



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



2021-0957
Officer Involved Critical Incident – 3171 Legion Lane, Columbus,
OH (L)

Investigative Activity: Interview with Witness
Involves: Officer Eric Channel (W)
Date of Activity: 04/28/2021
Activity Location: Channel, Officer Eric – Business – Substation 20, 2500 Park Crescent Drive, Columbus, OH 43232, Franklin County
Author: SA Jonathan W. Jenkins, #99

Narrative:

On April 28, 2021 at approximately 1535 hours, Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation Special Agent Jonathan Jenkins met with Columbus Police Department (CPD) Officer Eric Channel, at CPD Substation 20. Jenkins spoke with Channel in order to ask him questions related to the Officer Involved Critical Incident (OICI) between CPD Officer Nicholas Reardon and Ma'khia Bryant. On April 20, 2021, Channel and CPD Officer Serge Akpalo responded to 3171 Legion Lane, Columbus, Ohio, in reference to a disturbance at the residence. Reardon was initially dispatched to the call and Channel along with Akpalo served as backup officers. Upon arriving at the scene, Reardon allegedly observed Bryant holding a knife and attempting to stab another person. Reardon drew his service firearm and discharged multiple rounds at Bryant, striking her upper body. Bryant later died as a result of her injuries.

Upon meeting with Channel, Jenkins properly identified himself and requested permission to speak with him. Channel agreed and the interview took place in a conference room at Substation 20. Also present during the interview was Channel's Fraternal Order of Police Attorney Kate Harshman. Prior to asking Channel any questions Jenkins explained to him the interview was part of a criminal investigation, which Jenkins was assisting in conducting. Channel was advised he did not have to answer any questions and could stop at any time. Channel stated he understood and the interview continued.

Jenkins started the interview by asking Channel about his background and training as it relates to law enforcement. Channel stated he graduated from the CPD Police Academy in June of 2014 and had no previous law enforcement experience. Jenkins asked Channel if he and Akpalo graduated from the same CPD Academy class. Channel stated they did. Channel said he is currently assigned to road patrol duties at Substation 20 and his badge number is 2757. On the day of the OICI, Channel was assigned to patrol vehicle 200, which is a Ford Explorer, equipped with external emergency lights and the standard markings of most other

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CPD vehicles. Channel stated the emergency lights were not activated during the incident. Channel added that on the day of the incident, patrol vehicle 200 was a two officer car where he was the driver and Akpalo was the passenger. Channel is currently working the shift starting at 1400 hours and ending at 2200 hours, with days off on Friday and Saturdays. Channel reported being well rested before his shift started and had not worked any extra duty hours prior to the beginning of his shift. In addition, Channel had not consumed any alcoholic beverages in the 24 hours prior to his shift and is not currently taking any prescription medication that could interfere with the performance of his duties. Channel does not wear glasses, contacts, or have any physical impairments. Channel also stated he was not injured during the OICI. During the incident Channel was dressed in the standardized CPD road patrol uniform and was carrying his normal duty belt. Channel's duty belt equipment is all departmental issued and includes: Smith and Wesson M&P 9mm firearm, 2 spare magazines loaded to capacity, taser, handcuffs, chemical spray, and a baton. Channel was equipped with a body worn camera, which he did activate prior to arriving at the scene in order to record the incident. Channel stated after the incident his camera was turned over to personnel inside the mobile command center, which was summoned to the scene. Channel also reported he never removed his duty firearm the holster or any other equipment during the incident.

