



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



2024-1385

Officer Involved Critical Incident - 121 W. Perry St., Tiffin,  
OH, 44883 (L)

**Investigative Activity:** Interview of Officer Drew Westenbarger  
**Involves:** Officer Drew Westenbarger  
**Activity Date:** 05/15/2024  
**Activity Location:** The Tiffin Police Department Conference room  
**Authoring Agent:** SA Chris Hamberg #69

### Narrative:

On Wednesday, May 15, 2024, at 1000 hours, Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) Special Agent (SA) Chris Hamberg (SA Hamberg) interviewed Officer (Ofc.) Drew Westenbarger (Westenbarger), who was accompanied by his attorney, Yvonne Trevino from the Ohio Patrolmen Benevolent Association (OPBA). The interview took place at the Tiffin Police Department Conference room. The interview was both audio and video recorded.

Ofc. Westenbarger read, understood, and signed the BCI Criminal Investigation Notification form.

During the interview, agents utilized tactics designed to illicit truthful responses and to test the veracity of information provided. As many of the details of the investigation into the incident were publicly available, it was necessary to utilize alternative tactics (beyond the typical methodology of retaining confidential "holdout" information regarding the incident and then comparing/contrasting witness statements with information that could only be known by those with actual knowledge of the incident). These tactics include developing rapport and potentially providing information known to be erroneous. Therefore, misstatements of facts or evidence in the recorded interview by the interviewing agents are intentional and align with the strategy for the overall investigative plan.

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.

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**Preliminary and Demographic Information:**

<b>Name:</b> Drew Westenbarger	<b>Rank:</b> Officer (Ofc.)
<b>Badge Number:</b> 1125	<b>Cruiser/Vehicle Number:</b> TPD 56
<b>Radio Call Sign:</b> 56	<b>Immediate Supervisor:</b> Sgt. Bour
<b>Radio Channel Utilized:</b> Normal	<b>Mobile Data Terminal:</b> Present & Utilized
<b>Cruiser Description:</b> Marked Tiffin cruiser with lights and standard markings	<b>Occupants of Cruiser and Seating Positions:</b> NA
<b>Assignment:</b> Traffic Enforcement	<b>Normal Shift:</b> 1100 hours -2100 hours
<b>In-Car Camera:</b> Operational & Utilized	<b>Spotlight:</b> Present; Not utilized
<b>Emergency Lights:</b> Present & Utilized	<b>Siren:</b> Present; Not Used
<b>Shift Day of Incident:</b> Day Shift	<b>Duty Status:</b> On-Duty
<b>Days Off:</b> Saturday, Sunday, Monday	<b>Prior Overtime or Extra Details within Preceding 48 Hours:</b> None
<b>Hours of Sleep Prior to Incident:</b> full nights rest.	<b>Consider Self Well Rested?</b> Yes
<b>Length at Current Agency:</b> Ten years	
<b>Physical Disabilities (to include hearing aid):</b> None	<b>Corrective Lenses:</b> No Corrective Lenses
<b>Uniform Worn:</b> Standard Tiffin Police marked uniform	<b>Equipment and Less-Lethal Options Carried on Person/Belt/Vest:</b> Mace, expandable baton, and Taser
<b>Ballistic Vest:</b> External Armor	<b>Body Worn Camera:</b> Present; Not Used
<b>Other Recording Devices:</b> None	<b>Partner:</b> None
<b>Injuries:</b> None	<b>Equipment Damage:</b> None
<b>Prior Shooting Incidents:</b> None	<b>Prior Discipline or Use-of-Force Complaints:</b> None
<b>Medications, Prescriptions, or Drugs that might Impair Your Duties at Time of Incident:</b> None	<b>Medications, Prescriptions, or Drugs that might Impair You Now for Interview:</b> None

