive and communicative with me. The topics he was willing to discuss with me were as follows:

- His children and the impact this event would have on their future lives
- The perceived failures of the people he reached out to for help (family, friends, pastor, & local police department)
- The recent dismissal by his therapist and the ending of their services
- His ex-wife and their issues as a couple
- His ex-wife and her manipulation of his children, his employment, and the terms of their separation/divorce
- His previous stints in drug rehab and the failures post-rehab
- His love/hate of police

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- Our roles as fathers
- Dealing with mental illness

We talked about each of these subjects, and more, over the course of the negotiations- approximately 3 hours. Mr. Kerr would "ride" a roller coaster of emotions throughout the negotiations. Some of the topics (i.e. His ex-wife and his children) were more sensitive topics and could either ramp up his emotions or cause him to become somewhat reflective and share positive aspects of those relationships.

My personal methods of interacting with Mr. Kerr included connecting with him on a personal level, using subjects or topics that were similar in both of our lives. I also kept my voice non-confrontational and calm throughout negotiations. I suggested and offered many opportunities to end the situation peacefully and allow the officers to take him into custody without harm coming to him. Whenever his emotions ran high, I would revisit a topic that brought out calm positive behaviors in Mr. Kerr. I made every effort to address his personal crisis and not focus on the tactical operations that were occurring around him.

These are some of the specific techniques that I used to connect with Mr. Kerr: positive reinforcement, addressing the crisis that triggered his actions, reminding him of the positives of remaining alive, discussing the potential psychological toll this would have on his children and family, provided him with bottled water, provided him with a means to communicate with negotiators, and discussed an exit plan that would end with him safe.

From my perspective, the tactical teams that I could observe were remaining calm and still throughout the negotiations. Officers that attempted to communicate with the subject were calm, polite, and expressed a desire to help the subject.

At no point in the negotiations did Mr. Kerr waver from his intent to kill himself or force the officers on scene to kill him. He appeared to be stalling for time throughout our communication. The subject was adamant that he was going to die there that day. Based on my training and experience, and based upon Mr. Kerr's statements, I believe that he intended to end his own life either with the pistol he possessed or by forcing the tactical operators to shoot him.

These are some of the statements that I recall Mr. Kerr making:

- "I didn't want this to happen in the middle of the intersection. I'm going to die on the pavement, and I'd rather be in nature. I was headed to the Metroparks to end this."

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Bureau of Criminal Investigation
Investigative Report



2025-2000

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- "I'm sorry that my friend didn't know what I was going to use his gun for."
- "The Brimfield Police screwed up when they visited my house. They didn't try to make contact with me."
- "My priest didn't care that I was going to kill myself."
- "My therapist fired me."
- "I know that I have family that loves me."
- "I know that this is going to mess up my kids."
- "I'm sorry for forcing the officers here to do this."

Depending on the topic being discussed, Mr. Kerr displayed a variety of emotions- anger, agitation, guilt, resignation, sadness, calm, paranoia, etc. Throughout the entire duration of the incident, Mr. Kerr maintained control of his weapon. The gun was primarily held to his temple throughout the incident. There were brief moments when he would remove the gun from his temple and place it down on his leg or on the seat of the truck. He would do that in order to receive water from the tactical officers on scene and whenever he was adjusting his position to make it more difficult for the operators to deploy their weapons or PepperBall. He was very lucid and articulate throughout the majority of the negotiations. He did not appear to be under the influence of any drugs or alcohol, even though he stated that he had attempted to consume a bottle of prescription pills. (After his initial vehicle accident, he vomited on the pavement).

At one point he began to use what appeared to be a glass pipe (commonly used for marijuana) and smoke some unknown substance. After this action, I observed some paranoid behaviors, and his emotions were easily ramped up.

The incident concluded not much longer after his smoking of the pipe. Mr. Kerr disconnected the call and set the phone down. He stepped out of the vehicle with the pistol in his hand and walked towards officers that were positioned in front of his vehicle. When he discontinued communication via cellphone, I continued to talk to him over the LRAD system. Negotiations continued until the moment he was shot.

Due to possible auditory exclusion at that moment, I did not hear a shot fired from his pistol. I saw the moment the bullet made impact with the subject, but I do not recall hearing the shot. But I learned during our team debrief on 6/26/25 that the OSP bearcat vehicle had been struck by a pistol round and there was a spent shell casing jammed in Mr. Kerr's pistol. I did not see Mr. Kerr point the pistol at the bearcat; however, when he was struck by the tactical team's Pepperball, he jerked his arm down. I then observed him attempting to rack his weapon again, possibly for an additional follow up shot.

