



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



2024-1814
Officer Involved Critical Incident – 8401 South Dixie Highway,
Rudolph, Ohio 43462

Investigative Activity: Interview with Officer
Involves: Michael Shaffer (W)
Date of Activity: 06/21/2024
Activity Location: Wood County Sheriffs Office – Business – 1960 East Gypsy Lane
Road, Bowling Green, OH 43402
Author: SA Joshua S. Rammel, #175

Narrative:

On June 21, 2024, Special Agent (SA) Josh Rammel (Rammel) and SA Jason Snyder (Snyder) conducted an interview with Deputy Michael Shaffer (Shaffer) of the Wood County Sheriff's Office (WCSO) regarding the Officer Involved Critical Incident (OICI) involving the WCSO and deceased individual George Eric Taylor (Eric) that occurred on June 16, 2024, at 8401 South Dixie Highway, Rudolph, Ohio.

The interview was conducted at the WCSO located at 1960 East Gypsy Lane Road, Bowling Green, Ohio. Also present during the interview was George Gerken (Gerken) of the Ohio Patrolman's Benevolent Association (OPBA).

The interview was recorded using a digital audio recorder. A copy of the recording was attached to this investigation.

The interview began with SA Snyder informing Shaffer that he was speaking with the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) on his own free will and that there was no obligation for Shaffer to speak with BCI. Shaffer acknowledged that he understood, and that he understood that the interview was not a Garrity interview conducted for internal investigations. Shaffer agreed to continue with the interview.

Shaffer provided identification information such as his date of birth (April 9, 1987) and his WCSO Unit Number (W70), which is the number that Shaffer uses and responds to over the radio. Shaffer also mentioned that it was the same number assigned to his cruiser, and that he is the only individual who uses that particular cruiser.

Shaffer indicated that he has been a law enforcement officer for five years with two years at the WCSO.

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Approved By SAS Scott A. Stranahan on
07/29/2024

Shaffer advised that during the OICI he was wearing his uniform-of-the-day, which was described as the basic Ohio Sheriff's Deputy uniform. Shaffer also stated he carried his issued Springfield 45 while on duty. Shaffer described where he carried his weapon and the remainder of the equipment located on his duty belt.

Shaffer stated that he was wearing a body camera during the course of the OICI and that the body camera is issued only to him.

Shaffer indicated that he worked the 6pm-6am shift on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday June 14-16 during the timeframe of the OICI. Shaffer stated that he did not work any overtime the day prior to the OICI, and that he was properly rested. Shaffer mentioned that he was not on any medication nor had corrective lenses.

Shaffer informed agents that he was a member of the Special Response Team (SRT) and that he was certified with Critical Incident Training (CIT).

SA Snyder gave Shaffer free reign to describe his shift leading up to the response to a wellness check at 8401 South Dixie Highway on June 16, 2024.

Shaffer advised that Deputy Samuel Miller (Miller) was the first one on scene. Shaffer mentioned that as he was approaching the front of the house, he heard Miller say that Eric had a knife and, with the previously provided information that stated Eric was suicidal, Shaffer ran towards the entrance of the house and through the garage door to join Miller.

Shaffer stated that once he entered the house, he saw Miller had his gun out behind his back, and that Eric's friend, identified as Matt Patton (Patton), was also in the residence speaking with Eric. Shaffer indicated that as he entered the house, Eric stood up from the couch and pointed the knife he had towards Shaffer. Shaffer stated that Eric kept posturing towards him in a threatening manner and kept talking about the "reactionary gap". Shaffer also mentioned that the knife was a large Ka-bar knife at least 7 inches in length, and that Eric also had a large bottle of alcohol in his hand.

Shaffer advised that Eric kept insulting Shaffer and threatening violence towards Shaffer. Shaffer told agents that due to the negative reaction he was receiving from Eric, Shaffer contacted Sergeant Chris Reynolds (Reynolds) in order for Reynolds to take Shaffer's position inside the house as a way to help ease Eric. Shaffer told SA Rammel that he was only in the house for approximately 10 minutes and spent the whole time trying to convince Eric to put down his knife with no success.

