



Ohio Attorney General's Office
Bureau of Criminal Investigation
Prosecutor Summary



Officer-Involved Critical Incident – 6900 Block of S. High St, Columbus

To: Gary Tyack, Franklin County Prosecutor
From: Matt Collins, Senior Special Agent, Ohio BCI
Date: December 18, 2023
Involves: Zachary Bryson; CPD, [REDACTED]
BCI Case Numbers: 2023-2057
BCI Laboratory: 23-17518

Investigative Request

On Saturday, August 05, 2023, through an active MOU, Chief Elaine Bryant of the City of Columbus-Division of Police (CPD) requested the assistance of the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation's (BCI) Special Investigations Unit (SIU) and Crime Scene Unit (CSU) in conducting an independent investigation into the facts and circumstances surrounding an officer-involved shooting incident. The incident reportedly occurred on August 5, 2023 in the 6900 block of S. Main St, Columbus and resulted in the death of Zachary Bryson.

Preface:

This report serves as a synopsis of the investigation into the August 5, 2023 officer-involved shooting in Franklin County, Ohio. This report only summarizes the information that the investigative team determined to be the most useful in achieving an overall understanding of what occurred in this incident. Every fact and detail is not presented in this summary report. Therefore, it is recommended that each individual report from which this document is derived be read in order to obtain a complete understanding of this investigation. Further, audio and/or video recordings exist for the majority of the interviews conducted, revealing further details of statements given regarding the incident.

This investigation was conducted with the purpose of determining, to the extent possible, the facts and circumstances surrounding this incident. As unbiased collectors of fact, the investigative team has not and will not render any opinion of the legality of officers' actions. Instead, it is anticipated that this investigation will provide the basis of information for decisions to be rendered by the appropriate authorities.



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Investigative Team

Lead BCI Special Agent:

- SA Matt Collins

Assisting Investigative BCI Special Agents:

- SA Andrew Russell
- SA James Mulford
- SA Jonathan Scale

BCI Crime Scene Special Agents:

- SA Sarah Taylor
- Crime Scene Technician (CST) Amy Gill

BCI Criminal Intelligence Analyst:

- Stephanie Littell

BCI Investigative Supervisor:

- Special Agent Supervisor (Acting) James Mulford

Summary of Process

The following is a partial list of investigative activities or methods which were employed during the course of this investigation, by the investigative team, in an effort to thoroughly and accurately locate and document all pertinent facts and circumstances regarding this incident:

- Recorded interview with [REDACTED] who discharged his weapon
- Recorded interviews of two officers who were involved in the incident, at the scene, or otherwise deemed to potentially have relevant information
- Neighborhood canvass of the area surrounding the scene
- Interviews of family members or associates of the decedent
- Obtained and reviewed postmortem examination (autopsy) and toxicology reports
- Obtained and reviewed open and closed-source biographical information on the involved subjects, to include criminal history reports, OHLEG, driving records, etc.
- Review of all available dash cameras involved in the incident- *NOT Activated*
- Review of all available body cameras involved in the incident



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- Processing of the scene for potential evidence (photographing, searching, measuring, documenting, and collecting)
- Reviewed audio communications on the radio frequencies utilized during the incident
- Review of 911/phone communications related to the incident
- Review of dispatch/CAD records pertaining to the incident
- Conducted forensic laboratory examinations to include:
 1. Firearm identification testing of involved firearms, casings, and bullets
 2. Firearm operability testing
- Collected and reviewed the departmental personnel files of the officers involved in the shooting, to include training and disciplinary records (if any)
- Reviewed firearm qualification and training records for involved officers
- Verified the Ohio Peace Officer Training Commission (OPOTC) certification status of the officer(s) who discharged their weapons
- Obtained the department's policies and procedures regarding use of force for prosecutorial review
- Reviewed medical records of those injured, obtained through subpoena
- Reviewed EMS records pertaining to their response and the treatment administered

Incident Summary/Overview

On August 5, 2023, at 0057 hours, CPD received a 911 call from Denny Pauley. Pauley advised there was a white male, wearing a blue shirt and khaki pants on the side of the roadway (St. Rt 23; or S. High St), about one to two (1-2) miles south of the Casino. Pauley further stated, the subject appeared to be acting/attempting to jump in front of his (Pauley's) semi-truck.

CPD [REDACTED] ([REDACTED]) responded to the area and ultimately located Zachary Bryson, who was walking/standing on the shoulder of the roadway in the 6900 block of S. High St., just south of the Eldorado Gaming Scioto Downs (6000 S. High St).

During the interaction between [REDACTED] and Bryson, [REDACTED] discharged his firearm. Bryson was struck and ultimately transported by squad to Grant Medical Center, arriving at 0141 hours. Bryson succumbed to his injuries and was pronounced dead at 0155 hours.



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Subsequent Investigation

During the course of the investigation, several documents and recordings were reviewed. The following is an extremely abbreviated version of that information.

