



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



2022-2876

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

Involves: ██████████ (S)
Date of Activity: 01/17/2023
Author: SA James Chandler, #128

Narrative:

On Tuesday, January 03, 2023, at 1306 hours, Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) Special Agent (SA) Jason Snyder (Snyder) and Special Agent (SA) James Chandler (Chandler) interviewed Officer (Ofc.) ██████████ (██████) with the Marion Police Department, who was accompanied by his attorney (Atty.), Robert Sauter (Sauter), from the Ohio Patrolmen's Benevolent Association (OPBA). The interview took place at the Marion County Sheriff's Department. The interview was audio recorded.

Ofc. ██████████ read, understood and signed the BCI Criminal Investigation Notification form.

Ofc. ██████████ was identified as being a police officer that witnessed and/or had some level of involvement in the December 20, 2022 officer-involved shooting, which occurred in the area of the railroad crossing of Section Street, LaRue, Ohio. Reportedly, Ofc. ██████████ did discharge his firearm during the course of the incident. The purpose of the interview was to obtain all relevant information about the incident known or observed by this officer.

Ofc. ██████████ of the Marion Police Department has been employed since ██████████ of 2016. He has been a police officer for a total of six years. During the incident, Ofc. ██████████ did not wear the uniform provided by the Marion Police Department. Ofc. ██████████ wore woodland camouflage clothing due to his sniper role. Ofc. ██████████ also indicated that his camouflage clothing had no police markings, but that he was carrying his badge in his pocket. He was transported in an unmarked cruiser. He considered himself to be well-represented as a police officer during the incident. He stated he was not under the influence of any substances that would have impaired his memory or judgment during the incident or during the interview with BCI. He does not wear corrective lenses.

Ofc. ██████████ enlisted in the United States Marine Corps as an Infantryman in 2006 and was honorably discharged from the military in 2011. Ofc. ██████████ advised that during his military career, he did discharge his duty weapon for lethal force.

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Ofc. █████ attended the Basic Police Officer Training Academy at the Marion Technical College, Marion, Ohio, and graduated in 2016. Ofc. █████ was hired full-time with the Marion Police Department in 2016 as a patrol officer and became a Field Training Officer, a member of the SWAT team, a less lethal instructor and certified with a precision rifle.

Ofc. █████ explained that the Marion Special Response Team (MSRT) had a briefing prior to executing the narcotic search warrant at 256 N. Swaine Avenue in LaRue, Ohio. During the briefing, Ofc. █████ stated he learned the suspect could have had a firearm and body armor. While in route to the location, Ofc. █████ advised that he arrived near 256 N. Swaine Avenue and positioned approximately 300–400 yards near a tree northeast of the target location. Ofc. █████ said he could view the main door to the garage, which was on the east, and the back door to the trailer side. Ofc. █████ also stated that Officer (Ofc.) █████ with the Marion Police Department, assisted with security.

While continuing to observe the garage area, Ofc. █████ believed the suspect, Travis Hellinger (Hellinger), walked out the main garage door with a female and entered the residence through the back on the north side. Ofc. █████ said Hellinger exited the residence using the rear door and walked around the backyard with a flashlight. Ofc. █████ also indicated that Hellinger was wearing a dark-colored hoodie. Ofc. █████ observed that Hellinger could hear the drone from his backyard and began shining his flashlight in the air toward it.

While observing Hellinger's movements, Ofc. █████ stated he could hear the Tactical Response Vehicle (TRV) approaching and noticed Hellinger observed the TRV. Ofc. █████ observed Hellinger flee on foot, running north of the tree line. Ofc. █████ radioed to Ofc. █████ to inform him of the situation. Ofc. █████ said he lost visual, but soon after, was able to locate Hellinger running toward him and Ofc. █████ Ofc. █████ and Ofc. █████ located Hellinger and identified themselves as police officers. Ofc. █████ and Ofc. █████ advised that they provided verbal commands to Hellinger to show his hands, but he began yelling and refusing to cooperate with the officers.

Ofc. █████ stated while giving verbal commands, he observed what looked like a handgun in a holster beneath Hellinger's left armpit. Ofc. █████ continued to give verbal commands and instructed Hellinger to get on the ground. Ofc. █████ informed Hellinger they had a search warrant for his residence, but Hellinger refused to cooperate and told the officers they had no reason to arrest and detain him. Ofc. █████ explained that Hellinger continued to walk westbound on the railroad tracks and would shine his flashlight toward the officers' faces at times, causing Ofc. █████ to lose focus on Hellinger's movements.

While continuing to follow Hellinger on the railroad tracks, Ofc. █████ said other officers assisted, informing him he was under arrest and to comply. Ofc. █████ advised that

Hellinger was still shining the flashlight into officers' eyes while giving verbal commands to comply. Ofc. █████ stated that they followed Hellinger to the railroad crossing of Section Street. Ofc. █████ heard the K9 handler give verbal commands that the K9 would be deployed. Ofc. █████ advised that Hellinger stated he would shoot the dog if a K9 was deployed. Ofc. █████ observed the K9 being deployed and observed Hellinger use his right hand, point a handgun at the K9 and begin discharging his firearm at the K9 and officers. Ofc. █████ said Hellinger was west on the railroad crossing and was in the middle of the railroad tracks. Ofc. █████ advised that he was positioned north of the railroad crossing near the crossing sign when he observed Hellinger discharging his firearms. Ofc. █████ stated he believed Hellinger fired three (3) to four (4) shots.

Ofc. █████ advised he was carrying his Glock 17 9mm pistol, a department issued weapon approved by the agency, which Ofc. █████ had qualified with in the last 12 months. Ofc. █████ explained he only had one magazine inserted into the Glock 17 9mm pistol. Ofc. █████ advised that he only had 17 rounds in the magazine and one (1) in the chamber. Ofc. █████ reported he believed he fired two (2) to three (3) rounds, which was the only firearm he discharged.

While Hellinger discharged his weapon, Ofc. █████ explained that he returned fire and observed the suspect lying on the ground. Ofc. █████ stated he approached the suspect and stood by in a security role while EMS arrived. Ofc. █████ said that once the suspect was secured and attended to by EMS, he met with Major (Maj.) Chad Adkins (Adkins), turned over his firearm, traveled to the Marion Police Department and met with BCI personnel.

The interview was audio recorded. The audio recording is attached to this report. In addition, the signed BCI Criminal Investigation Notification form is also attached to this report. Please see the attachments for further details.