



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



2023-0408
Officer Involved Critical Incident – 1680 Stringtown Rd., Grove
City 43123 (L)

Investigative Activity: Interview with Officer
Involves: Officer Matthew Liford (S)
Date of Activity: 03/06/2023
Author: SA Kyle Douglass, #126

Narrative:

On March 6, 2023 at approximately 1109 hours, Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) Special Agents Jim Mulford (SA Mulford) and SA Kyle Douglass (SA Douglass) interviewed Columbus Division of Police (CPD) Officer Matthew Liford (Officer Liford) regarding an Officer-Involved Critical Incident (OICI) which occurred at 1680 Stringtown Road in Grove City, OH (parking lot of Home Depot). On February 11, 2023, it was reported that CPD officers were attempting to execute an arrest warrant on Bret Andrews (Andrews). During the encounter, multiple CPD officers discharged their firearms. Andrews was transported to Grant Medical Center with alleged gunshot wounds, where he was pronounced deceased. BCI was notified of the shooting by CPD; however, this event occurred in the jurisdiction of Grove City Police Department (GCPD) and BCI was officially requested by GCPD to investigate the incident. The purpose of the interview was to obtain all relevant information of the incident known or observed by this individual. Also present for the interview was Officer Liford's FOP legal counsel, Nicole Wannemacher.

This interview was audio recorded, and a copy of the recording was saved electronically within the case file. Please refer to the recording for specific quotes. The following is a summation of the interview.

Prior to beginning the interview, SA Douglass provided Officer Liford with a BCI "Criminal Investigation Notification" form. SA Douglass advised BCI was conducting a criminal investigation separate from any internal investigation that CPD may be conducting. Officer Liford was told his interview was voluntary and that he could stop answering questions at any time. Officer Liford verbally confirmed he understood the contents of the form and signed the document, acknowledging his understanding. A copy of the signed Criminal Investigation Notification (CIN) is attached to this report.

Attorney Nicole Wannemacher provided SA Douglass with a written statement from Officer Liford regarding the OICI. Agent Douglass reviewed the statement upon receipt. SA Douglass provided a printed map of the location of the OICI scene to reference throughout the interview.

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Officer Liford signed his statement provided to BCI, and he verified the statement was a true and accurate depiction of the OICI incident. Please refer to Officer Liford's statement for further details. A copy of the signed written statement and the map was saved within the case file and is attached to this report.

SA Douglass and SA Mulford asked Officer Liford several follow-up questions and had him confirm where he fired his weapon based on the printed map of the OICI location. Officer Liford's answers appeared to be consistent with his written statement.

Officer Liford wrote in his statement, "I pulled into the parking lot from Stringtown Road. It was not very crowded and I immediately saw the white car a few spaces south of the contractor pickup area. I drove in front of the car and the suspect, who was still standing outside the car door, and pulled around behind and parked my car in the aisle behind (east) of the suspect. The suspect looked at me, as I drove my car by, and got into the passenger seat of the white car but did not fully close the door (it was open about 6-8 inches). Officer Cutshall aired for the team to take him, which means for each of us to pull our car up and box in the suspect vehicle so that he cannot escape. Simultaneously, I pulled my car up to the passenger side door of the white car. Officer Cutshall pulled up to the front driver's side door and Officer Ashenurst pulled up to the front of the car. I believe Officer Cibulskas pulled up to the rear of the vehicle. I placed the front of my car against the passenger's door of the white sedan and the suspect tried to open his car door. As I opened my car door, I unholstered and drew my weapon. As soon as I had my door opened, I yelled "Get your hands up!" I left my door open and I was behind the "A" pillar, with my gun pointed over it, as I continued yelling for him to get his hands up. The suspect was crouching down in the front seat, like he was reaching for something on the floor. I do not believe he said anything but his car window was up. I yelled "he's reaching" to alert the rest of the SWAT members. Suddenly, I saw a gun in the suspect's right hand and he was bringing it up, with the barrel being leveled toward Officer Cutshall and I heard a gunshot. It is at that moment that I fired my weapon and I heard other rounds being fired simultaneously. The suspect collapsed in the seat and I stopped firing. I kept my gun trained on the suspect and I aired shots fired and that we needed TEMS (Tactical Emergency Medics). I held cover while Officer Cutshall approached the driver and Officer Ashenurst approached the passenger. Once we knew the suspect was down and no longer a direct threat, I got into my unmarked car and backed it up so that we could open the passenger's door to reach the suspect. Officer Ashenurst broke out the passenger's side window then he and Officer Cibulskas opened the door and removed the suspect from the car. I looked into the car and I saw a black semiautomatic handgun on the floorboard with a duffle bag. The medics and several other officers were on scene because the TEMS accompanying us on our missions and they began rendering aid to the suspect. The medics stated they were going to transport him to Grant and a Grove City officer (rode) with them. Other officers had secured the individual in the driver's seat of the white sedan and officers were securing the scene. Columbus Police Officer Support arrived on scene. This ended my involvement with this incident. I now know I fired 3 rounds during this incident. I fired those rounds in rapid succession. I would estimate that I fired all 3 rounds in less than two seconds. My target was the suspect's upper right side. I fired using a two-handed grip, from a standing position behind the "A" pillar of my plain car, utilizing it as cover. I fired through the 6-8 inches that the passenger's side door was cracked. The direction of my shots was south to slightly southwest. I fired at a slightly downward angle as the suspect was in the passenger seat of the car. My backdrop was the floor of the car and

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the blacktop of the parking lot. I believe I was approximately 5–6 feet from the suspect when I fired my weapon. Even though it was dark outside, there were multiple lights throughout the parking lot, as well as ambient light from Officer Ashenhurst’s headlights which were pointed at the suspect, so I was able to see the suspect and him raise the gun.”