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**Officer's Firearm(s):**

**Weapon #1**

<b>Make:</b> Smith & Wesson	<b>Model:</b> M&P 2.0
<b>Caliber/Gauge:</b> 9 mm	<b>Serial Number:</b> [REDACTED]
<b>Type:</b> Semi-Auto Handgun	<b>Method of Carry:</b> On the hip
<b>Magazine Capacity:</b> 17 rounds	<b>Total Rounds as Carried (including chamber):</b> 18 rounds
<b>Extra Magazines:</b> Two	<b>Number of Rounds in Extra Magazines:</b> 34 rounds
<b>Discharged During Incident?</b> No	<b>Primary or Backup Weapon:</b> Primary
<b>Rounds Remaining After Incident:</b> 15 rounds	<b>Number of Rounds Fired:</b> Two
<b>Right/Left-Handed Carry:</b> Right-Handed	<b>Ownership:</b> Personally Owned

SA Hamberg asked Westenbarger if he could describe how the events unfolded on May 3, 2024, regarding the officer involved critical incident (OICI). Westenbarger stated that his scheduled working duty hours were from 1100 hours to 2100 hours and his days off are Saturday, Sunday, and Monday. Westenbarger stated his work week is Tuesday through Friday. Westenbarger added that if there is enough coverage, they are permitted to “work out” in the fitness room at the Tiffin Police Department (TPD) at the beginning of their shift with supervisory approval.

Westenbarger stated he checked with his supervisor, Sgt. Bour, and was granted permission to “work out”. Westenbarger stated he came into the TPD around 0930 or 0945 hours to “work out”. Westenbarger stated as he was getting ready to go out on patrol around 1130 to 1145 hours, he was in dispatch and overheard radio traffic of officers looking for a suicidal male. Westenbarger added that the male was driving a red truck and had cut his wrists with a knife. Westenbarger added that he believed this information came from the suicidal male’s dad.

Westenbarger added while he was still in dispatch, he was observing the monitors in dispatch that showed the security cameras that covered the TPD and the back parking lot. Westenbarger stated he observed a red truck in the back parking lot that matched the description that the suicidal male was supposed to be driving. Westenbarger

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stated, he thought, that probably was not the truck as officers were looking for the vehicle on the west side of the city.

SA Hamberg was told that Westenbarger grabbed his radio and Getac, Body Worn Camera (BWC) and went to his assigned cruiser #56. Westenbarger placed the BWC in the cradle inside his cruiser. Westenbarger added that it takes a few minutes for the BWC to Sync with the Getac MDT in his cruiser and they must have a wireless connection from the TPD for the sync to be successful. Westenbarger told SA Hamberg once the sync is successful, and after he activates his emergency lights, both the dash camera and the BWC will automatically begin recording.

Westenbarger stated after he logged into his MDT, he was reviewing the information on the red truck and of the suicidal male. Westenbarger said he was leaving the TPD and was attempting to locate the vehicle. Westenbarger said after he got a few blocks from TPD he observed a red truck matching the description of the vehicle that officers were looking for, drive past him. Westenbarger stated he looked at his MDT and confirmed that was the same truck, as the license plate matched that on the MDT. Westenbarger stated he notified Sergeant Bour (Sgt. Bour) over the radio that he located the red truck and asked for permission to stop the red truck. Westenbarger stated that Sgt. Bour gave him permission to stop the red truck.

SA Hamberg was told that Westenbarger activated his emergency overhead lights and conducted a traffic stop of the red truck, near the address of 121, West Perry St., in Tiffin, OH. Westenbarger stated the truck stopped but did not pull completely over to the curb. Westenbarger stated he then exited his cruiser and began walking up to the red truck. Westenbarger got approximately a few feet in front of his cruiser when the male exited the truck. Westenbarger stated he gave the male verbal commands for him to stay inside his vehicle. Westenbarger said that the male ignored those commands and began walking toward him.