Shaffer mentioned that once he exited back into the garage, Shaffer remained in position just in case the incident got worse. Shaffer stated that he went to his cruiser to get a trauma bag before returning back to the garage. Shaffer indicated that he could hear Miller, Reynolds, Patton, and Eric inside the residence, but could not really tell what they were saying. Shaffer advised he held this position until Reynolds came back out and told Shaffer that Eric wanted to speak with him again.

Shaffer returned back into the residence under the impression that Eric wanted to apologize to him, but Eric began asking questions such as inquiring as to why Shaffer had gloves on.

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Shaffer advised that he believed Eric was asking questions in a way to try and get Shaffer "riled up". Eric also kept asking Shaffer about what Shaffer would have done different at the beginning of their interaction. Shaffer stated that he was not answering the questions the way Eric would have liked and Shaffer left the residence again.

Shaffer mentioned that Patton eventually came up to him and told Shaffer that Eric had multiple guns in his house. Shaffer passed the information on to Reynolds.

Eric eventually told Reynolds to make Shaffer leave the residence completely. Shaffer stated that he left the residence and staged with Emergency Medical Services (EMS) before being dispatched to a separate call in Wood County. Shaffer mentioned that he switched his radio to a different channel when he left for the new call and did not hear what happened leading to the shooting. Shaffer clarified that he was no longer present when the shooting occurred.

Shaffer indicated that he went to several other locations throughout Wood County before being called back to 8401 South Dixie Highway in order to start a log for all individuals on scene after the shooting occurred.

Shaffer stated that Eric was initially acting suicidal, but when Shaffer arrived on scene Eric became confrontational toward Shaffer. Shaffer mentioned that he agreed to put his gun away if Eric would put his knife down, but Eric kept refusing to put his knife down. Shaffer stressed that Eric pinpointed Shaffer as the "bad guy" or "threat", so all aggression was directed toward Shaffer. Shaffer expressed that he kept trying to de-escalate the situation, but Shaffer was not having any success speaking with Eric. Shaffer also mentioned that Eric threatened to "fuck him (Shaffer) up". Shaffer indicated that Eric was "twice my (Shaffer's) size" and that the scene was very intense. Shaffer also told agents that Eric kept asking "are you ready" directed towards WCSO, and that Shaffer, Miller, and Reynolds kept trying to convince Eric to put his knife down and seek medical assistance. Shaffer even mentioned that Patton was trying to talk Eric down from hurting anyone or himself and that Patton was helpful when it came to speaking with Eric. Shaffer advised that Patton had "good intentions" and "was not going to leave the house".

Shaffer stated that he did not see any firearms in Eric's possession or in the house, but Shaffer reiterated that Eric was armed with a knife the entire time. Shaffer advised that he knew Eric had guns in the house due to being alerted of such by dispatch but did not see any. Shaffer mentioned that when Patton told him about guns being in the house, Patton also informed Shaffer that Eric always has a handgun in his possession.

Shaffer told SA Rammel that Eric kept making comments about being within the reactionary gap while holding a knife. Shaffer advised that there was a couch between him and Eric and did not know for sure what type of clothing Eric had on his lower body but confirmed that Eric was wearing a hoodie. Shaffer stated that per his training, a knife is seen as a lethal weapon and that Shaffer would never attempt to use a less lethal device against an individual utilizing a deadly weapon.

At this time SA Snyder requested that Shaffer draw a diagram of Eric's house in order to get a better idea as to where Shaffer's location was to Eric during the time Shaffer was present at the scene.

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Shaffer completed the sketch and described the locations of Eric, Miller, Patton, and himself during the timeframe where Shaffer was attempting to deescalate the situation.

When Shaffer completed the sketch, he signed the sketch and provided it to SA Rammel and SA Snyder.

At that time SA Snyder inquired if there was any additional information that Shaffer deemed important. Shaffer advised that he just remembered Eric making comments about the whole thing being "part of my (Eric's) game". Shaffer stated that he heard Eric saying this towards the end of the time that Shaffer was present. Shaffer again reiterated that he believed Eric wanted Shaffer to come back inside for other reasons than for Eric to apologize.

Shaffer mentioned that he believed he told SA Rammel and SA Snyder everything he could think of and clarified that he was no longer present when the actual shooting took place.

At the conclusion of the interview Gerken explained to Shaffer what was going to happen moving forward involving the investigation and how the legal process was going to work. Shaffer expressed that he understood, and the interview ended.

