



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: ██████████

Activity Date: 1/3/2023

Activity Location: Marion County Sheriff's Office - Business - 100 Executive Drive, Marion, OH 43302, Marion County

Authoring Agent: SA Josh Rammel #175

Narrative:

On Tuesday, January 03, 2023, Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) Special Agent (SA) Josh Rammel (Rammel) and SA Tiffany Vollmer (Vollmer) interviewed Marion County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) Deputy ██████████ ██████████, who was accompanied by his attorney, Lane Hagar (Hagar), from the Fraternal Order of Police. The interview took place at the Marion County Sheriff's Office. The interview was audio recorded.

██████████ read, understood and signed the BCI Criminal Investigation Notification in the presence of Hagar. ██████████ had a prepared statement, which he read to agents.

The interview began with all individuals identifying themselves. ██████████ indicated he was employed with the Marion County Sheriff's Office on a part-time, as needed, basis, and confirmed that he was directly involved in the officer-involved shooting (OIS), which took place on December 20, 2022, during the execution of a search warrant at 256 N. Swain Ave., LaRue, Ohio. ██████████ provided his unit number as 46, and that all units involved from Marion County were utilizing Marion PD Tach 1 radio channel.

██████████ informed agents that he has been a law enforcement officer since 2015, splitting his time between the Columbiana County Sheriff's Office (CCSO) and the MCSO. ██████████ indicated he was employed with the MCSO previously for a few years prior to leaving for the CCSO and then returning to the MCSO on a part-time basis in August or September of 2022. ██████████ stated that he works full time for a software company and currently only works with the MCSO as part of the Marion County Special Response Team (SRT) under the supervision of Lieutenant Wheeler. ██████████ advised that he was previously in the Navy from 1999 through 2000 before being medically discharged. ██████████ received his Ohio Basic Police Officer Training from Eastern Gateway College in 2014.

██████████ indicated that he wears corrective glasses but never wears contact lenses. ██████████ stated that he was wearing his glasses during the search warrant in LaRue on December 20, 2022.

██████████ mentioned that he does not have any physical disabilities, nor does he wear a hearing aid.



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██████ told agents that he last drank alcohol at approximately 1700 hours on December 19, 2022, and it was only a few beers with dinner. ██████ advised that he does not drink anything besides beer, and he did not have anything to drink eight hours prior to the OIS. ██████ stated that he was well rested prior to the OIS, and provided the timeframe of 2030 hours-0200 hours as the length of sleep ██████ had during the night of December 19-20, 2022, prior to the OIS. ██████ clarified that since he is a part-time deputy with the MCSO, he did not work any police shifts within 48 hours of the OIS. ██████ did advise that he worked his normal full-time job for approximately seven hours on December 19, 2022, spread throughout the day.

██████ indicated that he has never used lethal force before, and he has never received discipline for the use of less-than-lethal force. All previous less-than-lethal force instances from ██████ have all been reviewed and determined to be within department policy during the time of the use of force. ██████ stated that he is familiar with the MCSO's use-of-force policy, and the SRT reviews the use-of-force policy prior to every search warrant.

██████ stated that he carried his personal LMT Mars Quad Rifle. ██████ further stated that he carried three .223 caliber magazines for the rifle, with 28-29 rounds in each extra magazine and 30 rounds in the magazine loaded in the rifle. ██████ advised that he carried one extra magazine on his outer carrier vest, which was clearly identified as law enforcement; and the other extra magazine on his duty belt. Also included on ██████'s duty belt was a Glock 17, a dump pouch, handcuffs and a magazine pouch with two extra 9mm magazines for the Glock 17. ██████ also indicated that he carried a pair of scissors and a flashlight on his outer carrier next to the extra rifle magazine. ██████ stated that he last qualified with both the rifle and Glock in the summer of 2022, and ██████ last trained with both firearms the week prior during SRT training.

██████ mentioned that he believed he fired two to three rounds with his rifle, and ██████ did not fire any rounds from his Glock 17. ██████ advised that he was wearing a body camera during the OIS, but the MRAP vehicle ██████ arrived at the search warrant in does not have an in-vehicle camera.

██████ stated that he surrendered his rifle immediately after the OIS, and his body-camera footage should have already been provided to BCI.

