



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



2023-2306

Officer Involved Critical Incident - [REDACTED]
Ave., Alliance, OH 44601, Stark County

Investigative Activity: Witness Officer Interview
Involves: Sergeant Stephen Minich (W)
Activity Date: September 13, 2023
Activity Location: Alliance Police Department, 470 E. Market Street, Alliance, Ohio
Authoring Agent: SA Nicholas Valente #139

Narrative:

On September 13, 2023, Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) Special Agent (SA) Matthew Armstrong (Armstrong) and SA Nick Valente (Valente) interviewed Alliance Police Department (APD) Sergeant Stephen Minich (Sergeant Minich). The interview took place in a training room at the APD. The interview was audio and video recorded. The audio recording has been attached to this report. The video recording has been stored in the BCI SIU case file as Reference Item C.

Sergeant Minich was identified as an APD officer who witnessed and/or had some level of involvement in the September 3, 2023, officer-involved shooting which occurred at [REDACTED], Alliance, Ohio. Sergeant Minich did not discharge a firearm during the course of the incident. The purpose of the interview was to obtain all relevant information of the incident known or observed by Sergeant Minich (excluding any potential Garrity derived information).

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 of the 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. It 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 obtained during the interview.

Throughout the interview, Sergeant Minich provided the following information:

Sergeant Minich watched his body-worn camera recording of the event one time prior to the interview. Sergeant Minich also viewed the body-worn camera recording of Officer Shane Tallman one time prior to the interview. APD officers use body-worn cameras that are attached to their hats or a headband rather than their uniform shirts or vest carriers. Sergeant Minich utilized his body-worn camera to record the incident. Sergeant Minich did not have or use any other recording devices during the incident. Sergeant Minich was operating car 47 or car 48 at

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the time of the incident and that was the call sign he used to communicate with the APD dispatchers during the incident.

Sergeant Minich has been employed by the APD for just over 23 years. Sergeant Minich has prior law enforcement experience with a variety of local police departments obtained at the beginning of his law enforcement career.

Sergeant Minich was working the second half of a double shift at the time of the shooting. Sergeant Minich was wearing the standard APD uniform of the day at the time of the incident. Sergeant Minich's uniform consisted of black boots, pants, a police shirt with patches on the shoulders, and an exterior ballistic vest carrier. Sergeant Minich's name was affixed to the right front of his vest and a police badge was present on the left front of his vest. Sergeant Minich's vest had a large patch that read "POLICE" on the back of his vest in a yellow/orange colored script. Sergeant Minich considered himself to be well represented as a police officer at the time of the event. Sergeant Minich's assigned patrol vehicle he used to respond to the scene was a black Ford Explorer with a light bar, siren, and APD markings on all four sides of the vehicle.

Sergeant Minich was not under the influence of any substances at the time of the shooting nor was he at the time of the interview with BCI agents.

Sergeant Minich believed he had previously responded to the location where the officer-involved shooting occurred. Sergeant Minich had previously dealt with the subject before and recalled interacting with him in a prior incident that involved the subject yelling at his children. Sergeant Minich knew the subject to have anger issues, mental health issues, and a history of drug abuse, specifically methamphetamine. Sergeant Minich did not know for certain that George Appleby, the subject, was the person who was involved in this incident prior to his arrival. Sergeant Minich believed George Appleby was likely the subject of the 911 call however based upon the location of the incident and the caller referring to the man involved as "George."

Sergeant Minich reported that he was the APD shift sergeant at the time of the officer-involved shooting. Sergeant Minich recalled that while speaking with a friend in the community, he overheard a call dispatched to an APD officer where the dispatcher advised the officer "he's got a knife to her throat." Upon hearing this, Sergeant Minich told his friend he needed to leave and began responding to the scene. Sergeant Minich was able to listen to the 911 call while responding to the scene.

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While Sergeant Minich was responding to the scene, he heard APD Officer Lee Rose (Officer Rose) arrive and broadcast over the radio "He's standing on the balcony. He's got a knife to her throat." Officer Rose then reported over the radio the subject retreated back into the house with the hostage.

When Sergeant Minich arrived on scene he noticed the 911 caller outside. The 911 caller directed Sergeant Minich to the back of the residence where the entrance door to the subject's unit was located. When Sergeant Minich got to the back of the multi-unit home, Officer Rose asked him for a ram (to force the front door to the subject's residence open). Sergeant Minich did not have a door ramming tool in his patrol vehicle. Officer Rose then used a brick provided by a neighbor to break out the glass in the front door of the subject's unit. Officer Rose was able to break out the glass in the door and make entry into the unit. Sergeant Minich recalled there were neighbors present in the backyard at that time and one of the neighbors yelled at him "Hurry up, he's going to kill her" or something similar. Sergeant Minich then went up the stairs, into the unit, and located Officer Rose. Once inside the unit Sergeant Minich was made aware the subject and hostage were in the bedroom at the end of the hallway and the door to the bedroom was shut and locked.

Officer Rose yelled at the subject "Open the door. Come outside. Drop the knife. Come Outside." The subject replied that he would not comply unless they left. Sergeant Minich then kicked the locked bedroom door two or three times but was unable to get the door open. Unable to get the door opened, Officer Rose continued conversing with the subject through the door utilizing crisis intervention training (C.I.T.) techniques and continued to try and persuade the subject to open the door. The subject could not be persuaded to unlock the door and exit the room. Officer Rose then requested an officer bring a door ram or halogen pry bar tool to them.

