



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



2024-3649
Officer Involved Critical Incident - 6880 Sunset Strip Ave
NW, Room #220, North Canton, Ohio, 44720

Investigative Activity: Neighborhood Canvass
Involves: James Vanest (S)
Activity Date: 11/21/2024
Activity Location: BCI - Richfield
Authoring Agent: SA Joseph Goudy

Narrative:

On Monday, November 18, 2024, Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) Special Agents Joseph Goudy (Goudy), Bill Conn (Conn), Jesse Bynum (Bynum), John Tingley (Tingley), Nick Valente (Valente), and Allison Fletcher (Fletcher) conducted a neighborhood canvass in the area of 6880 Sunset Strip Ave NW, North Canton, Ohio. This location is commonly known as the Rodeway Inn Motel. The purpose of the canvass was to identify and interview potential witnesses to the officer-involved critical incident that occurred at 6880 Sunset Strip Ave NW, Room #220, North Canton, Ohio on Monday, November 18, 2024.

During the neighborhood canvass, Special Agents made or attempted contact with the residents at the Rodeway Inn Motel.

The following information was authored by SA Goudy:

Nicholas Ratzel / DOB: 3-20-1987 / Cell: [REDACTED] / Room #222

At 1628 hours, SA Goudy spoke with Nicholas Ratzel (Ratzel). At the time of the incident, Ratzel was staying at the Rodeway Inn Motel inside room #222. Ratzel stated that at approximately 1030 hours, he stepped outside his room to smoke his vape. During that time, he noticed three US Marshalls knocking on the door of #220 stating that they had a warrant. Shortly thereafter, Ratzel stepped back into his room to put shoes on and went back outside. Ratzel stated that while he was outside, he heard shots being fired from inside room #220. It was at that moment that Ratzel and the other bystanders were told to move further back.

Ratzel stated that law enforcement made multiple announcements for the occupant of #220 to exit and surrender. Ratzel stated that he heard the occupant yell something from inside but was not able to understand what he said. Ratzel stated that the occupant of #220 fired his weapon from inside the room before law enforcement fired. When Ratzel was asked why he felt the first shots were fired from inside room #220, he

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stated that the gunshots sounded muffled. Furthermore, Ratzel stated that gunfire was more distinct coming from the outside. Ratzel stated that when the shots were fired from inside, law enforcement officers moved back to take cover. Ratzel stated after the officers moved back towards cover, they fired their weapons in a manner he believed was to “deter” the occupant and not harm him.

Ratzel believed that these rounds were meant to be more “suppressive” in nature to avoid harming the occupant. Shortly after, an additional round was fired from inside towards officers. Ratzel described it as one round that sounded like a handgun which was muffled. Ratzel stated that the officers did not return fire after that. When Ratzel was asked if he had any interactions with the occupant of #220, he stated that he did not. Ratzel was asked if he had ever seen the truck possessed by the occupant of #220, he stated that prior to him leaving for work at 1530 hours on 11-17-2024, he had never seen the truck. Ratzel added that during the incident, “the officers did a fantastic job.”

Nothing further to report from this resident.

Misty Goodwin / DOB: 9-22-1987 / Text: [REDACTED] / Room #224

At 1700 hours, SA Goudy along with SA Conn spoke with Misty Goodwin (Goodwin). Goodwin was residing in room #224 at the time of the incident. She stated when she woke up, she walked outside of her room and officers told her to go back in. At that time, Goodwin stated she went back into her room and went back to sleep. Goodwin stated that at approximately 1400 hours, she woke up to the sound of “boom, boom, boom.” Goodwin said at the time, she didn’t know what the sound was and was not able to process it fast enough, but soon realized that it was the sound of gunshots being fired. Goodwin did not observe anything regarding the incident.

When asked if she knew the occupant of room #220, Goodwin stated that she had prior interactions with him. She stated that she had been living at the motel for two weeks, and he’d been there longer than her. Goodwin stated that the occupant of #220 seemed like a nice person and that he would walk down and speak with her and the other residents nearby. Goodwin further stated that she would smoke “weed” with him on occasion and that this situation is very surprising. The last interaction Goodwin had with the occupant of #220, was either 2100 hours or 2200 hours the night before (11-17-24). Goodwin stated that he appeared to be “pretty normal” to her. She only knew him as “Jim” and that he was 65 years old.

