

Rapid City Police Department Officer Involved Shooting Summary Detailing Events That Took Place January 18, 2023

On January 18, 2023, the Rapid City Police Department (RCPD) requested the South Dakota Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI) investigate an officer involved shooting that occurred at an apartment complex in Rapid City. A RCPD Police Officer discharged their duty pistol during an armed confrontation with a subject, identified as Ira Julian Wright. Wright was pronounced deceased as a result of gunshot wounds. The following is a synopsis of the events that occurred on January 18, 2023, and the subsequent investigation which was conducted by the DCI.

SYNOPSIS

On January 18, 2023, RCPD Officer #1 was on duty as a member of the Street Crimes Unit (SCU). At around 10:18 PM, Officer #1 was on foot inside Building #100 Surfwood Drive. Officer #1 was attempting to contact a female subject at an apartment inside the building on suspicion of an active Warrant. Officer #1 walked outside the building to check the back window to determine if anyone was attempting to flee the apartment. As Officer #1 went around the building, they observed Ira Wright walking with a blue backpack. The subsequent investigation revealed that Wright had fled through the window of the apartment after Officer #1 knocked on the interior door.

Officer #1 attempted to contact Wright, who fled on foot toward Building #20. Wright discarded the backpack as he ran. Wright was in possession of a .22 Magnum revolver during this pursuit, unbeknown to Officer #1. After Wright failed to comply with verbal commands to stop, Officer #1 deployed a Taser on Wright as he ran into the front door of Building #20. The Taser had no effect and Wright continued to flee up the first stairwell inside the building. As Officer #1 continued to chase Wright up the second flight of stairs, Wright turned toward Officer #1 with the revolver pointed in their direction. Officer #1 identified that Wright was armed and drew their duty pistol, shooting Wright multiple times. Wright fell at the top of the second flight of stairs and remained motionless.

Secondary officers arrived within seconds of the shooting, attempted life saving measures, and requested medical units to respond. Wright was pronounced deceased at the scene. Officer #1's Glock 9MM duty pistol was secured by a supervisor after the shooting. The shooting incident was captured by Officer #1's body worn camera.

During the timeframe of the shooting incident, a subject associated with Wright retrieved his discarded backpack and fled from law enforcement into an apartment. The backpack was later recovered during the execution of a Search Warrant and found to contain evidence of drug distribution.

The Pennington County Sheriff's Office secured the scene. DCI Special Agents and a Meade County Sheriff's Office Investigator conducted a scene examination, witness interviews, officer processing and executed a Search Warrant for additional evidence. Nine cartridge casings were recovered which was consistent with Officer #1's issued 9MM ammunition. A .22 caliber revolver was recovered near Wright's body. The revolver cylinder and six .22 Magnum cartridges were located in proximity to the revolver.

Agents documented that Officer #1 was wearing their RCPD issued uniform. Officer #1's duty firearm was documented and inventoried, revealing that it was nine rounds short of full capacity. The South Dakota Highway Patrol assisted in the investigation with crime scene mapping.

INTERVIEW: OFFICER #1

On January 24, 2023, DCI Special Agents interviewed Officer #1. Officer #1 described their involvement and thought process during the shooting incident.

Officer #1 explained they were stationed to work the three apartment complexes in the area of North Maple Avenue and Knollwood Drive, due to an influx of crime in this specific area. Those apartment complexes were identified as Knollwood Townhouses, Maplewood Townhouses and Knollwood Heights Apartments.

Officer #1 attempted to contact two females observed walking into one of the buildings at the Knollwood Heights Apartment complex. Officer #1 believed one of the females had outstanding arrest warrants. The females walked into an apartment in the building and shut the door behind them. Officer #1 knocked on the door and attempted to contact them; however, they did not answer the door.

Officer #1 walked around the back side of the building to see if this female was going to exit the apartment out the back window. When Officer #1 reached the back side of the building, they observed Ira Wright carrying a blue backpack and walking at a brisk pace away from them. Officer #1 was confident Wright noticed them walk around to the back side of the apartment complex. Officer #1 identified the blue backpack as a possible indicator that Wright had an affiliation with a gang.

Officer #1 asked Wright where he was going, and Wright said the first building. Officer #1 identified this response as very nondescriptive and believed Wright was trying to elude them. Officer #1 heard a female yelling from the area Wright had just come from. Based upon similar circumstances the officer has experienced in their law enforcement career, Officer #1 believed an assault may have just occurred and Wright was trying to leave the area.