Officer Rob Toussant (Officer Toussant) arrived on scene. Officer Toussant announced his presence to the other officers and entered the apartment. Officer Toussant asked Officer Rose if he brought his "long gun." Officer Rose stated "yes." Officer Rose and Officer Toussant are both members of the S.R.T. team and train together. Officer Rose and Officer Toussant then switched places. Officer Toussant was then in the bathroom doorway closest to the locked bedroom door. Officer Rose was then behind Officer Toussant with his pistol. Sergeant Minich believed he was "less lethal" (not actively holding a firearm but a taser or other device) at that moment.

The officers continued their attempts to convince the subject to surrender via talking through the door. The subject continued to ignore their commands and requests. The subject said "You guys

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just need to leave. I won't do it. I'm not coming out" and other similar statements. When later asked what he believed the subject meant when he said "I won't do it," Sergeant Minich told BCI agents that he recalled one of the officers or someone on the 911 call stating the hostage was bleeding from the neck and based on that information and knowing the subject was holding a knife to the neck of the victim the subject meant that he would not kill the hostage if police left.

Officer Shane Tallman (Officer Tallman) and Officer Chad Caughey (Officer Caughey) then arrived on scene and began to assist. Sergeant Minich could not recall if Officer Tallman or Officer Caughey arrived first. Officer Tallman brought a halogen tool to pry the bedroom door open. Officer Tallman used the halogen tool on the door but was unable to pry it open. Sergeant Minich described the hallway as narrow and not providing the needed extra space to the side of the door the halogen tool required to work effectively. Officer Tallman grew tired and frustrated with being unable to open the door. Sergeant Minich and Officer Tallman switched places and Sergeant Minich began attempting to force the door open with the halogen tool.

Eventually Sergeant Minich was able to get the door to open. When the door first opened, Sergeant Minich believed he said to Officer Toussant "ready" and Officer Toussant replied back "ready" as well. Sergeant Minich then quickly opened the door. Sergeant Minich did not remember what he said next, but did recall from watching his body-worn camera recording of the event that he said "Go, go, go. There he is, there he is, there." Sergeant Minich continued "And Rob Toussant's job was done at that point." Sergeant Minich described seeing the victim standing in front of him and seeing the subject's head peak out from around the victim. Sergeant Minich recalled Officer Toussant having fired his rifle two times and the subject's head "disappearing." When later asked what exactly he could see in the bedroom when the door was opened, Sergeant Minich stated that due to the narrow nature of the hallway, once he opened the door he had to make way for the officers to pass him so that they could enter the room. Sergeant Minich stated he believed he saw the subject standing behind the hostage while holding a large knife somewhere to her upper body but not her neck. The subject was positioned directly behind the hostage and was holding her as a human shield. The subject took a half step back with the victim, poked his head out from behind the hostage and that was when Officer Toussant fired his rifle at the subject two times. Sergeant Minich noted that the subject's face seemed to disappear after the shots were fired. Both the subject and hostage fell to the ground after Officer Toussant fired his weapon.

When later asked if he feared for his safety or the safety of anyone else during the event, Sergeant Minich stated he did not fear for his safety or that of the other officers, noting that some of them have specialty SWAT training. Sergeant Minich did say however, he feared for the life

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of the female hostage. Sergeant Minich stated he was relieved when the officers were finally able to open the door the female was still alive. Sergeant Minich recalled that when the door was opened he was surprised to see the female standing up. While recalling his surprise to see the hostage standing in front of the officers when they were able to open the door, Sergeant Minich stated "She actually had ahold of his hands I thought at one point in time, or was trying to make a move but it was like she was, she was alive which was very good to see because I thought we weren't going to see that." When asked if he believed they would find the hostage to have been killed by the subject, Sergeant Minich stated he believed that was likely and cited a similar previous incident where the hostage was killed before police were able to enter the room.

Relieved that none of the officers appeared injured, Sergeant Minich began taking control of the scene. Sergeant Minich requested emergency medical personnel, who had previously been staged nearby, to respond to the residence. Sergeant Minich had Officer Toussant exit the apartment and return to a patrol vehicle. Sergeant Minich also expedited the hostage in vacating the residence. Sergeant Minich had Officer Rose and Officer Caughey secure Officer Toussant's rifle. Sergeant Minich further told Officer Rose and Officer Caughey to return to their patrol vehicles, not speak to anyone, and await further instruction. Sergeant Minich did not hear the female hostage make any statements to the officers or subjects prior to the shooting.

Sergeant Minich asked Officer Toussant what he observed inside the apartment. Before Sergeant Minich relayed to BCI agents this information, he was stopped and told to exclude providing any information to agents that came from Officer Toussant. Sergeant Minich stated he understood this request and carried on relaying his recollection of the event while excluding any information from Officer Toussant. After a brief conversation with Officer Toussant, Sergeant Minich placed crime scene tape around the residence to secure the scene. Officer Caughey began a crime scene log and noted all personnel who were in the home. Sergeant Minich advised his dispatcher of shots fired and that a civilian had been struck. Sergeant Minich advised the dispatcher to notify the ranking members of the APD of the situation. When the Alliance firemen arrived, Sergeant Minich briefed them on the situation and allowed a single fireman/medic to enter the unit and check the subject for any signs of life. The fireman/medic did not find any indication the subject was still alive and exited the scene.

Sergeant Minich then spoke with police and city administrators on the phone providing further background on what had just transpired. Sergeant Minich called BCI and requested they respond to the scene and investigate the incident. Sergeant Minich and the involved officers then gathered outside the residence and awaited BCI personnel to arrive.

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Prior to the conclusion of the interview, Sergeant Minich was offered an opportunity to review his body-worn camera video footage and declined to do so.

Reference Item:

Reference Item C – DVD containing video recorded interview of Sergeant Minich

Attachment:

2023-09-13: Interview Sgt. Stephen Minich