



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



2022-2876

Officer Involved Critical Incident – 256 N. Swain, LaRue, Ohio (L)

Investigative Activity: Interview with Officer
Involves: Jay McDonald (W)
Date of Activity: 12/20/2022
Activity Location: ██████████ ██████████ – Business – 233 West Center Street, Marion, OH 43302, Marion County
Author: SA Christopher Hamberg, #69

Narrative:

On December 20, 2022, the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) was requested to investigate the facts and circumstances surrounding an officer-involved critical incident (OICI) that occurred on the railroad tracks near Section Street, in LaRue, in Marion County, OH. The OICI occurred when the Marion County SWAT Team (MCST) [which encompasses deputies from the Marion County Sheriff's Office, along with police officers from the Marion Ohio Police Department] came in contact with Travis Hellinger (Hellinger) as the MCST was attempting to execute a search warrant at the Hellinger residence. Hellinger succumbed to his injuries.

On December 20, 2022, BCI Special Agents (SA) Chris Hamberg (Hamberg) and Josh Rammel interviewed Marion Police Chief Jay McDonald (McDonald) of the Marion Police Department. The interview took place in an interview room at the Marion Police Department. The interview was digitally recorded. The audio file is attached to the case file.

The purpose of the interview was to ascertain what Chief McDonald may have witnessed at the scene of the of the OICI incident.

SA Hamberg asked Chief McDonald to describe how the events unfolded and what he witnessed in regard to the OICI. Chief McDonald stated he was at the mobile command center when he overheard radio traffic that Hellinger was taking off on foot and was walking down the railroad tracks. Chief McDonald stated he got into his vehicle and drove to South Section Street near the railroad tracks to where Major Adkins and Captain Rittenour of the sheriff's office were located.

Chief McDonald said that Hellinger was moving down the railroad tracks westbound with a flashlight in his hand, and the MCST was following Hellinger and was giving verbal commands for Hellinger to stop and get on the ground and he (Hellinger) was under arrest; when Hellinger was making some statements [it's his freedom, he's not a threat and something

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about taxes]. Hellinger refused to comply with the verbal commands being issued by the officers and continued westbound on the railroad tracks and crossed the crossing gate on Section Street, when the verbal commands given were, if Hellinger did not stop and get on the ground, they were going to deploy the K-9 unit. Chief McDonald stated that these verbal commands continued with Hellinger refusing to comply with and Hellinger yelling back at the officers that if they deployed the K-9, he (Hellinger) would shoot the K-9 and officers, to which the officers yelled back, if Hellinger pulled his gun, the officers would shoot Hellinger.

Chief McDonald added that the K-9 was deployed when Hellinger started shooting; at which time, the officers and deputies of the MCST returned gunfire toward Hellinger, when Hellinger fell onto the railroad tracks. Chief McDonald said he ran up to the railroad tracks and observed the officers providing medical treatment to Hellinger, while Hellinger was moaning. Chief McDonald stated that officers then began life-saving measures by providing CPR to Hellinger, and they assisted loading up Hellinger in the back of the squad.

Chief McDonald had no additional information to share on the incident.

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 audio recording. 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 or responses. It is suggested that the reader refer to the audio recording in its entirety.

Attachments:

Attachment # 01: Interview with Chief Jay McDonald