



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



2024-1658

Officer Involved Critical Incident - 2212 Tryon Rd.,
Ashtabula, Ohio 44004

Investigative Activity: Interview with Deputy Donald Tichel
Involves: Deputy Donald Tichel (W)
Activity Date: 06/20/2024
Activity Location: Lake County Sheriff's Office-104 East Erie Street,
Painesville, Ohio
Authoring Agent: SA Cory Momchilov #64

Narrative:

On June 20, 2024, at 1223 hours, Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) Special Agent (SA) Cory Momchilov (Momchilov) and SA Jesse Bynum (Bynum) interviewed Lake County Sheriff's Deputy Donald Tichel (Deputy Tichel) The interview took place at the Lake County Sheriff's Office located at 104 E. Erie Street, Painesville, Ohio. The Interview was audio recorded.

Deputy Tichel was identified as being a police officer who witnessed and/or had some level of involvement in the June 1, 2024, officer-involved shooting which occurred in the area of 2212 Tryon Road, Ashtabula, Ohio. Reportedly, Deputy Tichel 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.

Deputy Tichel stated his radio call sign on June 1, 2024, was "Tichel". He has been employed by the Lake County Sheriff's Office for approximately 1 year. Prior to that, Deputy Tichel retired from the Painesville Police Department after 23 and ½ years. Deputy Tichel has been a member of the Lake County Regional SWAT Team for approximately 19 years and is the Assistant Commander. Deputy Tichel was wearing an "upper battle shirt," green pants, and external ballistic vest. He stated was not under the influence of any substance that would impair his memory or judgment during the incident or during the interview with BCI. He does not wear corrective lenses.

Deputy Tichel was physically on scene of this incident and served as the main point of contact between team members on scene and command.

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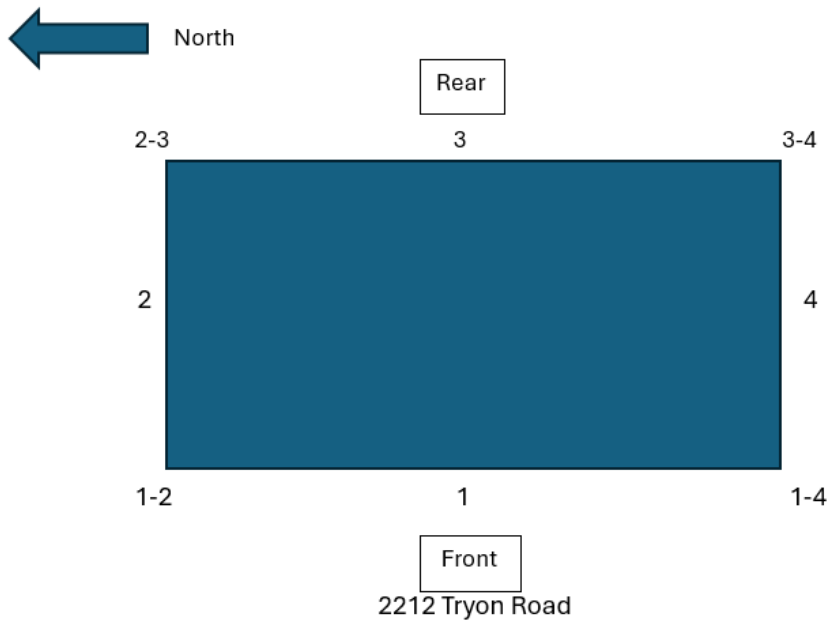
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Precursor Information

During tactical situations, a tactical numbering system is often utilized to quickly identify positions around a residence. The main entrance of the residence is usually referred to as the "1 side", counting clockwise around the house, the sides are then sequentially numbered. The corners are then designated by indicating which sides meet at that corner, e.g. corner 1-2, 2-3, 3-4, and 1-4. This number system was utilized by the Lake County Reginal SWAT Team during this incident (See diagram below).



The Lake County Reginal SWAT Team had two armored vehicles on scene. A smaller armored vehicle, which team members refer to as "David" and a larger armored vehicle which is referred to as "Goliath."

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SA Momchilov asked Deputy Tichel how he became involved in the incident and what actions he took.

Deputy Tichel explained that he received a call from Team Commander Lieutenant Larry Harpster (Lieutenant Harpster) who advised the team was being requested for a barricade situation. Deputy Tichel further explained that an individual had brandished a firearm towards family members and neighbors then retreated into the house. Deputy Tichel then responded to the "rally point."

