



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



2023-0556

Officer Involved Critical Incident - 23897 US Rt 23, Circleville 43113 (L)

To: Pickaway County Prosecutor
From: James Poole, Special Agent, Ohio BCI
Date: May 3, 2023
Involves: Pamela Croston, Deputy Alfredo Magna, Corporal Jon Campbell
BCI Case Numbers: 2023-0556
BCI Laboratory: 23-12174

Investigative Request

On Saturday, February 25, 2023, the Chief of the Circleville Police Department requested the assistance of the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation's (BCI) Special Investigations Unit (SIU) and Crime Scene Unit (CSU) in conducting an independent investigation into the facts and circumstances surrounding an officer-involved shooting incident. The incident reportedly occurred on February 25, 2023, in the area of 23897 US Rt 23, Circleville, Ohio, and resulted in the death of Pamela Croston.

Preface:

This report serves as a synopsis of the investigation into the February 25, 2023, officer-involved shooting in Pickaway County, Ohio. This report only summarizes the information that the investigative team determined to be the most useful in achieving an overall understanding of what occurred in this incident. Every fact and detail is not presented in this summary report. Therefore, it is recommended that each individual report from which this document is derived be read in order to obtain a complete understanding of this investigation. Further, audio and/or video recordings exist for the majority of the interviews conducted, revealing further details of statements given regarding the incident.

This investigation was conducted with the purpose of determining, to the extent possible, the facts and circumstances surrounding this incident. As unbiased collectors of fact, the investigative team has not and will not render any opinion of the legality of officers' actions. Instead, it is anticipated that this investigation will provide the basis of information for decisions to be rendered by the appropriate authorities.

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Investigative Team

Lead BCI Special Agent:

- SA James Poole

Assisting Investigative BCI Special Agents:

- SA Andrew Russell
- SA Ryan Scheiderer
- SA David Wieging

BCI Crime Scene Special Agents:

- Scene Technician Amy Gill
- SA Cassandra Tackett
- SA Aja Chung

BCI Cyber Crime Personnel:

- SA Tyler Price

BCI Investigative Supervisor:

- Special Agent Supervisor Kevin Barbeau

Summary of Process

The following is a partial list of investigative activities or methods which were employed during the course of this investigation, by the investigative team, in an effort to thoroughly and accurately locate and document all pertinent facts and circumstances regarding this incident:

- Recorded interview(s) of the Pickaway County deputies who discharged their weapons
- Recorded interviews of witnessing officers who were involved in the incident, at the scene, or otherwise deemed to potentially have relevant information
- Neighborhood canvass of the area surrounding the scene
- Recorded interview(s) of the involved subject and others subjects directly involved in the incident
- Interviews of the civilian witnesses to the incident
- Interviews of family members or associates of the decedent
- Post mortem examination (autopsy) of the deceased
- Obtained and reviewed post mortem examination (autopsy) and toxicology reports

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- Obtained and reviewed open and closed-source biographical information on the involved subjects, to include criminal history reports, OHLEG, driving records, etc.
- Review of all available dash cameras involved in the incident
- Review of all available body worn cameras involved in the incident
- Review of all available surveillance video which captured any portion of the incident.
- Processing of the scene for potential evidence (photographing, searching, measuring, documenting, and collecting)
- 3D scans / model of incident area
- Reviewed audio communications on the radio frequencies utilized during the incident
- Review of 911/phone communications related to the incident
- Review of dispatch/CAD records pertaining to the incident
- Review of Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) communications relative to the incident
- Reviewed phone/text records obtained
- Review of the department's reports, photographs, and investigative materials pertaining to the incident, excluding any Garrity statements or information derived from any compelled statement
- Conducted forensic laboratory examinations to include:
 1. Firearm identification testing of involved firearms, casings, and bullets
 2. Firearm operability testing
- Reviewed data obtained from aforementioned items of electronic evidence
- Collected and reviewed the departmental personnel files of the officers involved in the shooting, to include training and disciplinary records (if any)
- Reviewed firearm qualification and training records for involved officers
- Verified the Ohio Peace Officer Training Commission (OPOTC) certification status of the officer(s) who discharged their weapons
- Obtained the department's policies and procedures regarding use of force for prosecutorial review
- Obtained subpoenas for Grant Medical Center
- Reviewed medical records of those injured, obtained through subpoena
- Reviewed EMS records pertaining to their response and the treatment administered
- Reviewed tips, social media posts, and pertinent statements made in the media regarding the incident

