



Ohio Attorney General's Office
Bureau of Criminal Investigation
Prosecutor Summary



Officer-Involved Critical Incident – 2022-0727
914 Salt Springs Road, Youngstown, Ohio 44509

To: Paul Gaines, Mahoning County Prosecutor
Cc: David Posten, Special Agent Supervisor, Ohio BCI
From: Al Bansky, Special Agent, Ohio BCI (330-623-0139)
Date: August 29, 2020
Involves: James Sheets and Struthers Police Officer, Tom Schneeman
Case Title: Officer-Involved Critical Incident
BCI Case Numbers: Special Investigations (SIU): SI-2022-0727

Investigative Request

On Friday, April 1, 2022, the Youngstown City Police Department requested the assistance of the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation's (BCI) Special Investigations Unit (SIU) and Crime Scene Unit (CSU) in conducting an independent investigation into the facts and circumstances surrounding an officer-involved shooting incident. The incident reportedly occurred on April 1, 2022, in the area of 914 Salt Springs Road, Youngstown, Ohio, and resulted in the death of James John Sheets.

Preface:

This report serves as a synopsis of the investigation into the April 1, 2022, officer-involved shooting in Mahoning County, Ohio. This report only summarizes the information that the investigative team determined to be the most useful in achieving an overall understanding of what occurred in this incident. Every fact and detail is not presented in this summary report. Therefore, it is recommended that each individual report from which this document is derived be read in order to obtain a complete understanding of this investigation. Further, audio and/or video recordings exist for the majority of the interviews conducted, revealing further details of statements given regarding the incident.

This investigation was conducted with the purpose of determining, to the extent possible, the facts and circumstances surrounding this incident. As unbiased collectors of fact, the investigative team has not and will not render any opinion of the legality of officers' actions. Instead, it is anticipated that this investigation will provide the basis of information for decisions to be rendered by the appropriate authorities.



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Investigative Team

BCI Special Agent (SA) Al Banksy (Banksy) was assigned as the lead SIU case agent. SA Banksy received assistance in the investigation from SA Eric Lehnhart, SA John Tingley and SA Jack Shea. Special Agent Supervisor David Posten served as Supervisor Agent in Charge.

BCI SA Dan Boerner (Boerner) of the Crime Scene Unit processed the scene of the incident; documenting, preserving and collecting possible evidence recovered from the scene. Additionally, various personnel from the BCI crime laboratory performed scientific analyses on submitted items of potential physical evidence.

Summary of Process

The following is a partial list of investigative activities or methods which were employed during the course of this investigation by the investigative team, in an effort to thoroughly and accurately locate and document all pertinent facts and circumstances regarding this incident:

- Recorded interview(s) of the officers who discharged their weapons (Struthers Police Officer Tom Schneeman)
- Recorded interview of Struthers Police Captain Matt Haus; officer who was involved in the incident, at the scene or otherwise deemed to potentially have relevant information
- Neighborhood canvass of the area surrounding the scene
- Recorded interview(s) of the involved subject and others subjects directly involved in the incident
- Interviews of first responders or medical personnel
- Interviews of family members or associates of the decedent
- Special agent attendance to post mortem examination (autopsy) of the deceased
- Obtained and reviewed post mortem examination (autopsy) and toxicology reports
- Obtained and reviewed police reports of prior law enforcement contacts with the subject
- Obtained and reviewed open and closed-source biographical information on the involved subjects, to include criminal history reports, OHLEG, driving records, etc.
- FBI National Crime Information Center (NCIC) checks on any non-law enforcement weapons involved in the incident (to determine if reported stolen)
- Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) trace on any non-law enforcement weapons involved in the incident (to determine ownership history)
- Review of all available dash cameras involved in the incident
- Review of all available body cameras involved in the incident
- Review of all available surveillance video which captured any portion of the incident



