



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



2023-1614

Officer Involved Critical Incident – 428 Foster Ave, Cambridge (L)

Investigative Activity: Records Received
Date of Activity: 11/03/2023
Author: SA Kyle Douglass, #126

Narrative:

From September 7, 2023 to November 3, 2023, Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) Special Agent Kyle Douglass (SA Douglass) received written statements from FOP legal counsel Jess Franken (Franken) on behalf of officers from the Cambridge Police Department (CPD). These statements were provided by CPD officers who were on scene during an Officer-Involved Critical Incident (OICI) which occurred on June 15, 2023, at 428 Foster Avenue in Cambridge, OH.

On June 15, 2023, BCI was notified by CPD of a barricade situation at 428 Foster Avenue in Cambridge. Taurean Brown (Brown) allegedly fired a weapon at responding officers and a CPD SWAT officer had returned fire. Brown was later discovered in the upstairs hallway deceased with an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound, and with several firearms in his vicinity.

Written statements were received from Franken for the following CPD responding officers:

1. Ptl. Eric Miller
2. Ptl. Curtis Braniger
3. Ptl. Ryan Oliver
4. Ptl. Adam James
5. Ptl. DJ Gombeda

Franken advised that the following witness officers did not wish to provide a statement:

1. Ptl. Hunter Sylvis
2. Ptl. Bryan DesGravise
3. Ptl. Bridget Vickers
4. Sgt. Chris Gebhart

Franken also advised she did not receive a response regarding a witness statement from the following witness officers:

1. Det. Roy Angler
2. Sgt. Zach Wolfe

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3. Sgt. Cody Baker
4. Ptl. Chris Loudin

For further information from CPD officers regarding specific details of their recollection of the incident, please refer to the attached statements.

Attachments:

- Attachment # 01: Written Statement – Ptl. Eric Miller
- Attachment # 02: Written Statement – Ptl. Curtis Braniger
- Attachment # 03: Written Statement – Ptl. Ryan Oliver
- Attachment # 04: Written Statement – Ptl. Adam James
- Attachment # 05: Written Statement – Ptl. DJ Gombeda

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On June 15th, I was called in due to a standoff. I arrived at mobile command that was located at N.th 5th Street and Foster Ave around 6:30 PM. Once at the scene I was assigned to the rear perimeter of the house to give the Deputy's from the Guernsey County Sheriff's Office a break. I was told the subject in the house had already fired at officers out the front and rear of the house. After about a half hour, I was relieved by Deputy's from the Guernsey County Sheriff's Office. I went back to mobile command.

I made several trips back to the station to retrieve gear for ■■■■■ and Ptl. Gerdau. I worked perimeter by mobile command for a few hours before I was sent down to the middle of the 400 blk of Foster Ave due to a large crowd that had gathered across the street from the barricade house. The crowd was very agitated and screaming at officers.

After the swat team made entry and cleared the house, I stayed outside the of the house and provided security for BCI until I was relieved of my duties around 3 am.

Name: Curtis W. Braniger

Agency: Cambridge Police Department

Title: Police Officer / SWAT Operator/Medic

Assigned shift: 11A to 9P Friday to Monday

YOS: 23 years of service, 2+ with CPD

Date of Incident: 6/15/2023

Location of Incident: 428 Foster Ave, Cambridge, Ohio

On 6/15/2023 at approximately 1528 hrs I was notified by SWAT Team Commander [REDACTED] that the Cambridge PD SWAT team was on standby. At approximately 1620 hrs [REDACTED] instructed all members to report to the station. I arrived at the station a short time later and reported to the SWAT room where I donned my kit and reported to the scene with Sgt. Wolfe.

Upon arrival at the scene, I was assigned to cover the A/D corner of the residence, identified as 428 Foster Ave. I was briefed on the mission by [REDACTED] who reported a male occupant had barricaded himself inside the home and was failing to comply with orders to come out. [REDACTED] reported that it was believed the male had access to firearms and was currently wanted for felony crimes.

I positioned my SWAT medic bag in close proximity to me for quick retrieval and positioned myself near the "A" pillar of the SWAT van, which was already on scene, so I had a clear view of the A/D corner of the residence. A short time later I heard what I identified as a single gunshot from inside the residence. I was unsure of the location within the home where the shot originated from or if the round was fired at police or bystanders, or was an attempted suicide by the suspect. I observed no activity in any of the windows of the first or second story of the home on the A/D corner.

