

Witness Statement Form


Incident Date: January 17, 2024 Time: 1849 Incident # 2024-015839
 Address of Occurrence: 7702 Spafford Rd District: 4 Zone: 1
 Officer Name: Sgt. Wills Badge# 9321 Bureau/District 4 Platoon C
 Citizen Name: Robert James Perkins

Witness Statement

On Wednesday, January 17, 2024 at approximately 1849 hours while assigned to 4S33, I (Sgt. Wills #9321) responded to 3894 E.71st in connection with a 60 year male who suffered a stab wound to the chest. Concurrently there were multiple shot spotter alerts in the general vicinity. When I arrived on-scene for the male stabbed, members of 4A31 (P.O. Lyberger #1547 and P.O. Ayers #635) currently had a female in custody. While on-scene, I overheard multiple gun shots in close proximity to our location. We were able to ascertain that the gun fire was unrelated to our assignment.

Members of 4A32 (P.O. McCartney #820 and P.O. Kane #997) and I then went to the area where the gun fire was heard. I proceeded to travel to east on Canton Ave from E.71st trying to determine where it was coming from. Detective Nezbeth #1850 broadcast via radio that the shot spotter alerts were near the intersection of Spafford Rd and Canton Ave. While touring the area, I noticed a pedestrian walking and I advised him to travel an alternate route. Once I arrived in the area of E.75th St and Canton Ave; another zone car advised me that there was a store front property at 7702 Spafford with disco lights, a loud intercom/music speaker, and a sign that read "fair warning, today will be the end." Another resident located behind it on Canton indicated that that was the property associated with our assignment.

We were then able to establish a perimeter outside the residence. Members of 4A32, 4A38 (P.O. Reynolds #1236 and P.O. Peters #1300), and I all were near the intersection of E. 75th and Canton Ave. We were able to see the west side/rear of the residence from our vantage point. P.O. Bloxton #0032 and P.O. Morrison #1017 were both on Spafford Rd overlooking the east (front) and north side of the property. As the incident progressed, we were able to positively identify Robert Perkins through on-scene intelligence. While on-scene, we could overhear Mr. Perkins speaking from inside the residence from a sound amplifying device.

Signature:  Badge# (if applicable) 9321
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 LT. V. SCHNEIDER #8566

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I advised P.O. Reynolds to attempt to make contact with our loud speaker. According to 4A35 (P.O. Morrison and P.O. Bloxton), the sound was faint and they could not hear clearly from where they were positioned. When asked if they could attempt to make contact on their loud speaker, they advised me that they were having mechanical issues with their zone car. I then proceeded to their location in an attempt to establish contact with my loud speaker.

As the incident continued, I proceeded to contact our Crisis Response Team due to my familiarity with him and his current behavior. When I arrived on Spafford Rd near the front of the residence, I observed P.O. Morrison covering the north side as P.O. Bloxton was watching the male through the front window. P.O. Bloxton had already made contact with Mr. Perkins. He was seen walking throughout the first floor holding and speaking into a microphone. An assault rifle could also been seen laying on a table near the rear of the room. P.O. Bloxton was able to establish a dialogue with Mr. Perkins through the front window.

Due the situation evolving into a SWAT call up, I requested assistance from available units for traffic to secure the area and to control the ingress and egress routes. I also requested any available patrol rifle operators (PRO). Detective Nezbeth responded and set up position directly across the street from the target location. He had a clear unobstructed view of the front side. He was able to utilize cover on the south side of residence across from 7702 Spafford Rd.

While on-scene, there were residents just north of Canton Ave on Spafford Rd who were yelling about their home being shot into. During the course of the event, Mr. Perkins grabbed the assault rifle and retreated upstairs. After he did so and our direct line of communication was loss, I contacted the SWAT Unit through the Communications Control Section (CCS) due the male now being barricaded and armed. I was contacted by Lt. Kincaid and I explained the circumstances surrounding the incident. After speaking with him, Mr. Perkins fired multiple shots from an assault rifle outside the second floor front window. At the time of the shooting, the shots were presumably fired at police due to him knowing we were on-scene. Detective Nezbeth later confirmed that the suspect's muzzle was pointed north possibly toward a neighbor's house.

Signature: Sgt. [Signature] # 9321 Badge# (if applicable) 9321

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On January 5, 2024, Mr. Perkins was taken to the hospital for a psychiatric evaluation after he was found shooting into vacant houses with a shotgun. When CRT arrived on-scene, they attempted to contact Mr. Perkins utilizing a phone number associated with him. They also informed me that a vehicle was struck by gunfire and was currently parked further south on Spafford Rd. Due to the volatility at the scene, we were not able to make direct contact with occupants of that vehicle. I later conferred with radio dispatch who advised me that that party went to the third district to complete a report. I spoke to a third district officer who informed me that they were completing a felonious assault and criminal damaging report.

All related communication was switched to our tactical channel. A dispatcher was also secured to monitor radio traffic from involved personnel. Radio was advised to contact EMS to stage. After conferring with Lt. Kincaid, we were able to establish a staging area at E.78th St and Broadway Ave.

Once additional personnel arrived on-scene, I was able to direct/position everyone. An officer/PRO from the third district positioned himself on Spafford Rd north of the target location. There was zone cars blocking traffic at Spafford Rd and Fullerton, Broadway Ave and Canton Ave, E.75th St and Canton Ave, and Spafford just south of the target location. When SWAT personnel arrived on-scene, they were briefed as to what transpired. Additional third district personnel also offered their assistance and responded to the scene. They were utilized to provide relief for our personnel due the frigid temperature. SWAT personnel took control of the interior perimeter as a standoff had now officially ensued.

During the incident, I was mobile going to various perimeter locations ensuring the well-being of our on-scene personnel. At some point throughout the incident, I was advised that SWAT personnel used their armored vehicle to breach the front door. According to information relayed to me, Mr. Perkins was seen sweeping at the front door afterward. During the incident at the staging area, I overheard a volley of shots. I heard via radio that SWAT personnel went inside the residence and secured Mr. Perkins. Once he was secured, EMS responded to the location and transported him to Metro Health Hospital. I did learn that there was an exchange of gunfire between SWAT officers and the suspect.

Signature: SGA [Signature] #9321 Badge# (if applicable) 9321
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I contacted radio to have a second district zone car respond to the hospital. Our crime scene unit was contacted to respond to process the scene. I conferred with Commander Brown who advised me that he will contact our force investigation team and that I did not need to complete a public safety statement. The inner perimeter was then secured as we waited for their arrival. A crime scene log was started by P.O. Morrison.

While on-scene, we learned that multiple residences and a vehicle was struck by gunfire. I also observed that the windshield to the Cleveland Division of Police SWAT Unit's armored vehicle was struck by gunfire. As the investigation continued, members of 4A11 (P.O. Varndell #2554 and P.O. Musson #1956) responded to the location to wait for "board up" as personnel began to clear. P.O. Lane #1661 also responded to process tow a vehicle in connection with the incident. Involved personnel was advised to complete a witness statement in regard to the assignment. Once the on-scene personnel's ammunition was tallied, they were relieved of their duties and advised to clear.

Signature: Sgt. [Signature] #632 Badge# (if applicable) 9321

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