



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



2025-1603
Officer Involved Critical Incident - 4482 Hampton Woods
Ct., Columbus, Ohio 43230 (L)

Investigative Activity: Uninvolved Officer Interview
Involves: SWAT Officer Steve Kaethow
Activity Date: 05/20/2025
Activity Location: CPD SWAT Headquarters
Authoring Agent: SA Eric Runyan

Narrative:

On May 20, 2025 at approximately 0453 hours, Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) Special Agents Ryan Scheiderer (SA Scheiderer) and Eric Runyan (SA Runyan) obtained a recorded statement from Columbus Division of Police (CPD) Officer Steve Kaethow (Officer Kaethow) regarding the May 19, 2025 fatal shooting incident between CPD officers and Jerry Smith (Smith) that occurred at 4482 Hampton Woods Court in Columbus, Ohio. The contact with Officer Kaethow took place at the CPD Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) building. Prior to providing a statement, Officer Kaethow was notified that BCI was conducting a criminal investigation into the shooting incident, and he confirmed he would provide a voluntary statement. The following is a summation of the statement of Officer Kaethow and additional details can be found in the attached audio recording.

On May 19, 2025, Officer Kaethow (Badge #2081 and radio call sign 512) was assigned to CPD SWAT Green Team. Officer Kaethow was off duty at the time of the incident. Officer Kaethow was advised by SWAT leadership to respond directly to the command post at the scene of the incident. Upon arrival, Officer Kaethow was directed to deploy with his sniper rifle in a position toward the southwest corner of the residence. Officer Kaethow was aware that SWAT Officer [REDACTED] had deployed as [REDACTED] to the northwest of the front door of the residence. Officer Kaethow utilized a laser range finder and determined he was 30 yards from the front door of the residence. Officer Kaethow was told that a male subject, later identified as Smith, was in the residence had discharged a firearm in the direction of responding officers.

Officer Kaethow observed Smith open the door several times, however, Officer Kaethow could only see Smith's hand. Officer Kaethow observed Smith fire a handgun in his direction and he could hear the projectile fly by his position on the right. Officer Kaethow observed Smith discharge a handgun again in his direction and he could hear

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the projectile fly by his position on the left. Officer Kaethow was advised a "delta order" had been issued. Officer Kaethow explained a delta order is to advise officers if the subject presents himself while armed and presenting a threat, they are authorized to employ lethal force against the subject. A short time later, Smith came to the front door but was partially concealed by the door. While utilizing the scope on his rifle to observe the front doorway, Officer Kaethow saw a hand (described as African American) extended out from the doorway holding a "stainless steel" object. It was later learned that the magazine to the pistol Smith possessed was stainless steel and had fallen from the pistol at the time Smith exited the residence. Almost immediately after Smith emerged from the residence with the "stainless steel" object in his hand, Officer Kaethow heard a gunshot from what he recognized to be a suppressed rifle utilized by CPD snipers. Officer Kaethow was aware that [REDACTED] was the only other [REDACTED] deployed to this incident and believed he was the contributor to the gunshot. Officer Kaethow then heard [REDACTED] air on the radio that he too, discharged a firearm at Smith.

Officer Kaethow observed a female exit the residence and be escorted away by officers. The Franklin County Sheriff's Office (FCSO) drone team sent their drone into the residence and the entry team was able to secure the residence. Officer Kaethow was aware Tactical Emergency Medical Support (TEMS) medics assessed Smith and declared him deceased.

Officer Kaethow confirmed he did not discharge his firearm or Taser during the incident. Officer Kaethow didn't have any additional information and contact was ended at approximately 0506 hours.

References:

None

Attachments:

CPD Officer Steve Kaethow Audio 5.20.2025

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