Deputy Tichel advised that he and Lieutenant Harpster arrived at the rally point, which was a school, around the same time. Deputy Tichel advised that he received some additional information and eventually, the Lake County Regional SWAT Team was given tactical command of the incident. Both Lake County Regional SWAT Team's armored vehicles were not on scene yet, so Deputy Tichel gathered an arrest team and transported them to the scene in his marked pick-up truck.

Deputy Tichel advised that when they arrived on scene, they made contact with an Ashtabula County Sheriff's deputy who was positioned near the 1-4 corner of the residence. Deputy Tichel stated he was informed that the individual had "presented himself earlier before we got there, where he went back in. Kinda pointed at the direction across the street where, allegedly, he had pointed a weapon." Deputy Tichel also stated that an Ashtabula County Sheriff's deputy had been attempting to hail the individual using their cruiser's P.A. (Public Address) system.

The smaller armored vehicle, David, arrived on scene and was positioned on the roadway area near the 1-4 corner of the residence. Deputy Tichel advised that the team that had deployed with him, started "to work off that truck" and David took over hailing the individual with David's P.A. system.

The other armored vehicle, Goliath, eventually arrived on scene and was positioned on the 1-2 corner of the residence.

SA Momchilov asked if the individual inside the house was responding to the hailing commands.

Deputy Don Tichel responded, "Not at first. Sometime had gone by, and I remember him coming to the picture window. He had, uh, kinda like this, uh, vertical venetian blinds. At one point, he came to the window, kinda, pushed the window open, or I should say the, the blinds, and presented himself. And he had what we appeared to be a knife, and he was banging on the window with the knife and kinda yelling. But, from my distance in the truck, I couldn't hear if had been yelling anything. I could definitely tell

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from his gestures and movement; he was yelling something. But seemed like it was more directed towards Goliath at the 1-2 corner.

SA Momchilov stated, "So you're hailing over the PA system. Both cars are at the 1-4 and the 1-2 corner. I guess, it's my understanding, at some point, you guys decide to take armor and knock out the bay window. Is that accurate?"

Deputy Tichel responded, "Yes. So, the idea here is, uhm, I wanted to get a port inside the house because we had drones up, and a drone going around, and we couldn't get eyes inside the house. So, uh, normally a lot of teams will breach the door with the ram, we have a ram capable on the front on David, and, uh, Detective Raymond's (Deputy Jeffrey Raymond) very, very articulate with that ram. The reason I chose not to do the door is because I've seen in past other teams, when they punch the door, they tend to damage the door, create an obstruction, so if the person does want to come out, now they're climbing over top doors and stuff, so I said, hey just do me a favor. Just punch the glass window. Put a port where now the drone guy can now put in a drone, and we can fly around and get eyes inside. Uhm, sounded great on paper. Venetian blinds, uh, uh, uh, giant armor vehicle, giant ram, it got defeated by venetian blinds. So, as he goes in, the window comes out with him. Problem is, the venetian blinds are intact and he can't clear 'em. So, and with the drone, we can't get the drone in because, as soon as it hits the venetian blinds, it crashes. So, the idea was try ta, what we've done in the past, which Raymond's really good at, reaches back in, pulls the venetian blinds or push them up, and allows our drone guy to fly in underneath the rail. And that's how we got our first eyes inside (Figure 1)." (See Investigative Report titled, "Drone Footage Review" for further detail.)



Figure 1

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Deputy Tichel advised that he was watching the live feed from the drones. SA Momchilov asked Deputy Tichel what he had observed on the drone footage.

Deputy Tichel stated, "Uh, first I was looking for a layout and at one point, he, uh, once the drone first went in, he presented himself, one of the first or second times, and that's where we saw he had leveled the shotgun at the drone (Figure 2). So, he came out, the only thing I can think of, we didn't know the layout initially, but we knew there was a bedroom here and here and here, so he came from this area and then that hallway kinda dumped into the kitchen straight ahead and then the living room. So he came around the corner of that hallway into the living room and presented a shotgun, kinda shouldered it and that's the point, we're like okay, we know for a fact now he does have a long gun, 'cause up to that point, we had information and obviously, the complaints from the neighbors, but no cop that had seen this, so in my mi, I didn't know that, so at that point, all right, guys, you know, be cognizant and stay behind cover, he does have a long gun."



Figure 2

Deputy Tichel continued, "One of the times he (Deputy Raymond-David) was coming back out is when, um, Mr. Perry had fired on the vehicle, um, and struck the passenger window. Um, heard the shot go off and I remember going to radio 'cause I didn't know 'cause Raymond called shots fired, so my question to him, did he strike the vehicle, did he fire up in the air, did he fire inside, so and that's when Raymond came back and acknowledged negative, he'd struck the vehicle. So, it was interesting at that point, one of the sheriff's officers telling me, like, hey, we, we don't think he has ammunition,

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family doesn't have any am, ammunition. I'm like all right, that's good. Within minutes, we hear the shot fire.

