



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 Officer
Involves: ██████████ (S)
Date of Activity: 01/03/2023
Activity Location: Marion County Sheriff's Office – Business – 100 Executive Drive, Marion, OH 43302, Marion County
Author: SA Tiffany Vollmer, #49

Narrative:

On Tuesday, January 03, 2022, Special Agent (SA) Tiffany Vollmer (Vollmer) and SA Josh Rammel interviewed Marion County Sheriff's Deputy ██████████ (██████) at the Marion County Sheriff's Department, 100 Executive Drive, Marion, Ohio. ██████████ was accompanied by his attorney, Lane Hagar of the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP). ██████████ was identified as one of the officers who was directly involved in the shooting involving the deceased, Travis Hellinger (Hellinger). The following is a summary of the interview which was audio recorded and placed in the case file.

Deputy ██████████ acknowledged and signed the Criminal Investigation Notification form given to him by agents in the presence of his attorney. Deputy ██████████ had a prepared statement (attached to report) that he read to agents.

Deputy ██████████ advised he has been a full-time deputy with the Marion County Sheriff's Department since February 2016. His current assignment is as a school resource officer, and he also serves on the Marion County Special Response Team (SRT). Deputy ██████████ carries a Glock 17 Gen 5 9mm during his normal duties. During the incident, Deputy ██████████ also carried a Springfield Saint Rifle, which he believes he fired three shots from during the incident. ██████████ wears a gun belt, consisting of a tourniquet, firearm, dump pouch, and rifle and pistol magazines. He also wore an outer belt, consisting of a rifle magazine, an administration pouch, gas mask and medical kit.

Deputy ██████████ said he worked a normal shift on December 19, 2022, from 0700–1500 and went home and slept from 2100–0230 hours, before coming in for the search warrant call out at 0300 hours, on December 20, 2022. Deputy ██████████'s uniform of the day for the call-out was his department-issued SRT uniform, which was clearly marked as being a law enforcement officer. He also wore a helmet camera, which he reported to be in working condition.

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Deputy ██████ described the weather during the incident as cold and frosty. It was dark with no natural lighting but sufficient lighting for him to observe what occurred.

Deputy ██████ received a call-out page at approximately 1630 hours, on December 19, 2022, that there was a pre-planned operation scheduled for December 20, 2022, and to report to work at 0315 hours. Once Deputy ██████ arrived for briefing, Lieutenant Wheeler sent the sniper team to North Swain Street in LaRue, Ohio, to begin surveillance and give live updates as needed. The drone team was also sent out to set up equipment.

During the briefing, it was learned that the drug unit, MARMET, requested the SRT to assist in executing the search warrant at 256 North Swain Street, LaRue, Ohio. The property consisted of a residential structure, where a person by the name Kim Speck was living and a pole barn, where the suspect, Travis Hellinger, resided. There were known to be several security cameras located on the outside of the building and reports of a hidden room inside. ██████ was briefed that Hellinger was known to sell handguns and was not cooperative in the past with law enforcement.

At the briefing, it was discussed an entry team would make entry to Speck's residence and secure it, while another team would attempt to breach the pole barn door with a Bearcat. Once the door was breached, a "surround and call out" would be attempted to get Hellinger to come out of the building.

While en route to the location, the sniper team identified Hellinger and advised he was exiting the pole barn and walked into Speck's residence for a short time and then came back outside. The sniper team advised Hellinger spotted the drones and was flashing a flashlight at them. Shortly after, the SRT team arrived, and the sniper team advised Hellinger took off running on the railroad tracks.

While Deputy ██████ went into position, the sniper team advised they made contact with Hellinger on the railroad tracks and needed back up. ██████ advised he could hear Hellinger yelling and could see him waving a flashlight around. ██████ went to that location and upon arriving, Hellinger flashed the bright flashlight in ██████'s direction. ██████ said he was unable to see what Hellinger was doing. Hellinger was given commands by team members to get on the ground and stop walking away. At one point, Deputy ██████ was able to see Hellinger had a couple handguns on his person. One handgun was on Hellinger's side and the other was in a shoulder holster. Hellinger created more distance and moved from different sides of the track, when the team would mention using different less-than-lethal tactics.