Nothing further to report from this resident.

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Joseph King / DOB: 1-9-1991 / Cell: [REDACTED] / Room #225

At 1716 hours, SA Goudy and SA Conn spoke with Joseph King (King). He resided in room #225 at the time of the incident. King stated that at approximately 1030 hours, he woke up to what sounded like law enforcement banging on the doors. King stated that officers were evacuating the residents near room #220 and placing them at the far end of the building, out of harm's way. King stated they were still able to observe everything that was going on from where they were standing.

King heard multiple gunshots being fired from inside the room towards officers. King further stated that he observed one of the officers get hit by the same gunfire. He also observed officers returning gunfire into the room along with other forms of less lethal munitions. King stated, "a lot of gunfire exchanged...back and forth gunfire, for every bit of two hours." King stated he was not able to see much of the incident, due to where he was standing. When King was asked if he was aware of when the less lethal munitions were deployed, King stated it was approximately 10 or 15 minutes before the occupant of room 220 fired at officers. He further stated that the occupant of room 220 fired at officers sometime around 1115 or 1130 hours. King stated that, due to his previous experience in the United States Army, he was able to distinctly recognize that the occupant of room 220 fired at officers from within his room. King stated that he saw one of the rounds hit a SWAT vehicle that was parked in front of the room. At that point, King stated that the officers returned gunfire.

King stated that as the incident was occurring, officers maintained their positions on the outside of room 220. At that point, King stated that a drone was sent into the room in which he heard approximately two more gunshots being fired from inside. King assumed that the drone was hit because he did not see it exit. It was at that time that King stated officers fired another volley of gunfire into the room. King estimated that he heard 20 or 30 heavy rounds and 20 or 30 light rounds fired by the officers during the exchanges. When King was asked if he had any interactions with the occupant of room 220, he stated that the male, "seemed like a regular person that stays around here." King further stated that the male did not appear to be a threat and was respectful to everyone. King stated that motel management told him that the male had been staying in the room for 42 days.

Nothing further to report from this resident.



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Allan Wheeler / DOB: 11-21-1958 / Cell: [REDACTED] / Room #402

At 1727 hours, SA Goudy spoke with Allan Wheeler (Wheeler). He stated that he did not witness anything regarding the incident.

Tina Morrow / DOB: 7-22-1979 / Cell: [REDACTED] / Room #229

At 1740 hours, SA Goudy and SA Conn spoke with Tina Morrow (Morrow). She stated that she was not able to see anything but heard gunshots and tear gas being fired. Morrow stated that officers made her evacuate her room and she was not able to see anything from where she was standing.

Nothing further to report from this resident.

SA Goudy and SA Conn checked rooms 227 and 228. They appeared to be unoccupied at the time of the incident. This was confirmed by the fact that the window curtains were opened and other residents indicated that they were not rented by anyone.

The following information was obtained by SA Conn:

John J. Stone / DOB: 9-15-1972 / Cell: [REDACTED] / Room #226

Mr. Stone stated he and his girlfriend were evacuated from their room, 226, at approximately 1030 hours by local police and directed to the south end of the building to standby. Mr. Stone stated that he observed the officers attempting to gain entry to the room at the north end of the building, when he heard gunshots and saw an officer get shot. Mr. Stone further stated, at that time he, along with several other people, were moved further back out of sight of the incident by the police. Mr. Stone did not see or hear anything further of relevance.

Mr. Stone stated he did not know the subject, nor did he ever have any contact with him. Mr. Stone's girlfriend, Samantha Harsh (DOB: 12/9/1974), who also resides with him, could add nothing further.

Nothing further to report from this resident.

