



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



2023-2080

Officer Involved Critical Incident - 45 Great Southern Blvd., Columbus,
OH 43207

Investigative Activity: Interview with Involved Officer

Involves: Ofc. [REDACTED]
Activity Date: 8/30/2023
Activity Location: Residence of Ofc. [REDACTED]
Authoring Agent: Special Agent Chad Holcomb, #61

Narrative:

On Wednesday, August 30, 2023 at 1012 hours, Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) Special Agent (SA) Chad Holcomb (SA Holcomb) and SA Matt Collins (SA Collins) interviewed Columbus Police Department (CPD) Officer (Ofc.) [REDACTED] ([REDACTED]), who was accompanied by his attorney, Nicole Wannemacher, from the Fraternal Order of Police. The interview took place at Ofc. [REDACTED]'s house. The interview was audio recorded.

Ofc. [REDACTED] read, understood, and signed the BCI Criminal Investigation Notification form.

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 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 and 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 from the interview.

Narrative:

Prior to beginning the interview, SA Holcomb provided Ofc. [REDACTED] with the BCI Criminal Investigation Notification form. SA Holcomb advised BCI was conducting a criminal investigation separate from any internal investigation that CPD may be conducting. Ofc. [REDACTED] was told his interview was voluntary and that he could stop answering questions at any time. Ofc. [REDACTED] verbally confirmed he understood the contents of the form and signed the document, acknowledging his understanding. A copy of the signed Criminal Investigation Notification (CIN) is attached to this report.

Attorney Nicole Wannemacher provided SA Holcomb with a written statement from Ofc. [REDACTED] regarding the OICI. SA Holcomb reviewed the statement upon receipt. Ofc. [REDACTED] read his statement. Ofc. [REDACTED] signed his statement provided to BCI, and he verified the statement was true and accurate depiction of the OICI incident. Please refer to Ofc.

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██████████'s statement for further details. A copy of the signed written statement is saved within the case file and is attached to this report.

Ofc. ██████████ stated in his statement that he and his partner, Ofc. ██████████ were dispatched to the area of 45 Great Southern Blvd., on call of a male with a gun attempting to rob a male and steal his vehicle. Ofc. ██████████ stated, "Immediately after stopping and putting the police wagon into park, I was exiting it while simultaneously drawing my weapon. As I was exiting the police wagon, the suspect got out of the car with a gun in his right hand. I ran from the driver's seat, around to the front of the police wagon. He backpedaled (still facing us) with the gun in his hand. I yelled at him to drop the gun and I believe that Officer ██████████ was also yelling at him to drop it. He fell backwards onto the ground and immediately got back up. He was very erratic (flailing his arms/shuffling he feet). Suddenly, I saw the top of the barrel of his gun coming up and I started firing my weapon. The suspect fired at me and I was struck in the right thigh/femur. I fell to the ground and yelled that I was hit. I heard multiple gunshots still being fired and I rolled to my left side and maneuvered a little to the west to try to see around the gray sedan and I saw the suspect 30-40 feet to my north. He was advancing north and would fall and get back up. I believed the suspect was still armed and firing at Officer ██████████ because I knew Officer ██████████ had gone to my right (east), so I began firing at the suspect again. I stopped firing when I did not see the suspect moving anymore."

Ofc. ██████████ continued to state, "At the time I fired my weapon at the suspect, I was in fear for my life and the life of Officer ██████████. Prior to me firing my weapon, I knew the suspect had a firearm and that he had committed an armed robbery. Immediately before I discharged my firearm, I saw the top of the barrel of the suspect's gun and he was raising it towards me. I do not know how many rounds I fired before I was struck. I do not know how many rounds the suspect fired. I do not believe I had any other reasonable alternative to protect my life and the life of Officer ██████████ from the suspect's deadly threat at the time I fired my weapon."

SA Holcomb and SA Collins asked Ofc. ██████████ multiple follow-up questions.

SA Holcomb asked Ofc. ██████████ if he ever heard the subject, Austin Huntzinger (Huntzinger), say anything; he didn't recall him saying anything. Ofc. ██████████ asked if he saw the person Huntzinger took the car from; he declined ever seeing the person. Ofc. ██████████ was asked that if anytime during his encounter with Huntzinger, if Huntzinger ever complied with his commands; Ofc. ██████████ stated no. Ofc. ██████████ was asked if his emergency lightbar was activated when he came in contact with Huntzinger. Ofc. ██████████ said he was not sure but

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stated it was not difficult to identify him as law enforcement. Ofc. [REDACTED] stated that he did not have a bullet exit-wound and that the projectile is still in his right leg.

The interview concluded at approximately 1029 hours.

The interview was audio recorded. The audio recording was attached to this report. The signed BCI Criminal Investigation Notification form is also attached to this report. Please see the attachments for further details.

STATEMENT OF OFFICER [REDACTED], BADGE NO. [REDACTED]

This statement is regarding my involvement in an incident that occurred on Wednesday, August 9, 2023, from approximately 6:30 a.m. until 7:00 a.m. I am voluntarily providing this statement as part of the investigation being conducted by the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI).