Moments later a series of gunshots was heard which again originated from within the home. I am unsure of how many shots were fired but noted there were multiple gunshots, all of which originated from within the home. I observed several other SWAT members moving behind cover who were covering the A/B corner of the home. At one point I observed SWAT Medic Steven Helton, who was seeking cover at the rear of cruiser # [REDACTED] point down at what I perceived was his hand. Medic Helton was stating something but I could not hear him. I suspected he had been struck but did not observe any obvious signs of injury or blood.

Within seconds of the first series of gunshots, a second series of gunshots commenced during which I observed smoke and debris coming from a second-story window on the A/B corner of the home. I further noted debris, which appeared to be a result of bullets impacting the cruiser and or ground in the area of cruiser # [REDACTED] and the

location of those SWAT operators who were covering the A/B corner of the home. It appeared the barricaded suspect was engaging those SWAT officers who were covering the A/B corner of the home with gunfire. I did not have a clear visual of the window from which the smoke and debris were coming, nor did I have a clear visual of the suspect. I could only see the smoke and debris emitting from the area of the second-story windows on the A/B corner. I noted the smoke and debris were consistent with a firearm being shot from or through the window. At one point I heard suppressed gunfire which originated from the area where the SWAT operators were covering the A/B corner. I suspected our SWAT operators were engaging the suspect with direct fire as I noted other SWAT operators simultaneously moving back to better cover positions. I yelled out to Medic Helton that the incoming rounds were coming from the second story of the home on his side, the A/B corner. I am unsure if Medic Helton heard me.

After the second series of gunshots, I noted no further activity from within the home. I maintained coverage on the A/D corner of the home, as assigned, until relieved some time later by support officers from Byesville PPD. During this time I noted the crowd across the street, located at the Christopher Bowers residence, was growing. The crowd was generally defiant, obscene, and severely obstructing our ability to control the scene and the environment. At one point, a male identified as Shawn Payton attempted to go into the suspect's house, against police orders, and had to be held back by numerous bystanders from the same house. The growing crowd at the Bowers residence was yelling and cursing at officers and was compounding the danger facing officers and the general public.

Once relieved from that position, I reported to the incident post where I was later reassigned back with the team and positioned at the Sheriff's Office BAT, which had been positioned near the front of the residence. During this time period, the Ohio State Highway Patrol SWAT team arrived on scene and began operations in reconnaissance and overwatch using drones and throwbots. Sheriff's Office personnel simultaneously continued ongoing attempts to establish lines of communication with the barricaded suspect with the assistance of multiple family members. I remained stationed at the ready by the Sheriff's Office BAT while operations in porting the residence and application of chemical compounds were deployed inside the residence. After several hours Cpt. Peoples approached the SWAT team and advised that OSP reconnaissance and overwatch had revealed that the barricaded suspect was found down in the upstairs hallway, and he appeared to be deceased. ■■■■■ prepared a small team to make entry to clear the residence and locate the suspect.

I entered the structure with the team. I had not donned my gas respirator prior to entry and immediately noted the effects of the chemical munitions once inside the residence. Several of the operators were coughing and I instructed everyone to breathe through their noses to avoid the side effects of the chemical compounds. The first floor of the structure was cleared, finding no persons, and the team ascended the steps to the second story. Once at the top of the steps team members advised they had located

a male suspect laying in the hallway. As team members finished clearing the rooms of the second story, I made my way to the suspect and noted he was not breathing or moving and appeared to be deceased. I checked for a pulse by palpating the suspect's left carotid artery. No pulse was noted. I further noted that his body temperature in that area was reduced compared to normal ranges. I further noted what appeared to be a gunshot wound to the right temporal area of the suspect's head. After confirming the male suspect was deceased no other assessments or manipulations of the body were conducted. I did note the presence of two handguns in close proximity to the decedent's body. I further noted a small pile of 9mm ammunition was located in the hallway adjacent to the decedent as well as a shotgun laying in the same hallway. These weapons and/or ammunition were not moved or manipulated by any team members. Team members did retrieve the drones and throw bot that was deployed by OSP SWAT and removed them from the house per their request. One of the OSP drones was located in the north bedroom which faced Foster Ave. While in that room I observed an AR-style weapon laying on the bed and a handgun laying on the stand to the right upon entry into the room.