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The following information was authored by SA Nick Valente:

Jason Evans / DOB: 12-25-1976 / Cell: [REDACTED] / Room #400

SA Valente and SA Fletcher spoke with occupant Jason Evans (Jason E.) at 1735 hours on November 18, 2024. Jason E. stated he was home at the time of the incident. Jason E. reported he heard law enforcement officers identify themselves as being U.S. Marshals. Jason E. further reported that he later heard law enforcement shooting what he believed to be tear gas canisters into or at the subject's room. Jason E. stated he did occasionally look out his windows as the events outside unfolded. Jason E. did not hear or see the subject at any point during the event and was unsure if he was even in his room. Further, Jason E. did not see any specific officers fire their weapons. Jason E. stated he would not be able to identify any of the involved officers and was told by law enforcement to stay inside his room and away from the window. Jason E. stated he generally followed this advice and stayed inside and away from his window. Jason E. did not take any pictures or videos of the incident. Jason E. did not know the subject. The interview of Jason E. was recorded on SA Valente's body-worn camera (BWC) and saved as part of Reference Item A.

Nothing further to report from this resident

Tanisha Gray / DOB: 12-19-1997 / Cell: None / Room #403

SA Valente and SA Fletcher spoke with occupant Tanisha Gray (Tanisha) at 1803 hours on November 18, 2024. Tanisha stated she was home at the time of the incident but did not look out the window or watch the incident as it occurred. Tanisha stated she did hear glass breaking and the sound of an unknown number of gunshots. When asked to give a best guess as to the number of gunshots she heard, Tanisha stated more than 5 shots. Tanisha stated the shots were fired in quick succession. Tanisha stated she did not hear the subject, or any officers communicating during the incident and was distracted by watching TV inside her room. The interview of Tanisha was recorded on SA Valente's body-worn camera (BWC) and saved as part of Reference Item A.

Nothing further to report from this resident.

Alan C Koontz / DOB: 10-17-1967 / Cell: [REDACTED] / Room #405

Christopher Koontz / DOB: 8-31-1998 / Cell: [REDACTED] / Room #405

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SA Valente and SA Fletcher spoke with occupants Alan Koontz (Alan) and Christopher Koontz (Christoper) at 1740 hours on November 18, 2024. Alan and his son Christopher reported that they recognized the subject's truck but did not know the subject. Alan reported the subject would often have his truck backed up to the door of his room with the door to the room left open, including early in the morning. Alan felt that behavior was weird, and it had caught his attention in the past. Alan stated that when he attempted to leave his room earlier that day, he realized something unusual was happening because he saw multiple law enforcement officers positioned throughout the parking lot. Alan and Christopher both heard undistinguished yelling and law enforcement using a P.A. system to give orders to the subject. Alan and Christopher reported they could not make out the orders law enforcement were giving the subject from their position at the front door of their room. Alan and Christopher recalled hearing the subject yell loudly at the officers when they believed police had breached the door of the subject's room.

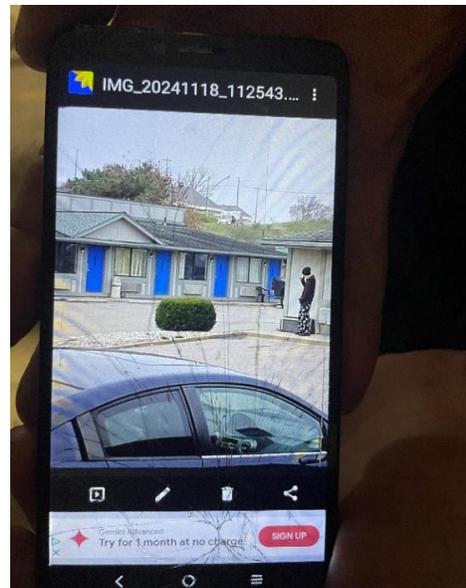
Alan and Christopher reported hearing the sound of what they believed to be multiple pepper balls being fired at the subject or into his room during the incident. The two men also reported they could smell and taste the effects of the pepper balls at the entrance to their room.

Both Alan and Christopher reported hearing multiple five to ten second firefights throughout the incident. Both men believed they heard between 20 and 30 actual gunshots fired collectively throughout the entire event. Both men observed a SWAT vehicle push the subject's truck away from the door of the subject's room.

Both men further reported that at one point they observed smoke clouds forming as pepper balls hit the front window of the subject's room. Both men believed at least 200 pepper balls were fired at the subject or his room.

Christopher did not take any photographs or videos of the incident.