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- Processing of the scene for potential evidence (photographing, searching, measuring, documenting and collecting)
- 3D scans/model of incident area
- Processing of involved vehicle(s) for potential evidence
- Reviewed audio communications on the radio frequencies utilized during the incident
- Review of 911/phone communications related to the incident
- Review of dispatch/CAD records pertaining to the incident
- Review of Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) communications relative to the incident
- Reviewed phone/text records obtained via search warrant from wireless service provider
- Review of the department's reports, photographs and investigative materials pertaining to the incident, excluding any Garrity statements or information derived from any compelled statement
- Obtained search warrants for the subject's phone and performed an analysis of the data present
- Conducted forensic laboratory examinations to include:
 1. Firearm identification testing of involved firearms, casings and bullets
 2. Firearm operability testing
 3. Chemistry (drug identification)
 4. DNA
- Obtained search warrant to analyze electronic evidence, to include:
 1. Cellular phones
- Collected and reviewed the departmental personnel files of the officers involved in the shooting, to include training and disciplinary records (if any)
- Reviewed firearm qualification and training records for involved officers
- Verified the Ohio Peace Officer Training Commission (OPOTC) certification status of the officer(s) who discharged their weapons
- Obtained the department's policies and procedures regarding use of force for prosecutorial review
- Enhancement of audio/video recordings through the assistance of the Ohio Organized Crime Investigations Commission
- Reviewed medical records
- Reviewed EMS records pertaining to their response and the treatment administered
- Performed records checks, including LEADS and NCIC offline search, for the vehicle(s) involved in the incident
- Reviewed tips, social media posts and pertinent statements made in the media regarding the incident



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Incident Summary/Overview

Approximately 17:08 hours, on Friday, April 1, 2022, the Youngstown Police Department requested BCI assistance regarding an officer-involved critical incident (Struthers City police officers), which occurred in the area of 914 Salt Springs Road, Youngstown, Ohio. Upon arrival, SA Bansky gathered the following information:

- SA Bansky spoke with Youngstown City Police Captain Jason Simon (Simon). Simon advised that their department has requested BCI assistance to conduct an independent investigation into an officer-involved shooting. Simon advised there is one person deceased at this time. Simon also advised there are two Youngstown City police officers (Officers Chase Lemke and Andrew Balog) who were not involved and arrived on scene after the shooting.
- SA Bansky spoke with Struthers City Police Chief Tim Roddy (Roddy) at the scene. Roddy advised that he had two of his officers (Captain Matt Haus and Patrolman Tom Schneeman) who were involved in this shooting.
- Inside the crime scene area, SA Bansky observed a 2000 gray Chevrolet Malibu, Ohio registration HHQ 1258, VIN #1G1NE5217Y6174532 and two Struthers' police cruisers, one on each side of the gray Chevrolet Malibu. SA Bansky also observed a white male subject who was slumped over in the driver's seat of the Chevrolet Malibu and also observed a black semi-automatic weapon on the driver's floor area. There was also a taser gun and wires on the ground area.
- According to Roddy, Captain Matt Haus (Haus) attempted a traffic stop after running the plate and received information that the driver was under suspension. The driver refused to stop and the chase ended up in the area of 914 Salt Springs Road and Steel Street. Upon the arrival of Haus and Patrolman Tom Schneeman (Schneeman), both officers boxed in the driver's vehicle. Officers exited their vehicle and deployed their tasers. It is believed Schneeman fired his service weapon.
- SA Boerner from the BCI Crime Scene Unit arrived and processed the crime scene. SA Bansky met with Mahoning County Coroner Investigator Kelsey Simon.
- SA Bansky received two written statements from Youngstown police officers Chase Lemke and Andrew Balog.
- Driver of the 2000 Chevrolet Malibu was identified as James John Sheets (Sheets), 1534 Midland Street, Youngstown, Ohio 44509, SSN: [REDACTED] DOB: 05/07/1986, Information received showed Sheets was under suspension since 2017.
- Sheets was removed from his vehicle and transported by F.H.S. Funeral Service to Cuyahoga County.



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- The 2000 Chevrolet Malibu was transported to the Struthers Police Department by Knuckle Buster Towing.
- Note: SA Bansky followed the 2000 Chevrolet Malibu to the Struthers Police Department. Vehicle was placed and secured into the Struthers Police Department's garage. SA Bansky will prepare a search warrant in order to search the entire vehicle.
- Information on driver: James John Sheets, 1534 Midland Street, Youngstown, Ohio 445009, SSN: [REDACTED] Height: 6'00; Weight: 280 lbs.