Deputy ██████ came to the location with his K9. Deputy ██████ gave commands to Hellinger to stop walking or he would send his K9. Hellinger threatened to shoot his dog if it was released. Hellinger continued walking away. Deputy ██████ advised he had his rifle at low ready. Deputy ██████ released the K9; and as the dog approached Hellinger, Hellinger drew a handgun and fired his handgun. Deputy ██████ advised he saw a muzzle flash towards his direction from Hellinger and ██████ returned fire. Hellinger went to the ground. The team approached Hellinger, who seemed to be resisting being handcuffed, and secured him and three of his firearms. The team rendered medical aid.

Deputy ██████ advised, normally if someone runs from the residence when officers have set

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up a perimeter, officers will go after that person because it is not typical for the team to let someone leave the scene of a search warrant. ██████ said he had no knowledge of there being an arrest warrant for Hellinger.

Deputy ██████ advised there was no less-than-lethal force which he could have used that would have been effective in stopping "the immediate and direct threat" from the actions of Hellinger.

██████ and his attorney stepped out of the interview room to talk. When they returned, ██████ had no further information to share about the incident. The recording, Criminal Investigation Notification and officer's written statement are attached to the report and placed in the case file.

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 audio recording. 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 or responses. It is suggested that the full audio recording be reviewed to clarify any content or contextual questions regarding the information from the audio recording.

Attachments:

- Attachment # 01: Deputy ██████
- Attachment # 02: Deputy ██████ Worksheet
- Attachment # 03: Deputy ██████ Criminal Notification Form
- Attachment # 04: Deputy ██████ Written Statement

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Preliminary and Demographic Information Worksheet:

| | |
|--|---|
| Name: [REDACTED] | Rank: Deputy |
| Badge Number: [REDACTED] | Cruiser/Vehicle Number: N/A |
| Radio Call Sign: [REDACTED] | Immediate Supervisor: Captain Ryan Zempter |
| Radio Channel Utilized: MPD Tach 1 | Mobile Data Terminal: N/A |
| Cruiser Description: TRV | Occupants of Cruiser and Seating Positions: |
| Assignment: SRO, SRT, Firearms Instructor | Normal Shift: 0700-1500 |
| In-Car Camera: none | Spotlight: N/A |
| Emergency Lights: N/A | Siren: N/A |
| Shift Day of Incident: 0700-1500 | Duty Status: active |
| Days Off: Sat/Sun | Prior Overtime or Extra Details within Preceding 48 Hours: no |
| Hours of Sleep Prior to Incident: 2100-0230 | Consider Self Well Rested?: yes |
| Total Length as Officer: 11 years | Length at Current Agency: 7 years |
| Physical Disabilities (to include hearing aid): none | Corrective Lenses: none |



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| | |
|--|--|
| Uniform Worn: OD Green Pants Long sleeve consistent | Equipment and Less-Lethal Options Carried on Person/Belt/Vest: |
| Ballistic Vest: Yes sheriff | Body Worn Camera: yes |
| Other Recording Devices: no | Partner: N/A |
| Injuries: No | Equipment Damage: None |
| Training or Areas of Specialty: | OPOTC Certification: Marion Technical |
| Military Experience/Training: None | Use-of-Force Training: SRT day of |
| Prior Shooting Incidents: None | Prior Discipline or Use-of-Force Complaints: None |
| Medications, Prescriptions, or Drugs that might Impair Your Duties at Time of Incident: None | Medications, Prescriptions, or Drugs that might Impair You Now for Interview: None |
| Alcohol in Past 24 Hours? None | Last Consumed Alcohol Prior to Incident: Unknown |



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Officer's Firearm(s):

