



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



2022-2876

Officer Involved Critical Incident – 256 N. Swain, LaRue, Ohio (L)

Involves: Mike A. Wheeler (W)
Date of Activity: 12/28/2022
Author: SA James Chandler, #128

Narrative:

On Tuesday, December 20, 2022, at 1348 hours, Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) Special Agent (SA) James Chandler (Chandler) interviewed Lieutenant (Lt.) Mike A. Wheeler (Wheeler) of the Marion County Sheriff's Department. The interview was audio recorded.

Lt. Wheeler was identified as a deputy who had some level of involvement in the December 20, 2022, officer-involved shooting in the area of School Street, at North Section Street, LaRue Marion County, Ohio. Reportedly, Lt. Wheeler did not discharge a firearm during the incident. The purpose of the interview was to obtain all relevant information about the incident known or observed by this officer.

The Marion County Sheriff's Department has employed Lt. Wheeler for about 16 years. He was assigned to the SWAT team in 2008 and has been the SWAT commander for the past two years. Lt. Wheeler's educational background consists of receiving his criminal justice associate degree from Marion Technical College and his OPOTA Certification. Lt. Wheeler also attended several trainings as a SWAT team member and as the current SWAT commander, including SWAT command leadership and decision making 1 and 2, SWAT team leadership development and hostage barricade. During the incident, Lt. Wheeler wore his standard SWAT uniform.

Lt. Wheeler explained that the Marion County SWAT team and the Delaware County SWAT team worked in conjunction when executing the narcotics search warrant at 256 Swine Avenue, LaRue, Marion County, Ohio. Lt. Wheeler advised that he and Sergeant (Sgt.) Derek Keller (Keller), the SWAT commander for the Delaware County SWAT team, were at the command center in the parking lot of High Street and School Street. Before executing the search warrant, Lt. Wheeler advised that the team met on December 15, 2022, to discuss the narcotic search warrant.

Lt. Wheeler and Sgt. Keller briefed the SWAT team around 3:15 am and gave

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assignments to each team member. Prior, Lt. Wheeler prepared a numerical threat assessment form, a national tactical officer narrative base threat assessment form and an operational plan (OPS). After the brief, Lt. Wheeler and Sgt. Keller, in conjunction, gave the order to execute the search warrant. Furthermore, Lt. Wheeler explained that they were using three drones to assist with the execution of the search warrant. Lt. Wheeler also advised that he received information from his team members that there were individuals outside the residence and near the woods.

Lt. Wheeler stated he received information, via radio traffic, that a male subject was walking through the woods, heading towards the railroad tracks. Lt. Wheeler continued and noted that snipers one and two gave verbal commands to the male subject. Lt. Wheeler was able to view the drone footage from the command center. In addition, Lt. Wheeler stated that one of the team members called out, via radio transmission, that they could see a firearm and continued to give verbal commands.

While watching the drone footage, Lt. Wheeler could view a bulge on the left side of the male subject. In addition, Lt. Wheeler explained that Detective (Det.) [REDACTED], the K9 handler with the Marion County Sheriff's Department, asked if the K9 was needed, and Lt. Wheeler said yes. Lt. Wheeler stated that a team member requested a 40 mm less lethal, which he granted. Lt. Wheeler also explained that he decided to send the K9, rather than use the 40mm less lethal, so the male subject didn't think SWAT members were shooting at him.

Lt. Wheeler continued and explained that he could see the male subject on the railroad tracks. While observing the drone footage, Lt. Wheeler watched the male subject pull a weapon and witnessed two muzzle flashes. Lt. Wheeler believes the male subject had a gun in his right hand. SA Chandler asked Lt. Wheeler if the drones had audio. Lt. Wheeler stated he did not know. Lt. Wheeler said he observed the male subject go down and requested medical assistance for the male subject. SA Chandler asked Lt. Wheeler if he went to the scene and Lt. Wheeler's response was, no.

Once EMS attended to the male subject, Lt. Wheeler explained that they then focused on clearing the residential property. SA Chandler asked Lt. Wheeler if he had any contact with the officers involved in the shooting. Lt. Wheeler said, no. Lt. Wheeler explained that any of the SWAT members that were not involved in the shooting had a critical incident stress management debrief.

SA Chandler asked Lt. Wheeler if he had heard who was involved in the shooting. Lt. Wheeler explained that he sent a text message to the team members asking who was involved. Lt. Wheeler explained that he did not ask who was involved in the shooting, just asked who was involved. Lt. Wheeler stated he received a "yes" back from the following team members that are from Marion Police Department: Officer [REDACTED], Officer [REDACTED] and Officer [REDACTED]. In addition, the following deputies from the Marion County Sheriff's Department: Deputy [REDACTED] and

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Deputy [REDACTED] SA Chandler provided this information to SA Jason Snyder.

The interview concluded at approximately 1423 hours.

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

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