



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



2021-0584

Officer Involved Critical Incident – Interstate 270 Northbound on
Big Walnut Creek Bridge, Columbus (L)

Investigative Activity: Interview with Witness
Involves: Deputy Jeremey M. Copas (W)
Date of Activity: 03/05/2021
Activity Location: Copas, Deputy Jeremey M. – Business – Franklin Co SO, 1945
Frebis Avenue, Columbus, OH 43206, Franklin County
Author: SA Jonathan W. Jenkins, #99

Narrative:

On March 5, 2021, at approximately 2311 hours, Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) Special Agent Jonathan Jenkins met with Franklin County Sheriff's Office Deputy Jeremey Copas. Jenkins spoke with Copas in reference to an Officer Involved Critical Incident (OICI), between Franklin County Sheriff's Deputies, Columbus Police Department Officers, and Andrew Teague. The incident occurred in the northbound lanes of travel on Interstate 270, near Noe Bixby Road, in Columbus, Ohio. During the OICI Teague received a fatal gunshot wound and died at the scene.

Prior to speaking with Copas, Jenkins met with BCI Special Agents Rick Ward and Jim Mulford and received a short briefing on the events which had taken place. Jenkins was advised that Andrew Teague had been involved in a vehicle pursuit with law enforcement officers and refused to stop. Ultimately Teague decided to travel southbound, in the northbound lanes of travel on Interstate 270 where he caused a head-on collision. After the crash, Teague exited his vehicle and attempted to continue to evade capture. At some point in time a shooting occurred, which resulted in Teague's death.

Upon making contact with Copas, Jenkins properly identified himself and requested permission to speak with him about the OICI. Copas agreed and the conversation took place at a Franklin County Sheriff's Office facility. Prior to any questioning, Jenkins advised Copas he did not have to speak with Jenkins and if he wanted to stop the interview at any time to talk with an attorney or union representative, he could. Copas stated he understood and the interview continued.

Jenkins first asked Copas about his training and work experience background. Copas started his career in law enforcement in 1994 where he worked for the Fairfield County Sheriff's Office, in Lancaster, Ohio, until 1997. In July 1997, Copas began his employment with the Franklin County Sheriff's Office and has worked there ever since. Copas is currently assigned as a K9

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handler and his partner is Atrey. Copas has been a K9 handler since December 2012. Copas' unit number is 703 and his radio call sign is K9-3. During the OICI, Copas was working his normal shift from 0700-1600 hours and reported being well rested before the start of his shift. Copas stated he has been involved in vehicle pursuits in the past and during this incident he was operating his assigned patrol vehicle described as a 2017 Chevrolet Tahoe. Copas said his patrol vehicle is marked with the standardized Buckeye State Sheriff's Association (BSSA) markings and his emergency lights and sirens were activated. Copas was dressed in his normal BSSA approved uniform which clearly identifies him as a Deputy Sheriff. Copas was also wearing his department issued Sig Sauer P226 9mm duty firearm, which he did not remove from his holster. Copas said by the time he reached the scene of the OICI, the shooting had already occurred.

Jenkins asked Copas how he became involved in the pursuit. Copas stated he was at his assigned Franklin County Sheriff's Office Substation when he heard Chief Deputy Gilbert on the radio calling out a vehicle pursuit. Copas stated he decided to leave his office and start towards the location where the pursuit seemed to be heading. Copas stated he eventually reached the area of Interstate 70, on the east side of Columbus. Copas said he heard over the radio the pursuit was heading westbound on Interstate 70 and towards his location. Copas then decided he would set up at a location where he could deploy his spike strips, in order to puncture the tires on Teague's vehicle. Copas described the location he set the spike strips as being in the westbound lanes of Interstate 70, at the Interstate 270 interchange. Copas stated as he waited for the pursuit to approach him, Teague appeared to be staying in the westbound lanes. However, at the very last moment, Teague changed his direction and quickly entered the entrance ramp for Interstate 270 northbound. Copas said as he watched Teague take the entrance ramp he could see Teague using a cellphone. Copas stated Teague held onto the cellphone with his left hand and was steering while holding a gun, at the same time, in his right hand. Copas stated when he saw the gun he immediately radioed the information to the other units.

After Teague changed directions, Copas quickly gathered his equipment, backed his patrol vehicle up and entered the Interstate 270 entrance ramp. Copas said it took him several minutes to fall in behind the pursuit and after he entered the northbound lanes of Interstate 270, he observed Teague traveling southbound (wrong way) in the northbound lanes. Copas said he traveled to the nearest place he could safely cross the median and then traveled southbound in the southbound lanes trying to catch up with the other officers in the pursuit. Copas stated when he reached the scene of the OICI, the crash and shooting had already occurred.

Jenkins asked Copas about any video recording equipment he had activated. Copas stated he did have a dash video camera activated which he had already downloaded and provided to his chain of command. Copas stated he could access the video footage, but a copy of the recording would have to be provided to BCI by the Franklin County Sheriff's Office. Copas was then able to show Jenkins the video footage of the events he described. Copas stated due to the fact his patrol vehicle was parked along the side of the roadway, the camera did not record anything behind his vehicle and did not capture video of Teague driving while holding the gun.

The interview between Jenkins and Copas was audio recorded and can be reviewed for additional details. *See attachment 1 for a copy of the audio recorded interview.*

Attachments:

Attachment # 01:Jeremey Copas, audio recorded interview, 3-5-21