Weapon #1

| | |
|---|---|
| Make: Springfield Saint | Model: |
| Caliber/Gauge: 556 | Serial: |
| Type: | Method of Carry: sling |
| Magazine Capacity: 30-32 | Total Rounds as Carried (including chamber): 30 |
| Extra Magazines: 2 | Number of Rounds in Extra Magazines: 28 |
| Discharged During Incident? yes | Primary or Backup Weapon: primary |
| Rounds Remaining After Incident: | Number of Rounds Fired: 3 |
| Right/Left-Handed Carry: right | Ownership: MCSO |
| Last Qualification Date: October 2022 | Type of Holster, if any: Sling |

Weapon #2

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Make: Glock | Model: 17 |
| Caliber/Gauge: 9M | Serial: |
| Type: | Method of Carry: Right holster |



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| | |
|---|---|
| Magazine Capacity: 17 | Total Rounds as Carried (including chamber): 17 |
| Extra Magazines: 1 | Number of Rounds in Extra Magazines: 17 |
| Discharged During Incident? no | Primary or Backup Weapon: Back up |
| Rounds Remaining After Incident: 17 | Number of Rounds Fired: None |
| Right/Left-Handed Carry: Right | Ownership: MCSO |
| Last Qualification Date: October 2022 | Type of Holster, if any: |

Weapon #3

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Make: | Model: |
| Caliber/Gauge: | Serial: |
| Type: | Method of Carry: |
| Magazine Capacity: | Total Rounds as Carried (including chamber): |
| Extra Magazines: | Number of Rounds in Extra Magazines: |
| Discharged During Incident? | Primary or Backup Weapon: |



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| | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| | |
| Rounds Remaining After Incident: | Number of Rounds Fired: |
| Right/Left-Handed Carry: | Ownership: |
| Last Qualification Date: | Type of Holster, if any: |



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Criminal Investigation Notification

1. This investigation is being conducted in order to determine whether any criminal laws have been violated on the part of those involved in this incident. Specifically, to collect facts and information to be provided to the prosecutor and/or grand jury in order for them to determine whether the conduct involved is authorized or prohibited by criminal statutes.
2. Your participation in this interview is voluntary and you may decline to answer or cease the interview at any time. You are entitled to have an attorney present if you wish.
3. The criminal investigation is separate from any internal, administrative investigation which your employer may or may not be independently conducting. You are not being compelled to give any statement or answer any questions. This is **not** a "Garrity" interview (where you could be required to answer).

[Redacted]

Printed Name of Interviewee

1-3-23

Date / Time

[Redacted]

Signature of Interviewee

SA Josh Ramm

BCI Agent (Printed)

[Signature]

BCI Agent (Signature)

Statement of Deputy [REDACTED], Marion County Sheriff's Office,
Regarding Incident of December 20, 2022

I. Background.

I began my most recent full-time employment with the Marion County Sheriff's Office ("Marion SO") as a Deputy Sheriff in February, 2016. I was first employed in law enforcement at the Mt. Gilead Police Department as a part-time officer from 2011 to 2013. I left for full-time employment with the Morrow County SO as a Deputy from 2013 to 2014. I then returned to the Mt. Gilead Police Department as a full-time Officer from 2014 through 2016. I do not have any military service.

I completed by basic Police Officer Training at Marion Technical College, graduating in August, 2011.

I graduated from River Valley High School, Marion, in 2008. I attended Toledo University for one year. I also attended classes in Criminal Justice at Marion Technical College.

My current assignment is as a School Resource Officer. I also serve on the Marion County Special Response Team ("SRT"). My current supervisor is Captain Ryan Zempter.

My regularly assigned work hours are from 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and my regularly assigned workdays are Monday through Friday.

At the Marion SO I have supplemental assignments as a Firearm Instructor (pistol, rifle, and shotgun) and I am also a member of the SRT.



I do not currently wear prescription glasses, contacts or a hearing aid. I take no prescription medication. Within eight hours prior to the incident, I had no consumption of alcohol. At the time of the incident, I was not under the influence of any intoxicant, whether alcohol, prescription drug, or non-prescription drug.

As a law enforcement officer, I have never received any discipline relative to the use of force. I have never been the subject of any Internal Affairs investigation relative to the use of force in my law enforcement career. I have never before used lethal force. However, there have been occasions in my law enforcement career where I have used less than lethal force, by use of my Taser and by hands-on techniques. These instances of use of less than lethal force have been reviewed and my use has been found to be within Departmental policy.

