



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



2023-2210

Officer Involved Critical Incident - [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Howland Township, OH 44484 Trumbull County

Investigative Activity: Interview with Officer Nicholas Brancaccio
Activity Date: December 12, 2023
Authoring Agent: Special Agent Cory Momchilov #64

Narrative:

On Tuesday, December 12, 2023 at 1346 hours, Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) Special Agent (SA) Cory Momchilov (Momchilov) and SA Joseph Goudy (Goudy) interviewed Howland Police Officer Nicholas Brancaccio (Officer Brancaccio), who was accompanied by his attorney, Dan Leffler, from the Ohio Patrolmen's Benevolent Association (OPBA). The interview took place at the Boardman Police Department. The interview was audio recorded.

Officer Brancaccio was identified as being a police officer who responded to the initial call at [REDACTED] Howland Township, OH 44484. Reportedly, Officer Brancaccio did not discharge a firearm during the course of the incident. The purpose of the interview was to obtain all relevant information of the incident known or observed by this officer.

SA Momchilov advised Officer Brancaccio that it was his understanding that he responded to an incident that occurred on August 22, 2023. Officer Brancaccio advised that was correct. SA Momchilov then asked Officer Brancaccio if he could explain how he became involved in that incident.

Officer Brancaccio explained that "A call came out, domestic disturbance, it said firearms were involved. It was kind of convoluted, the initial response, between trying to get to the call, it was a house that we dealt with frequently. While in enroute, they said that one of the brothers was armed with a firearm and then there was also three other family members inside the house. One of the other family members was also armed with a firearm and that they were barricaded."

SA Momchilov asked Officer Brancaccio if any other information was provided about the domestic incident. Officer Brancaccio replied, "It said that brother, Randall (Randall Fife) was armed with a firearm and that he was going kind of crazy, essentially. Some type of mental health crisis."

SA Momchilov stated, "You made a comment that you dealt with that house before, been to that house before." Officer Brancaccio replied, "Numerous times, yes sir." SA Momchilov asked Officer Brancaccio if he could describe those prior incidences.

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Officer Brancaccio stated, "Always for Randall, the times that I've been there and it's mental health crisis calls." SA Momchilov replied, "Has he been violent in the past?" Officer Brancaccio stated, "I wouldn't say necessary violent because it never escalated to the point that he was violent, but it could have become that way, yes."

SA Momchilov asked Officer Brancaccio if he had ever "Pink Slipped (Involuntarily committed) him (Randall Fife)." Officer Brancaccio replied, "Yes."

SA Momchilov then stated, "Alright, so, you get dispatched to this house. What happens when you arrive on scene." Officer Brancaccio replied, "Prior to us getting there, had that weird, there were two of us out, so me and the other officer, dealing with him and you know, kind of the state of the call involved, requested additional units to come and help us out. Weathersfield Township is next to us, we requested them to assist us. We arrived on scene; we parked just south of the house. Myself and Patrolman McDaniels deployed our rifles, we're walking up to, there is a driveway kind of right next to the house, we're walking up there, again they told us that he was armed with, I don't recall if, they told us it was a firearm, can't remember if it was a shotgun or long gun, what the witnesses on scene described to us. But as we were walking up to the house, there is a little picture frame window on the south side of the house, looked up into it. I remember seeing Randall walking past the window, had his hand up like this, had something in his hand. I identified it as being a firearm, we hear a slam at the backdoor. At that point, we're kind of in the middle of the open, so we made a decision at that point, being that it is not a good idea, we're going to fall back and start finding cover."

SA Momchilov asked Officer Brancaccio if he stayed on scene for the duration of the incident. Officer Brancaccio replied, "Yes." SA Momchilov asked Officer Brancaccio what actions he took during the standoff.

Officer Brancaccio advised he was the "OIC (Officer in Charge) for that shift. After he and Officer McDaniels fell back, he started requesting additional police units, which arrived. Officer Brancaccio also stated he "coordinated the response" with the other law enforcement agencies and created a perimeter around the house. Officer Brancaccio stated he also coordinated evacuating neighbors who were near the scene.

Officer Brancaccio explained that he also had dispatch locate a phone number for Randall. He then had Officer McDaniel call Randall to establish some type of communication with him, "which failed." Officer Brancaccio also had dispatch call the chief, assistant chief, and the Crisis Response Team (SWAT Team).

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SA Momchilov stated, "The Crisis Response Team arrives at some point." Officer Brancaccio replied, "Yes." SA Momchilov asked Officer Brancaccio what he was doing during that time.

Officer Brancaccio stated, "So we were kind of on a perimeter at that point. One of the Crisis Response Team officers arrived on scene, with another guy. We actually ended up going in front of the house, it would have been on the west side of the house, put some spotlights into the house, just so we could see and then us four, it was me, myself, it was myself, Patrol McDaniels and then two other officers just kind of staring at the house and just seeing, you know if we could see where Randall was walking around to and also trying to relay information between dispatch because we still had a line of communication with the family members inside. Relaying that to some of the operators who were coming on scene. Also, our chief and assistant chief arrived on scene at that point."

SA Momchilov asked Officer Brancaccio where he was when the SWAT Team made entry into the house. Officer Brancaccio stated he was north of the house at the intersections of Woodbine and Highlawn. Officer Brancaccio advised that he did not see any portion of the shooting.

Officer Brancaccio stated he was wearing a body-worn camera at the time of the incident. However, at some point the battery died while he was on scene.

The interview with Officer Brancaccio was recorded via audio. The audio recording is attached to this Investigative report.

Attachments

- Audio interview of Officer Brancaccio

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