



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



2024-2255

Officer Involved Critical Incident – 818 Cherryberry Dr.,
Columbus, OH 43228 (L)

Investigative Activity: Interview with Officer
Involves: [REDACTED] (W)
Date of Activity: 11/18/2024
Activity Location: – 2609 McKinley Ave., Columbus, OH 43204
Author: SA James Poole

Narrative:

On Monday, November 18, 2024 at 1202 hours, Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) Special Agent James Poole (SA Poole) interviewed [REDACTED], of the Columbus Division of Police (CPD) at 2609 McKinley Avenue, Columbus, Ohio. [REDACTED] was identified as a member of the CPD [REDACTED] that responded to a barricade situation that occurred on Thursday, August 1, 2024. The barricade situation occurred at 818 Cherryberry Dr. and stemmed from a domestic dispute involving Benjamin Wheeler (Wheeler), who is now deceased. Also present during the interview was [REDACTED] union attorney, Nicole Wannemacher. The purpose of the interview was to obtain all relevant information of the incident known or observed by [REDACTED]

Prior to the start of the interview, SA Poole advised [REDACTED] that BCI was conducting a criminal investigation separate from any internal investigation that CPD may be conducting. [REDACTED] was told that this interview was voluntary, and he could stop answering questions at any time. [REDACTED] verbally agreed to continue with the interview.

This interview was audio recorded, and a copy of the recording was saved electronically within the case file. Please refer to the recording for specific quotes. The following is a summation of the interview.

[REDACTED] identified that he was assigned to the [REDACTED] with his call sign [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] confirmed he has been with CPD for [REDACTED], was not working any Overtime or special duty prior to the incident, and carried a Glock handgun and non-lethal taser during the incident.

[REDACTED] went on to explain the [REDACTED] received a call for a subject that had felony warrants and barricaded himself inside a house at 818 Cherryberry Dr. [REDACTED] indicated his primary assignment was the [REDACTED] for the [REDACTED]. Once all members

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Approved By SAS James A. Mulford on
12/11/2024

arrived, announcements and commands to come out and that Wheeler had a warrant for his arrest were being given. [REDACTED] explained they received information that Wheeler had access to a firearm. [REDACTED] stated the team decided to breach the door by using the BearCat to give them access to see inside. Once the door was breached [REDACTED] explained that it was aired over the radio that Wheeler could be seen inside the house.

With Wheeler not responding to the commands, [REDACTED] explained a plan was devised to approach and enter through the front door to apprehend Wheeler. [REDACTED] stated his job was to be the lead bunker and provide cover while another officer used a taser to subdue Wheeler. As they arrived to the open front door [REDACTED] explained that was when items started flying out the front door to include boxes, candles, and a knife. As [REDACTED] was able to see inside the house he explained he saw Wheeler in the back kitchen area and saw the barrel of a long gun sticking straight up next to him. [REDACTED] stated he shouted "He has a gun." Simultaneously [REDACTED] identified a knife was thrown towards them and went over his bunker. A few seconds later [REDACTED] heard [REDACTED] shout he was out. [REDACTED] learned after the fact that [REDACTED] was struck by the knife that was thrown and had to be medically transported from the incident. Orders were given to retreat back to the BearCat and to reassess the situation.

[REDACTED] explained that for about two hours SWAT members used knee knockers to bust out the windows of the house and threw in multiple gas canisters to make Wheeler exit the house. During that time [REDACTED] also stated negotiations and commands were given over the loud speakers, but no response from Wheeler was heard or seen.

[REDACTED] explained Franklin County Sheriff's deputies arrived and used two drones to enter the house. [REDACTED] stated the second drone located Wheeler in the kitchen area behind a barricade of furniture.

[REDACTED] stated a plan was devised to approach the front door for a second time with bunkers and non-lethal Tasers to subdue and arrest Wheeler. [REDACTED] was assigned as the [REDACTED] and also non-lethal with a taser out ready to use. [REDACTED] explained as the team approached and entered through the front door he could see Wheeler "playing peek a boo" in the back kitchen jumping back and forth behind a wall. [REDACTED] stated he did not have a clear shot but attempted to strike Wheeler with the Taser twice and missed both times. Due to being out of Taser cartridges [REDACTED] stated he dropped his Taser on the floor due to it being unusable.

As [REDACTED] tried to move through the living room area to get to Wheeler's position they were slowed down by books, shelves, and furniture that was barricading the room. [REDACTED] stated, "It was a nightmare," moving through there due to the DVDs, CDs, and furniture on the floor that they had to clear a path through. [REDACTED] stated he could not see Wheeler hiding behind the wall in the kitchen and started to approach his last known location. Due to Wheeler continually throwing dangerous items at them [REDACTED] explained he held his shield higher than normal causing him not to see in front of him.

Once [REDACTED] arrived at the wall where Wheeler was last seen, [REDACTED] stated he was struck with something below his left knee. [REDACTED] believed he struck his knee on a piece of furniture in the barricaded area, but then quickly realized he was losing his

balance. [REDACTED] then stated he rested his shield on top of the barricaded furniture to keep his balance. [REDACTED] stated due to the shield position and his gas mask that he could not see Wheeler and lost all function in his left leg causing him to fall backwards onto his back. As this was happening [REDACTED] heard a Taser deploy to his left and then heard several gunshots coming from behind him.

[REDACTED] stated he laid there to allow the other SWAT members to continue to engage with Wheeler. [REDACTED] remembers SWAT members moving over him to get to Wheeler's position. [REDACTED] stated his last memory was being dragged out of the house by another SWAT member and being immediately transported to the hospital.

SA Poole asked [REDACTED] if there was a moment he was in fear for his life. [REDACTED] stated with the information that Wheeler had access to guns, not complying to commands, and seeing him with a knife before entering the first time he was fearful for his life and the life of others entering the home.

SA Poole asked if [REDACTED] ever fired his weapon. [REDACTED] stated he did not and explained he was assigned as the shield to protect the officers behind him and less lethal which was attempted and not successful. While on the ground [REDACTED] also explained he could not see wheeler through the barricade and his shield.

SA Poole asked if [REDACTED] believed his actions or the actions of the officers around him were criminal in nature. [REDACTED] stated, "No."

SA Poole asked [REDACTED] to explain the physical injuries he sustained from the incident. [REDACTED] explained he was transported to Grant Hospital where they identified a through and through stab wound under his left knee. [REDACTED] stated he has undergone multiple surgeries where doctors determined muscles and tendons were severed causing [REDACTED] to likely have permanent damage from the injury.

The interview concluded at 1224 hours.

References:

No references.

Attachments:

Attachment # 01: [REDACTED] interview