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I have not had a direct negotiation that was like this prior to that day. I have had crisis interventions with suicidal people during the course of my duties with the Cleveland Metroparks Police Department. Those incidents ended with the subjects transported for medical or psychological evaluation. Through the SEB Crisis Negotiation Team, I have been in a support role on the previous incidents.”

The following is a brief summary of the follow-up questions after the conclusion of Officer Rhoden's written statement.

When Officer Rhoden arrived on scene, he spoke with the subject's sisters. The sisters provided Officer Rhoden with the subject's cellphone number and background information on what the subject had recently been experiencing. The sisters stated that the subject had previously made suicidal statements.

Moments prior to the subject being shot, he exited his vehicle and began walking towards the highway with a firearm to his head. Officer Rhoden believed it was the subject's intention to force officers to shoot him.

Officer Rhoden feared for the safety of officers on scene who were not inside an armored vehicle like himself. In particular, Officer Rhoden described how officers attempted to get the subject water and how this put them in a vulnerable position.

After the subject was shot, he was immediately rendered aid by personnel on scene.

He did not observe any actions by officers on scene that would be considered to be a crime.

The interview concluded at approximately 1006 hours.

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References:

Reference Item J - Witness Officer Interviews - Axon Justice

Attachments:

1. 2025-08-08 Tim Rhoden Written Statement

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**Statement of Ofc. Timothy W. Rhoden, Cleveland Metroparks Police
Department & Southwest Enforcement Bureau (SEB) Crisis Negotiator
regarding the incident that occurred on: June 24, 2025:**

- **Background.**

I attended the Polaris Police Academy, Class of 2006-07. I was hired and began my full-time employment as a Road Patrol Officer with the Cleveland Metroparks in October of 2007.

I attended the FBI Basic Crisis Negotiation Course Nov. 18-22, 2024. I am a certified Crisis Negotiator and on the Crisis Negotiation Team for SEB, Southwest Enforcement Bureau. SEB is a multi-jurisdictional regional group of law enforcement agencies that share resources and manpower in order to provide specialized and critical police services to member agencies as needed.

Prior to 2007, I was in the field of early childhood education and recreation management. I attended Ball State University, Ohio State University, and Cuyahoga County Community College with course of study in Early Childhood Education; however, I did not complete my degree.

I have no previous law enforcement experience prior to my employment with the Cleveland Metroparks Police Department.

My current supervisors at the Cleveland Metroparks Police Department include Sgt. Scott Zahniser, Lt. Stephen Howard, Capt. Charles Moore, Capt. Ken Schabitzer, and Chief Kelly Stillman.

My current daily role in the Cleveland Metroparks Police Department is a Road Patrol Officer. I also am a member of the Honor Guard Unit, Bicycle Patrol Unit, Wellness Team, certified sharpshooter on the Wildlife Management Team, OPOTA certified Field Training Officer, ARIA certified Mounted Patrol Training Officer (American Riding Instructors Association), certified OPOTA Basic Academy Instructor with specialties in Physical Fitness, Impact Weapons, and Civil Disorder. I was also a Mounted Patrol Officer for 12 years.

My regularly assigned work hours are [REDACTED] We currently operate on a [REDACTED] shift system with rotating [REDACTED]

I wear Rx eyeglasses and/or contacts. That day I was wearing my contacts. I do not wear a hearing aid. I was not under the influence of any alcohol or drugs on the date of the incident.

On the date of the incident, I was dressed in my patrol uniform; black 5.11 shorts, black polo with Cleveland Metroparks Police Department patches on each shoulder, my issued protective vest with my Cleveland Metroparks Police badge on the upper left, my issued Cleveland Metroparks Police Department black ballcap, and my assigned/issued equipment.

- **Incident Narrative.**

At approximately 11:28 am, I received an alert via the Active Alert app on my cell phone. This alert was triggered by a command staff person from SEB West. The Active Alert app notifies members of the SEB team of critical incidents in which response is requested. I notified Lieutenant Stephen Howard (also a SEB Negotiator) that I was responding and that I would meet him at the scene.

I was on duty and working in my assigned patrol zones for that day. I responded to the incident from the West Creek Reservation of the Cleveland Metroparks in the City of Parma. My response time from the West Creek Reservation was probably less than 7 minutes.

I was advised via the Active Alert app that a suicidal man in a vehicle had a gun to his head. The app advised that he had crashed at the Interstate 480 exit ramp at Tiedeman Rd.

The scene of the incident was on Tiedeman Rd. at the intersection of the westbound exit ramp of Interstate 480 in Brooklyn. The subject, later learned to be Mr. Kerr, was involved in what appeared to be a serious car accident with two other vehicles. Patrol vehicles from various agencies and a Parma Police Department bearcat were already on scene and attempting to make contact with Mr. Kerr.