SWAT members then exited the home and were instructed to meet back up at the command post where the SWAT van had been relocated to. Prior to clearing, officers were requested back at the scene as the crowd at the Bowers residence had become disorderly and was escalating. I stood by in the area until the crowd had been de-escalated. During this time I observed several persons present at the Bowers' residence state that officers had killed the suspect, among other derogatory false comments made towards law enforcement. Once cleared from the scene, I returned to the police department where a debrief was conducted.

This concludes my written statement.

Cambridge Police Department
Call out on June 15th 2023
PTL. Ryan Oliver #65

On June 15th 2023 I was in Sandusky Ohio at the Kalahari resort for OTOA training. I was called at approximately 5:35Pm by Captain Peoples who advised that he needed me and PTL. James to head home due to shots being fired at our officers. I arrived on scene at approximately 7:30pm and was briefed on the situation. Shortly after my arrival members of our SWAT team and also the Ohio State Highway Patrol started deploying tear gas into the windows of the home in an attempt to force Mr. Brown from the home. Shortly after gas was deployed, OSP SRT deployed drones into the windows of the home. OSP SRT also deployed a robot in the downstairs. After several hours of being on scene OSP SRT advised they located Mr. Brown on a drone camera lying in the upstairs hallway. A team was put together, and I was the front man in the stack with the shield. The team entered the residence through the front door and cleared the first floor. I then moved the shield to the second floor and when at the top of the steps I could see who I believed to be Mr. Brown. All I could see was Mr. Browns stomach and his hands next to his sides. I also observed a handgun laying on Mr. Browns groin. I then moved down the hall towards Mr. Brown and kicked the handgun down towards his feet. I then continued into the bedroom to clear the room and also protect the team. Once I was in the bedroom our team medic started checking the pulse of Mr. Brown. While I was in the bedroom, I observed a AR-15 laying on the bed and also a handgun. In a night stand next to the bed I observed three more handguns. Once the second floor was clear, Swat members started exiting the residence. While I was walking past Mr. Brown towards the steps I observed a pile of ammo and a shotgun laying in the hallway. I then exited the house and back to the command post.

My name is Adam James and I have been a Patrol Officer for the City of Cambridge for 7 years. I currently work first shift with other duties, including being a member of the SWAT team as an operator.

On the day in question, I was currently in Sandusky, Ohio for training. I was given some information about the operation prior to a search warrant being executed, however I was not ordered back at that time.

After a period of time, I was ordered back to the City of Cambridge due to officers being fired at and it was a barricaded scene. Once in the area, on scene and geared, I responded to the SWAT vehicle parked near the reported house. I provided cover when needed and held on the home from the cover of the vehicle. I provided cover when devices were deployed at and into the home. The house across the street from the target house had individuals there who were yelling things at the suspect and at law enforcement officers during my time on scene. I never observed the suspect from outside the home.

During this incident, Captain Peoples personally informed us that the suspect appeared to have suffered a self-inflicted gunshot wound. After a short time, myself along with other Cambridge Police Swat members entered the home to conduct a protective sweep. The suspect was located upstairs. Once the house was believed to be secured, members left the home.

Once I was able to clear the scene, I started to respond to the Cambridge Police Department. I responded back due to the scene due to the people in the area possibly being disorderly. Once I was able to clear, I responded to the Cambridge Police Department for debrief.

My name is Patrolman Donald Gombeda, I've been employed with the Cambridge Police Department since June of 2018. I am currently a Patrolman attached to the K-9 Unit on afternoon shift. On June 15th, 2023 I was at home when I received a text message stating the SWAT team is currently on stand by. At that point, I turned on my radio and listened to the radio traffic. I could hear a lot of traffic on the radio and seemed they needed more units on scene. I put on my SWAT uniform, got my gear and got in my cruiser. I radioed to the scene and advised them I was enroute and asked where they needed me. I was advised of the address and upon arrival, I held containment on the front of the target home located at [428 Foster Ave in Cambridge, OH](#). I asked other units what the situation was and they stated Taurean Brown had broke into a woman's home, assaulted her, and came back home to 428 Foster and won't come out of the home. After a short time of holding containment on the front of the home, I heard a gun shot that came from the home and I took cover behind an SUV that was parked in front of the home. A few moments later more gun fire continued from the home and as I was behind the vehicle, I was hit with glass from one of the rounds hitting the windshield. Due to my position, I was unable to determine where the gun fire was coming from and just remained in cover. [REDACTED] returned fire and the decision was made to retreat from in front of the home to safer cover. Units began to bound and once that unit was set, another guy would bound to cover. I was able to bound back to cover safely and was not struck by any gun fire.