



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



2022-1115

Officer Involved Critical Incident - State Route 339 (L)

Investigative Activity: Processing of Shooting Scene
Activity Date: May 19, 2022
Activity Location: Near 1776 State Route 339, Belpre, OH 45714
Authoring Agent: Special Agent Mathew Austin

On May 19, 2022, the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) was requested by the Washington County Sheriff's Office (WCSO) to assist with an officer involved critical incident. The WCSO advised that after a traffic pursuit and crash, a deputy shot the single occupant of the vehicle. BCI was advised that after backup arrived and the vehicle was checked, the unknown occupant of the Honda Accord was found to be deceased. The area was secured and the WCSO was in the process of obtaining a search warrant for the vehicle. BCI Special Agent (SA) Mathew Austin and SA Shawn Rowley of the Crime Scene Unit (CSU) responded to assist along with various agents of the Special Investigative Unit (SIU).

SA Austin arrived to the scene at approximately 0735 hours and began recording scene access with a BCI Crime Scene Log. Road crews and vehicles had secured the southern entry to the area and marked WCSO deputies/cruisers secured a smaller area surrounding the two involved vehicles. SA Austin met with WCSO Captain Lockhart and was further briefed. Capt. Lockhart advised the only deputy directly involved in the shooting incident was Deputy [REDACTED] (Dep. [REDACTED]), and that he had been released from the scene and was off duty per the Sheriff. Capt. Lockhart advised that his office broke out the two windows on the driver side of the Accord to check the welfare of the occupant and removed a baseball hat from the male whose body was found slumped over the center console. Capt. Lockhart further advised responding backup deputies found the airbags deployed and front passenger window already broken out. SA Austin was also advised that the Washington County Coroner had already released the body.

SA Austin also met with Ohio State Highway Patrol Trooper Larry Gaskill who had been requested to investigate the crash components of this incident. SA Austin was advised that the Honda allegedly struck a truck north of this shooting scene during the pursuit. SA Austin escorted Trooper Gaskill through the shooting scene to collect measurements and to download computer data from the Honda.

SA Austin collected Dep. [REDACTED]'s firearm from Capt. Lockhart. Collected together as item 1 was a Smith and Wesson M&P 9 (S/N [REDACTED]) with weapon light, a full 17 round magazine, and a single 9mm luger WIN cartridge. Capt. Lockhart advised he believed Dep. [REDACTED] reloaded during the incident and that a magazine would be located within the scene.

SA Austin documented the scene through photography which comprised approximately 50' of the southbound lane of State Route 339. A WCSO SUV (84-16) was found facing southbound with its headlights and spotlight activated. A maroon Honda Accord with no license plate was located ahead of

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the cruiser in the grassy/muddy ditch that ran parallel to the road. SA Austin observed damage to the driver side of the vehicle, both driver side windows were shattered, the vehicle airbags were deployed, and that multiple suspected bullet holes were along the front and passenger side of the Accord. Numerous skid marks were visible on the roadway behind the two vehicles and these were further documented by Trooper Gaskill. A large grassy field with a wooden fence ran along the ditch to the west and a large commercial facility was to the east of the scene. No damage was noted to the cruiser except for a loose piece of trim that appeared to have scuffed the front passenger window. SA Austin observed that two long guns in the cruiser were secured. A Faro 3D scanner was used to collect measurements of the vehicles and scene.

Using a metal detector, a total of 11 fired 9mm Luger WIN casings were found in the tall and wet grass by the Accord and collected together as item 2. Their approximate locations (marked with pink flags for identification) spanned from in front of the vehicle by the passenger corner to the rear passenger tire. A 17-round Smith and Wesson pistol magazine with a total of three 9mm Luger WIN cartridges was located behind the Honda in the ditch (item 3).