I arrived in my marked Cleveland Metroparks Ford Explorer SUV- Unit 261. My patrol vehicle was not close enough to the active scene to record dash cam footage. At some point, my vehicle was moved off the overpass bridge by an unknown person to clear the area. My body worn camera was inadvertently left in the docking cradle of my patrol vehicle. This was due to the emergency nature of the call and the urgency to exit my patrol vehicle and begin assisting at the scene. I am not aware of a departmental policy or SEB policy that requires body cams or dash cams to be used during SEB responses.

The Team Lead for the Negotiators is Lt. Cindy Eschweiler from Brooklyn PD. During communication with Mr. Kerr, I was the Primary Negotiator. Lt. Eschweiler and Lt. Stephen Howard were my support members inside the OSP bearcat.

The situation was fluid and required tactical teams, command staff, and negotiators to react to the scenario as it unfolded. As I recall, there was not a specific plan in place (that I was told) for managing the incident. The incident was very fluid, and tactics changed as the subject's demeanor changed, as the needs of the scene changed (i.e. removal of the injured/deceased driver that had been struck by Mr. Kerr's vehicle), and as additional equipment and personnel came on scene. My support members were in contact with scene command and relayed information to me as necessary. My tactics and engagement with Mr. Kerr were based upon my training and experience as a law enforcement officer and Crisis Negotiator.

Initially when I arrived on the scene, I gathered information from the sisters of the subject. Mr. Kerr was engaged in communication with the responding patrol officer, Parma Heights Police Department Officer Molnar. Mr. Kerr was holding the gun to his head and appeared agitated. When the OSP armored vehicle (bearcat) arrived, the Negotiator Team of Lt. Cindy Eschweiler

(Brooklyn Police Department), Lt. Stephen Howard (Cleveland Metroparks Police Department), and myself transitioned into the bearcat and began communicating from there. Brooklyn Lt. Cindy Eschweiler attempted communication when we transitioned to the OSP bearcat.

The OSP bearcat was stationed approximately 10-15 feet away from Mr. Kerr. I had direct line of sight with the Mr. Kerr and he could see me through the window of the bearcat. Though the bearcat windows were tinted, due to the open roof hatch, the sunlight shining on me allowed Mr. Kerr to see the Cleveland Metroparks Police Department patch on my ballcap. He commented on the patch to clarify which department I worked for.

I became the primary negotiator at this time after providing my Cleveland Metroparks Police Department issued cell phone to Mr. Kerr (The specific time of this action should be in the after-action report drafted by Lt. Cindy Eschweiler, Brooklyn Police Department). I made contact with Mr. Kerr via a separate cell phone, which was issued to Lt. Cindy Eschweiler by Brooklyn Police Department, and then I remained Mr. Kerr's point of contact for the remainder of the incident.

Mr. Kerr had lost the use of his personal cellphone because it was on the ground outside of his vehicle. I am unaware of the circumstances that caused his phone to end up away from his physical control. Initial communication by the responding patrol officer (I am unfamiliar with which officer this was) attempted direct person-to-person contact with the subject with both parties attempting to shout over the environmental noise.

Due to the noise from the highway, the influx of patrol vehicles arriving on scene with lights and sirens, the engine noise from the bearcat, etc. communication was difficult. Mr. Kerr struggled to understand the patrol officer's instructions and the patrol officer had difficulty understanding Mr. Kerr. Communication over the LRAD (Long Range Acoustical Device) system was utilized but proved ineffective because we could not hear what the subject was saying back to us. I provided my assigned department cell phone as an alternative to establish direct communication with the subject. This was not a recorded conversation. A recorded line was not used because it was not available to us in the OSP bearcat.

Mr. Kerr initially was uncooperative and not willing to discuss the circumstances any further other than stating that he wanted to die that day. He did not appear to be in any physical distress. His initial communication was aggressive and direct. As I made connections with Mr. Kerr through a variety of subjects, he began to be more responsive and communicative with me. The topics he was willing to discuss with me were as follows:

- His children and the impact this event would have on their future lives
- The perceived failures of the people he reached out to for help (family, friends, pastor, & local police department)
- The recent dismissal by his therapist and the ending of their services
- His ex-wife and their issues as a couple
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- His love/hate of police
- Our roles as fathers
- Dealing with mental illness

We talked about each of these subjects, and more, over the course of the negotiations- approximately 3 hours. Mr. Kerr would "ride" a roller coaster of emotions throughout the negotiations. Some of the topics (i.e. His ex-wife and his children) were more sensitive topics and could either ramp up his emotions or cause him to become somewhat reflective and share positive aspects of those relationships.

