



**Ohio Attorney General's Office
Bureau of Criminal Investigation
Prosecutor Summary**

Officer-Involved Critical Incident – 345 Lincoln Ave.,
Lancaster, OH 43130



To: Kyle Witt, Fairfield County Prosecutor
From: Aja Chung, Special Agent, Ohio BCI
Date: January 17, 2025
Involves: Chad Evangelista
BCI Case Number: 2024-2738

Investigative Request

On Tuesday, September 10, 2024, the Fairfield County Sheriff's Office requested the assistance of the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation's (BCI) Special Investigations Unit (SIU) in conducting an independent investigation into the facts and circumstances surrounding an officer-involved use of force incident. The incident occurred on September 7-8, 2024, over a span of nineteen (19) hours, when Chad Evangelista (Evangelista) was arrested by a Fairfield County deputy and transported to the Fairfield County Jail. While lodged at the jail, Evangelista suffered an apparent medical episode, became unresponsive, and was transported to a nearby hospital where he ultimately died.

Preface:

This report serves as a synopsis of the investigation into the September 7, 2024 officer-involved use of force in Fairfield 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 the involved law enforcement personnel's 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 Aja Chung

Assisting Investigative BCI Special Agents:

- SA Craig Call
- SA James Poole
- SA James Gore

BCI Investigative Supervisor:

- Special Agent Supervisor Kevin Barbeau

Summary of Process

The following is a 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 interviews of sixteen (16) deputies, corrections officers or officers who were directly involved or had some involvement at the scene or jail.
- Review of Franklin County Coroner's Office reports and findings.
- Obtained and reviewed open and closed-source biographical information on the involved subject, to include criminal history reports, OHLEG, driving records, etc.
- Review of all available dash camera, jail video and body-worn cameras (BWC) involved in the incident.
- 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 the department's incident reports and investigative materials pertaining to the incident, excluding any Garrity statements or information derived from any compelled statement.
- Verified the Ohio Peace Officer Training Commission (OPOTC) certification status of the law enforcement personnel.
- Medical records for Chad Evangelista were obtained via subpoena, and reviewed.
- EMS records review.

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Incident Overview

On September 7, 2024, Chad Evangelista (Evangelista) was arrested by the Fairfield County Sheriff's Office (FCSO) for disorderly conduct and obstructing official business and transported to the Fairfield County Jail (FCJ). Low-level force was used multiple times during the arrest and at the jail. While Evangelista was lodged at the Fairfield County Jail, he attempted to escape his jail cell on two separate occasions and physically resisted corrections officers when they came in contact with him. He was sprayed with OC spray on two separate occasions and placed in a restraint chair. Six and one-half (6.5) hours after Evangelista was removed from the restraint chair, he lost consciousness inside his cell. Medical aid was rendered until medics arrived and transported Evangelista to Fairfield Medical for further medical attention. Evangelista was ultimately transferred to Riverside Hospital where he later died on September 9, 2024.

Investigation

Autopsy Report

The autopsy report for Chad Evangelista was obtained from the Franklin County Coroner's Office. Todd Barr, M.D., performed an external autopsy on Evangelista on September 11, 2024. In his report, Todd Barr, M.D. stated that Evangelista's cause of death was determined to be from [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The manner of death was ruled [REDACTED]. The autopsy report noted no significant injuries. The toxicology report, authored by Daniel Baker, M.S., F-ABFT, indicated that Evangelista had [REDACTED] in his system.

Dispatch recordings

911 caller/Tammy Workman reported an unknown White male was walking in and out of traffic. Ms. Workman provided a physical description of Evangelista and what he was wearing. Ms. Workman advised Evangelista "did not seem right or normal."

Video Recordings

SA Chung reviewed body-worn camera (BWC) for [REDACTED], Lithopolis Police Department (LPD) Officers Wesley Barton and Kurtis Schmidt, and Franklin County Sheriff Deputy Richard Verhoeven.

BWC for [REDACTED] the arresting deputy, showed him making contact with Evangelista as he arrived to the scene, near 720 W. Waterloo St., Canal Winchester, OH.

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[REDACTED] was observed making multiple attempts to calm Evangelista down and to keep Evangelista from walking into the busy roadway. Evangelista appeared to be distraught and/or confused as he yelled for his mother. Evangelista was also seen walking in and out of the roadway multiple times.

[REDACTED] attempted to grab Evangelista, however Evangelista started running away from [REDACTED]. After a short foot pursuit, [REDACTED] caught up to Evangelista and grabbed hold of Evangelista's arm. A struggle ensued, causing [REDACTED] BWC to be knocked off the BWC magnetic mount and onto the ground. Continual commands were given to Evangelista as he was seen pulling away from [REDACTED] grasp; and eventually out of the BWC view.

With the assistance of an unknown male citizen, [REDACTED] was able to place handcuffs on Evangelista and he was ultimately transported to FCJ. [REDACTED] could be heard telling other officers at the scene that Evangelista had been secured with handcuffs before any other law enforcement back up arrived.