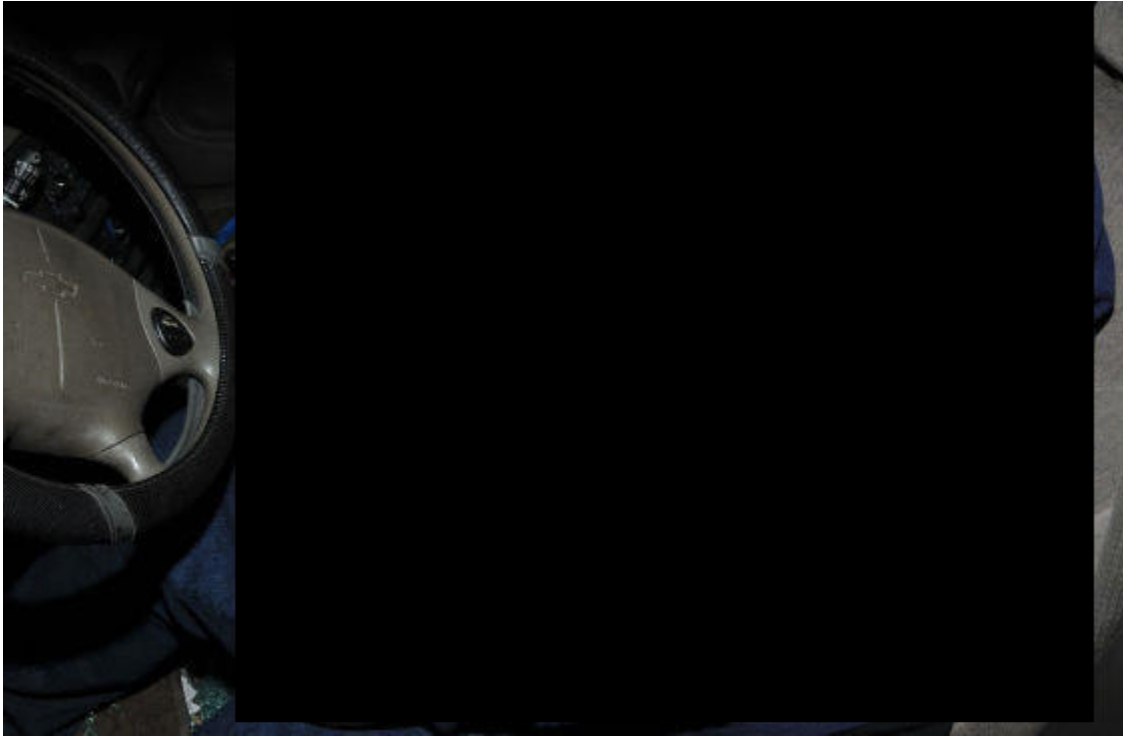
The above crime scene image captures Sheets' vehicle and two Struthers Police cruisers. The cruiser located on the right side of Sheets' vehicle was driven by Struthers Police Officer Schneeman. The cruiser located on the left side of Sheets' vehicle was driven by Struthers Police Captain Haus.



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The above crime scene image captures Sheets after Struthers Police Officer Schneeman discharged his weapon.

According to a statement from Haus, on May 2, 2022, while on patrol in the area of State Street, he was on his way to the police station to retrieve his bulletproof vest, when he observed a gold/tan-colored vehicle which was left of center, either “stopped or moving slowly.” Haus ran the registration of this vehicle, and the information he received back was the “registered owner had a suspended license.” Haus located the gold/tan vehicle again and attempted to make a traffic stop with his emergency lights activated. The suspect turned into the Wildcat Drive Thru. Haus stated, “I believed I tripped the siren, to let him know I was behind him.” Soon as the suspect stopped, “he looked up in the rear-view mirror and started looking thru the driver’s side mirror.” According to Haus, the suspect “ended up putting the vehicle in reverse, accelerated back and started turning around, coming back towards me. He punched it at a high rate of speed, he was close to my cruiser, that I could reach out and touch his face. I put it out thru the radio, he tried to hit or he hit me. Suspect ended out flying and I put out that I was in pursuit.” Pursuit ended in the area of 914 Salt Springs Road, Youngstown, Ohio.