My personal methods of interacting with Mr. Kerr included connecting with him on a personal level, using subjects or topics that were similar in both of our lives. I also kept my voice non-confrontational and calm throughout negotiations. I suggested and offered many opportunities to end the situation peacefully and allow the officers to take him into custody without harm coming to him. Whenever his emotions ran high, I would revisit a topic that brought out calm positive behaviors in Mr. Kerr. I made every effort to address his personal crisis and not focus on the tactical operations that were occurring around him.

These are some of the specific techniques that I used to connect with Mr. Kerr: positive reinforcement, addressing the crisis that triggered his actions, reminding him of the positives of remaining alive, discussing the potential psychological toll this would have on his children and family, provided him with bottled water, provided him with a means to communicate with negotiators, and discussed an exit plan that would end with him safe.

From my perspective, the tactical teams that I could observe were remaining calm and still throughout the negotiations. Officers that attempted to communicate with the subject were calm, polite, and expressed a desire to help the subject.

At no point in the negotiations did Mr. Kerr waver from his intent to kill himself or force the officers on scene to kill him. He appeared to be stalling for time throughout our communication. The subject was adamant that he was going to die there that day. Based on my training and experience, and based upon Mr. Kerr's statements, I believe that he intended to end his own life either with the pistol he possessed or by forcing the tactical operators to shoot him.

These are some of the statements that I recall Mr. Kerr making:

- "I didn't want this to happen in the middle of the intersection. I'm going to die on the pavement, and I'd rather be in nature. I was headed to the Metroparks to end this."
- "I'm sorry that my friend didn't know what I was going to use his gun for."
- "The Brimfield Police screwed up when they visited my house. They didn't try to make contact with me."
- "My priest didn't care that I was going to kill myself."
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Depending on the topic being discussed, Mr. Kerr displayed a variety of emotions- anger, agitation, guilt, resignation, sadness, calm, paranoia, etc. Throughout the entire duration of the incident, Mr. Kerr maintained control of his weapon. The gun was primarily held to his temple throughout the incident. There were brief moments when he would remove the gun from his temple and place it down on his leg or on the seat of the truck. He would do that in order to receive water from the tactical officers on scene and whenever he was adjusting his position to make it more difficult for the operators to deploy their weapons or PepperBall. He was very lucid and articulate throughout the majority of the negotiations. He did not appear to be under the influence of any drugs or alcohol, even though he stated that he had attempted to consume a bottle of prescription pills. (After his initial vehicle accident, he vomited on the pavement).

At one point he began to use what appeared to be a glass pipe (commonly used for marijuana) and smoke some unknown substance. After this action, I observed some paranoid behaviors, and his emotions were easily ramped up.

The incident concluded not much longer after his smoking of the pipe. Mr. Kerr disconnected the call and set the phone down. He stepped out of the vehicle with the pistol in his hand and walked towards officers that were positioned in front of his vehicle. When he discontinued communication via cellphone, I continued to talk to him over the LRAD system. Negotiations continued until the moment he was shot.

Due to possible auditory exclusion at that moment, I did not hear a shot fired from his pistol. I saw the moment the bullet made impact with the subject, but I do not recall hearing the shot. But I learned during our team debrief on 6/26/25 that the OSP bearcat vehicle had been struck by a pistol round and there was a spent shell casing jammed in Mr. Kerr's pistol. I did not see Mr. Kerr point the pistol at the bearcat; however, when he was struck by the tactical team's Pepperball, he jerked his arm down. I then observed him attempting to rack his weapon again, possibly for an additional follow up shot.

I have not had a direct negotiation that was like this prior to that day. I have had crisis interventions with suicidal people during the course of my duties with the Cleveland Metroparks Police Department. Those incidents ended with the subjects transported for medical or psychological evaluation. Through the SEB Crisis Negotiation Team, I have been in a support role on the previous incidents.

My statement is made from the best of my recollection as to the incident on June 24, 2025. I have not reviewed any video or audio footage of the incident. I did participate in a short debriefing with all personnel on-scene immediately following the conclusion of the incident. The team of negotiators, led by Lt. Eschweiler, met at the Brooklyn Police Department on June 26, 2025, to debrief the incident. Myself, Lt. Eschweiler, Lt. Howard of the Cleveland Metroparks Police Department, and Ofc. Matt Shuster from the Olmstead Falls Police Department attended this debriefing. My participation in the debriefing allowed me to organize my recollection of the conversations with Mr. Kerr and the steps we took to maintain negotiations and attempt to end the incident peacefully.

I wish to cooperate with this investigation and am prepared to answer any questions which you might have.

Respectfully submitted,


Ofc. Timothy W. Rhoden

8-8-25
Date