



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: Sheriff Matt Bayles (O)
Date of Activity: 12/20/2022
Activity Location: Bayles, Sheriff Matt – Business – 100 Executive Drive, Marion, OH 43302, Marion County
Author: SA Jason A. Snyder, #176

Narrative:

On 12/20/22, Special Agent (SA) Jason Snyder (Snyder) with the Ohio Attorney General's Office, Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI), conducted a taped interview of Sheriff Matt Bayles (Bayles) with the Marion County Sheriff's Office (Marion SO). The interview was conducted at the Marion SO, located at 100 Executive Dr., Marion, OH 43302.

Both SA Snyder and Sheriff Bayles agreed to meet at this date and location. Sheriff Bayles voluntarily agreed to speak to SA Snyder.

SA Snyder asked Sheriff Bayles about his work history and education. Sheriff Bayles has been in law enforcement for 32 years. Most of his time has been with the Marion Police Department (Marion PD). In 2020, Sheriff Bayles was elected as the Marion County Sheriff. He graduated high school in Marion and attended the University of Toledo.

SA Snyder asked Sheriff Bayles about an incident that occurred that morning in LaRue, OH. Sheriff Bayles stated that he was apprised of the search warrant being conducted in LaRue a few days earlier. Lieutenant (Lt.) Mike Wheeler (Wheeler) briefed Sheriff Bayles earlier in the week.

That morning, Sheriff Bayles entered the morning briefing mid-briefing. He then worked with his staff on logistical issues. When the search warrant was being served, he was in a trailer, which housed the drone computers and gear. The vehicle was located near the water tower at the old school in LaRue. Sheriff Bayles arrived at this location in his Ford F-150 marked truck.

While he was in the drone trailer, he witnessed the events from the drone's angles. Marion SO and the Delaware SRT both had drones in the air near the search warrant execution location.

Sheriff Bayles observed, in the drone trailer, officers approach the building which were to be

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searched. After a few minutes, he saw in the drone's screens that several officers were following a person on the railroad tracks. On the radio, officers stated that the person on the railroad tracks was Travis Hellinger (Hellinger).

Based on radio traffic, officers advised that Hellinger had a gun on "his left hip." Less-than-lethal munitions were used. After a few more minutes, Lt. Wheeler asked Sheriff Bayles if a K-9 officer could deploy. Sheriff Bayles gave the officer permission to release his K-9. At that time, the K-9 was seen approaching Hellinger on the drone screen. When the K-9 was a few feet away, the K-9 retreated. He then saw Hellinger fall to the ground. On the radio, he heard that shots had been fired.

Sheriff Bayles drove to the scene of the shooting. When he arrived, he saw that officers were providing medical attention to Hellinger on the tracks. At the same time, EMS arrived and took over medical attention to Hellinger.

Marion PD Chief of Police Chief Jay McDonald (McDonald) advised that BCI should be called to investigate this incident. Sheriff Bayles then coordinated with officers with securing the scene and continue with the search warrant.

Later that day, Sheriff Bayles, Chief McDonald and a chaplain provided death notification to Hellinger's family. While he was providing this notification, the girlfriend to Hellinger, Amanda Labounty (Labounty) stated to him that Hellinger was dealing methamphetamine. Labounty also stated to Sheriff Bayles that Hellinger stated to her that he was not going back to prison.

SA Snyder asked Sheriff Bayles about the briefing before the search warrant was executed. He stated that he did not fully attend the briefing, but he was briefed about the search warrant before that day. It was determined during the research for the search warrant, that Hellinger was a higher danger risk. Due to this, it was determined to request a night search, in the hopes to make the search warrant safer for all involved.

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.