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The above photo captures the drive thru area of the Wild Cat Drive Thru; Haus attempting a traffic stop on the tan Chevrolet Malibu.



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The above crime scene photo captures a Taurus 9mm handgun (serial #ABG663394) located on the driver-side floorboard of the tan Chevrolet Malibu.



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The above crime scene photo captures a Taurus 9mm handgun which was located on the driver-side floorboard area of the tan Chevrolet Malibu.

Decedent

James John Sheets was a 35-year-old white male who listed an address of 1534 Midland Ave., Youngstown, Ohio. Sheets had multiple prior BMV convictions and records showed Sheets had a prior bench warrant out of Struthers Municipal Court for Failure to Appear (section 2705.02A); records showed Sheets had a suspended Ohio driver's license.

Autopsy Report

The autopsy report for the decedent (Sheets) was obtained from the Mahoning County Coroner's Office (actual autopsy was conducted by Cuyahoga Coroner's Office). A review of those documents revealed the following information:

This autopsy report was authored by Deputy Medical Examiner Todd M. Barr from the Cuyahoga County Coroner's Office. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



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The “TOXICOLOGY REPORT” contained the following pertinent information: BASIC DRUGS BY GC/MS

[REDACTED]

Physical Evidence

The BCI Crime Scene Unit was requested to respond to the scene of the shooting in order to document and preserve any items of potential evidence. Multiple agents responded and processed the scene, to include photographing and mapping the area; as well as the search for, documentation and collection of items of possible evidence. Detailed crime scene reports were completed with the below information only summarizing some of the more significant findings.

SA Boerner proceeded to photograph the scene. The scene consisted of the roadway in the area of 914 Salt Springs Rd., the subject vehicle (tan 2000 Chevrolet Malibu four door, VIN: 1G1NE52J7Y6174532, bearing Ohio registration HHQ1258) and two Struthers Police Department cruisers.



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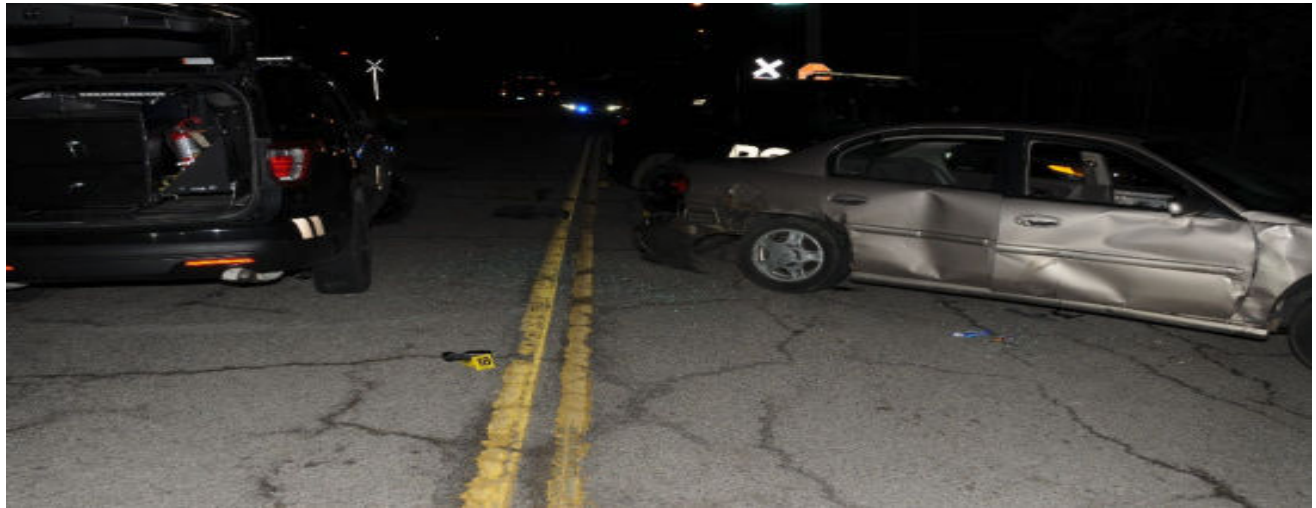
The above crime scene photo captures Struthers Police Officer Schneeman's cruiser and Sheets' vehicle.