My duty weapon is a Glock 17 Gen 5-9mm. I did not use my duty weapon at the incident. Instead, I used my Springfield Saint, with a Colt select fire lower receiver. Both of these weapons are Agency-issued. I last qualified for these weapons in October 2022.

I carry three (3) magazines for my rifle, one (1) in the rifle, one (1) on my outer vest, and one (1) on my belt. Each magazine holds thirty (30) rounds.

I believe I fired three (3) rounds from my rifle during the incident.

On my duty belt I carry (clockwise) the following items: a tourniquet, my Glock 17 duty weapon, a dump pouch, my rifle magazine, and my pistol magazine.

On my outer belt I carry (from my left to my right) the following items: one (1) rifle magazine, an administration pouch, gas mask, and medical kit.

I did not carry any backup weapon during the incident.

On Sunday, December 18 it was my day off and I did not do any work. On December 19, I worked my regular assignment from 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. I worked no special duty on either day.

I was well rested on the date of the incident. I slept from approximately 9:00 p.m. on December 19 until 2:30 a.m. on December 20.

I was in my prescribed SRT uniform, including O.D green pants, a long sleeve shirt, and my outer vest.

During the incident, I had a helmet cam which I was wearing and it was recording. I had no personal recording device.

I was transported to the incident in a tactical response (armored) vehicle ("TRV"). I do not believe that the TRV has an in-car video system.

The weather during the incident was cold and frosty. It was dark during the incident with no natural lighting, but there was sufficient lighting at the scene for me to observe what occurred.

II. Incident Narrative.

On December 19, 2022, at approximately 4:30 p.m., I received notification from the Sheriff's Office Active Alert paging system that there was a pre-planned operation scheduled for December 20, 2022 and I was to report at 3:15 a.m. for briefing.

On December 20, 2022, at approximately 3:00 a.m., I arrived at the hangar and waited for everyone else to arrive for briefing. Delaware Tactical Unit also arrived at the hangar to assist. Once all personnel arrived for briefing, Lt. Wheeler sent our sniper team out to the area of North Swain Street to start surveillance and give live updates as needed. Our drone operator was also deployed at this time with the command truck to start setting up drone equipment and begin flying for surveillance.

Lt. Wheeler started the briefing and advised MARMET had requested the Marion Special Response Team to assist in serving a search warrant at 256 North Swain Street, in Larue. In the briefing, we learned that this property had a residential structure where a female named, Kim Speck was living. This property also had a large pole barn building on it where the suspect, Travis Hellinger, resided. This building had several cameras located on the outside of the building and it was reported that there was a hidden room inside.

During the briefing, the team was told what their responsibilities were. An entry team was assigned to make entry into Ms. Speck's residence and secure it. While that entry team was doing that, the team I was assigned to was tasked with assisting the Delaware Tactical Unit while they attempted to breach the garage door of the pole barn with their Bearcat. Once Ms. Speck's residence was secure and the garage

door to the pole barn was breached, a surround and call out would be attempted to get Mr. Hellinger out of the pole barn building.

Once briefing was over, all personnel completed equipment checks and began getting ready to depart to 256 North Swain St. While enroute, our sniper teams gave intel on a male, identified as Mr. Hellinger, exiting the pole barn and walking into Ms. Speck's residence. Shortly thereafter, Mr. Hellinger came out of Ms. Speck's residence and was standing outside. Our sniper team then reported that Mr. Hellinger was standing in the tree line behind the pole barn. He had seen the drones and was flashing a light at the drones. Shortly thereafter, we arrived at 256 North Swain St in our marked transport vehicles. As we arrived, the sniper teams advised that Mr. Hellinger took off running on the railroad tracks.

All personnel exited the vehicles and began our approach to the pole barn. I established a position on the side of Ms. Speck's residence and held security on the pole barn while another team made entry into Ms. Speck's residence. While this was happening, the sniper team advised they had made contact with Mr. Hellinger on the railroad tracks and needed more people to their location.