██████ continued to read from his written statement and provided a description of events leading up to the OIS. ██████ stated that he attended a briefing for the search warrant execution at the Marion County Airport prior to heading towards 256 N. Swain Ave., LaRue, Ohio. ██████ stated that the suspect for the search warrant was identified as Travis Hellinger (Hellinger), and Hellinger was believed to be residing in a garage/pole barn next to the trailer at 256. During the briefing, the SRT was informed that Hellinger may have fully automatic rifles and has made



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multiple comments about not wanting to go back to jail; including comments about shooting it out with police.

██████████ indicated that all SRT members and members of the Delaware County SRT left the briefing around 0500 hours, and while en route to 256 N. Swain, the SRT members were alerted by surveillance teams that Hellinger was outside of the residence and that Hellinger had spotted a drone utilized by other officers. Prior to arriving at the residence, the SRT members stopped at a gas station near 256 N. Swain Ave., and attached a ram to the front of the Delaware County SRT Bearcat.

██████████ stated that upon arrival to the residence, ██████████ continued with his team and cleared the trailer. Once the trailer was secured and all individuals discovered in the trailer placed into custody, ██████████ heard on the radio that Hellinger was on the train tracks behind the residence not cooperating with law enforcement commands, and Hellinger appeared to be armed.

██████████ indicated that he left the trailer to go aid on the train tracks, when ██████████ observed Hellinger on the train tracks yelling back at officers. ██████████ advised that in a normal situation, all members of the SRT have a specific duty and would not leave that duty, but ██████████ indicated that due to Hellinger not complying and assistance being requested; ██████████ determined it was necessary to assist on the tracks once the trailer was secured. Hellinger continued to not comply with law enforcement commands, as he directed a spotlight at members of the SRT and continued to walk westward down the train tracks. ██████████ stated that the spotlight was “blinding” when pointed directly at him, but since Hellinger was moving the spotlight around at each individual officer, ██████████ was able to identify at least one gun under Hellinger’s left arm. ██████████ informed agents that Hellinger appeared to intentionally attempted to obscure the SRT members vision. ██████████ advised that commands to stop were continually directed at Hellinger, as well as making sure Hellinger knew that the police officers were in fact police. ██████████ mentioned that Hellinger kept arguing back with officers, including making comments about his rights being violated and not knowing who the police officers were.

As officers continued down the track following Hellinger, a call was made to consider less-lethal options, but a taser was ruled out due to the distance Hellinger was from the SRT members. A K9 was requested, and K9 handler Deputy ██████████ indicated he was joining the SRT members in pursuit of Hellinger.

Hellinger was warned multiple times to comply, otherwise the K9 would be deployed. Hellinger continued to ignore commands, and stated back to the SRT that he would shoot the K9 if it was deployed. ██████████ stated that after several more commands towards Hellinger advising him to stop and put down his weapons were ignored, the K9 was deployed. ██████████ indicated that as the K9 approached Hellinger, ██████████ could see Hellinger reach for his gun. Hellinger then fired his



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gun towards the K9 approaching and the SRT members behind the K9. ██████ informed agents that he felt a burst of air go by past his head, but ██████ did not know for sure if it was the rounds fired by Hellinger or if it was just the air. ██████ stated that he heard approximately two to three shots from Hellinger, towards the K9 and the SRT members located behind the K9, before multiple return shots were fired by the members of the SRT. ██████ corroborated his earlier statement and informed agents that he fired approximately two to three rounds in return to Hellinger's gun shots. At that time, ██████ observed Hellinger fall to the tracks. ██████ informed agents that from his perspective, it was impossible to tell for sure if Hellinger was firing at the K9 or at the SRT members, due to the K9 running towards Hellinger after being deployed from directly in front of the SRT members.

██████ advised that the SRT members then proceeded to approach Hellinger, giving him commands to show his hands. Hellinger was secured as an ambulance was called to assistance with Hellinger's injuries. ██████ stated that SRT members continued to assist Hellinger with his injuries until medics arrived. ██████ also stated that a medical helicopter was also called to assist, but it was cancelled when Hellinger was determined to be deceased.

██████ concluded his written statement by mentioning that he has never had any contact with Hellinger before, and that his actions during the OIS were consistent with his training. ██████ also mentioned his rifles was surrendered to command staff at the scene, and he was transported from the OIS to the Marion Police Department for an initial meeting with BCI.

██████ indicated that he has since reviewed his body-camera footage and did not wish to change any aspect of his written statement.

After ██████ recited his written statement and all follow-up questions were answered, ██████ signed his written statement, initialed each page and provided the statement to BCI.

SA Rammel and SA Vollmer thanked ██████ for speaking with them. ██████ and Hagar indicated that they did not have any additional questions.

