



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 Officer [REDACTED]
 Activity Date: December 12, 2023
 Authoring Agent: Special Agent Cory Momchilov #64

Narrative:

On December 12, 2023 at approximately 1259 hours, Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) Special Agent (SA) Cory Momchilov (Momchilov) and SA Joseph Goudy (Goudy) interviewed Warren Police Officer [REDACTED] (Officer [REDACTED] who was accompanied by his attorney, Dan Leffler, from the Ohio Patrolmen's Benevolent Association (OPBA). The interview took place at Boardman Police Department. The interview was audio and video recorded.

Prior to the interview, Officer [REDACTED] read, understood, and signed the BCI Criminal Investigation Notification form.

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.

Preliminary and Demographic Information:

Name: [REDACTED]	Rank: Officer
Badge Number: [REDACTED]	Cruiser/Vehicle Number: N/A
Radio Call Sign: [REDACTED]	Immediate Supervisor: Team Leader [REDACTED] or Saluga
Radio Channel Utilized: Channel 1 but Officer [REDACTED] stated "But I don't have Comms"	Mobile Data Terminal: N/A
Cruiser Description: N/A	Occupants of Cruiser and Seating Positions: N/A
Assignment: Patrol Officer and SWAT Team Operator	Normal Shift: 1400-0000
In-Car Camera: N/A	Spotlight: N/A
Emergency Lights: N/A	Siren: N/A

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Shift Day of Incident: Was called in for SWAT Call Out	Duty Status: On-Duty
Days Off: Sunday, Monday, Tuesday	Prior Overtime or Extra Details within Preceding 48 Hours: Does not recall
Hours of Sleep Prior to Incident: 6-8 hours	Consider Self Well Rested?: Yes
Total Length as Officer: 10 Years	Length at Current Agency: 9 Years
Physical Disabilities (to include hearing aid): No	Corrective Lenses: No Corrective Lenses
Uniform Worn: Green shirt, Green BDU Pants, Duty Belt-Standard SWAT Uniform	Equipment and Less-Lethal Options Carried on Person/Belt/Vest: Ammunition pouches, 2-30 Round Magazines for rifle, 2-17 round magazines for pistol (Glock), "Battle Belt" with handcuffs, first-aid pouch, holster, tourniquet, Taser and drop pouch
Ballistic Vest: External Armor	Body Worn Camera: Not Present
Other Recording Devices: No	Partner: N/A
Injuries: No	Equipment Damage: Officer ██████ stated that the cuff of his pant leg sustained damage from shotgun pellet
Training or Areas of Specialty: SWAT Training, Rifle/Pistol Training, Explosive Training, Tactical Team Leader Courses, etc.	OPOTC Certification: Kent-Trumbull Police Academy 2012
Military Experience/Training: 20 years in U.S. Army as Medic	Use-of-Force Training: Routinely reviews SWAT Team use of force policy during SWAT Training
Prior Shooting Incidents: Yes-During Military Deployment in Afghanistan	Prior Discipline or Use-of-Force Complaints: No
Medications, Prescriptions, or Drugs that might Impair Your Duties at Time of Incident: No	Medications, Prescriptions, or Drugs that might Impair You Now for Interview: No
	Last Consumed Alcohol Prior to Incident: Possibly a week prior

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Officer's Firearm(s):

Weapon #1

Make: Glock	Model: 17
Caliber/Gauge: 9 mm	Serial: [REDACTED]
Type: Semi-Auto Handgun	Method of Carry: Round in Chamber
Magazine Capacity: 17	Total Rounds as Carried (including chamber): 52
Extra Magazines: 2	Number of Rounds in Extra Magazines: 17
Discharged During Incident? Yes	Primary or Backup Weapon: Primary
Rounds Remaining After Incident: 1 round from Chamber-9 in magazine-Total 10	Number of Rounds Fired: Based on the rounds in Officer [REDACTED]'s firearm after the shooting and recovered shell casings from the scene-8 rounds were fired.
Right/Left-Handed Carry: Right-Handed	Ownership: Department Owned
Last Qualification Date: Within last 12 months	Type of Holster, if any: Safariland Level III

SA Momchilov asked Officer [REDACTED] if he could explain how he became involved in the incident and what actions he took.

Officer [REDACTED] explained that once the SWAT Team was activated via the 911 app, he called into his dispatch (Trumbull County 911) and "Tried to get as much information on the incident as possible" prior to him leaving his residence. Officer [REDACTED] then responded to the location in his take home cruiser.

When Officer [REDACTED] arrived on scene, he stated he noticed, "A lot of traffic cruisers lining the roads" none of which he recognized as being members of the SWAT Team. Officer [REDACTED] then parked his cruiser and then put all his equipment on.