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The above crime scene photo captures Struthers Police Captain Haus' cruiser.



The above crime scene photo captures the overhead diagram taken by a FARO focus S-70 Sc.



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The above crime scene photo captures items found on Sheets:

- 1. Two plastic baggies of suspected methamphetamines*
- 2. Plastic baggie containing white powder*
- 3. Currency in the amount of \$263.00*
- 4. Wallet containing multiple ID's*

Various items of potential evidence were submitted to the BCI Laboratory for analysis. The actual reports should be consulted as the following synopsis does not include many of the details from the full reports.

On August 15, 2022, SA Bansky received a laboratory report from Forensic Scientist Erin Miller.

1. Two plastic bags each containing crystalline substance found to contain methamphetamine.
2. White substance found to contain cocaine.

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The BCI Firearms Section performed an analysis of the officers' firearms, as well as the firearm-related evidence collected from the scene, vehicles and autopsies (casings and bullets). By comparing evidentiary cartridge casings/projectiles to known standards from each weapon, identifications were able to be made as to which casings/projectiles were fired from each firearm. Of the casings/projectiles recovered, the following identifications were made:

1. Item #20: Glock firearm cartridge casings recovered were matched to Officer Schneeman.
2. Item #21: Taurus firearm (pistol discovered in the tan Chevrolet Malibu) was operable.

Officer Interviews

Officer Tom Schneeman (Schneeman)

On April 1, 2022, at approximately 1700 hours, Schneeman was on patrol and received information that Captain Matt Haus was attempting a traffic stop on a tan-colored Chevrolet Malibu on State Street and heard, "I'm in pursuit, he hit me in the drive thru." Schneeman was down the street on State Street and pulled over, off the road, and saw the pursuit heading directly toward him. Schneeman observed Haus with his emergency lights and siren on, in pursuit of the Chevrolet Malibu. As both vehicles passed, Schneeman joined the pursuit with speeds up to 80 miles per hour. The pursuit eventually ended at the intersection of Salt Springs Road and Steel Street, Youngstown, Ohio. According to Schneeman, Haus struck the suspect's vehicle on the right-rear area, using a "pit maneuver," while Schneeman then struck the suspect's driver's door, not "allowing him to get out, run on foot." Schneeman exited his cruiser and described the suspect as a white male, heavy set, with facial hair and wearing a black shirt. At this time, Schneeman had his service weapon in his right hand and his taser in his left hand, giving several commands, "Show me your hands over and over." According to Schneeman, "His right hand was on the gear shift, trying to move his vehicle. I deployed my taser, but I do not know if the taser made good contact or not. I see his right hand come up and he turns towards me. I yelled gun, gun and ducked down while in a seated position. The gun was pointed directly at me. I could see the barrel. I fired 18 times and believed I was stationary at that time." Schneeman then took cover behind his cruiser and reloaded his service weapon with another magazine. Schneeman yelled to Haus advising, "He has a gun, he has a gun."

Schneeman then started giving commands, "Show me your hands, screaming over and over." Schneeman then turned off the sirens in both police cruisers, so both officers could communicate to each other. According to Schneeman, he checked on Haus and then stood in front of his cruiser, waiting for additional officers. Schneeman advised, except for Haus, there were no other



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officers present at this time. Schneeman “peaked” into the suspect’s vehicle and noticed that the suspect “wasn’t breathing.” At this time, several Youngstown City police officers arrived on scene. Schneeman went to his cruiser and retrieved a bulletproof shield. Schneeman and one of the Youngstown police officers started approaching the suspect’s vehicle with their weapons drawn. According to Schneeman, he could see the “gun on the floor” and believed that the suspect was “dead.” The crime scene was then being secured by Youngstown police officers. Schneeman and Haus went to Mercy Health Hospital. SA Bansky asked Schneeman to describe the weapon when he first seen it. Schneeman advised the weapon was a “black semi-automatic.” SA Bansky asked Schneeman did the suspect fire his weapon. Schneeman stated that he “didn’t know.”