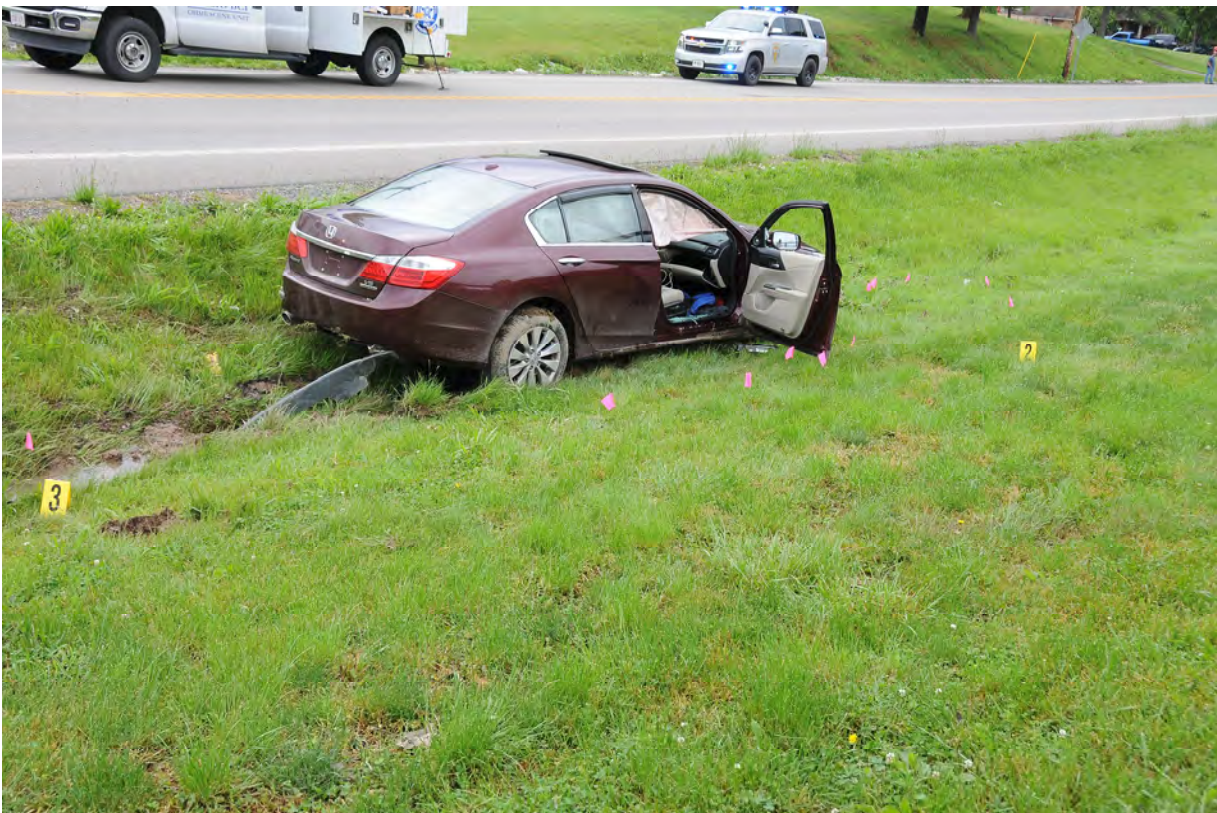


Image 1. 11 9mm WIN casings (item 2) and S&W magazine (item 3)

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Agents were able to pry open the front driver door to gain access to the front driver seat area. Slumped to the right, over the center console, was a young white male with short brown hair. The male, later identified as Devon Taylor, was wearing a white t-shirt, blue jeans, blue Hanes boxers, and Air Jordan shoes. A blue bandana was also tied loosely around his neck. Blood appeared to be coming from an injury to Taylor's head and suspected gunshot wounds were visible along his back, left arm and into his left thigh. From the passenger side front door, SA Austin observed the front sight of a firearm in the area of Taylor's lap. As Agents began to move Taylor, a black/brown handgun barrel became visible under his torso. SA Austin collected a plastic black/brown BB handgun (S/N 21C24408) that contained a magazine with BBs as item 5. The BB gun was in the style of a 1911 pistol and featured a cocked hammer that appeared broken along with a safety that was engaged. It should be noted that the BB gun appeared visually consistent with a real firearm and it was not until it was handled that the weight and construction difference became noticeable.