Jenkins asked Channel to explain how he became involved in the OICI. Channel stated he and Akpalo were finishing another call for service when they heard Reardon and another CPD officer get dispatched to 3171 Legion Lane. Channel said he and Akpalo decided to add themselves onto the call for service and assist Reardon along with the other officer. Jenkins asked Channel where he and Akpalo were located when they started towards Legion Lane. Channel stated he believes they were in the area of Tussing Road when they added themselves as backup officers for Reardon. Channel stated as they turned off of Old Refugee Road he could see Reardon's patrol car stopped where Legion Road road curves. Channel pulled behind Reardon's vehicle then both patrol vehicles started towards the residence where the disturbance was reported. Channel said as they approached the residence, he could see several people standing outside in the driveway area. As Channel exited his vehicle and started walking towards the crowd, he noticed a commotion off to his right and what appeared to be two people fighting. Channel said he then saw a female on the ground and he also observed a female dressed in pink color clothing who was either in an altercation or about to be in an altercation. Channel said the female dressed in pink was standing near a vehicle parked at the end of the driveway. Channel said, when his attention was drawn to his right, which is where the female was on the ground, he suddenly heard the gunshots ring out. Jenkins asked Channel where he was standing at the time the gunshots were fired. Channel stated he stopped his patrol vehicle behind Reardon's and approached the residence by walking in the street. Therefore, Channel stated he was still in the street, behind Reardon, when he heard the gunshots. Additionally, Channel stated he did not believe he had passed by the front of Reardon's vehicle when the shots were fired. Jenkins asked Channel what actions he took next. Channel stated after the gunshots, he started to hear screaming and then observed Reardon had his duty firearm un-holstered. At this point in time, he also saw a black female laying on the ground by the car where the female dressed in pink was standing. Channel stated he did not draw his duty firearm because there did not appear to be any threats. Channel said he then approached the female and put on his gloves in order to assess the female's injuries. Channel said he and CPD Officer Estep started to render aid to the female and asked bystanders what her name was. At this time Channel learned the name of the female to be Ma'khia Bryant.

Jenkins asked Channel what actions he took in order to render aid to Bryant. Channel stated when he approached her, he noticed she was breathing but was struggling to breathe. Channel said he then started to look for wounds in order to hold pressure on them to stop the bleeding. Channel said he could not find any wounds on her front, then lifted up her back and observed blood. Channel then noticed Bryant may have stopped breathing and he could not find a pulse. Estep then approached Channel and Bryant and he (Estep) started administering chest compressions to Bryant. Channel said while Estep was doing the chest compressions he started to make sure no bystanders approached, because people were starting to yell at him and the other officers. Channel said he stayed in the immediate area near Bryant and Estep until emergency medical personnel arrived.

Jenkins asked Channel if he felt Reardon was justified in discharging his firearm at Bryant. Channel stated he did, especially after he observed the video footage from Reardon's body camera televised on the news stations. Channel further stated he believes Reardon saved the other woman's life. Jenkins asked Channel if he received training in the use of force and the use of deadly force. Channel stated he has received training in the use of deadly force. Jenkins asked Channel if he thought race had anything to do with the incident. Channel stated he did not think race had anything to do with the incident. Channel further stated there was no reason for him to believe race had anything to do with Reardon's actions and that Reardon was doing what he was trained to do. Jenkins asked Channel how long he has worked with Reardon and if he ever heard Reardon make any type of racial slur. Channel stated he has only worked with Reardon for approximately one month and has never heard him make any racially inappropriate comments. Jenkins asked Channel if he ever dealt with Bryant in the past or ever responded to any calls for service at her residence. Channel stated he did not know Bryant and does not remember ever dealing with her in the past.

Jenkins asked Channel when he observed the knife. Channel said he did not see the knife until he approached Bryant in order to render aid. Channel observed the knife laying on the ground at that time. Channel described the knife as silver in color with a black handle and resembled what a steak knife would look like. Jenkins asked Channel if he considered the knife to be a deadly weapon. Channel stated he did consider the knife to be a deadly weapon. Jenkins asked Channel at what point in time did he see Bryant holding the knife. Channel said he did not see Bryant holding the knife.

The interview between Jenkins, Channel, and Harshman was audio recorded and can be reviewed for additional details. *See attachment 1 for a copy of the audio recording.*

Attachments:

Attachment # 01:Eric Channel, audio recorded interview, 4-28-21