Upon arrival at FCJ, Evangelista was observed to be non-compliant with requests/orders made by FCJ corrections officers when they tried to remove him from the backseat of [REDACTED] cruiser. Evangelista was observed to using his body weight to plant himself in the seat.

Once inside the pre-booking area, Evangelista continued to use his body weight to push and/or pull towards and against the corrections officers escorting him into the jail. Once the handcuffs were removed, Evangelista remained in pre-booking.

Additional BWC

Franklin County Sheriff's Deputy Verhoeven's BWC footage started recording after Evangelista had been detained and was secured in the back seat of his cruiser. As Deputy Verhoeven spoke to Evangelista, Evangelista was observed to have a wet/sweaty face.

BWC from LPD Ofc. Schmidt and LPD Chief Barton captured [REDACTED] and Franklin County Deputy Verhoeven already engaged with Evangelista in the back seat of Deputy Verhoeven's cruiser. Both LPD's BWC's showed the handcuff safety checks (tightness and double-locked) [REDACTED] conducted prior to Evangelista being placed in the back seat of [REDACTED] cruiser. BWC for LPD Ofc. Schmidt captured him asking Evangelista if he wanted a medic to assess him. Evangelista was heard declining medical attention.

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Jail Video Footage

Footage was captured from ten (10) different cameras throughout the Fairfield County Jail, that spanned from Evangelista first being lodged to his medical transport to Fairfield Medical Center. Each camera recorded different angles that allowed the incident to be captured, providing over nineteen (19) hours of footage. Said footage was provided by the Fairfield Sheriff's Office.

Footage shows Evangelista being non-compliant with corrections officers attempting to remove him from [REDACTED] cruiser. This footage was similar to what was captured on [REDACTED] BWC upon his arrival at FCJ. FCJ correction officers could be seen pulling Evangelista from the back seat of the cruiser and ultimately escorting him towards the jail doors.

Once inside FCJ, Evangelista was observed to use his body weight to push and/or pull from the correction officers control. While in the pre-booking cell, Evangelista was observed trying to damage the cell camera and FCJ personnel could be seen ordering Evangelista to stop his actions. [REDACTED] sprayed Evangelista with OC spray after Evangelista charged at her and attempted to escape FCJ. Evangelista was then placed in a restraint chair and was seen kicking at corrections officers as they secured his limbs in the restraint chair. The OC spray that was deployed on multiple occasions did not appear to affect Evangelista.

Evangelista was ultimately removed from the restraint chair. During the removal process, Evangelista attempted to escape the cell but did not succeed. Evangelista remained in that booking cell until he suffered a medical emergency. Prior to his medical emergency, Evangelista was checked on, and provided food and water.

Footage also showed first aid being rendered from the time of his collapse inside the cell until his ambulance transport to the hospital.

Interviews

SA Chung identified and interviewed fourteen (14) law enforcement personnel regarding the incident and are listed below.

Fairfield County Sheriff's Office:

- [REDACTED]
- Deputy Luca Renner – no direct contact with Evangelista
- Deputy Benjamin Rodderick – no direct contact with Evangelista
- [REDACTED]

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- Corporal Austin Reeves
- Correction Officers (CO) Brock Vanhorn
- CO Landon Talbott
- CO Cody Factor
- CO Morgan Hoy – no direct contact with Evangelista
- CO Robert Kunkler (no longer employed with Fairfield Sheriff's Office)
- CO Sean Brentlinger (no longer employed with Fairfield Sheriff's Office)
- CO Samuel Keys (no longer employed with Fairfield Sheriff's Office)

Lithopolis Police Department

- Chief Wesley Barton
- Officer Kurtis Schmidt

The statements of those interviewed, deemed important by the author, have been compiled into a general overview of their involvement and the incident details in the following paragraph. Please refer to their separate interview reports and recorded audio interview for their detailed statement.

Those that had direct contact with Evangelista described his behavior as someone under the influence of drugs and no odor of alcohol emitting from his breath. All described Evangelista as having a vacant expression, being agitated and/or paranoid, profusely sweating and constantly moving. The officers having direct contact with Evangelista throughout the entirety of incident consistently described Evangelista's speech as unintelligible and his behavior as erratic. More detailed accounts can be found by reading the individual reports written by the interviewers and by reviewing the recordings of each interview.

No officers reported observing abusive actions or conduct toward Evangelista at any time during the incident.

Conclusion

All persons and pertinent records known to have relevant information regarding this investigation have been interviewed, obtained and reviewed. BCI will continue to offer investigative assistance into any newly identified witnesses or information related to this investigation. BCI's investigation into this use of force incident is concluded unless new information and/or witnesses are identified through grand jury or other means.

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Contact Information

The preceding information comprises only a portion of facts and circumstances collected during the investigation of the officer-involved critical 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 Aja Chung. SA Chung can be reached via email at Aja.Chung@OhioAGO.gov or by telephone, at (614) 208-3121.

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