The interview was concluded after 48 minutes 8 seconds.

During the course of the interview, agents utilized tactics designed to illicit truthful responses and to test the veracity of information provided. As many of the details of the investigation into the incident were publicly available, it was necessary to utilize alternative tactics (beyond the typical methodology of retaining confidential "holdout" information regarding the incident and then comparing/contrasting witness statements with information that could only be known by those with actual knowledge of the incident). These tactics include developing rapport and potentially providing information known to be erroneous. Therefore, misstatements of facts or



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evidence in the recorded interview by the interviewing agents are intentional and align with the strategy for the overall investigative plan.

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

The interview was audio recorded. The audio recording was attached to this report. The signed BCI Criminal Investigation Notification form is also attached to this report, along with the written statement provided by [REDACTED].

Please see the attachments for further details.



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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).

Printed Name of Interviewee

01/03/22
Date / Time

Signature of Interviewee

Sgt Josh Ramsey
BCI Agent (Printed)

[Signature]
BCI Agent (Signature)



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Preliminary and Demographic Information Worksheet:

Name: [REDACTED] ALSO	Rank: Deputy
Badge Number: [REDACTED]	Cruiser/Vehicle Number:
Radio Call Sign: [REDACTED]	Immediate Supervisor: Lt. Wheeler
Radio Channel Utilized: MPD Tech 1	Mobile Data Terminal: N/A
Cruiser Description: MRAY	Occupants of Cruiser and Seating Positions: N/A
Assignment: Deputy SRT	Normal Shift: home
In-Car Camera: none	Spotlight:
Emergency Lights: N/A	Siren: N/A
Shift Day of Incident: none	Duty Status: part time / as needed
Days Off: part time sawee employment	Prior Overtime or Extra Details within Preceding 48 Hours: 7 hours other job
Hours of Sleep Prior to Incident: 6:30p - 2a	Consider Self Well Rested?: yes
Total Length as Officer: 7 yrs	Length at Current Agency: 3 months
Physical Disabilities (to include hearing aid): none	Corrective Lenses: prescription glasses



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Uniform Worn: black pants belt green jacket	Equipment and Less-Lethal Options Carried on Person/Belt/Vest: no less lethal
Ballistic Vest: outer carrier	Body Worn Camera: yes
Other Recording Devices: none	Partner: N/A
Injuries: no	Equipment Damage: no
Training or Areas of Specialty: military	OPOTC Certification: Eastern Gateway college 2014
Military Experience/Training: Navy Intelligence 1yr	Use-of-Force Training: MISO day before incident
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? 5pm	Last Consumed Alcohol Prior to Incident: beer



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Officer's Firearm(s):

Weapon #1

Make: MARB Q V&C	Model: LOUIS MALHOTRA P
Caliber/Gauge: .223	Serial:
Type:	Method of Carry: sling shot
Magazine Capacity: 30	Total Rounds as Carried (including chamber): 28-29
Extra Magazines: 3	Number of Rounds in Extra Magazines: 28-29
Discharged During Incident? YES	Primary or Backup Weapon: primary
Rounds Remaining After Incident: unknown	Number of Rounds Fired: 2-3
Right/Left-Handed Carry: left	Ownership: self
Last Qualification Date: 2022 summer	Type of Holster, if any: n/a

Weapon #2

Make: Glock	Model: 17
Caliber/Gauge: 9mm	Serial:
Type:	Method of Carry: duty belt
Magazine Capacity: 17	Total Rounds as Carried (including chamber): unknown



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Extra Magazines: 2	Number of Rounds in Extra Magazines:
Discharged During Incident? no	Primary or Backup Weapon: backup
Rounds Remaining After Incident:	Number of Rounds Fired: none
Right/Left-Handed Carry: right	Ownership: JUSO
Last Qualification Date: 2022 Summer	Type of Holster, if any: right

Weapon #3

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

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

I. Background.

I began my full-time employment with the Marion County Sheriff's Office ("Marion SO"), as a Deputy Sheriff in January of 2020. My assignment changed to that of a Detective with the Marion SO in approximately April of 2020. I have been in a part-time position with the Marion SO since August 2022.

I have prior law enforcement experience as a Deputy and Sergeant with the Columbiana County Sheriff's Office from 2015 to 2022.

I served in the United States Navy from February 1999 through ~~March~~ ^{MAY} 2000. I received an honorable medical discharge from military service.

