



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



2024-1385
Officer Involved Critical Incident – 121 W. Perry St.

Investigative Activity: Case Opening
Date of Activity: 05/03/2024
Author: SA Ryan Emahiser, #36

Narrative:

On May 3, 2024, The Tiffin Police Department (TPD) requested the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation's (BCI) assistance in investigating an Officer Involved Critical Incident that occurred within the city of Tiffin and involved one of their officers. Initial reports were that a traffic stop was conducted on a vehicle driven by a reported suicidal male in front of 121 W. Perry St., Tiffin, Ohio. Upon being stopped by a TPD Officer the alleged suicidal subject exited his vehicle and approached the TPD Officer brandishing a knife. While still on the roadway the TPD Officer fired his duty weapon, striking the subject, and the subject was transported to the Tiffin Mercy Hospital. Acting Special Agent Supervisor Christopher Hamberg assigned Special Agent (SA) Ryan Emahiser to the case, and SA Emahiser along with agents from the Northwest Ohio Special Investigations Unit and the Crime Scene Unit responded to the incident location.

SA Emahiser was advised, while in route, that the involved TPD officer had been taken to the TPD, and SA Emahiser responded directly there. Upon arriving at the TPD at approximately 13:00 Hours, SA Emahiser made contact with TPD Lieutenant Jake DeMonte. TPD Lt. DeMonte stated that prior to the incident the Seneca County Sheriff's Office (SCSO) had contacted the TPD advising of a suicidal 19-year-old male named Blake Fleure (Blake). Blake was reported to be driving a red Chevrolet single cab pickup truck. Lt. DeMonte explained that the SCSO advised the TPD that Blake's father had reported to the SCSO that Blake was suicidal, had allegedly cut his wrist, and was likely headed into the city of Tiffin. Lt. DeMonte said that shortly after TPD received Blake's vehicle description from the SCSO, Officer Westenbarger was at the TPD and saw a vehicle matching the description given by the SCSO drive around the TPD two times. TPD had surveillance video of the vehicle driving past the TPD two times, and Lt. DeMonte advised that the video would be provided to BCI.

Upon viewing the described vehicle believed to be driven by Blake, Officer Westenbarger entered his assigned TPD patrol vehicle and located the described vehicle travelling west on West Perry St. Officer Westenbarger initiated a traffic stop on the red pickup truck in front of 121 W. Perry St. Lt. DeMonte stated that according to reports, when Officer Westenbarger exited his patrol vehicle Blake exited the driver's door of the pickup truck and began approaching Officer Westenbarger with a knife in his hand. It was reported that Officer

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.

Approved By SA Christopher Hamberg on
05/09/2024

Westenbarger, upon seeing that Blake had a knife, pulled his duty weapon and began ordering Blake to stop and to get back in the vehicle. It was reported that Blake did not obey Officer Westenbarger's commands, pointed the knife in his hand at Officer Westenbarger, and began running at Officer Westenbarger. According to information obtained by TPD, Officer Westenbarger began to retreat from Blake and as Blake closed in on Officer Westenbarger, Officer Westenbarger fired his duty weapon striking Blake.

Lt. DeMonte said that Officer Westenbarger radioed "shots fired" and additional officers began arriving on scene and provided life saving measures to Blake. Tiffin Fire and Rescue Division (TFRD) was called to the scene, arrived on scene, and at some point, transported Blake to Tiffin Mercy Hospital where Blake later died. The incident scene was secured by TPD Officers, and Officer Westenbarger was transported back to TPD where his duty weapon was secured for evidence of BCI's investigation of the incident.

SA Emahiser provided Lt. DeMonte a list of items that BCI would need as part of the investigation, to include: Incident reports, Body Worn Camera (BWC) and In-Cruiser Dash Camera footage of all involved and responding TPD Officers, TPD surveillance footage, radio traffic recordings of the incident, and Computer Automated Dispatch (CAD) records. Lt. DeMonte advised that he would provide those items as soon as practical.

SA Emahiser also made contact with the TPD officers that responded to the incident and scheduled a time for them to be interviewed by BCI. SA Emahiser also made contact with Officer Westenbarger, took photos of him in his uniform, and took possession of his duty weapon, which will be detailed in a separate report. SA Emahiser advised Officer Westenbarger that BCI Agents would be in contact to schedule an interview.

SA Emahiser was made aware that TPD Detective Mark Marquis had begun to compile the known details of the incident for a search warrant of the red Chevrolet pickup that was being driven by Blake and stopped by Officer Westenbarger. SA Emahiser advised Det. Marquis that BCI would review the details in the draft search warrant, and SA Emahiser would be the affiant on the search warrant of the red pickup for any incident evidentiary items that would be in the truck. SA Emahiser then was able to verify the information that Det. Marquis had already compiled, and also added to the draft affidavit. A search warrant application and affidavit were then taken to Seneca County Common Pleas Judge Damon Alt, and a search warrant was issued by Judge Alt. The search warrant for the red pickup truck was provided to BCI's Crime Scene Unit, who executed a search warrant on the vehicle at the incident location. Upon completion of the search warrant execution, the Crime Scene Unit left a copy of the search warrant and the inventory with seized items within the vehicle. The vehicle was later towed to a secure location within the city of Tiffin, which will be detailed in a separate report.

BCI Agents that arrived at the incident location canvassed the incident area conducting numerous witness interviews, which will be detailed in separate reports. It is anticipated that additional interviews, document reviews, video footage reviews, and numerous other investigative activities will follow. Attached to this report is also a letter of request to investigate from Tiffin Police Chief David Pauly.

Attachments:

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.

Attachment # 01: Tiffin PD BCI Request Letter

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.



TIFFIN POLICE DEPARTMENT

51 E. Market St., Tiffin, Ohio 44883
Phone: 419.447.2323 Fax: 419.448.5417
chiefofpolice@tiffinohio.gov

Chief of Police
David W. Pauly

May 3, 2024

To the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation,

I am requesting assistance from BCI for an investigation into an officer involved critical incident that occurred in the city of Tiffin. A Tiffin Police Officer was involved in a shooting incident that resulted in the death of the subject. Requesting both the crime scene unit and special investigations unit.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David W. Pauly".

Chief David W. Pauly
Tiffin Police Department
51 E. Market St.
Tiffin, Ohio 44883
419-447-2323 Ext. 1102

Fairness * Integrity * Respect * Service * Teamwork

Serving the Tiffin Community since 1851