



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



2022-0826

Officer-Involved Critical Incident - W. 46th Street, between Collins Blvd. and Valley View Blvd.

Investigative Activity: Interview with Officer
 Involves: APD Ofc. Sheri Allen
 Activity Date: 7/26/2022
 Activity Location: Diemert & Associates, 1360 SOM Center Road, Mayfield Heights, Ohio 44124
 Authoring Agent: SA Jon Lieber #50

Narrative:

On Tuesday, July 26, 2022, at 1048 hours, Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) Special Agent (SA) Jon Lieber (Lieber) interviewed Ashtabula Police Department (APD) Officer (Ofc.) Sheri Allen (Allen), who was accompanied by her attorney, Tom Hanculak, from the Fraternal Order of Police. The interview took place at Diemert & Associates, 1360 SOM Center Road, Mayfield Heights, Ohio 44124. The interview was audio recorded.

Allen was identified as being a police officer who witnessed and/or had some level of involvement in the April 13, 2022, officer-involved shooting which occurred in the area of W. 46th Street between Collins Blvd. and Valley View Blvd., Ashtabula, Ohio. Reportedly, Allen 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.

Allen stated her radio call sign on April 13, 2022, was P8. She has been employed by the APD for about 9 years. She has been a police officer for a total of 23 years. During the incident, Allen wore her standard police uniform with a metal police badge affixed to it. She also wore an external ballistic vest and duty belt. She drove a police vehicle marked with APD and K-9 emblems and emergency lights. She considered herself to be well-represented as a police officer during the incident. She stated she was not under the influence of any substance that would impair her memory or judgment during the incident or during the interview with BCI. She does wear corrective lenses. Allen was wearing a body camera, which she turned on and off during the incident. Allen stated that she has done negotiations in the past that have taken several hours. As a result, she toggled the camera on and off so that the battery would not run out of charge. Allen has been a certified hostage negotiator since the mid to late 1990's. She received her training through the Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy (OPOTA).

Allen stated that she and Ofc. Cody Caruso (Caruso) were on a call on West 12th Street. She heard radio traffic that dispatched Lieutenant (Lt.) [REDACTED] ([REDACTED]) and Ofc. Brandon Zukoski (Zukoski) to a call of a male walking down the street with a shotgun. As Allen and Caruso responded to the area of the call, which was on the 46th Street bridge, they turned off

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their emergency lights and sirens so that the subject would not know that the officers were in the area. Allen said that the dispatcher relayed to officers that the subject said that he had a gun. Allen said that [REDACTED] told them to respond to the east side of the bridge because [REDACTED] and Zukoski were already on the west side of the bridge. Allen said that Caruso went to East 46th Street, while she went to East 45th Street and Valley View Boulevard.

Allen said that dispatch advised that they were trying to talk to the male but he kept hanging up. Allen then called dispatch and told them to put the male through to her so that she could negotiate with the male. Allen said that it was 12:30 AM when she first started negotiating with the male. Allen learned that the name of the male was David Ward Jr. (Ward). Allen said that Ward was slurring his words a little bit. She also said that Ward admitted to her that he had drank some alcohol and that he was highly depressed. Ward said that he was sick and tired of people trying to talk him out of suicide. Allen said that the negotiation went on for about 30 to 40 minutes total.

Allen told Ward that alcohol is a depressant and it would make him more depressed. Allen said she thought that the more time she could talk to Ward, the more he would sober up and become more reasonable. Allen said that the opposite happened. The more she spoke to Ward, the angrier he became. Ward was angry that the police did not respond with lights and sirens. Ward kept asking where everybody was. Allen would tell Ward that she didn't know. Ward thought that Allen was the only officer on the call. Allen stated that Ward wanted the police to come onto the bridge with lights and sirens so that he could point his gun at the police, and they would shoot him. Allen said this is what Ward had said to her. Ward kept asking where Allen was located. Allen said that once she began building a rapport with Ward, he said that he didn't want her to have to shoot him. Allen said that Ward wanted to know what side of the bridge she was on so that he could walk to the opposite side. Allen never told Ward of her location.

Allen said that throughout the negotiations, Ward would be up and down. At one point, he would be calm; the next minute, he would be mad. Ward said, "You think I'm not serious? The next person I see I'm going to shoot." Allen then heard Ward rack the shotgun. Allen recalled Ward saying that it was either a 12-gauge or 20-gauge. Allen said that while she was negotiating with Ward, vehicular traffic would approach and she would have to stop cars to keep them away from the bridge. Allen said that in the trunk of her vehicle, she had night vision and binoculars. She used those to try to see where Ward was on the bridge. Due to trees located between her and Ward, she was unable to see him.

Allen said, at one point during the negotiations, the call disconnected. This occurred around 1:06 AM. When the call disconnected, Allen called APD dispatch and told them to try to reconnect her and Ward. Ultimately, she was able to get back on the phone with Ward.

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Allen said that she turned her police radio volume down because she didn't want Ward hearing the radio traffic. She knew that if he could hear the radio, he would have known that there were officers on both sides of the bridge. Allen said that she knew that [REDACTED] and Zukoksi were near each other, so she would send text messages to Zukoski with updates. Allen said that she told Zukoski that Ward was drunk and that he wanted suicide by cop.

Allen said that she told Ward that there was help available. She said that everyone in life goes through things and Ward was only 23 years old. Allen said that Ward would say that he has already been in for help and he named several mental health facilities that he has been to, including in southern Ohio. Ward said that nothing was working. Allen told him that sometimes you have to find the healthcare worker that you click with. Ward said he has tried it and he is done.

Allen said, at one point near the end of the negotiations, Ward said that he saw the highway patrol. Ward asked what they were doing there. Allen said that she didn't know because she wasn't near the highway patrol officer. Ward then said that he saw APD officers and he told Allen that APD was here. Allen said that she could then hear Ward walking with force. Allen heard officers yelling. Allen said that she couldn't understand what specifically they were yelling. Allen said that she began yelling at Ward to put the gun down. She did not receive any response from Ward. All of a sudden, Allen heard silence. Allen said that she did not hear the gunshot. SA Lieber asked Allen to describe Ward walking with force. Allen said that she could hear his clothes moving and that is what she interpreted as moving with force.

Allen said that after the incident, Ward's father and girlfriend arrived on scene; they told Allen that in the last week, they tried to get Ashtabula County Medical Center (ACMC) to admit Ward but they wouldn't. Allen said that Ward's father said the gun Ward had belonged to his father (Ward's grandfather). Allen asked Ward's father if the gun was loaded. Ward's father said that he didn't know but there could be one or two shells in it.

SA Lieber asked if the calls she had with Ward were audio recorded. Allen said that she doesn't believe that they were. Allen said that if the call is on an open line, then the call is recorded. However, when dispatch patches the call through to Allen, the connection with dispatch ends and therefore the recording ends.

Allen said that after the shooting, Lt. Parkomaki had Allen drive his cruiser while Parkomaki was in the front passenger seat. Caruso got into the backseat; they drove down the bridge and administered medical aid to Ward. Shortly after, medics arrived on scene and provided additional medical care. Allen said that when officers first approached Ward, there was a shotgun lying next to him. Lt. Parkomaki moved the shotgun away from Ward.

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The interview concluded at approximately 1110 hours.

The interview was audio recorded. The audio recording was attached to this report. Please see the attachments for further details.