I received my Basic Police Officer Training at Eastern Gateway Community College, Steubenville, graduating in 2014. In 1997, I graduated from High School at Southern Local, Salineville. I also have taken college classes at Eastern Gateway, Steubenville, where I attended classes for approximately one year.

My current assignment is that of a part-time Patrol Deputy and SRT member. My current supervisor is Lieutenant Wheeler. As a part-time Deputy, I serve as needed.

I wear prescription glasses, but do not wear contacts or a hearing aid. I am under no physical disability. I take no prescription medication which would impede my ability to serve as a law enforcement officer. I had no alcohol consumption within eight hours prior to being called out for the incident.

[REDACTED]

As a law enforcement officer, I never received any discipline relative to use of force. I have never been the subject of an 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 where I have used less than lethal force by hands-on techniques. In all instances where I have used hands-on techniques, this use has been subject to review and my use has been found to be within Departmental policy.

I am familiar with the Marion SO's Use of Force Policy. I was most recently trained on this Policy prior to the incident on December 20.

During the incident, I used my personal LMT Mars Quad rifle which I carried with Agency permission. I last qualified for this weapon in the summer of 2022.

I carried three (3) magazines for this weapon, one (1) which is in the carrier of the rifle, one (1) on my belt, and one (1) on my outer carrier. There are approximately 28 rounds in each magazine. During the incident, I believe that I fired two (2) or three (3) rounds.

On my duty belt (clockwise), I carry the following items: my duty weapon which is a Glock 17 and is Agency issued, my rifle magazine, my dump pouch, handcuffs, and my Glock 17 magazine pouch with magazines. On my outer vest: I carried (from my left to my right) one (1) rifle magazine, scissors and a flashlight.

I had no backup weapon on the date of the incident. I used no other weapon in the incident other than my LMT Mars Quad rifle.

As to the forty-eight hours prior to the incident, I had no work as a Deputy. On Sunday, December 18, I was entirely off work. On Monday, December 19, I did work from my home office for another job, and I worked approximately seven (7) hours.

I was well rested prior to the incident on December 20, 2022. I slept from approximately 8:30 p.m. on December 19 to 2:00 a.m. on December 20.

On the date of the incident, I was dressed in my prescribed uniform. I had a thin vest jacket under my outer vest.

I was wearing a body camera in accordance with the Marion SO policy. My body camera, both audio and video, was working during the incident. I carried no personal recording device.

I was transported to the incident in a MRAP vehicle. This vehicle does not have an in-car video.

II. Incident Narrative.

On December 20, 2022, I responded to the Marion County Airport for a pre-planned operation. I am a member of the Marion County Special Response Team. Our team, The Delaware County Tactical Unit and MARMET, received a brief of the operation by Lieutenant Wheeler. During the brief, it was learned that we would be executing a search warrant on the residence of Travis Hellinger who was living in a garage behind his mother, Ms. Speck, and that the warrant was also for the trailer of Ms. Speck. During the brief, we were advised that Mr. Hellinger may have automatic

weapons, plate carriers and plates, and that he had made statements that he was not going back to jail, and he would have a shootout with police if they showed up to his residence and that he always carried a gun on his person. It was also learned during the brief that Mr. Hellinger has an extensive criminal history. I was advised that I would be part of the entry team into the trailer. Ms. Speck was to be detained and brought to Detectives to try to obtain intelligence on Mr. Hellinger's whereabouts and what he may have inside the garage.

All agencies left the Marion County Airport at approximately 5:00 a.m. While in route to the target location, agencies received word from surveillance teams that there were people moving around and in and out of the garage and trailer. When units were closer to La Rue we were advised that Mr. Hellinger was now out of the house and spotted a drone that we had above the location.

All agencies stopped at a gas station and Delaware County Tactical attached a ram to the front of their Bearcat. After the ram was attached, the Bearcat units continued to the target location.

Upon arrival at the target location, I moved toward my respective assignment. The trailer entry team and I approached the front of the trailer. As we were getting to the trailer, I could see one of the snipers yelling at someone near the next road over. I continued to the door of the trailer. An officer knocked on the front door and announced that it was the police with a search warrant. The door of the trailer was breached, and I was the second officer through the door. The first officer encountered a female in the living area and I held security on the hallway to the right of the living room. When another unit advised he was with me and to move, I went to the first door on his left, opened the door and heard a female say something like, "I'm in

here.” I had the female stand up from the bed and show her hands, I had her walk to me, passed her off to another officer and finished clearing the bedroom.