Westenbarger stated he observed the male to have a knife in his hand when the male began charging towards him and was yelling for Westenbarger to "shoot him". Westenbarger stated he again gave the male verbal commands to stop and get back into his vehicle. Westenbarger added the male continued to ignore those commands and continued towards him. Westenbarger stated he drew his duty weapon, Smith and Wesson M&P 2.0 from his duty holster and began walking backwards away from the male, while still giving verbal commands to the male to stop. Westenbarger stated as he was trying to retreat from the male, the male began walking at a faster rate of speed with the knife being fully extended toward Westenbarger. Westenbarger stated he gave the male approximately thirty (30) to forty (40) feet distance between them, hoping the male would change his mind and just listen to the verbal commands that

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Westenbarger was giving him, to stop and get back in his vehicle. Westenbarger stated the male kept coming towards him. Westenbarger stated he walked backward almost to the curb area when the male was closing the gap on him. Westenbarger said he gave one last verbal command for the male to stop. Westenbarger stated the male was not obeying the verbal commands and was approximately ten (10) feet from him, when he had no other choice but to discharge his duty weapon. Westenbarger said he shot two (2) times towards the male, at "center mass". Westenbarger said he probably let the male get too close to him when he fired his weapon. Westenbarger got emotional at this time and stated he did not want to shoot the male, but the male was not listening to any of the verbal commands that he was giving him. Westenbarger stated he was in fear for his life, as the male was charging at him with the knife being fully extended.

Westenbarger stated that after the shots were fired, that the male fell to the street. Westenbarger stated he notified other officers over the radio that shots were fired, and it took approximately thirty (30) seconds or so for other officers to arrive on scene, and lifesaving measures were initiated. Westenbarger stated shortly after that Tiffin Fire and Rescue arrived on scene and they transported the male to the Hospital.

SA Hamberg asked Westenbarger if he ever had any dealings with the male subject, later identified as Blake Fleure (Blake). Westenbarger stated no. However, the Seneca County Sheriff's Office has had dealings with him, Westenbarger had been told.

SA Hamberg was told that after Westenbarger's ringing stopped in his ears, a female came up to him and was yelling at him, this was only to be a welfare check. Westenbarger said he could not remember if she told him that was her son. Westenbarger added that he was not sure if she observed the critical incident take place. Westenbarger added that he told the female that the male was charging at him with a knife. Westenbarger stated that was the only conversation he had with the female.

Westenbarger stated shortly after the incident took place he was sitting on the street, when he looked down and noticed that he did not have his BWC on; that the BWC was still in the cradle in his cruiser. Westenbarger added he was not sure if the BWC was synced up or not. SA Hamberg asked Westenbarger how far away or how many minutes away from the TPD he was when he conducted the traffic stop on the red truck. Westenbarger started approximately five (5) minutes and a few blocks from the TPD.

Westenbarger stated he remained on scene for a few minutes with Sgt. Bour and Lt. DeMonte, and then was taken to the TPD.

SA Hamberg asked Westenbarger if the red truck that he stopped was the same truck that was parked behind the TPD that he observed on the cameras. Westenbarger stated This document is the property of the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation and is confidential in nature. Neither the document nor its contents are to be disseminated outside your agency except as provided by law - a statute, an administrative rule, or any rule of procedure.



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he advised Lt. DeMonte that he observed a red truck parked behind the TPD and they were able to confirm that was the same red truck he (Westenbarger) observed at the beginning of his shift, parked in the parking lot, where the cruisers park and the truck was there for approximately nine (9) minutes or so.

SA Hamberg asked Westenbarger how many rounds his Smith & Wesson can hold in his magazine. Westenbarger started seventeen (17) rounds. Westenbarger was asked if he normally carries the magazine to full capacity and, also carries one (1) round in his chamber. Westenbarger stated he usually does. After the round count was completed after the critical incident took place, Westenbarger had fifteen rounds in the magazine and one (1) in the chamber. SA Hamberg asked Westenbarger about that, when Westenbarger stated must have been one short of the full capacity.

Westenbarger had no additional information to share on the OICI.

The interview concluded at approximately 1036 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

**References:**

1. Video Recording of the interview was placed onto a Thumb drive and placed in the exhibit folder.

**Attachments:**

1. Audio recording of the interview.

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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).

Drew Westenberger  
Printed Name of Interviewee

5/15/24 10:12a  
Date / Time

Drew Westenberger  
Signature of Interviewee

Chris Hamberg  
BCI Agent (Printed)

Col Dan  
BCI Agent (Signature)