



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



2024-3649
Officer Involved Critical Incident - 6880 Sunset Strip Ave
NW, Room #220, North Canton, Ohio, 44720

Investigative Activity: Witness Officer Interview
Involves: Officer Matthew Machamer (W)
Activity Date: 12/19/2024
Activity Location: BCI - Richfield
Authoring Agent: SA Allison Fletcher

Narrative:

On Thursday, December 19, 2024, at 0906 hours, Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) Special Agent (SA) Matthew Armstrong (Armstrong) and SA Allison Fletcher (Fletcher) interviewed Canton Police Department (CPD) Officer Matthew Machamer (Machamer), who was accompanied by his attorney, Ty Graham, from the Fraternal Order of Police. The interview took place at BCI – Richfield, located at 4055 Highlander Parkway, Richfield, Ohio 44286. The interview was audio and video recorded.

Officer Machamer was identified as being a police officer who witnessed and/or had some level of involvement in the November 18, 2024 officer-involved shooting which occurred in the area of 6880 Sunset Strip Avenue in North Canton, Ohio. Reportedly, Officer Machamer did not discharge a firearm during the course of the incident. The purpose of the interview was to obtain all relevant information of the incident known or observed by this officer.

Officer Machamer stated that his radio call sign on November 18, 2024, was 243. He has been employed by the CPD for about four years. He has been a police officer for a total of four years. During the incident, Officer Machamer wore his standard police uniform with a metal police badge affixed to it. He also wore an external ballistic vest and duty belt. He drove a marked CPD police vehicle that was equipped with emergency lights and sirens. He considered himself to be well-represented as a police officer during the incident. He stated that 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.

Officer Machamer has been a member of the Canton Regional SWAT team (Canton SWAT) for approximately two and a half years. He was required to attend annual 40-hour trainings and monthly 16-hour trainings throughout his career with Canton SWAT.

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Officer Machamer reviewed body camera footage from his body camera, [REDACTED], Sergeant Eric Lee's, and Officer Dylan Shroyer's. He indicated that he reviewed the other officers' body camera footage due to his body camera not capturing his less-lethal use of force. What he observed in the body camera footage was primarily what he recalled occurring during the incident.

On the day of the incident, Officer Machamer was working his normal shift as a uniform patrol officer for CPD. He first became aware of the incident at Sunset Strip Avenue NW, when he observed information logged by dispatch on his mobile data terminal (MDT). Information provided stated that the U.S. Marshals requested the assistance of Canton SWAT members at 6880 Sunset Strip Avenue NW, Room #220 in North Canton, Ohio. The U.S. Marshals also requested an additional CPD officer (also a member of Canton SWAT), who was working uniform patrol, to respond to the scene. The additional officer requested was [REDACTED], who was a [REDACTED].

Officer Machamer began scanning the Canton SWAT radio channel, SPEC OPS, and was learning information as the incident evolved. Dispatch was also updating information within the call for service screen on Officer Machamer's MDT. The information he learned included: the subject's name was James Vanest (Vanest), there was a federal warrant for a weapons charge for Vanest, and Vanest pointed a firearm at federal agents. Officer Machamer also took it upon himself to look up Vanest through a law enforcement database to gain background information and criminal history.

From monitoring the Canton SWAT radio traffic, Officer Machamer learned Vanest had fired at gun at officers on scene, and he also shot an officer. Officer Machamer later learned the officer who was shot was [REDACTED].

Officer Machamer became involved in the incident after a "full team activation" was sent via text/alert to his personal cellphone. Officer Machamer responded to the location of the incident in his marked police vehicle. Based on the information he had gathered from monitoring the SPEC OPS radio traffic, Officer Machamer believed his response to the situation was elevated and the level of threat was much higher. He went on to state, "you're going into a position where you know this individual (Vanest) in my head is trying to murder us" [11:05].

When Officer Machamer arrived on scene, he maintained his normal patrol uniform and exchanged his external patrol uniform vest for his SWAT uniform external vest. There was no active gunfire at the time of his arrival.

After approaching the armored vehicle, Officer Machamer was assigned a task that

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involved delivering a pepper ball gun to another officer on scene. In order for Officer Machamer to deliver the gun to the other officer, he had to cross the area where Vanest had been shooting. Officer Machamer believed there was no safe way to deliver the less-lethal firearm to the other officer "based on his (Vanest) actions of trying to kill us" and did not complete the initial task [12:25].

After putting the pepper ball gun back, Officer Machamer heard gunfire. He believed the gunfire was from a rifle, but he was initially unsure who was firing. Officer Machamer then heard CPD [REDACTED] state over the radio that the subject was pointing a firearm at him. This led Officer Machamer to believe it was [REDACTED] who was firing his gun.

Not long after [REDACTED] fired his gun, Officer Machamer was requested by Sergeant Lee to assist with entry into Room #220 by using a 40mm launcher (less-lethal firearm). Officer Machamer explained that the 40mm launcher was loaded with foam OC, which upon impact on a target, would become an irritant. Officer Machamer was specifically assigned to "launch"/fire the less-lethal round at Vanest upon entry for purposes of verification that Vanest was not responding to their commands due to incapacitation. Officer Machamer believed there was a strong likelihood that Vanest was feigning incapacitation and could ambush officers.

Vanest's last known location was between the bed and the wall of the room. That specific location was a small space and it would be difficult for officers to go "hands on" with Vanest should he decide to engage with officers. Based on those circumstances, Officer Machamer fired one less-lethal round at the subject's thigh area.

Officer Machamer was uncertain if commands were given upon entry into Room #220. He indicated officers making entry had gas masks on which often made it difficult for commands to be given or even be clearly heard. He did mention that commands were previously given, and it was clear the subject was not "surrendering."

Officer Machamer feared for the safety of himself and other officers on scene. He stated Vanest was "a lethal threat, he posed a massive risk of serious physical harm towards us" [15:50]. The last thing Officer Machamer was thinking about prior to making entry into the room was that Vanest had just pointed a firearm at an officer and previously shot another officer. Officer Machamer described making entry into the room as "scary" because Vanest had attempted to "murder" many of the officers out there [19:35].

Officer Machamer also explained Vanest was a threat to the surrounding area. Based on the location of Room #220, there was a highway not far from the shooting area and

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a large business district just beyond the highway. Officer Machamer explained Vanest was firing his gun in the direction of innocent drivers on the highway and could have struck someone.

The interview concluded at approximately 0928 hours.

The interview was audio recorded. The audio recording was attached to this report. Please see the attachments for further details.

References:

Reference Item I – Officer Interviews – Evidence.com

Attachments:

1. 2024-12-19 Audio Recorded Witness Officer Interview – Matthew Machamer

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