

Minnehaha County Sheriff's Office Shooting Summary Detailing Events That Took Place on September 23, 2017

On 9-23-17, the South Dakota Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI) was called by the Minnehaha County Sheriff's Office and notified of an officer involved shooting that had occurred at 6200 North Cliff Avenue, Lot 153 near the city of Sioux Falls, South Dakota. The shooting resulted in the suspect, Christopher Scott Sanftleben, being shot one time. Sanftleben survived his injuries. A deputy with the Minnehaha County Sheriff's Office, Deputy Taylor Court, was the deputy involved in the shooting. The following is a synopsis of the events that occurred on 9-23-17 and the investigation that was conducted by the DCI.

Synopsis

On 9-23-17 at about 1:21 AM, Sioux Falls Metro Dispatch received a call from a female stating her husband is being abusive, demanding, and very intoxicated. The female stated she had left the house and was calling from a neighbor's house, Lot 151.

Minnehaha County Deputy Taylor Court was notified and responded from Brandon, SD. Deputy Court arrived at the trailer park at approximately 1:32 AM. A second deputy, Deputy Tanner Cornay, was also dispatched to this call and arrived just after the shots were fired.

Deputy Court saw the male subject standing on the deck as he drove past the trailer house. Deputy Court proceeded and parked on the north side of the trailer house near lot 153. Deputy Court then exited his vehicle and immediately saw the barrel of a rifle in the hands of the subject who was on the deck of this residence. Deputy Court took up position on the passenger rear side of his patrol vehicle and began giving verbal commands and firing six rounds from his duty issued firearm.

At about 1:34 AM, Deputy Court advised dispatch communications, "Shots fired." Sanftleben was shot one time in the lower chest area. The bullet remained inside his body.

After the shot, Sanftleben was located lying on the ramp portion of the deck with the gun in close proximity to him. Deputy Court kicked the gun out of the immediate reach of Chris and began to render aid. Deputy Court performed CPR on Sanftleben until a time when EMS arrived and took over.

Sanftleben was transported to a Sioux Falls hospital where he was treated for a bullet wound to the chest. Deputy Court did not sustain any injuries. The crime scene was secured by the Sioux Falls Police Department, the Minnehaha County Sheriff's Office, and the South Dakota Highway Patrol until DCI arrived.

DCI made contact with Deputy Court at the Sioux Falls Law Enforcement Center. DCI documented Deputy Court was wearing his department issued uniform, which clearly marks him as a Police Officer. Deputy Courts' blood, urine, weapon, and magazines were secured, documented, and inventoried. The inventory showed the following:

- One Sig Sauer P226 handgun with six live rounds in the magazine and one live round taken from the chamber.
- Deputy Court's remaining two .40mm magazines each contained 12 live rounds of ammunition.

Review of Deputy Court's and Deputy Cornay's in-car video, 9-1-1 calls, and dispatch logs

DCI reviewed the in-car video from both Deputy Court's and Deputy Cornay's dash cameras. The video from Deputy Court's vehicle shows him entering the trailer park and driving past trailer 153. Deputy Court is heard talking with dispatch advising he has arrived and advising Deputy Cornay where he is located in the trailer park.

When contact was made with Sanftleben, Deputy Court can be heard giving loud, verbal commands to Sanftleben to, "Put the gun down."

The shooting was not captured on either dash camera video, but in Deputy Cornay's dash camera video, Deputy Court was seen standing at the rear passenger side near the trunk just after the shots had been fired.

According to the recorded 9-1-1 call, Sanftleben's wife was on the phone with dispatch when Deputy Court arrived and the shooting incident occurred. She can be heard advising dispatch he has a pellet gun and that is when the shots were heard.

Dispatch logs show Deputy Court was dispatched to 6200 North Cliff Avenue, Lot 153 in Sioux Falls for the domestic assault report. Deputy Court arrived at approximately 1:32 AM and notified dispatch of shots fired at approximately 1:34 AM. Deputy Court notified dispatch he had fired his duty weapon and requested EMS. Dispatch logs are consistent with events heard on the 9-1-1 call, in-car dash camera video, and witness statements.

Shooting Scene Investigation and Interviews

Based on DCI interviews with Deputy Taylor Court, Deputy Tanner Cornay, Christopher Sanftleben, his wife, other witnesses, and the scene investigation, the following information was gathered during this investigation.

When DCI arrived on scene, two Minnehaha County Sheriff's Office patrol cars were observed. Six spent shell casings were located and recovered, five spent bullets were located and recovered, the deputies' and the subject's weapons were recovered, and interviews were conducted.

On 9-25-17, DCI interviewed Deputy Court. Deputy Court advised he was dispatched to a possible domestic assault call at 6200 North Cliff Avenue, Lot 153 at approximately 1:25 AM. Deputy Court was advised no weapons were involved but a pellet gun may be in the residence.