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Incident Summary/Overview

On Saturday, February 25, 2023 the Pickaway County Sherriff's Office (PCSO), Circleville Police Department (CPD), and the Ohio State Highway patrol (OSHP) were dispatched to the area of 23897 US Rt, Circleville OH on a suicidal female at an unknown hotel named Pamela, later identified as Pamela Croston (Croston). Officers and deputies check the Holiday Inn and did not find anything. During the that time officers were at the Holiday Inn, it seen on the Rodeway Inn surveillance video that a hand reaches out the front door of room 104 and fires a single round in the direction of the Holiday Inn. Officers and deputies then arrive at the Rodeway Inn and speak to the desk receptionist. They asked if a female named Pamela had checked in. The receptionist confirmed there was a Pamela Garcia that had just checked into room 104. While approaching room 104, officers and deputies see a handgun pointing at them through the front window of room 104 in between the curtains. Officers and deputies take cover behind their parked cruisers and begin yelling commands to drop the weapon. Croston is then seen in the window with the curtains open, holding a handgun in her right hand, and pointing it to her head. Officers and deputies continue to give commands to drop the weapon. After a few moments Croston moves back into the room where she cannot be seen. Officers and deputies continue to negotiate with Croston. Croston is then seen opening the front door to room 104 with the handgun to her head, still in her right hand. Officers continue to plead for Croston to put down the weapon. Deputy Magaña is positioned directly in front of Croston taking cover behind a cruiser with Corporal Campbell positioned behind another cruiser to the right of Deputy Magaña. Deputy Magaña continues to negotiate with Croston. Croston is seen taking a couple steps forward, yelling at Deputy Magaña, pointing her left hand at him, and then takes her right hand, holding the handgun, from her head and points it directly at Deputy Magaña. Deputy Magaña and Deputy Campbell both fire several rounds striking Croston. Croston falls to the ground and drops her handgun. Officers and deputies approach Croston, secure her handgun, and begin medical treatment until medics arrive on scene. The Circleville Fire Department (CFD) transported Croston to Grant Medical Center in Columbus, Ohio, where she later succumbed to her injuries.

Subsequent Investigation

Through Interviews with Jerry Croston, the husband of Pamela Croston, and Kristina Lovely, Pamela Croston's friend, they both identified that Pamela Croston had a history of depression and possible mental illness. They both explained that Pamela Croston had attempted suicide in the past, but was never been successful. On February 25, 2023, Jerry Croston confirmed that Pamela and himself had been in an argument earlier that day. Kristina Lovely also shared screenshots with the investigators of Pamela Croston with the gun to her head threatening to

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kill herself. This took place while Pamela Croston facetimed Kristina Lovely before the police arrived at the hotel that night.

Post-Mortem Examination / Autopsy Report

The autopsy report for the decedent (Pamela Croston) was obtained from the Franklin County Coroner's Office. A review of those documents revealed the following information:

The cause of death for Pamela Croston was determined to be from multiple gunshots. The manner of death was ruled a homicide. The toxicology report is still being waited on.

Physical Evidence and Laboratory Reports

Various items of potential evidence were submitted to the BCI Laboratory for analysis. The actual reports should be consulted as the following synopsis does not include many of the details from the full reports.

The BCI Firearms Section performed an analysis of the officers' firearms, as well as the firearm-related evidence collected from the scene, vehicles, and autopsy (casings and bullets). By comparing evidentiary cartridge casings/projectiles to known standards from each weapon, identifications were able to be made as to which casings/projectiles were fired from each firearm. Of the casings/projectiles recovered, the following identifications were made:

Item 12: Glock Pistol (████████) was Operable and Source Identified with Items 1,2,3,4

Item 13: Ruger Rifle (████████) was Operable, Source Identified with Items 5,6,7,8, and source exclusion with Item 11

Item 14: Ruger Pistol (████████) was operable, Source Identified with Item 10, and Source Exclusion with Items 11,15,16,17

Investigative Interviews

The following information comprises extremely abbreviated versions of the statements made by the witness and/or participants of this incident deemed by the author to be of most relevance to the overall understanding of the incident. More detailed accounts can be found by reading the separate reports written by the interviewers and by reviewing the recordings of each interview, including those not synopsized below.

Deputy Magaña stated, "At approximately 1:30 A.M. I was engaged in routine patrol activities. I was informed by our Dispatch that there was a report of a suicidal woman with a gun at the Roadway Inn, which is located on U.S. 23 in the City of Circleville area. While I was in route to

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the Roadway Inn, Dispatch further advised me that the woman, who I would later learn was named Pamela Coston, indicated she wished to commit "suicide-by-cop." "As we approached the room, a woman, who would later be identified as Pamela Coston, drew the curtains of the room's window, placed a handgun against the window and tapped the glass with the gun. The law enforcement officers on the scene began to yell, "Gun! Gun!" and I, along with the other officers, began to take cover. I took cover behind my patrol vehicle, which was parked in front of Coston's motel room door."