Officer [REDACTED] approached the scene and made contact with a Howland Township officer who provided him with information about the incident. Officer [REDACTED] stated, "Essentially the gist that I took in was that we had a hostage situation, family member who was a prior drug user, diagnosed with mental health issues, been off of his medications and he had family inside and weapons. I was advised that they tried to make an approach and they were threatened, so they backed away and set up a perimeter."

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Officer [REDACTED] then called SWAT Team command and relayed what information he had to them. Officer [REDACTED] advised that the initial responding officers had a "solid perimeter set" and there really wasn't much for him to take over on scene.

Officer [REDACTED] then moved to an area that he felt was safe and began gathering equipment such as a shield and ram in case an emergency breach was needed.

Eventually other team members arrived and "we pushed out all elements outside of CRT (Crisis Response Team), we maintain and hold perimeter. Command and Control did their thing, negotiators worked, drone team worked and I basically held for perimeter, so, I don't know, 9, 10, 11 hours, however long it was. At some point, they've exhausted all options. So, we gathered some of the guys, tried to develop a plan like, listen we got OSP (Ohio State Highway Patrol). I guess there was kind of an issue with OSP, they wouldn't give us equipment, a bearcat. So, we wanted originally, I think the plan was to get the OSP's BearCat, which is like a mobile ram, armored ram, you can ram the door, pull the door apart and enter. They refused, so instead they sent us a breaching element, which was nice. So, we formulated a plan with the OSP breaching team. Said that we would send first team in, as cover. They would set the breaching charges, we would back away and stand by. Breaching element was set, they asked for operators, you know who's going to take shield, who wants point. I said, 'I'll take it.' Big shield, it's a level 3 rated shield, so it's a heavy shield, I'm a bigger guy, a lot of the guys on the team are a little bit smaller, they have, you know, different skill sets, I figured I'd take the shield, work it."

Officer [REDACTED] continued, "So the breaching element was made, we moved up through the backyards. OSP, I moved up with OSP, we have a couple guys, rifle guys for cover for us. The OSP set the breaching charges on the back door, which was, it's a weird, elevated backdoor, it's not like a ground level backdoor so we had to move up some stairs, they set the breach charges. Everything was set and we backed down and away and around to the opposite end of the house.

Officer [REDACTED] stated that prior to detonating the breaching charge it was already decided the order in which officers would approach the house. Officer [REDACTED] advised that he was first in the stack, followed by Sergeant [REDACTED] followed by Officer [REDACTED]. Once team members were "set" they advised "command in control" that they were ready, and a countdown began.

Officer [REDACTED] stated, "Command and control gave us a countdown, OSP blew the door, breach went off, we moved out, I was point man with the shield. So, rounding the backside of the house, up the stairs, shield facing the doorway, I immediately saw the

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guy, I believe his last name is Fife, so I saw Fife at the door he had the shotgun leveled at us. I started calling out the shotgun.”

At this point in the interview, Officer [REDACTED] wished to clarify some tactical training associated with the shield. Officer [REDACTED] explained, “We don’t typically train shield and pistol work in CRT. My police department, I’ve been through training where we do train pistol and shield work. While we were stacked, prior to the breach, you know, I made the comments, ‘Listen guys, you know, I’ll have the shield, I’ll have my pistol we’ll move, you know, this direction and I was instructed, ‘hey we don’t train like that, so go ahead and holster up. Focus your shield work, the rifle guys will cover you.’”

Officer [REDACTED] continued, “Go back to after the breach, as I’m moving forward with the shield, both arms on the shield. Fife comes up, leveled shotgun, again he is at an elevated position. So, backdoor is not ground level, it’s elevated. He levels the shotgun at us, I start calling out, ‘shotgun, shotgun, shotgun.’ I think [REDACTED] moves to the left side, you know, we were single file, moving around. [REDACTED] moves to my left side, cover behind shield, I’m working shield. Fife backs away into the house into the darkness of the house, you can’t see him at that point. So, you got to move to the house. So, we move up the stairs to the backdoor, the breach, something happened with the breach, blew the backdoor off but the screen door, blew the backdoor in but the screen door kind of like just crumpled in on itself and blocked the doorway. So, I start clearing the doorway out, you know, shield in one hand, trying to plug the door, trying to clear the trash out of the doorway. [REDACTED] is to my left, he’s trying to do the same thing. At that moment, Fife comes through the dining room, like short hallway dining room, into the kitchen and fires a round off, a shotgun round. I can feel it hit the shield, um, I don’t really remember whether or not I felt it hit my pants or not, but at that moment I drew my pistol, [REDACTED] leveled his rifle and I started pushing into the kitchen and then I start hearing, it all happened so fast. It was like the shotgun went off, I could hear it hitting the walls, I could hear it hitting the shield, I had my pistol in my hand and I moved into the kitchen area, [REDACTED] was on my left but using shield as cover and I could hear [REDACTED] screaming, ‘I’m shot, I’m shot, I’m shot.’