I could hear Mr. Hellinger yelling and could see him waving a flashlight around. My team had started to move towards Mr. Hellinger's location but stopped and continued to hold our position. Someone asked the sniper team if they still needed more units to their location and I did not hear a response. I told the team I was with that I needed guys on me and started moving to the railroad tracks.

While this was happening, Delaware Tactical Unit was attempting to get their Bearcat in position to breach the garage door, but with several vehicles in the driveway and blocking access to the garage door it was taking longer than expected.

During our approach to the railroad tracks, Mr. Hellinger saw us coming towards him and began yelling at us and pointing his flashlight at us. The light was very bright when it was pointed at me. At times, because of the bright light, I was unable to see Mr. Hellinger or what he was doing. Several team members began giving him commands to get on the ground, and to stop walking away. Mr. Hellinger continued to yell and ask what he was being arrested for. As we attempted to get Mr. Hellinger to comply, he kept getting further from us and continued to walk backwards on the railroad tracks. While he was shining his light at other Officers, I could see a handgun on his side and it appeared he had a shoulder holster on with another handgun.

Mr. Hellinger continued to walk backwards and cross the tracks, and once he would hear one of us talk to one another about a tactic, he would run to the other side of the tracks creating more distance between us. K-9 [REDACTED] and his handler, Deputy [REDACTED] came to our location. Deputy [REDACTED] started giving commands to Mr. Hellinger to stop walking or he would send his dog. Mr. Hellinger advised he was going to “shoot the dog if we released it”. Several more commands were given to Mr. Hellinger and he continued to walk away. During this time, I had my rifle in a low ready position, watching Mr. Hellinger over top of my optic.

Deputy [REDACTED] released K-9 [REDACTED] and as [REDACTED] closed the distance to Mr. Hellinger, I saw him draw a handgun with his right hand. I then saw the muzzle flash from the handgun and returned fire. Once Mr. Hellinger went to the ground, the team

closed the distance and continued to give verbal commands for him to show his hands. Mr. Hellinger was not showing his hands and was moving around.

We were able to obtain the firearms from his person and were attempting to place him in handcuffs. It appeared Mr. Hellinger was still resisting. At this time, I started calling out for our Tac Medic. Deputy ██████ handed me a flashlight and asked me to hold it and he started putting a tourniquet on Mr. Hellinger's Leg. Once Tac Medic Williams arrived at our location he started providing medical care.

I then saw Deputy ██████ and K-9 ██████ behind us and it appeared as if K-9 ██████ might be hurt. I noticed Lt. ██████ was next to me and I advised him to go help Deputy ██████ and ██████ since he was another K-9 Officer.

Major Adkins from the Police Department advised me and Lt. ██████ he needed to collect our rifles and I handed my rifle to him. I asked him if he needed me to unload the rifle and he stated "no." At this time, Chief ██████ advised Officer ██████, Officer ██████, Officer ██████, Deputy ██████ and me to get in his vehicle and go back to the Police department.

My backdrop when I shot was the railroad tracks and open area. I fired for Mr. Hellinger's center mass.

By drawing his firearm and firing it at the K-9 ██████ at me, and other SRT team members at the scene, Mr. Hellinger posed a direct and immediate threat to me and other members of the SRT team at the scene. There was no less than lethal force which I could have used which would have been as effective in stopping this

immediate and direct threat from the actions of Mr. Hellinger. This is why I used lethal force.

I was not subject to drug testing after the incident because such testing is not required by our policy.

My action in firing my rifle, as described above, was consistent with my training and experience as a law enforcement officer.

I have had no prior contact with Mr. Hellinger.

My statement is made to the best of my recollection as to the incident of December 20, 2022. Prior to preparing this statement I had not viewed either my helmet camera or any other video of the incident. On December 22, 2022, I reviewed my helmet camera and other video of the incident. This review did not substantially change my statement.

I wish to cooperate with this investigation and am prepared to answer any questions you might have.

Respectfully submitted,



Deputy 

1-3-23

Date