"At this point, from cover, myself and other officers began to plead with Coston to put down the gun, which was visible through the window. However, she refused. She then closed the curtains to her motel room. After a few seconds, she opened the curtains to the room, stood in front of the window, and placed the gun to her head. Again, myself and other officers asked her to drop the gun. We asked her to talk with us instead of harming herself. She refused to drop the weapon. Instead, she opened the door and stepped into the doorway with the gun still pointed at her head." "We continued to plead with Coston to put the gun down. She did take the gun from her head, however, she held it around her waist and pointed it toward a patrol vehicle." "I became increasingly concerned that she would fire at Cpl. Campbell or others. I was also concerned that a person staying at the motel could exit a nearby motel room and unwittingly make themselves a target to Coston." "Concerned that Coston would shoot at Cpl. Campbell or others nearby and seeking to attempt to defuse the situation, I asked Coston whether she had any kids. My intent was to get her to realize that she had people who cared about her and would not want her to commit suicide. I wanted her to think about how her actions might affect others that she loved, or those that loved her. She looked directly at me, and in an angry voice said, "Don't bring them up!" I said that if she had kids, not to harm herself. She became visibly angry and pointed her handgun directly at me with an outstretched arm." "I believed that by pointing the gun at me she was aiming in order to shoot at me. In order to protect myself I fired at Coston with my rifle. Had I not fired, I believed she would have shot me. I fired several rounds at Coston."

Corporal Campbell stated, "At approximately 1:30 A.M. on Saturday, February 25, 2023, I was driving home in my personal vehicle following the conclusion of my shift at the Pickaway County Sheriff's Office. I witnessed two Pickaway County Sheriff's Office patrol vehicles pass me at a high rate of speed, one of which had its lights and sirens activated. In response, I turned on my portable radio and learned that the vehicles had been dispatched to the Roadway Inn located on U.S. 23 in reference to a possibly suicidal female with a gun. I then heard Sgt. Joseph Hugus state on the radio that it was believed that the female, who I would later learn was

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named Pamela, was inside a motel room and had possibly barricaded herself in the room with a gun.”

“When I arrived at the Roadway Inn I exited my personal vehicle and heard other deputies and law enforcement officers from the Ohio State Highway Patrol and City of Circleville Police Department giving commands and telling a female to “drop the gun!” I retrieved my ballistic shield and took cover behind OSHP Trooper Moore’s vehicle. From the cover of Trooper Moore’s vehicle, I was able to see Pamela who was standing inside a hotel room, behind a window, with a gun to her head. She was looking in our general direction in the parking lot. Pamela then exited the room and stepping outside onto a walkway. She was approximately 15 yards from our location. She fumbled briefly with the gun before placing against her head with her finger on the trigger. Myself and multiple officers tried to engage Pamela in order to convince her to drop the gun or place the gun on the ground. We told her that we would be able to help her get through whatever trauma she was going through at the time. After a few moments Pamela looked directly at Deputy Magaña and yelled something at time. I could not hear exactly what was said because she yelled while looking at Deputy Magaña and I was located to Pamela’s left. It was clear she was agitated. She raised the gun and pointed it directly at Deputy Magaña. I believed that she was in the act of shooting Deputy Magaña. In order to stop the threat to Deputy Magaña’s life, I fired my duty weapon at Pamela. I did so believing that if I failed to act, she would have shot him. I fired approximately six rounds. She fell to the ground and, within seconds, myself and others rushed toward her. I assisted with first aid while an ambulance was called to the scene.”

Summary

All persons known to have relevant information regarding this investigation have been interviewed (or attempted), and all known pertinent records and evidence have been obtained and reviewed. BCI will continue to offer investigative assistance into any newly identified witnesses or information relative to this criminal investigation. BCI’s investigation into this officer-involved critical incident is concluded unless such new information/witnesses is/are identified through grand jury or other means.

Agents remain available for consultation and/or to perform any additional investigation, analysis, processing and/or other assistance/involvement you might deem to be necessary.

Contact Information

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The preceding information comprises only a portion of facts and circumstances collected during the investigation of the officer-involved shooting incident. For further review of specific information or documentation collected during the investigation, please refer to the individual reports and documents from which this summary was derived. Any questions regarding the content or context of the information contained in this document can be directed to the attention of Special Agent James Poole. SA Poole can be reached via email at James.poole@OhioAGO.gov or by telephone, at 614-370-4820.