My date of hire with the Columbus Division of Police (“CPD” or the “Division”) is December 17, 2007. Prior to my employment with CPD, I had obtained my Ohio Police Officer Training Certificate through a community college. I worked as an officer for Put In Bay Police Department for a summer and I served as reserve officer with Marblehead Police Department. Even though I already had my OPOTA certification I was still required to attend the CPD police academy and graduated from that in June 2008. I do not have any use of force that was determined to be outside of policy currently in my file.

My regular assignment is 13A2. My duty hours are from 6:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m., with Sunday and Monday off. I did not work any special duty or overtime in the 24-hour period prior to my shift. I arrived at the start of my shift well-rested.

I wear contacts and I had them in at the time of this incident. My corrected vision is good. I do not wear a hearing aid and my hearing is good. I do not suffer from any disabilities. I had not consumed alcohol in the 24-hour period prior to this incident. I did not consume any prescription or over-the-counter medication in the 24-hour period prior to this incident.

On the day of this incident, I was wearing the CPD patrol uniform consisting of navy pants, an external vest, a navy short-sleeved shirt which displayed my badge on the front and stated “COLUMBUS POLICE” on the back. I was also equipped with a body worn camera (BWC) which was mounted to my chest and activated during this incident. I also had on the dark

blue CPD baseball cap. I was working with a partner: CPD Officer [REDACTED]. We were in the Columbus Police Wagon which is [REDACTED].

I was equipped with my Division-issued Smith & Wesson 2.0 9mm handgun, which was loaded with Division-issued ammunition. I was current in my range qualifications with that weapon. I was not carrying any backup firearm.

Immediately before this incident, I was at the 13-precinct substation. We had just completed roll call and were loading up for the day when radio aired that there was a gun (33) run at Diebel's Floor at 4000 S. High Street. Officer [REDACTED] and I were dispatched on it. I believe Officer Casto also added himself to the run. I got into the driver's seat and he got into the passenger seat and drove towards Diebels. We were only a few miles from the location. The information from dispatch was not very clear but I believe it was that there was a male with a gun approaching the employees who were out back. The description was a male white with short dark hair dressed in a red shirt and shorts. Then I believe they changed the description to a white shirt and jeans.

I drove down Obetz Road and turned left (south) onto High Street. As we were passing the Lowes, I saw Officer Casto turn into the Lowes and drive by a white male with short brown hair walking north but he was in a black shirt and black pants. None of the descriptions that we had been provided with were of a black shirt and black pants. I turned left from High Street into Diebel's Floor and I drove around to the back of the business where the employees park. I parked the wagon and we exited. There were initially two employees in the back who were sitting in a truck. They got out and came to talk to us. They told us that they were in the back parking lot when this guy came towards them from High Street and that he kept giving them the thumbs up with his left hand but had a gun in his right hand that he was trying to hide behind his back. One

of the employees stated that he retrieved an ax from his truck and yelled at him to get out of there. They also stated that he had a female with him and that she had black hair and was wearing very short shorts.

The employees told us that he was in a white dress shirt and jeans. During our conversation, more employees arrived and came to talk to us. I recognized one of the employees as the father of one of my son's friends. I believe he was the caller and he was trying to pull up the security camera footage on his phone to show us the suspect but he could not get it to work. Since I realized I knew him, I provided him with my phone number in case he was able to retrieve the footage. While we were still standing in the parking lot, Officer Casto pulled into Diebel's. He told me that he saw a white male with a black dress shirt at Lowes and that as soon as he saw Officer Casto, he took off running. Once Officer Casto had said a black dress shirt, one of the employees immediately agreed that it was a black dress shirt. At that point, I think Officers Casto and [REDACTED] as well as myself all realized that it was the same male we had seen minutes before walking in the Lowe's parking lot. Officer Casto left Diebels to go look for the male and after another minute or two of speaking with the employees we left to go assist Officer Casto in looking for the suspect.

I got back into the driver's seat of the wagon and Officer [REDACTED] got into the passenger's seat. I drove out to High Street but there was a truck ahead of us and it took it a minute or so to turn onto High Street. Once the truck turned, I turned right (north) onto High Street and radio aired that there was a caller who stated a white male in a black button-down shirt had her boss at gunpoint and was ordering him out of his car. The location she provided was 45 Great Southern which was right across the street. Officer [REDACTED] aired that we would be there in a second and I flipped on the lights at the intersection with Obetz Road and I turned left (west) onto the service

road that leads to 45 Great Southern. As I drove north up the service road, there were not a lot of cars in the parking lot and I immediately saw him in the driver's seat of a gray compact car. I believe I said right there or he's right there or words to that effect to Officer [REDACTED].

The car was parked facing the Auto Title (southwest). The suspect was looking down, like he was trying to start the car. There was a black SUV northeast of the suspect. I quickly accelerated through the parking lot. I pulled the police wagon up to within about 10 feet southeast of the gray car, so that the front of the wagon was diagonal towards the suspect's driver's side door. Immediately after stopping and putting the police wagon into park, I was exiting it while simultaneously drawing my weapon.

