



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



2023-2008

Officer Involved Critical Incident – Terminal Road By Dayton
Airport, OH (L)

Investigative Activity: Interview with Officer
Involves: Lt. Seth Douthitt (W)
Date of Activity: 08/21/2023
Activity Location: Ohio State Highway Patrol Special Response Team – Business –
1583 Alum Creek Drive, Columbus, OH 43224, Franklin County
Author: SA Richard Ward, #55

Narrative:

On Thursday, August 21, 2023 at 1003 hours, Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigations Special Agents Richard Ward and Perry Roeser met with Ohio State Highway Patrol (OSHP) Special Response Team (SRT) Staff Lieutenant Seth Douthitt at OSHP SRT Headquarters, 1583 Alum Creek Drive Columbus, Ohio, for the purpose of an interview.

In the early morning hours of Wednesday, August 2, 2023, London Police Sergeant Michael Orahod conducted a traffic on Rodney and Elaine Helman in the Village of London for various traffic violations. During the interaction between Orahod and the Helmans, false information was provided reference their identity and ultimately fled from the stop in the vehicle both occupied. The Helmans fled to a nearby Travel America where both fled on foot; during which Rodney Helman pointed a handgun at Orahod. Both Rodney and Elaine Helman entered a stationary semi-truck occupied by [REDACTED] who used a hammer to fend off the Helmans, but was shot in the hand by Rodney Helman. The Helmans gained control of the semi-truck and fled the area. After a prolonged pursuit and standoff, which culminated near the Dayton International Airport, both Rodney and Elaine Helman were shot and killed by Ohio State Highway Patrol Troopers.

Lt. Douthitt has been employed with the OSHP for 24 years and a SRT member since 2004. Douthitt is the overall SRT "team commander" while Lt. Margin is responsible for tactical operations. Shortly after 0200 hours, on August 2nd, Douthitt was contacted by the "Hub" the main communication center of the OSHP and informed of an ongoing situation. Specifically, an active pursuit that began in London (Madison County) with a highjacked semi-truck traveling westbound on a road he did not recall. Additionally, information received that the subject(s) had gained control of a hostage. Douthitt contacted Lt. Mangin, who resides closer to the reported pursuit and requested he activate SRT personnel. Douthitt, who resides a greater distance away, responded to the scene.

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While travelling to the scene and monitoring the radio traffic, Lt. Douthitt learned Lt. Mangin fell into the pursuit while operating the armored vehicle (BEAR). Douthitt diverted briefly to retrieve the equipment truck located at SRT headquarters (Columbus). According to Douthitt, aviation was overhead and SRT members assigned overnight to the Ohio State Fair responded to the scene rather quickly. The semi-truck was somewhat disabled because of stop sticks deployed along the pursuit route, which was able to deflate both front tires of the semi. The pursuit eventually concluded near the Dayton International Airport.

Lt. Douthitt arrived on scene at approximately 0530 hours, and was briefed by Lt. Mangin reference the limited communications with the suspects and observed the BEAR was positioned alongside the driver's side of the semi, which provided a decent view to the semi. Montgomery County Sheriff's Office negotiators were on scene and were in communications with the subjects. Douthitt stated the subjects informed the negotiators once they received requested items (mostly provided) they would exit the semi-truck, but the surrender never materialized and the standoff "dragged on".

Lt. Douthitt stated a plan was devised to rescue the hostage, which medical condition was unknown and place the suspects into custody. The plan was prepared in a collaborative effort between Douthitt, Lt. Mangin and OSHP Captain Jim Tracy. The plan that was settled on would have two teams approach the semi on either side while he would deploy distraction devices (flashbangs) from his position at the front of the BEAR. Once the flashbangs were deployed, Douthitt would merge with the SRT members who approached the driver's side of the semi. The flashbangs were deployed by Douthitt, the teams approached and broke out the windows of the driver and passenger sides of the semi. A curtain, which concealed the interior of the semi was removed. Trooper ██████ who was initially at the driver's side, would marry up with the team at the passenger side. Douthitt, ██████ and Robinson were positioned at the left front of the semi as ██████ moved toward the passenger area when "in a split second" he heard a "pop". Douthitt stated he knew the gunshot was not a SRT member's. Agent Ward asked Douthitt how he could differentiate the initial gunshot from that of a SRT member. Douthitt stated from his position, he observed ██████ and determined he was not the origin of the gunshot. Moments after the initial gunshot, Douthitt observed ██████ and ██████ hoot. Douthitt placed ██████ beside him when he discharged his rifle and placed ██████ near the front right of the semi moving clockwise when he discharged his pistol.

Following the gunshots, Lt. Douthitt observed the male subject point a handgun toward the the passenger side of the semi and ██████ discharged his rifle a second time. Agent Ward played the interior truck video for Douthitt, which captured ██████'s gunshots. When asked the sequence of shots, Douthitt stated the initial gunshot, followed almost simultaneously by ██████ and ██████ firing shots. Douthitt believed the subject was seated behind the passenger seat when he first fired/displayed the handgun, but did not see the gunshot/handgun. On the second occasion when he observed the handgun, Douthitt placed the subject in-between the seats and more forward when ██████ fired the second time.

After ██████ engaged the subject the second time, Lt. Douthitt and Trooper ██████ moved to the passenger area. Douthitt heard the female subject "wailing" and observed the hostage's head inside the cab. Douthitt stated gas was deployed inside the semi and he moved to the rear passenger of the BEAR to view the passenger side of the semi. Douthitt heard he's coming

out and observed the hostage, he recognized from pictures provided earlier, exit the passenger side of the semi. The hostage was passed off to uniformed troopers. Agent Ward asked if he knew Trooper ██████'s location and Douthitt stated while he was at this position (rear passenger of the BEAR), he felt a "thud" impact to the BEAR, which may have been a shot by ██████

Lt. Douthitt relocated to the passenger interior of the BEAR with Lt. Mangin and Trooper ██████ where he observed some movement from the subjects. At one point, the male subject sat up and Douthitt observed blood on his face and in his hair. Other than an occasional hand movement, there was no response from either subject to the command issued via the PA system to surrender. Douthitt deployed a gas canister into the driver's window from his position in the BEAR.

Lt. Douthitt exited the BEAR and rejoined the team at the passenger side of the semi. Because of the danger presented by the subjects, Douthitt broke out another window more positioned to the passenger rear. Trooper ██████ utilized a ladder to view through the window inside the sleeper portion of the semi and observed the female subject. The male subject, although positioned in-between the seats, feet were near the gas and gear peddles. Douthitt believed the male subject wanted to place the truck into gear and leave.

Lt. Douthitt and Trooper Robinson entered the semi and he observed the male subject between the seats leaning against the passenger seat, but tucked away. Douthitt grabbed the male subject's hand and the subject went "nuts". The male subject, despite resisting and screaming, eventually was removed from the semi. Once the male was removed, Douthitt observed the silver semi-automatic handgun positioned to the subject's right side. When the male subject was removed onto the pavement, he was handcuffed then treated medically for his wounds until medics arrived. Douthitt stated the female had also been removed from the semi.

Agent Ward concluded the audio recorded interview (attached below) with Lt. Seth Douthitt at 1032 hours.

Attachments:

Attachment # 01: 2023-08-21 / Lt. Seth Douthitt OSHP audio interview

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Exhibit 1

Included as a separate file.