SA Momchilov asked Deputy Tichel where he was at when the individual fired at David. Deputy Tichel advised that he was just north of the south side neighbor's driveway. Deputy Tichel stated, "I heard it. I did not see it. So, when I heard it, Raymond called shots fired, and my first indication all right, they shoot inside, did he shoot himself, did he shoot, and I said did he shoot the vehicle. I, I think, I can't remember if I said shoot. Raymond confirmed, he goes he struck the windshield in the armor. I was like oh, okay."

SA Momchilov asked what transpired after David pulled back to the 1-4 corner.

Deputy Tichel explained that after the individual fired, the first shot at David, it was decided that the team would come up is a "gas plan (Introducing tear gas into the residence)" to "minimize the structure he's able to access." Deputy Tichel explained at this point, the team has already "turned off the gas (Natural Gas) and also "pulled the meter on the house (electricity)."

Deputy Tichel further explained that a team deployed gas on the 4 side of the residence while another team introduced gas to the garage area. Once the gas was introduced, Deputy Tichel advised that the gas needs time to be effective so they "let it sit."

Deputy Tichel stated, "That went, that went probably a little while. Um, the next, we were gonna work more gas and there, this team had come back to the armor. We're holding here, and then a team went to the left front clean sided David, so it would be the corner driver's side of David. They deployed gas from there, and as that gas guy worked this bedroom window, now we're thinking he's holed up in there or at least push him towards the center. So, the idea is work the exterior with gas. We left the front room and that front area so he could come out that way not obstructed by gas. So, we started to work this 1-4, big bedroom window. Round went in there, almost immediately as the gas round went in, another shot fired come out at us. Um, I'm not gonna lie, it sounded like a Volkswagen over top the armor. Um, so it's almost instantaneously. That round went in, the gas round went in, and the round came back out. Um, once again I don't know if he's aiming at us or at the truck, but as I said, like I told you, it did sound like a Volkswagen over top as it went by. So, we kinda pulled back a little bit, and let it sit a little bit more. We wanted to keep working the 3 side here. So, we knew the basement was hot with gas. We knew the garage was hot with gas. Now we knew we had gas in that front bedroom, so we knew it's hot. The areas we did know is that three side. We know there's a bathroom and some areas back there.

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Um, I've had in my career where guys have barricaded themselves and barricaded themselves inside bathrooms and they'll use the vent stack in the bathroom. Put a blanket over it and breathe cool, clear, clean air through that vent stack. So, one idea is to try to get gas to that three side. As Murphy would have it, um, the gas gun on this side went down. We only had two gas guys in the operation. One on the 1-4 and one on the 2-3 corner. That gun happened to go down. So, I'm like, okay, what do we do? We need to start working that 3side, because at this point this is cooking. The garage is cooking. Nothing on the three side. We attempted to get some rounds in, but the gun failed. So, the game plan is we knew we had a gun or a truck here. Dave was here. I told him, take the truck and put the gun on it. Just take the, move the armor forward, deliver the gun to the other team and they'll get that team to the back side so they can get the gun over

Deputy Tichel continued, "There's no need for all of us to be on the truck. It was simply deploying a piece of equipment to the other side. Um, so they moved the truck down. I saw the lights come on. I knew they, there'd been where the truck is sat, in touch with the other trucks. So, I knew something they exchanged, and then when the truck was on the way back, it slightly paused here, and at that point I didn't know why it had paused. Um, later on I find out that he had presented himself from the door, I'm sorry from the window, because obviously the front window's out. Um, so I'm looking at this. I'm looking at the house. I'm looking at the back of David as it's backing up, and that's, I could see [REDACTED]'s [REDACTED] rifle come up. I know it's [REDACTED], and I could see it, and I saw the puff coming off the can, and then I heard shot, you know, uh, shots fired, shots fired, my shot, suspect down"

Deputy Tichel continued, "I tell them put the drone here as quick as you can. The drone gets in, drone has eyes on, comes across my comms. He's down, he's down, we have eyes on him. So. at that point, now I'm thinking well it's, it's a rescue. Now it's a rescue versus recovery. He's down. Don't know the extent of the injuries. I tell David pull up, pull up. So, I get behind David. I go, go perpendicular right to the door. Um, and I wanted them just to hold that position. So, I used the passenger side of David is clean and it was right against the stairs. So, we were able to take a team up. So, that's when I, uh, right on that truck had been [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] [REDACTED]), Hopp (Deputy Shane Hopp) and myself. Been doing this a while and I knew [REDACTED] had shot. I just knew it because I could see him. So, he stands up, stands, so I tap him on the shoulder. I'm like hey dude, you're out. We got this brother, you stay back, and the next guy stood forward was [REDACTED] and he looked at me and he goes, I shot too. I was like, Hopp, so I took Hopp, I ended up taking Hopp, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and went in, and we went in and, as soon as you get in the front door, you know, two

