



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



2022-2876

Officer Involved Critical Incident – 256 N. Swain, LaRue, Ohio (L)

Investigative Activity: Interview with Witness
Involves: Sgt. Dereck Keller (O)
Date of Activity: 12/21/2022
Author: SA Jason A. Snyder, #176

Narrative:

On 12/21/22, Special Agent (SA) Jason Snyder (Snyder) with the Ohio Attorney General's Office, Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI), conducted a taped interview of Sergeant (Sgt.) Dereck Keller (Keller) with the Delaware County Sheriff's Office (Delaware SO). The interview was conducted at 100 Dillmont Dr., Columbus, OH 43235.

Both SA Snyder and Sgt. Keller agreed to meet at this date and location. Sgt. Keller voluntarily agreed to speak to SA Snyder.

SA Snyder asked Sgt. Keller about his work history and education. Sgt. Keller has a high school diploma. Sgt. Keller has been employed with the Delaware SO for 22 years. He has a total of 23 years in law enforcement. Since 2012, Sgt. Keller has been a part of the Delaware Tactical Team. In 2019, Sgt. Keller was promoted to sergeant.

SA Snyder asked Sgt. Keller about an incident that occurred the day before in LaRue, OH. Sgt. Keller stated that he was apprised of the search warrant being conducted in LaRue a few weeks earlier. Lieutenant (Lt.) Mike Wheeler (Wheeler) briefed Sgt. Keller earlier in the week. Sgt. Keller assisted in surveillance with Lt. Wheeler, while the search warrant was being created for the location of 256 N Swain Ave., LaRue, OH 43332.

Sgt. Keller advised that he was briefed on the case concerning Travis Hellinger (Hellinger). Lt. Wheeler asked Sgt. Keller about using several items, including a bearcat, drones and logistical items, which Sgt. Keller had access to; also, the additional personnel from the Delaware SRT. After the request, Sgt. Keller made the appropriate contacts and was given approval.

During the preparation of the operation plan, Sgt. Keller had some input into the creation of it. Some of the input was his team members would focus on the building (pole barn) in the rear of the trailer, which they believed Hellinger resided in.

Additional information was there was no arrest warrant for Hellinger, due to investigative needs. But, an arrest warrant would be provided if Hellinger broke any laws on scene. Also, a

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nighttime search warrant was requested in the hopes that Hellinger's would be asleep and lessen some of his involvement with the search warrant.

Sgt. Keller was also advised by Lt. Wheeler that during the course of the investigation, Hellinger had made statements to confidential informants that he was not going to be arrested again, and he would start a "gun fight" to prevent his arrest.

On 12/20/22, Sgt. Keller attended the morning briefing for the officers who were going to execute the search warrant that morning. It was briefed that Hellinger was known to carry weapons, and he had made comments of not going back to prison. Due to Hellinger's criminal history, the officers at the briefing were advised that this search warrant execution could be high risk. It should be noted that during the briefing, it was pointed out that Hellinger was a convicted felon and was not allowed to possess weapons.

When Sgt. Keller's SRT officers arrived at 256 N. Swain Ave., LaRue, OH 43332, his SRT officers secured the area around the pole barn. Sgt. Keller worked from the drone trailer, which was stationed near the LaRue water tower. From this area, Sgt. Keller could direct his officers as needed.

Sgt. Keller observed from the drone videos that Hellinger was outside the pole barn, near the railroad tracks. He had a bright flashlight, which he was using in the area. On the radio, officers stated that Hellinger had a gun under his left arm. Sgt. Keller could see, on the drone video, something under Hellinger's left arm. The officers near Hellinger also reported that Hellinger could be wearing body armor.

On the radio, officers could be heard telling Hellinger to "drop the gun" and "get on the ground" several times. Lt. Wheeler asked Sgt. Keller if his K-9 could be used to assist in apprehending Hellinger. Sgt. Keller wanted to keep his K-9 at the location of the house. So, Lt. Wheeler contacted another K-9 officer.

A few minutes later, a K-9 was observed in the drone video. The K-9 approached Hellinger. Hellinger drew a gun and shot at the K-9. The K-9 retreated after being shot at. Hellinger then fell onto the ground. It was believed that Hellinger was shot by Marion SRT. Then, officers moved on Hellinger and secured him. Medical attention was given to Hellinger.

Sgt. Keller stayed at the command trailer and continued to direct his officers in clearing of the pole barn. Forty minutes later, the pole barn was cleared by Delaware SRT officers. At no time did Sgt. Keller enter the area of the incident.

This report only summarizes the information deemed by the author to be of the most relevance to the investigation and does not purport to contain all questions and answers from the interview. Further, this report was placed in a chronology to aid the reader's overall understanding of the information elicited during the interview and may not be reflective of the actual sequencing of questions.

This report was written by SA Jason Snyder.

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