Officer [REDACTED] continued, “So, this is where the story gets weird. I recalled only one shot being fired. I’ve been told multiple times that there were multiple shots fired. I’ve never seen the body camera, so I don’t know exactly how many shots but, in my mind, I heard one shot. I move into the kitchen, into the dining room, dinette, and then I see Fife, sitting on the couch, holding the shotgun, pistol is in my hand, I present out and start shooting. [REDACTED] starts shooting, Fife goes down. Holster up, shotgun is out of Fife’s hands, I chuck the shield off into the couch. I move around, [REDACTED] is using, I’m using [REDACTED] as cover, he’s got rifle pointing down, shield is out of my hand, pistol is

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holstered. I handcuff Fife, I roll him over, I check for a carotid pulse, I felt a very rapid but weak and thready carotid pulse.”

Officer [REDACTED] stated he then started to yell for a medic and other team members “cleared the house.” Officer [REDACTED] advised that the hostages/family members were still barricaded in the residence, hiding under beds. The family members were then extracted from the residence by other team members.

Officer [REDACTED] advised that his version of events is from what he “remembered in the moment” and that he could piece everything else together from what he had heard.

SA Momchilov stated, “And you said you haven’t viewed any body camera footage.” Officer [REDACTED] replied, “Nothing, I haven’t heard nothing. My department has shielded me from everything. I mean, yes, we still, SRT, we still go to trainings and stuff and guys will talk. I try to limit it because you’re suppose to, hey what happened to you, what did you go through, during the interviews but of course I’ve heard a lot of different stories, a lot of different accounts of what happened.”

SA Momchilov asked Officer [REDACTED] if anyone had asked him to lie or try to influence his statement. Officer [REDACTED] replied, “No, not at all.”

SA Momchilov stated, “So, you said you were doing perimeter for the majority incident, outside. Do you recall seeing anything in the house?”

Officer [REDACTED] replied, “Yeah, Fife moving around a lot, with the rifle, um not rifle, shotgun. In the moment I didn’t know what it was, I knew it was a weapon.”

SA Momchilov asked Officer [REDACTED] if when he initially observed Fife, with the shotgun leveled, would he had fired if his pistol was out. Officer [REDACTED] stated he would have.

SA Momchilov asked Officer [REDACTED] “Why would that have been?” Officer [REDACTED] replied, “He’s pointing a weapon at us. We’ve been on scene for 11 hours; we’ve identified ourselves in every way humanly possible. I think he made statements, again this is, you know, everything is crisscrossing between what I remember and what I’ve heard. I’m pretty positive on scene, I had already known that he had threatened his family members with a shotgun. I know his history only because I looked up his history. So, he has made threats prior, in the moment, I didn’t know that but, in the moment, we identified ourselves as law enforcement. The negotiators tried for hours to get him on the phone, he would talk to them and then hang up. The drones, the police sirens, the uniforms, hostages, threats, and he leveled a shotgun at police.”

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At this point in the interview, Officer [REDACTED] elaborated about what he observed when he saw Fife sitting on the couch, when officers made entry into the house. Officer [REDACTED] stated, "He is sitting on the couch. The way it looked; he was reloading the shotgun. I only remember one shot, but I've been told many times that I'm wrong. I've been told there was two or three shots. I only remember the one shot. So, he was sitting on the couch reloading a shotgun, which I assume was a single shot shotgun. I could see the break and it was folded in half, like you know, an over/under and he was like, that look in his eye and he was facing us. So as soon as I came through the kitchen into the dinette, passing that threshold, that's what I see, him sitting on the couch. That's the moment, I had the shield and the pistol, [REDACTED] was off to my left. I knew [REDACTED] was clear and it was him, couch, wall, and that's when I opened fire.

SA Momchilov asked Officer [REDACTED] if he knew where his rounds hit. Officer [REDACTED] believed he struck Fife in the head.

Officer [REDACTED] advised that he believed his actions were consistent with his training and that he had no other option other than to use deadly force.

The interview with Officer [REDACTED] was recorded via audio and video. The audio recording is attached to this Investigative Report. The video was placed onto a DVD, the DVD was placed into the item section of the physical case file labeled as Item D.

The Ohio BCI Criminal Investigation Notification form signed by Officer [REDACTED] is attached to this Investigative report.

Attachments

- Audio interview of Officer [REDACTED]
- Ohio BCI Criminal Investigation Notification Form-Signed by Officer [REDACTED]

Items

- D-Video Recording of Officer [REDACTED] Interview

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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).

[Redacted] _____
Printed Name of Interviewee

12-12-2023
Date / Time

[Redacted] _____
Printed Name of Interviewee

COPY MOMCHILAV #64
BCI Agent (Printed)

[Signature]
BCI Agent (Signature)