Alan took one photograph and one 2-second-long video of the incident. Alan's phone was unable to upload the photograph and video he created through an Axon Community Requests sent by SA Valente. SA Valente then took photographs and a short video of Alan's phone as he played the video he created. The



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video and picture created by Alan were saved as part of reference item A. The picture taken by Alan and depicted at right depicts an unknown male looking in the direction of the subject's room towards the beginning of the incident. The rear right side of a truck can be seen in the picture parked near the door to the subject's room. Neither the subject nor law enforcement are visible in the photograph.

The 2-second-long video shows three officers standing behind a lime green Kia Soul parked in front of a room to the south of the subject's room. The three officers had unknown weapons in their hands pointed in the general direction of the subject's room. The sound of apparent pepper ball impacts can be heard on the recording.

The screenshot included below was taken from SA Valente's body-worn camera to demonstrate the approximate location and viewpoint of Alan and Christopher as they stood in the doorway of their room and observed the incident. From their vantage point, the subject's room was the last room on the right of the bank of rooms running perpendicular to the Koontz's room.

The interview of Alan and Christopher was recorded on SA Valente's body-worn camera (BWC) and saved as part of Reference Item A.



Approximate vantage point and view from the doorway of Room 405 where Alan and Christopher Koontz stood as they observed the incident.

Nothing further to report from these residents.

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Jason Clemens / DOB: 9-27-1983 / Cell: [REDACTED] / Room #406

SA Valente and SA Fletcher spoke with occupant Jason Clemens (Jason C.) at 1800 hours on November 18, 2024. Jason C. recalled hearing an unknown number of gunshots he best described as "a lot." Jason C. stated he thought there may be some sort of terrorist activity taking place due to the number of gunshots he heard. Jason C. did not see any shooting take place. The interview of Jason C. was recorded on SA Valente's body-worn camera (BWC) and saved as part of Reference Item A.

Nothing further to report from this resident.

Room numbers 401, 404, 407, and 408 did not respond and/or were unoccupied.

The following information was authored by SA Jesse Bynum

James Belcher / DOB: 7-7-1989 / Cell: [REDACTED] - Room #305

On November 18, 2024, SA Tingley and SA Bynum attempted to speak with residents of room 305. James Belcher (Belcher) stated he was in the room at the time of the incident. Belcher said that he witnessed a sniper being shot and that the person in the room (200) was shooting at the SWAT team. Belcher also stated that SWAT was using pepper balls and returning fire. Belcher stated he had video taken with his cellular phone and agreed to send it through evidence.com. Later that same day, five videos were submitted by Belcher.

Nothing further to report from this resident.

Elizabeth Schnerer / Room #307

On November 18, 2024, SA Tingley and SA Bynum spoke with residents of room 307. Elizabeth Schnerer (Schnerer) stated that she was home at the time that the shooting occurred, but did not see anything as she stayed inside of her room. Schnerer said that her daughter was also home at the time but also did not see anything.

Nothing further to report from this resident.

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Clifton Jones / DOB: 10-11-1971 / Cell: [REDACTED] / Room #323

Tashae Jones / DOB: 5-8-1995 / Room #323

On November 18, 2024, SA Tingley and SA Bynum spoke with residents of room 323. Clifton Jones (DOB 10-11-1971) and Tashae Jones (DOB 5-8-1995). Clifton Jones stated he heard three shots when SWAT sent in the drone. He also stated that SWAT was using pepper spray and the person in the room was shooting at the police, and he saw one police officer fall to the ground after being shot. Clifton stated he did not have any video of the event.

Nothing further to report from this resident.

Jonelle Young / Room #327

On November 18, 2024, SA Tingley and SA Bynum spoke with residents of room 327. Jonelle Young (Young) stated that she was home at the time of the incident and saw a drone go in and then after an officer was shot. Young stated that the guy in the room kept shooting and that she had video. Young stated she had video taken with her cellular phone and agreed to send it through evidence.com. Later that same day, one video was submitted by Young.

Nothing further to report from this resident.

The following room numbers were either no answer and/or the room appeared to be empty: 300, 301, 302, 302, 303, 304, 306, 308, 310, 321, 322, 324, 325, 326, 328, 329, and 330.

The residents from room #309 indicated that they were not home at the time of the incident and did not witness anything relevant to the investigation.

For further details, please refer to the audio/video recorded interviews that were conducted. The recorded interviews can be found in Reference Item A.

References:

Ref Item A

Attachments:

None

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