Officer Liford also wrote, “This entire encounter was rapidly evolving and occurred in a matter of seconds. I would estimate that from the time we boxed in the car and I opened my door until all the shots were fired was approximately 15 seconds. At the time I fired my weapon, I was directly in fear for the life of Officer Cutshall, as well as the other officers and the civilian in the car with the suspect. The suspect had ignored my repeated commands to show me his hands, crouched down in the front seat, retrieved a gun and was raising it with the barrel coming up towards Officer Cutshall. I was also concerned that Officer Ashenhurst would become a target, as he exited his vehicle and approached the front of the suspect car, as the suspect was raising the weapon. I did not believe I had any other reasonable alternative to protect the life of Officer Cutshall or the lives of the other officers from the deadly threat presented by the suspect’s actions.”

Although he knew Andrews’s name before the encounter, Officer Liford advised he did not know Andrews and had no previous interactions with Andrews in his official capacity as a police officer.

Interview concluded at approximately 1123 hours.

Attachments:

- Attachment # 01: 2023–03–06: CPD Officer Matthew Liford Interview Audio
- Attachment # 02: BCI CIN – CPD Officer Matthew Liford
- Attachment # 03: Officer Statement – CPD Officer Matthew Liford
- Attachment # 04: Scene Sketch Map – CPD Officer Matthew Liford



Ohio Attorney General's Office Bureau of Criminal Investigation



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).

MATTHEW LITFORD
Printed Name of Interviewee

3/6/23 11:10a
Date / Time

[Signature]
Signature of Interviewee

Kyle Douglass
BCI Agent (Printed)

[Signature]
BCI Agent (Signature)

[Signature]

STATEMENT OF OFFICER MATTHEW LIFORD, BADGE NO. 2182

This statement concerns my involvement in an incident that occurred on Saturday, February 11, 2023, between about 7:55 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. I am voluntarily providing this statement as part of the investigation being conducted by the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI).

My date of hire with the Columbus Division of Police is September 6, 1998. I have been assigned to Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) for approximately a year and a half. Currently, I am on the Gold Team. My call number is 535. My regular duty hours are from 7:00 p.m. until 3:00 a.m. with Sunday and Monday off. I do not have any prior law enforcement experience. I served four years in the Air Force and I received an honorable discharge.

At the time of this incident, I was wearing blue jeans and a dark navy hoodie. I had on my ballistic vest which says "POLICE" on the front and back. My body worn camera (BWC) was also mounted to my vest. I was carrying my Division-issued Glock 17 9mm handgun, loaded with Division-issued ammunition. It carries seventeen rounds in the magazine plus another round in the chamber. That gun was also equipped with a Division-approved tactical light and a green dot sight. My range qualifications were current for that weapon. I was not carrying a backup firearm.

I do not wear glasses or contacts and my uncorrected vision is good. I do not wear a hearing aid and my hearing is good. I do not suffer from any disabilities. I had not taken any medication, over the counter or prescription, that would impair my abilities. I had not consumed any alcohol in the 24-hours prior to this incident. I had not worked any special duty in the 24-hours prior to this incident. I arrived at the start of my shift well-rested.

Several weeks prior to this incident, an Athens County Detective, I believe Detective Goodrich, had reached out regarding an individual named Bret Andrews, who had an active felony warrant for rape of a child under the age of 13. The detective believed that he was in the Columbus area, as they had been pinging his phone. He was also believed to be in a Gold Suburban, which I believe he had stolen from his girlfriend, who was the mother of the minor child he raped. We located the vehicle in a parking lot on Lockbourne Road, obtained a warrant, and placed a GPS tracker on it, however, the vehicle never left.

On the day of this incident, I believe SWAT Officer Cutshall (who is the team leader for SWAT Gold) received a call from Detective Goodrich that a female who knew the suspect, I believe her name was Chelsea, and she reported that she would be meeting him at the Home2Suites hotel in Grove City that evening. He requested that SWAT arrest the suspect. A little before 8:00 p.m., myself and other members of the SWAT Gold team (SWAT Officers Cutshall, Shope, Cibulskas, and Ashenhurst) got into our unmarked city vehicles and drove to the hotel in Grove City.

