



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



2024-3954

Officer Involved Critical Incident - 3487 Belmont Avenue,
Youngstown, Ohio, 44505

Investigative Activity: Witness Officer Interview
Involves: Nicholas Ryan (W)
Activity Date: 12/16/2024
Activity Location: Liberty Township Police Department
Authoring Agent: SA Matthew Armstrong

Narrative:

On Monday, December 16, 2024, at 2013 hours, Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) Special Agent (SA) Matthew Armstrong (SA Armstrong) and SA Nick Valente (SA Valente) interviewed Liberty Township Police Department (LTPD) Officer Nicholas Ryan (Ryan). The interview took place in a conference room at the LTPD. The interview was audio and video recorded. The video recording has been stored in evidence.com as reference item C. The audio recording has been attached to this report.

Officer Ryan was identified as being a police officer who witnessed and/or had some level of involvement in the December 16, 2024 officer-involved shooting which occurred in the area of 3487 Belmont Avenue, Youngstown, Ohio, 44505, Ohio. Officer Ryan did not discharge a firearm during the incident. The purpose of the interview was to obtain all relevant information about the incident known or observed by officer Ryan.

This report only summarizes the information deemed by the author to be 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 elicited 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. References to times on the recording correspond to the time elapsed on the video recorded interview.

At the time of the interview, Officer Ryan had not reviewed any video recordings of the incident

Officer Ryan's radio call sign on December 16, 2024, was 928. He has been employed by the LTPD for approximately 2 years and 11 months. He had not worked at another law enforcement agency prior to working at the LTPD. During the incident, Officer Ryan

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wore his standard police uniform which he also wore during the interview. It included an external ballistic vest carrier and a duty belt. He drove a marked police cruiser #09, which was a Ford Explorer marked with Liberty Police decals and emergency lights. He considered himself to be well-represented as a police officer during the incident. He stated he was not under the influence of any substance that would impair his memory or judgment during the incident or during the interview with BCI.

During the incident, he wore a body camera mounted to the right side of his chest. It along with his cruiser dash camera were on during the incident. He did not know the involved subject and had no previous encounters with the subject.

Earlier that day, a BOLO (be on the lookout) was issued for a vehicle with stolen license plates. Prior to the incident, officers received a Flock alert indicating the vehicle from the BOLO had entered the township. Officer Rice believed he had located the vehicle and Detective Altier confirmed the involved vehicle's location and presence. Officers then set up in the area but out of view of the involved vehicle. The plan was to converge on the vehicle and box it in, so it had nowhere to go.

Once everyone was in place, Captain Buhala gave the call to "take down" the vehicle. He drove to the vehicle which was located in the parking lot in front of Harbor Freight. Det. Altier was in front of Officer Ryan in an unmarked vehicle. Det. Altier parked directly in front of the subject vehicle. Officer Ryan drove around Det. Altier with his emergency lights on and parked near the front driver side area of the subject vehicle.

Since this was a high-risk felony stop, his first goal was to get to a position of cover. Officer Ryan exited his cruiser and moved to the rear portion of his cruiser. He could hear another officer giving commands. Once there, he realized he was in a crossfire situation with officers positioned at the rear portion of the subject vehicle. He then ran past the driver's side of the subject vehicle to the driver's side area of Officer Christian Thoma's vehicle. As he did so, he could see the male driver of the subject vehicle was a white male.

The subject then put the vehicle in reverse. He could hear the engine revving and saw the subject vehicle back up and strike Captain Buhala's vehicle. At that point, he heard a gunshot. There was a brief pause, then the subject vehicle began driving away, and he heard another shot. The subject vehicle took the same path Officer Ryan had just come from. He did not see the subject vehicle strike his cruiser, but after it passed his cruiser, he could see damage on the front of his cruiser. The subject vehicle then crashed into the front of Harbor Freight.

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When he heard the gunshots, he did not know who was firing. He feared for his safety throughout the incident and explained that when the subject vehicle reversed into Captain Buhala's vehicle, they were all outside of their vehicles. He believed the subject was trying to flee and he feared for the safety of the other officers because he did not know where they were.

After the vehicle crashed into Harbor Freight, the female was given commands. He saw her exit the passenger's side of the vehicle. However, he was focused on the driver's side and was not involved in securing the female passenger. He could not see the driver's hands or body but knew the subject was not showing his hands, despite being given commands to do so.

Another officer obtained a shield and officers approached the vehicle. They indicated the subject had a visible injury. At that time, he secured his firearm and assisted with rendering aid to the subject.

Officer Ryan did not know where [REDACTED] was positioned when firing because he could not see [REDACTED]. He did not know if there were other bystanders in the immediate area because he was focused on making sure he was out of the way once the subject vehicle began moving.

When asked if there was any additional information, he would like to add to his statement Officer Ryan said he wanted to reiterate "The suspect, to my best knowledge looked at me in a fully marked police uniform. I was in a fully marked police vehicle in front of his vehicle. Um, and we were giving loud verbal commands to him that, um, I feel like he would have heard from inside his motor vehicle" (18:05).

Officer Ryan said the officers were giving the subject commands for approximately 10 seconds prior to the vehicle moving in reverse. After the subject reversed into Captain Buhala's vehicle, there was a 3 – 5 second pause where he thought the subject was going to stop. Then the engine began revving again, and the vehicle took off into the front of Harbor Freight. He said all the cruisers, including the two unmarked cruisers, had emergency lights activated.

The interview concluded at approximately 2033 hours.

References:

Reference Item B – Officer Interviews

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Attachments:

1. 2024-12-16 Audio Interview of Officer Nick Ryan

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