



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 Officer
Date of Activity: 08/09/2023
Activity Location: Columbus Police Department – Business – 120 Marconi Blvd.,
Columbus, OH 43215, Franklin County
Author: SA Craig Call

Narrative:

On August 9, 2023, the Columbus Division of Police (CPD) requested the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigations (BCI) Crime Scene and Special Investigation Units respond to 45 Great South Blvd., Columbus, Ohio, in reference to an Officer-Involved Critical Incident. It was reported to BCI that CPD Officers [REDACTED] (Officer [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] (Officer [REDACTED] responded to a robbery in progress call for service in the parking lot of the above location and where met by the involved subject, later identified as Austin Huntzinger (Huntzinger), who reportedly was armed with a firearm. Officers [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] reportedly exchanged gunfire with Huntzinger resulting in Officer [REDACTED] being shot in the leg and Huntzinger being killed.

BCI Special Agents Jimmy Poole (SA Poole) and Craig Call (SA Call) responded to the above location to assist with the investigation and were informed there were potential witness officers from the Franklin County Sheriff's Office (FCSO) and CPD currently waiting at Precinct 12. SA Poole and SA Call responded to Precinct 12 to meet with the officers in order to obtain witness statements.

SA Call met with FCSO members Lt. Ed Schillig, Deputy Jeremy Copas, Deputy Scott Rambardan, Deputy Ben Townsend, and Deputy Rebecca Eads. Lt. Schillig, Deputy Copas, and Deputy Rambardan described having no involvement in the incident beyond providing uniformed escort for the squad transport to the hospital.

FCSO Field Training Officer Deputy Ben Townsend (Deputy Townsend) and Trainee Deputy Rebecca Eads (Deputy Eads) identified themselves as officers that played a small role in the above incident. SA Call requested to interview Deputy Townsend and Deputy Eads and they agreed to be interviewed and requested to be interviewed simultaneously due to them sharing the same cruiser and response to the incident.

Prior to any questioning, SA Call informed Deputy Townsend and Deputy Eads BCI's

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investigation was third party and not a part of any internal review of the incident by CPD or the FCSO and any statement they provided would be free and voluntary. Both officers acknowledged and agreed to be interviewed.

The audio recording began at approximately 1051 hours.

Deputy Townsend, badge number 1167, said he is currently assigned to Deputy Eads, badge number 1505, as a Field Training Officer and they are currently assigned to first shift (0700–1500 hours) and were working in FCSO marked cruiser number 31 during the above incident. Deputy Townsend described their patrol assignment as the Jackson Township area, which is located to the west of where the incident occurred.

Deputy Townsend described the learning of the incident during shift changeover as he and Deputy Eads were preparing the cruiser for the shift. Deputy Townsend described the incident as being “toned” out over the radio as a Code 44, described in this instance as an officer in trouble call with shots fired and a CPD officer injured. Deputy Townsend elaborated when a “tone” comes over the radio it is a sign of an all units respond call and the tone prepares officers listening to get ready to copy the necessary information to respond. Deputy Townsend and Deputy Eads estimated their response time to 45 Great Southern Blvd., as approximately 8–10 minutes.

Upon their arrival, Deputy Townsend described observing who he believed to be the involved subject being loaded into an emergency medical squad. Deputy Townsend said they were immediately instructed by FCSO Sgt. Bluestone to follow the squad to the hospital and for Deputy Eads to ride in the squad with the squad members. Deputy Townsend and Deputy Eads estimated they would have only actually been on scene at the incident for one to two minutes. Deputy Townsend described following the squad to Grant Hospital where he said the involved subject was pronounced dead almost immediately upon their arrival. Deputy Townsend indicated he and Deputy Eads remained with the body for a short period of time until the body was placed in the hospital morgue where they were relieved by other CPD officers.

Deputy Eads described her account of riding in the squad with the involved subject to the hospital. Deputy Eads observed the involved subject to be completely unresponsive throughout the entirety of the transport and she simply observed squad personnel administer aid and hook up the LUCAS chest compression machine. Deputy Eads described the involved subject as a thin, White male with tattoos and the only gunshot wound she could observe was a through and through to the left shoulder area.

Both Deputy Townsend and Deputy Eads confirmed they do not know the identities of the officer or officers that fired their weapons during the incident nor do they know the identity of the now deceased involved subject. Deputy Townsend said he did briefly observe the injured CPD officer in the trauma bay area at the hospital, however he reiterated he does not know the officer.

Both Deputy Townsend and Deputy Eads confirmed they were equipped with activated body worn cameras throughout the entirety of their involvement in the incident. Deputy Eads further explained their body worn cameras were activated from the moment they received the dispatch due to their emergency response.

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Both Deputy Townsend and Deputy Eads confirmed they did not and could not have witnessed the shooting event as it was concluded prior to their arrival.

The audio recording ended at approximately 1104 hours.

Attachments:

Attachment # 01: FCSO Deputy Townsend and Eads Interview