Captain Matt Haus (Haus)

Haus stated that while on patrol in the area of State Street, he was on his way to the police station to retrieve his bulletproof vest, when he observed a gold/tan-colored vehicle which was left of center, either “stopped or moving slowly.” Haus ran the registration of this vehicle and the information he received back was the “registered owner had a suspended license.” Haus located the gold/tan vehicle again and attempted to make a traffic stop with his emergency lights activated. The suspect turned into the Wildcat Drive Thru. Haus stated, “I believed I tripped the siren, to let him know I was behind him.” Soon as the suspect stopped, “he looked up in the rear-view mirror and started looking thru the driver’s side mirror.” According to Haus, the suspect “ended up putting the vehicle in reverse, accelerated back and started turning around, coming back towards me. He punched it at a high rate of speed, he was close to my cruiser, that I could reach out and touch his face. I put it out thru the radio, he tried to hit or he hit me. Suspect ended out flying and I put out that I was in pursuit.” Haus was in pursuit and observed Schneeman pulled over on the side of State Street and then became involved in the pursuit. Pursuit ended up at the intersection of Salt Springs Road and Steel Street. According to Haus, “I initiated a pit on him.” Haus exited his vehicle and he could hear Schneeman giving “commands.” Haus came around the back of his vehicle, walked up toward the suspect’s passenger window and could hear Schneeman giving more commands to “Show me your hands.” According to Haus, “I could see the driver turn towards Ofc. Schneeman and I could see that I had a clear shot and I already had my taser out and I deployed my taser. As I deployed my taser, I could see him moving and Ofc. Schneeman was yelling gun, gun, gun, gun, gun. I was looking straight across at Ofc. Schneeman and he was in direct line and then heard the gun fire.” According to Haus, “I could see that he was still moving inside the car. I couldn’t see the gun. Ofc. Schneeman yelled that he was reloading. I was still holding the car and creeping up to see if he was still moving and he was slumped over. I knew that point, the threat was gone.” According to Haus, both he and Schneeman stayed back waiting for additional officers. At this time, Schneeman stated to Haus,



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“I may have shot him, I shot him” and both officers started checking each other to see if they were shot. Officers from the Youngstown Police Department arrived and the suspect’s vehicle was “cleared.” According to Haus, “I was told the gun was on the floor board of the car” and the scene was released to Youngstown City Police Captain Simon.

Video Recordings

Schneeman body camera captured the actual shooting.

The following times listed came from Schneeman’s body cam time bar, dated April 1, 2022:

- Approximately 17:08:09: Video shows Schneeman operating his police cruiser, following Struthers Police Captain Haus.
- Approximately 17:13:28: Video shows/hears Schneeman arriving on Salt Springs Road. You can hear a loud sound caused by Schneeman’s police cruiser striking Sheets’ tan-colored Chevrolet Malibu on the driver’s side. Note: Video also shows Haus’ police cruiser on the passenger side of Sheets’ vehicle.
- Approximately 17:13:32: Video shows Schneeman exiting his cruiser.
- Approximately 17:13:34: Video shows/hears Schneeman, with his duty weapon in his right hand and his taser in his left hand, approaching the driver’s side of the tan Chevrolet Malibu. You can hear Schneeman yelling, “Show me your hands.” You can also see Sheets sitting upright in the driver’s seat (cannot see Sheets’ hands).
- Approximately 17:13:36: Video shows/hears Schneeman yelling, “Show me your hands.”
- Approximately 17:13:39: Video/shows Schneeman yelling, “Got gun, gun.”
- Approximately 17:13:41: Video shows/hears shots being fired. Note: Police sirens were still activated at this time and were overwhelming the audio of Schneeman’s body camera during the discharge of his duty weapon.
- Approximately 17:13:43: Video shows/hears Schneeman saying, “Gun.”
- Approximately 17:13:46: Video shows/hears Schneeman saying, “Gun, reloading, reloading.”
- Approximately 17:13:52: Video shows/hears Schneeman saying, “Get back, back, he got a gun.”
- Approximately 17:13:58: Video shows/hears Schneeman saying, “Show us your hands.”