Bryson-

It was learned, Bryson was originally from North Carolina and had been living in California for four (4) years. Bryson had recently experienced difficulties with mental health [REDACTED] and substance abuse. Bryson was seeking treatment for such. First, he sought treatment while in California, where he was said to have voluntarily checked in to Southern California Hospital in Van Nuys, CA. Records indicated Bryson last attempted suicide on July 26, 2023 (Overdose; due to a bad breakup). Bryson then flew to Columbus, OH, arriving on August 2, 2023, to be closer to his family while continuing to receive care. Bryson had checked himself in to the Ohio Addiction Recovery Center in Grove City, OH. [REDACTED]

On August 4, 2023, Bryson was reported to have thoughts or intentions of leaving the facility against medical advice (AMA). According to documents, Bryson was convinced to stay, by his brother. However, documents further indicated that Bryson did in fact leave the facility at approximately 2130 hours, heading towards Stringtown Rd. The notes further indicated that Bryson had “suicidal ideation” while on the phone with his brother, earlier in the day. Records indicated the “local police department” was notified.

Grove City Police records indicated Dee Jordan contacted their agency on August 4, 2023, at 2118 hours, to report Bryson leaving their facility and they were concerned with his wellbeing, due to mental status. The records continued, with the caller stating they did not need an officer but just wanted them to be aware. In the records, Bryson’s mother (April Bryson) called Grove City PD around 2144 hours and provided additional information. The last note was at 2209 hours and listed April Bryson as the mother.

[REDACTED] has been a police officer for approximately sixteen (16) years and has been with CPD since [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] is a member of they Army National Guard. He received Critical Incident Training (CIT) while in the academy as well as additional trainings, related to dealing with individuals with mental illness.



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On the night of the incident [REDACTED] was working his normal shift from 1900 hours to 0500 hours, where he was assigned as “midwatch patrol.” On the night of the incident, [REDACTED] indicated he was well rested and his days off were Tue/Wed/Thursday. [REDACTED] indicated, in addition to his firearm, he was equipped with a baton on the night of the incident. He was equipped with a body worn camera (BWC) and it was activated during the incident. [REDACTED] was viewed (BWC) and reported to have discharged his firearm. The firearm is a 9mm Smith and Wesson handgun. [REDACTED] was noted having qualified with his duty weapon in April 2023.

Post-Mortem Examination / Autopsy Report-

The autopsy report for the decedent (Zachary Bryson) was obtained from the Franklin County Coroner's Office. A review of those documents revealed the following information:

[REDACTED]

Physical Evidence and Laboratory Reports-

The scene was outside, in or near the roadway. It was in the 6900 block of S. High St. on the east side of the northbound lane. [REDACTED] s vehicle (# [REDACTED] was positioned on the east side of S. High St. facing north, in the north bound lane/s of travel. See photograph below.



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AMG_6480: Facing North



AMG_6482: Facing South

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In front of vehicle # [REDACTED] a broken Modelo bottle (Item #1) was found.



AMG_6505: Broken Modelo bottle, believed to be possessed by Bryson

Various items of potential evidence were submitted to the BCI Laboratory for analysis. The actual reports should be consulted as the following synopsis does not include many of the details from the full reports.

The BCI Firearms Section performed an analysis of the officer's firearm, as well as the firearm-related evidence collected from the scene, and autopsy (casings and bullets). By comparing evidentiary cartridge casings/projectiles to known standards from each weapon, identifications were able to be made as to which casings/projectiles were fired from each firearm. Of the casings/projectiles recovered, the following identifications were made:

The lab report indicated the Smith and Wesson 9mm, possessed by [REDACTED] was determined to be operable. It further indicated casings and projectiles recovered were compared to the Smith and Wesson (Item#2; IR listed incorrect (#4). Item #2 was found to be the source of those casings and projectiles. Item #2 is pictured below.



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SLT_0014: Item #2; [REDACTED]'s firearm



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Investigative Interviews

The following information comprises extremely abbreviated versions of the statements made by the witness and/or participants of this incident deemed by the author to be of most relevance to the overall understanding of the incident. More detailed accounts can be found by reading the separate reports written by the interviewers and by reviewing the recordings of each interview, including those not synopsised below. In this particular case, [REDACTED] and Bryson were the only subjects present during the shooting incident.

Pauley-

As mentioned before, Pauley was traveling south on S. High St. when he called 911 about a subject on the side of the road, appearing to try and jump into traffic. Pauley stated the subject was on the west side of the roadway as Pauley was traveling south in his semi-truck. Pauley stated the subject was facing north and running towards the roadway and stopped just as he approached the shoulder. Pauley described the subject as a male in his twenties, with dark hair, wearing a blue shirt and tan or khaki-colored shorts.