As I was exiting the police wagon, the suspect got out of the car with a gun raised in his right hand. I ran from the driver's seat, around to the front of the police wagon. He backpedaled (still facing us) with the gun in his hand. I yelled at him to drop the gun and I believe that Officer [REDACTED] was also yelling at him to drop it. He fell backwards onto the ground and immediately got back up. He was very erratic (flailing his arms/shuffling his feet) Suddenly, I saw the top of the barrel of his gun coming up and I started firing my weapon. The suspect fired at me and I was struck in the right thigh/femur. I fell to the ground and yelled that I was hit. I heard multiple gunshots still being fired and I rolled to my left side and maneuvered a little to the west to try to see around the gray sedan and I saw the suspect 30-40 feet to my north. He was advancing north and would fall and get back up. I believed the suspect was still armed and firing at Officer [REDACTED] because I knew Officer [REDACTED] had gone to my right (east), so I began firing at the suspect again.

I stopped firing when I did not see the suspect moving anymore. I rolled back to my right and put a tourniquet on my leg. A few seconds later Officer Casto ran up to me and assisted in

securing my tourniquet. Multiple other officers arrived and medics arrived and transported me to Grant Hospital. I underwent surgery and was released a few days later.

I am not certain how many rounds I fired during this incident but I believe it was 18 since the BWC footage appears to show the slide of my gun locked back. Initially, I fired using a two-handed grip and I believe I utilized my sights. I fired from a standing position near the front driver's side corner of the gray sedan. My target was the suspect's center mass. I would estimate that I was initially approximately 15-20 feet from the suspect when I fired. However, once I was shot and repositioned myself on the ground, the suspect had advanced north and I would estimate 30-40 feet from the suspect. I do not recall firing all the shots on the ground as I was in tremendous pain from the bullet in my leg, so I cannot specifically recall the part of the suspect that was my target. I believe he was also moving/rolling, etc., while on the ground. I believe while I was firing from the ground those shots were fired one-handed and I don't believe I utilized my sights but I am not certain. I do not know how long the gunfire lasted but it seemed to be very quick. I did not have any cover or concealment when I fired. The direction of all of my shots was north. The backdrop for all of my shots was the empty parking lot.

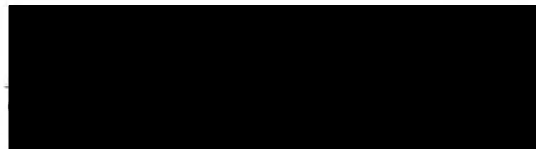
At the time I fired my weapon at the suspect, I was in fear for my life and the life of Officer [REDACTED]. Prior to me firing my weapon, I knew the suspect had a firearm and that he had committed an armed robbery. Immediately before I discharged my firearm, I saw the top of the barrel of the suspect's gun and he was raising it towards me. I do not know how many rounds I fired before I was struck. I do not know how many rounds the suspect fired. I do not believe I had any other reasonable alternative to protect my life and the life of Officer [REDACTED] from the suspect's deadly threat at the time I fired my weapon.

I did have a taser on me at the time of this incident. However, this incident did not meet the taser test. The test requires time, distance, barrier, lethal force backup and reasonableness. It would not have been reasonable to utilize a taser in this situation because the suspect had a gun and could use deadly force against me, which he did. In addition, optimal taser range is 7-15 feet and the suspect was moving backwards and there was an open car door from the gray car which was in the path.

I now know that the suspect is Austin Huntzinger. I do not recognize this person as anyone I have ever had any prior encounters with, neither professionally nor personally.

I have had the opportunity to review the footage of this incident after this event. After doing so, it appears that after the suspect shot me, he dropped his gun on the ground. However, I did not see this during the incident as I was lying on the ground because I had been shot in the thigh/leg and the gun was black and the blacktop was black. It also appears that Officer Casto arrives during the gunfire but I do not recall seeing him until the incident was over and he came to assist me.

This concludes my statement and I will now answer any follow-up questions you may have at this time.





DAVE YOST
OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL



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Criminal Investigation Notification

1. This investigation is being conducted in order to determine whether any criminal laws have been violated on the part of those involved in this incident. Specifically, to collect facts and information to be provided to the prosecutor and/or grand jury in order for them to determine whether the conduct involved is authorized or prohibited by criminal statutes.
2. Your participation in this interview is voluntary and you may decline to answer or cease the interview at any time. You are entitled to have an attorney present if you wish.
3. The criminal investigation is separate from any internal, administrative investigation which your employer may or may not be independently conducting. You are not being compelled to give any statement or answer any questions. This is not a "Garrity" interview (where you could be required to answer).

[Redacted] _____
Printed Name of Interviewee

8/30/23 10:10am
Date / Time

[Redacted] _____
S

Chad Holcomb
BCI Agent (Printed)

SA O'Hall #61
BCI Agent (Signature)