The sketch provided by Shaffer was attached to this investigation.

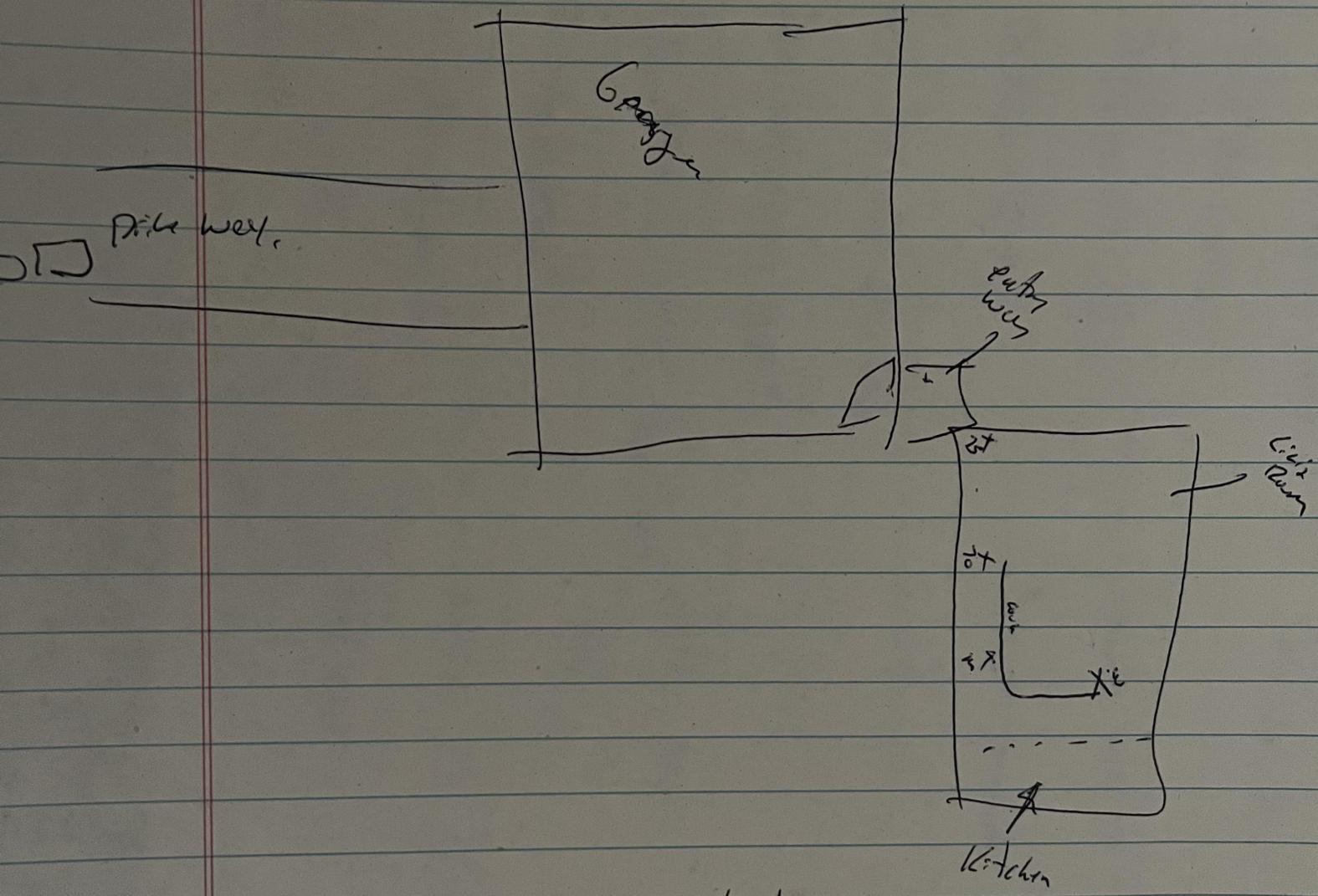
This report only summarizes the information deemed by the author to be of the most relevance to the investigation and does not purport to contain all questions and answers from the interview. Further, this report was placed in a chronology to aid the reader's overall understanding of the information 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.

Attachments:

Attachment # 01: michael shaffer interview 2024-06-21

Attachment # 02: shaffer sketch

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6/21/24

Michael Shaffer

12:01pm

W70

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