



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



2022-1564
Officer Involved Critical Incident – 1132 Ashwood Drive, South
Charleston, OH (L)

Investigative Activity: Interview with Witness
Involves: Ralph D. Sowers (W)
Date of Activity: 07/24/2022
Activity Location: Sowers, Ralph D. – Home – 1135 Ashwood Drive, South
Charleston, OH 45368, Clark County
Author: SA David Wieging, #122

Narrative:

On July 24, 2022, at approximately 1837 hours, Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) Special Agent David Wieging (SA Wieging) interviewed Ralph Sowers (Sowers) at his residence located at 1135 Ashwood Drive, South Charleston, Ohio (Harmony Estates Mobile Home Community). The purpose of the interview with Sowers was to obtain all relevant information regarding the activities that occurred on this date at the residence of 1132 Ashwood Drive, South Charleston. It was reported that the Clark County Sheriff's Office (CCSO) responded to the 1132 Ashwood Drive address upon receiving a complaint that Jodie Arbuckle (Arbuckle) may have been shot inside of the residence while checking on the welfare of her son, Cole White (White). CCSO Deputy Yates was one of the responding deputies and was reportedly struck by gunfire when he entered the residence. As the incident progressed, BCI Agents learned that Deputy Yates had succumbed to his injuries. BCI Agents further learned that Arbuckle and White were found deceased inside the residence after it caught fire.

This report only summarizes the information deemed by the author of the most relevance to the investigation and does not purport to contain all questions and answers from the interview. Further, this report was placed in a chronology to aid the reader's overall understanding of the information obtained during the interview and may not be reflective of the actual sequencing of questions. It is suggested that the full recording be reviewed to clarify any content or contextual questions regarding the information from the interview.

Sowers' wife, Kelly (K. Sowers), was present during the interview and participated in the conversation. The Sowers have been residents in the community for 27 years and know White and Arbuckle. Sowers shared that he left his house about 0930 hours to go to Speedway and when he returned about 15 minutes later he observed a female, believed to be Arbuckle's wife, standing in the street. Sowers believed she was on the phone with Arbuckle who was in White's residence and she appeared calm. This isn't the first time that they have seen Arbuckle at

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White's residence doing a well check. Arbuckle has had White's friends also check in on him, one of which was "Tylar" who had learned that White was home on Friday (22nd) with a gun in his bedroom. Tylar was present at the scene and had been interviewed by BCI.

After lighting a cigarette, Sowers heard "pop, pop," turned around and heard Arbuckle's wife scream "Jodie! Jodie!". Both Sowers and K. Sowers called 911 after approaching Arbuckle's wife and Sowers related he informed dispatch that White does indeed have weapons. After hearing the two shots, there was no activity until the police arrived on scene. Originally, there was a 3-man team with a fourth officer joining later whom Sowers lost sight of. The only officer Sowers observed entering the residence was the officer that kicked in the door, and once he stepped inside, Sowers heard the two shots immediately. K. Sowers also heard the two shots. This officer never came out of the residence and his two other partners sought cover.

After the officer went down, nothing else happened until other officers arrived and that's when they heard gunfire again with more rounds being fired. Sowers believed another officer was shot in the leg. Officers then began advising residents in the community to get back and go inside. Sowers stated SWAT had not arrived yet.

Sowers commented every officer handled the situation "100% professionally." According to one officer that spoke with the Sowers it was revealed that law enforcement was not able to return fire and all of the rounds fired came from White. Sowers related that before the fire, SWAT used their armored vehicle to retrieve the down officers.

Sowers said he did not hear anyone yell out from inside the residence. While the residence was on fire, they did hear additional rounds being discharged, but they were uncertain if White was shooting or if the heat contributed the rounds going off.

The Sowers did not have any recorded documentation of the events that transpired. They shared that they have known White since he was 3 years old and he was a nice kid. They further shared that White was diagnosed bipolar and he had been off his medication for months.

SA Wieging's interview with Sowers ended at approximately 1846 hours.

A copy of the audio-recorded interview with Sowers is attached to this report.

Attachments:

Attachment # 01: 2022-07-24 Audio Interview with Ralph Sowers

Exhibit 1

Included as a separate file.