[REDACTED]

Stated he was patrolling the area of S. High St and Fornof Rd, when he was dispatched to the area of Eldorado/Scioto Downs Casino for a report of a male walking into traffic. [REDACTED] stated he provided the description of a white male wearing a blue shirt and khaki shorts. [REDACTED] stated he arrived in the area and initially did not locate anyone. However, when he began travelling back to the north, he witnessed Bryson, who was fitting the description provided. [REDACTED] let dispatch know he located Bryson. [REDACTED] described Bryson tensing up and assume an aggressive posture by blading his body, just after he turned on his "takedown" lights. [REDACTED] stated he exited his patrol car and identified himself. [REDACTED] stated Bryson was moving left and right on the shoulder of the roadway. [REDACTED] stated, "These acts and his demeanor led me to believe he was under the influence of drugs/alcohol and or undergoing a mental disturbance." [REDACTED] requested a squad for Bryson because he may be having an "excited delirium" episode.

[REDACTED] stated he believed Bryson was holding something in his hand, but he initially did not know what it was and did not immediately register it as a weapon. [REDACTED] said Bryson "tensed up like he was going to attack then suddenly lunged forward and stopped within about 10-15 feet." [REDACTED] stated he told Bryson to calm down and [REDACTED] advised dispatch of Bryson becoming combative. [REDACTED] stated Bryson "stayed back for a few moments"



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before he “launched forward a few feet like he was going to attack.” On this occasion, ██████ stated he noticed the object in Bryson’s hand was a broken bottle. ██████ described the broken bottle more specifically as only having the neck and shoulder of the bottle and it as having jagged edges. He said Bryson was holding it with the jagged edges facing upward. Again, ██████ advised dispatch of Bryson trying to fight him.

██████ described initially retrieving his baton and telling Bryson, “Don’t do it.” To which Bryson responded, “shoot me.” ██████ told Bryson he did not want to shoot him and that he wanted to help him. ██████ described Bryson continuing to make these hasty movements back and forth. At one point, ██████ witnessed Bryson dragging the broken bottle across the ground, as though he was sharpening it. Then Bryson took the bottle and began “slashing” his left arm. ██████ said he placed his baton on the top of the patrol car and unholstered his firearm.

██████ described Bryson lunging himself forward into the direction of ██████ before stopping and moving back. ██████ described Bryson getting closer and closer each time. ██████ also stated he continued to tell Bryson to “Stop. Don’t do it” and did so multiple times. However, Bryson “Charged me with the bottle still in his right hand before stopping again about 7-10 feet away.” ██████ backpedaled and said, “Don’t do it.” It was a “fraction of a second later he lunged at me while raising the bottle. I quickly backpedaled but the suspect was rushing toward me and closing the gap. I believe he intended to stab me and that I would be seriously injured or killed, and it was at that moment I raised my weapon and fired at the suspect.”

██████ fired three (3) rounds in rapid succession. He approximated; all his rounds were fired within one second. Agent Note: This was confirmed during the BWC video review. ██████ stated, “I was in fear for my life at the times I fired my weapon.” He said, “In the instant before I fired, the suspect had rushed in my direction and gotten within several feet of me despite my backpedaling. He had the bottle raised such that I believed he intended to stab me and that I would be grievously injured or killed. I did not believe I had any other reasonable alternative to protect my life from the deadly threat presented by his actions, and it was then that I fired.”



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F11458: Believed to be the moment 1st shot fired.

Bryson Family-

SA Collins spoke with Bryson's brother, Cody Bryson (Cody). Cody described Bryson having dealt with mental health and drug addiction. Cody explained or described the above-mentioned issues Bryson was having, including his recent suicidal thoughts and actions. Cody stated Bryson had attempted to overdose on Tylenol while in California, which led to him being housed in a facility in California for 48 hours. Cody said Bryson was able to be transitioned to Ohio.

SA Collins also spoke with Bryson's parents, Steven and April Bryson. April shared her concern with having contacted law enforcement (Grove City) and reported Bryson having walked away from the facility. April commented on the incident being a confirmation of Bryson's suicidal tendency.



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Summary

All persons known to have relevant information regarding this investigation have been interviewed (or attempted), and all known pertinent records and evidence have been obtained and reviewed. BCI will continue to offer investigative assistance into any newly identified witnesses or information relative to this criminal investigation. BCI's investigation into this officer-involved critical incident is concluded unless such new information/witnesses is/are identified through grand jury or other means.

Agents remain available for consultation and/or to perform any additional investigation, analysis, processing and/or other assistance/involvement you might deem to be necessary.

Contact Information

The preceding information comprises only a portion of facts and circumstances collected during the investigation of the officer-involved shooting incident. For further review of specific information or documentation collected during the investigation, please refer to the individual reports and documents from which this summary was derived. Any questions regarding the content or context of the information contained in this document can be directed to the attention of Senior Special Agent Matt Collins. SA Collins can be reached via email at Matthew.Collins@OhioAGO.gov or by telephone, at (216) 218-2380.