I heard radio traffic that other officers were requesting assistance. They had Mr. Hellinger on the railroad tracks. It appeared that he had a gun, and he was not cooperating.

I left the trailer and began toward the railroad tracks to assist other officers. As I went around the trailer, I could see Mr. Hellinger standing on the railroad tracks facing two officers and yelling. We could see a team to our left moving toward the tracks and joined those officers’ approach to the tracks. When I arrived on the tracks with the other officers, Mr. Hellinger appeared to be very agitated, and he was not complying with the officers’ commands. Mr. Hellinger was pointing a spotlight in my eyes and the other officer’s eyes, making it very difficult to see his hands or any other movements.

At one point early on, I noticed that Mr. Hellinger had at least one gun under his left arm and advised other officers. Mr. Hellinger began walking backwards down the tracks stating he wasn’t going to stop and that he wasn’t going to jail. This went back and forth with Mr. Hellinger for a distance down the tracks. At one point, Mr. Hellinger said, “I don’t even know who you are.” Deputy ██████ responded with it is the Sheriff’s Office and other officers stated it was the police or the Sheriff’s Office. Mr. Hellinger was also advised while on the tracks that he needed to stop because he was under arrest for trespassing.

Officers were asking if anyone had less lethal. One Officer stated he had a taser, but could not get close enough to deploy it. Officers began calling for a K-9 to our ██████

location. Several minutes later, as Officers were approaching a railroad crossing, Deputy [REDACTED] advised he was coming up behind with his K-9.

At the crossing, I went to a crossing arm in attempt to get some cover. Deputy [REDACTED] began giving commands to Mr. Hellinger to comply or he was going to release his K-9, Mr. Hellinger said “if you release that K-9, I’m going to shoot it”. Mr. Hellinger was given several warnings that the K-9 would be released, and he would be bitten but he still would not comply. Deputy [REDACTED] released his K-9 and it came right to me and jumped on me, the K-9 did not bite me and was called back by Deputy [REDACTED]. Deputy [REDACTED] released the K-9 again and it went right toward Mr. Hellinger.

When the K-9 was almost to Mr. Hellinger, I could see Mr. Hellinger reaching for his gun, I then saw Mr. Hellinger fire his weapon at the K-9 and toward Officers and felt a burst of air go past my head, unsure if it was a round, dirt or something else. I heard two (2) or three (3) shots coming from Mr. Hellinger, followed quickly by return fire from other officers.

I was afraid that the K-9, myself and other officers were going to be shot and I fired two (2) or three (3) rounds at Mr. Hellinger. Mr. Hellinger went down onto the tracks.

Officers then approached Mr. Hellinger and gave him commands to show his hands. It appeared that Mr. Hellinger was trying to reach for something, and a couple of officers grabbed his hands. Officers began calling for an ambulance, I asked for a tourniquet because Mr. Hellinger had been shot in the leg, I began attempting to apply it to his leg when Deputy [REDACTED] grabbed it and applied it. Medics began [REDACTED]

assessing Mr. Hellinger and trying to keep him stable until the ambulance could get to our location. I heard one of the medics state that they could no longer get a pulse and they began to perform CPR.

The weather during the incident was frosty and cold and there was no natural lighting at the location. However, there was sufficient lighting during the incident for me to observe what was occurring.

The backdrop for my shots were the railroad tracks and open area nearby.

I shot for center mass. Mr. Hellinger posed a direct and immediate threat to me from his actions, namely his firing his weapon at K-9 [REDACTED] and towards me and the other members of the SRT. When I fired my weapon, there was no less than lethal force that I could have used which would have been as effective in stopping the immediate and direct threat posed to me and to other law enforcement officers from the actions of Mr. Hellinger in firing his weapon.

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

I had no prior contact with Mr. Hellinger, either personal or law enforcement contact prior to the incident.

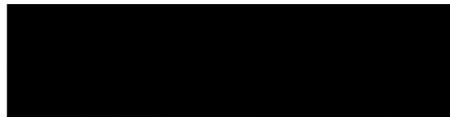
I was directed away from the scene and was transported to the Marion City Police Department where I had an initial meeting with BCI agents. I was not required to be drug tested after the incident.



My statement is made from the best of my recollection as to the incident on December 20, 2022. Prior to preparing my statement, I had not viewed either my body camera or any video of the incident. On December 22, I viewed my body camera and other video of the incident. This viewing has not substantially changed my statement.

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

Respectfully submitted,

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

Deputy 

01/03/23
Date