Images 2 & 3. Black and brown 1911-style BB gun located under Taylor (item 5)

Agents further photographed the body of Taylor once removed from the vehicle. Both of his eyelids were bruised and swollen shut and a small injury consistent with a gunshot wound was observed in his head near his right ear. A black folding knife was collected from his right front pocket as item 6. Two Honda Accord keys connected together with a dealer inventory tag, a phone charger block, and a folding pocket knife were collected from Taylor's left front pocket together as item 7. Both knife blades tested negative for blood with TMB (Tetramethylbenzidine is a presumptive color change test for the presence of blood). Taylor was sealed into a body bag and transported to the Montgomery County Coroner's Office (MCCO) for an autopsy under the direction of the Washington County Coroner. It should be noted that at that time, the body had been incorrectly identified as Connor Suter. Some of BCI's paperwork still contains this mis-identification as it was the MCCO that positively identified Taylor during autopsy.

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Multiple items of property were collected from inside the vehicle. A blue backpack with assorted items that had the name "Connor Suter" written inside it two times was collected from the front passenger floorboard (item 8). A gray t-shirt, red baseball hat, and a green/black baseball hat that had a suspected bullet hole and blood on it were collected together from the passenger seat area (item 10). A black Samsung phone with a cracked screen was located in the center console (item 11) and a black/green headlamp was found on the front driver seat (item 13). An unopened "Pure Life" bottle of water with a yellow label was found in the center console. Various clothing and property were located inside the trunk and documented through photography.

From the exterior of the vehicle, multiple ballistic events (BE) were observed and numerically labeled for identification purposes. BEs 1-5 were located in the hood of the vehicle with characteristics of a flight path from the front passenger corner of the vehicle. BEs 4 and 5 continued through the lower passenger corner of the windshield at 4.1 and 5.1 into the cabin of the vehicle. BEs 6 and 7 were distinct oval shaped bullet holes with beveling that indicated a shot direction of outside the vehicle into the vehicle. BE 8 was a hole that went through the upper edge of the front passenger door and appeared to stop at the A pillar evidenced by bullet splash. BEs 9-12 were suspected bullet holes through the drop-down side curtain air bag at the front passenger seat. BEs 9-11 were described as ragged holes in the airbag with smaller areas of secondary fragmentation damage whereas BE 12 was a circular hole with apparent bullet wipe. All of the observed damage indicated a shot direction from outside of the vehicle towards the area of the front driver seat. An additional suspected bullet hole in the front edge of the front passenger airbag was later located (BE 20).



Image 4. BEs 3 through 12, 20 (BEs 1-2 further to the right into hood)

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Numerous areas of suspected bullet damage were observed inside the vehicle. These consisted of a ricochet off the upper dashboard (BE 13), bullet strikes to the front radio/climate control area (BEs 14-16), a small tear in the front driver seat (BE 17), an impact to the front driver B pillar (BE 18), and a hole into the interior of the front driver door (BE 19). Agents were unable to connect any of the interior ballistic events with exterior BEs. Numerous pieces of projectile-related evidence were collected from the interior of the vehicle (see table below).

Table 1. Projectile-related evidence located inside Honda Accord

Item #	Description	Location
4	Bullet	Front driver floorboard
9	Bullet	Front passenger floorboard
12	Bullet fragments	Rear seat area
14	Bullet fragment	Rear driver floorboard
15	Bullet	Front driver floorboard
16	Bullet fragments	Vehicle interior

Agents cleared the scene at approximately 1453 hours after arrangements were made for the Accord to be towed to the WCSO impound lot.

At 1550 hours, SA Austin placed items 1-16 into temporary evidence at the BCI Athens office.

On May 25, 2022, SA Austin retrieved all of the items and submitted the firearms-related evidence to BCI evidence receiving at the London office (items 1-4, 9, 12, 14-16). All remaining items were placed into temporary evidence at the London office.