Deputy Court advised as he was driving north, he observed what he believed to be the trailer in question and a male subject standing on the deck. Deputy Court advised as he drove past this trailer and the male subject on the deck, they locked eyes and the male subject then turned and

went back into the trailer house. Deputy Court explained how he had a sense and a feeling that something wasn't right.

Deputy Court then explained that he drove past the trailer and parked to the north and faced his patrol car west. Deputy Court then explained when exiting his patrol car, he heard the sound of a door opening and closing and then observed the same male subject and the barrel of a gun. The male subject was on the deck and was holding the gun up in a shooting position.

Deputy Court then went to the passenger rear side of his patrol car and began to give loud, verbal commands to "Drop the gun." Sanftleben initially had the barrel of the gun pointing in Deputy Court's direction and ultimately pointed the gun at him, which is when Deputy Court fired his duty weapon. Deputy Court believed Sanftleben was "hunting for him". Deputy Court then demonstrated how the subject was "sweeping" the gun in his direction. Deputy Court believed this gun to be a hunting rifle.

On 10-4-17, DCI interviewed Christopher Sanftleben at a Sioux Falls hospital. During the interview, Sanftleben confirmed drinking too much and was angry and upset. He damaged items in his trailer house including the stove, TV, and his wife's cell phone. Sanftleben said he believed his wife was in fear of him at this point and acknowledged that she had left the house.

Sanftleben then described going outside to shoot a rabbit. Sanftleben was unsure where his wife went, but assumed she was at the next door neighbor's house.

While outside, Sanftleben had the pellet gun raised when he heard someone yelling at him to, "get down". Sanftleben was unsure who was yelling at him, but because of the situation, Sanftleben assumed it was likely a law enforcement officer.

Sanftleben said he was trying to lie down on the ramp portion of the deck when he was shot. Sanftleben said it may have been possible he pointed the gun at the officer as he was trying to get down. When asked about the description of the pellet gun, Sanftleben described it as looking like a real gun, like an assault rifle.

Interviews were conducted with other witnesses. These witnesses reported seeing Sanftleben exit the house with the gun in his hands. One witness stated the gun was up to his shoulder in a shooting position. This witness said, "Chris had the look of the devil in him." The witnesses described seeing Sanftleben crouching down and pointing the gun to the north of the trailer house in a raised shooting position.

DCI conducted interviews at two Sioux Falls bars where Sanftleben had been earlier in the evening. Bar employees described Sanftleben as being drunk, angry, and not very nice earlier that evening. Sanftleben had been removed from a bar because of trying to start a fight with a bouncer. Sanftleben made a comment to one of the bartenders that he wanted to die tonight.

South Dakota Forensic Laboratory Testing

The South Dakota Forensic Laboratory examined the spent shell casings and the fired rounds found at the shooting scene. It was determined the casings and the rounds were fired from Deputy Court's duty weapon.

The pellet gun was also examined by the South Dakota Forensic Laboratory and it was determined the pellet gun was functional and was found to have a muzzle velocity of approximately 895 fps (feet per second), capable of causing serious bodily injury. At the time the gun was seized, the pellet gun was not loaded.

Medical Reports and Criminal History

- Six (6) rounds were fired and one (1) round entered Christopher Sanftleben's lower chest area and did not exit. This round was later removed by hospital surgeons.
- A blood and urine sample was taken from Deputy Court after the shooting. Tests of these samples were negative for both drugs and alcohol.
- A blood and urine sample was taken from Christopher Sanftleben after the shooting incident. Christopher Sanftleben's blood test showed .233 blood alcohol level.
- A criminal history check for Christopher Sanftleben shows numerous charges and convictions in both South Dakota and Iowa for DUI, simple assault, domestic assault, violation of a protection order, and possession of explosives with criminal intent.

Investigation Results

Based on the totality of the circumstances, a reasonable officer present at the scene utilized deadly force in a situation that was tense, uncertain, and rapidly evolving. Deputy Court observed what he believed to be a deadly weapon pointed at him by Sanftleben. Christopher Sanftleben had the means and opportunity to cause serious bodily injury and was a clear and present danger to Deputy Court at the time.

It is the conclusion of this report and the Attorney General that Deputy Court was justified in firing his weapon and using lethal force.

Based on the investigation conducted by the DCI, the crime scene reconstruction, evidence collected at the scene, witness statements, and statements made by Deputy Court, all were found to be consistent with the described events that occurred on 9/23/2017 in Minnehaha County.

Officer Involved Shooting - Minnehaha County Sheriffs Office
Date of Incident: 09/23/2017
Map Drawn By: Trooper Angel Duran-Garcia