It took approximately 10-15 minutes to get to the hotel from SWAT headquarters. I had a picture of Chelsea so I knew what she looked like. I drove around the hotel and I saw a female who appeared to be Chelsea speaking with a Grove City Officer in the hotel parking lot. I drove over to them and she told me that she was texting him (she was impersonating an ex-girlfriend of his) and that he was at the Home Depot, near the contractor pickup. She also told me that he was wearing a blue hoodie. I relayed this information to the other members of the SWAT Gold Team. The other members of the SWAT team drove to the Home Depot. I waited until a SWAT member was in the parking lot and then I notified Grove City that if they had any officers in the area to get them out of there as to not scare the suspect.

I got back into my unmarked vehicle and drove to the Home Depot. As I was driving there, I believe SWAT Officer Cibulskas aired that he had a visual on the suspect and that he was standing outside by a white car texting. I pulled into the parking lot from Stringtown Road. It was not very crowded and I immediately saw the white car a few spaces south of the contractor pickup area. I drove in front of the car and the suspect, who was still standing outside the car door, and pulled around behind and parked my car in the aisle behind (east) of the suspect. The suspect looked at me, as I drove my car by, and got into the passenger seat of the white car but did not fully close the door (it was open about 6-8 inches). Officer Cutshall aired for the team to take him, which means for each of us to pull our car up and box in the suspect vehicle so that he cannot escape.

Simultaneously, I pulled my car up to the passenger side door of the white car. Officer Cutshall pulled up to the front driver's side door and Officer Ashenurst pulled up to the front of the car. I believe Officer Cibulskas pulled up to the rear of the vehicle. I placed the front of my car against the passenger's door of the white sedan and the suspect tried to open his car door. As I opened my car door, I unholstered and drew my weapon. As soon as I had my door opened, I yelled "Get your hands up!" I left my door open and I was behind the "A" pillar, with my gun pointed over it, as I continued yelling for him to get his hands up. The suspect was crouching down in the front seat, like he was reaching for something on the floor. I do not believe he said anything but his car window was up. I yelled "he's reaching" to alert the rest of the SWAT members.

Suddenly, I saw a gun in the suspect's right hand and he was bringing it up, with the barrel being leveled toward Officer Cutshall and I heard a gunshot. It is at that moment that I fired my weapon and I heard other rounds being fired simultaneously. The suspect collapsed in

the seat and I stopped firing. I kept my gun trained on the suspect and I aired shots fired and that we needed TEMS (Tactical Emergency Medics). I held cover while Officer Cutshall approached the driver and Officer Ashenhurst approached the passenger. Once we knew the suspect was down and no longer a direct threat, I got into my unmarked car and backed it up so that we could open the passenger's door to reach the suspect. Officer Ashenhurst broke out the passenger's side window then he and Officer Cibulskas opened the door and removed the suspect from the car. I looked into the car and I saw a black semiautomatic handgun on the floorboard with a duffle bag. The medics and several other officers were on scene because the TEMS accompanying us on our missions and they began rendering aid to the suspect. The medics stated they were going to transport him to Grant and a Grove City officer road with them.

Other officers had secured the individual in the driver's seat of the white sedan and officers were securing the scene. Columbus Police Officer Support arrived on scene. This ended my involvement with this incident. I later returned to SWAT headquarters and voluntarily meet with a BCI Agent who took photographs of me and collected my firearm.

I now know I fired 3 rounds during this incident. I fired those rounds in rapid succession. I would estimate that I fired all 3 rounds in less than two seconds. My target was the suspect's upper right side. I fired using a two-handed grip, from a standing position behind the "A" pillar of my plain car, utilizing it as cover. I fired through the 6-8 inches that the passenger's side door was cracked. The direction of my shots was south to slightly southwest. I fired at a slightly downward angle as the suspect was in the passenger seat of the car. My backdrop was the floor of the car and the blacktop of the parking lot. I believe I was approximately 5-6 feet from the suspect when I fired my weapon. Even though it was dark outside, there were multiple lights

throughout the parking lot, as well as ambient light from Officer Ashenhurst's headlights which were pointed at the suspect, so I was able to see the suspect and him raise the gun.

This entire encounter was rapidly evolving and occurred in a matter of seconds. I would estimate that from the time we boxed in the car and I opened my door until all the shots were fired was approximately 15 seconds. At the time I fired my weapon, I was directly in fear for the life of Officer Cutshall, as well as the other officers and the civilian in the car with the suspect. The suspect had ignored my repeated commands to show me his hands, crouched down in the front seat, retrieved a gun and was raising it with the barrel coming up towards Officer Cutshall. I was also concerned that Officer Ashenhurst would become a target, as he exited his vehicle and approached the front of the suspect car, as the suspect was raising the weapon. I did not believe I had any other reasonable alternative to protect the life of Officer Cutshall or the lives of the other officers from the deadly threat presented by the suspect's actions.

I know that the suspect's name is Bret Andrews. Prior to this incident, I do not believe I have ever had any professional or personal encounters with him.

I have now had an opportunity to review the body worn camera footage of this incident and it appears that Officer Cutshall fired a round or two prior to me firing my weapon. It also appears that after I stopped firing my weapon, another round or two was fired by Officer Cutshall or Ashenhurst. I do not know if the suspect fired a round.

This concludes my statement. I am prepared to answer any additional questions you may have at this time.


SWAT Officer Matthew Liford, Badge #2182

Google Maps



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[Handwritten signature]