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- Approximately 17:14:01: Video shows Haus with his duty weapon in his right hand, approaching Sheets' vehicle on the passenger side.
- Approximately 17:14:05: Video shows/hears Schneeman asking Haus if he "okay."
- Approximately 17:14:08: Video shows Schneeman saying, "Show us your hands."
- Approximately 17:14:11: Video shows/hears Schneeman saying, "Put your hands up."
- Approximately 17:14:14: Video shows/hears Schneeman saying, "Put your hands up."
- Approximately 17:14:39: Video shows Schneeman going back to his cruiser, setting his taser inside the cruiser.
- Approximately 17:14:40: Video shows Schneeman pointing his duty weapon toward the driver-side window.
- Approximately 17:14:51: Video shows/hears Haus asking Schneeman if he was "shot."
- Approximately 17:15:51: Video shows/hears sirens from other officers arriving on scene, while Schneeman has his duty weapon pointed toward the driver's window of Sheets' vehicle.
- Approximately 17:15:51: Video shows Schneeman with his weapon in his right hand, moving closer to the driver's side window of Sheets' vehicle.
- Approximately 17:16:28: Video shows/hears Schneeman yelling, "Show us your hands."
- Approximately 17:16:43: Video shows two Youngstown police officers who arrived on scene with their weapons pointed toward Sheets' vehicle.
- Approximately 17:16:58: Video shows Schneeman retrieving a bullet-proof shield from the trunk of his police cruiser.
- Approximately 17:16:19: Video shows Schneeman with his bullet-proof shield approaching Sheets' vehicle toward the driver's side.
- Approximately 17:17:19: Video shows Sheets slumped over toward the passenger side, not moving.
- Approximately 17:17:19: Video shows/hears Schneeman saying, "Gun in the floor board."
- Approximately 17:17:26: Video shows/hears a Youngstown City police officer, who is positioned on the passenger side of Sheets' vehicle, advising Schneeman that he is going to reach in [inaudible at this time]. Schneeman can be heard saying, "Go ahead." Note: The Youngstown



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police officer mentioned at this time was later identified as Officer Gregg Tackett (Tackett). According to Tackett, he shut the engine off.

- Approximately 17:17:37: Video shows/hears Schneeman walking away from Sheets' vehicle saying, "On the floor board."
- Approximately 17:22:35: Video shows the arrival of Youngstown Police Captain Jason Simon; who took command of the scene.

Conclusion

Based upon documents reviewed, physical evidence recovered and interviews conducted, SI 2022-0727 supports the following information:

- On April 1, 2022, at approximately 17:00 hours, Struthers Police Department Captain Matt Haus attempted a traffic stop on a James Sheets, who was operating a tan Chevrolet Malibu in the area of the Wild Cat Drive thru.
- Captain Haus ran the registration and was advised by dispatch that the registration owner had a suspended driver's license. (Note: Owner of the vehicle came back to a Lloyd Greenwalt.)
- Captain Haus activated his overhead emergency lights and attempted a traffic stop on Sheets.
- Sheets refused to stop his vehicle.
- Captain Haus became involved in a pursuit of Sheets.
- Struthers Police Department Officer Tom Schneeman also took part in this pursuit.
- Pursuit ended in the area of 914 Salt Springs Road, Youngstown, Ohio.
- Both Captain Haus and Officer Schneeman struck the tan Chevrolet Malibu.
- Both officers exited their vehicles. Officer Schneeman began giving "several commands" to Sheets to "show his hands."
- Both Captain Haus and Officer Schneeman deployed their tasers.
- According to Officer Schneeman, Schneeman observed Sheets' "right hand up and presented a firearm."
- According to Officer Schneeman, Schneeman yelled, "gun," and then discharged his firearm.
- A 9mm Taurus automatic weapon was found on the driver-side floorboard area of Sheets' vehicle.
- According to toxicology laboratory reports, it was conformed that Sheets tested positive for several drugs in his system.



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- It was confirmed that Sheets had a suspended driver's license and a bench warrant out of Struthers Municipal Court.

Contact Information

The preceding information comprises only a portion of facts and circumstances collected during the investigation of the officer-involved shooting incident. For further review of specific information or documentation collected during the investigation, please refer to the individual reports and documents from which this summary was derived. Any questions regarding the content or context of the information contained in this document can be directed to the attention of Special Agent Al Bansky. SA Bansky can be reached via email at al.bansky@OhioAGO.gov or by telephone at 330-623-0130.