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chairs. It kinda like, it's a straight shot and the living room opened to our left. There was two chairs. He had been down behind a chair. As soon as he broke the threshold, we went in. I could see it was a large wound to the forehead and I could tell that he most likely, if not deceased, he was disabled, and [REDACTED] went around me. They flipped a chair up, and I think the chair, uh, the shotgun had been around him. They kicked the shotgun chair and flipped it up, and he was laying on his left side. Um, at that point, I could see he was very well a good chance he was deceased. I took guys, I said, pull secondaries on the house, clear the house and I called medic up, and that would have been Hyle Squire that I called up to make the official pronouncement on him."

SA Momchilov asked, "Do you recall the exact position of that shotgun or the individual shotgun prior to them moving that chair?"

Deputy Tichel stated, "He's laying on the floor on his left side towards us. There's a, uh, a spent casing almost near his hand, and then the shotgun was maybe a foot, foot and a half from him. The butt towards him, muzzle towards us, and when [REDACTED] went over and grabbed and reached and pulled, I don't know if he intentionally hit the shotgun or intentionally grabbed, but definitely saw the big movement of the chair and flipped it over. I think to assess him, everything got kitty wampus."

SA Momchilov replied, "Okay. So, it'd be fair to say maybe, uh, [REDACTED] either intentionally or unintentionally moved that shotgun?"

Deputy stated, "Yes."

SA Momchilov replied, "From its original position?"

Deputy Tichel stated, "From its original position. I think he wanted to get over here and assess him, and it's like that's why all that kinda got, the chair got flipped and all that."

Deputy Tichel stated he was not wearing a body-worn camera during the incident and has not viewed any footage from the incident.

SA Momchilov asked Deputy Tichel if he had discussed this matter with other team members. Deputy Tichel stated, "No. The only thing we've had so far, which I'll be honest with you, killing us a little bit, we've had a critical debrief. The guys, we're all sitting in a room with counselors and if anyone's had anything. Um, because of the investigation, we have not had a chance to sit down with you guys. Um, we've held off on our debriefs and talks with the other people just, just in case."

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Deputy Tichel also advised that no one has asked him to lie or otherwise try to influence his statement to investigators.

SA Momchilov asked, "From a, a command standpoint, was this individual in the house, was he, uh, compliant with any of the commands?"

Deputy Tichel replied, "No."

SA Momchilov asked Deputy Tichel, "Why would you say that?"

Deputy Tichel replied, "Well, uh, the number of times, uh, it had to be in the hundreds of times that, um, prior to us getting there, ACSO, which is Ashtabula County Sheriff's Office, was hailing him. Then we get on scene. So, you had to think every minute and a half to 2 minutes we're handling. He doesn't come out. He knows we're there. The first time he presented himself, uh, with the knife and banging on the window. We know it's armor. I'll see a, we continue to hail, we shoot a little gas, uh, I'm sorry, prior to gas, he levels a shotgun at the armored vehicle. Seen the armored vehicle, it's in your front yard. It's free. I mean, the guy knows we're there. So as this goes on and on, I'm thinking this is probably not gonna be a good outcome. This guy, we're giving him every opportunity to come out, come out, and, uh, in the end, he didn't."

SA Momchilov stated, "Would it be fair to say that maybe you guys were running out of options as well?"

Deputy Tichel replied, "Well the next option would be to work to the exterior of the structure. We, we've held, we've given gas. Um, and he's still presenting on us. So, the only option tactically at the next option there is starting to work the exterior."

SA Momchilov asked, "What do you mean working the exterior?"

Deputy Tichel stated, "Well we start to pure, peel all the exterior structure away to try to get a tactical advantage and, um, that's, that is a last, last chance, last, nobody wants to go to that."

SA Momchilov replied, "And you're, you're referring to like using the boom on the front, on the front of the truck and literally dismantling the house."

Deputy Tichel replied, "Yes sir, exactly, very well put."

The interview with Deputy Tichel was audio recorded, the audio recording is attached to this Investigative report.

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References:

None

Attachments:

1. Interview with Deputy Donald Ticel

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