Wright dropped the backpack, discarded an object from his pocket, and started to run away from Officer #1. Officer #1 ran after Wright and followed him around the front side of a building at the Knollwood Heights apartment complex. Wright ran toward the front door of this apartment building and started to enter the apartment building. Officer #1 commanded Wright to "stop right there." Wright fled into the building as the officer deployed their Taser on Wright, which was unsuccessful.

With the Taser being unsuccessful, Wright continued to flee up the stairs. Officer #1 attempted to holster their Taser while chasing Wright up the stairs. As they both reached the first landing, Officer #1 observed Wright turn in Officer #1's direction and point a revolver at them. As the revolver was pointed at Officer #1, the officer heard a "click" and believed Wright just pulled the trigger. Officer #1's belief was that Wright just attempted to shoot them. Officer #1 drew the duty weapon and fired in Wright's direction, shooting Wright.

Officer #1 advised they used deadly force because they believed Wright was trying to kill them.

WITNESS INTERVIEWS

DCI Agents interviewed a witness who was with Wright during the encounter with Officer #1. The witness stated Wright had family that lived in the Knollwood Heights apartment complex and would stay with them from time to time. The witness went on to say that Wright had outstanding arrest warrants and had been on the run for a while. The witness also stated most of Wright's friends are associated with the "TBZ" gang.

The witness explained that when Wright was informed of law enforcement presence outside the apartment, he fled out the back window of the apartment. The witness observed law enforcement following Wright, with Wright eventually dropping a backpack and fleeing from law enforcement.

The witness described Wright as being angry about losing family and friends to shooting incidents in the area. The witness did not know if Wright carried a firearm but stated they would be fearful of him if he did possess one.

SCENE INVESTIGATION

The shooting scene investigation conducted by DCI produced items of evidence that confirmed statements given by Officer #1 and video obtained from their body worn camera.

DCI Agents observed deployed taser cartridges on the stairwell. There were nine (9) fired 9MM cartridge casings bearing the same manufacturing stamp. The location of the casings was consistent with Officer #1 shooting their firearm while standing on the second-floor staircase landing.

DCI Agents observed a revolver cylinder with six (6) unfired .22 Magnum cartridges resting on the stairwell. Wright was lying on the third-floor landing. At the base of Wright's feet was a Heritage Rough Rider .22 caliber revolver.

DCI Agents documented three (3) bullet defects in the wall of the third-floor landing and another bullet defect that ricocheted off the floor, tearing the carpet. The location of these bullet defects was consistent with the location where Officer #1 fired their weapon.

A cell phone was located outside the building in the area where Officer #1 observed Wright drop an object during the pursuit.

A search of Wright's person revealed approximately 5.5 grams of methamphetamine.

The South Dakota Highway Patrol recorded and measured the shooting scene with a laser scanning/mapping device.

SOCIAL MEDIA REVIEW

Numerous Facebook accounts belonging to Wright were identified during this investigation. An open-source search of those accounts was completed. One of the Facebook accounts showed numerous pictures of Wright displaying gang signs with his hands.

VIDEO EVIDENCE

Audio/Video recordings from Officer #1's body worn camera captured the shooting and were reviewed.

The video depicts Officer #1 walking between two apartment buildings. Wright can be observed walking from behind one of the apartment buildings. Officer #1 walked toward Wright and Wright continued to walk away from Officer #1. Wright then fled from Officer #1. Officer #1 gave chase and communicated over radio that they were involved in a foot pursuit. Wright was carrying a backpack, which was dropped during the foot pursuit.

Wright reached the front door of a building at the Knollwood Heights apartment complex. Officer #1 yelled for Wright to "Stop right there". While giving this command, Officer #1 drew their Taser. Wright opened the door to the apartment building with his left hand, while holding a revolver in his right hand.

As Wright and Officer #1 entered the apartment building, Officer #1 deployed their Taser in the direction of Wright. Wright was not affected by the Taser and ran up a flight of stairs. As Officer #1 gave chase up the stairs, Wright pointed the revolver in the direction of Officer #1 and an audible "click" noise could be heard. Officer #1 drew their sidearm and fired nine (9) rounds toward Wright, incapacitating him.

Officer #1 called out "shots fired" as two other RCPD officers were arriving in the building. Officer #1 told the officers that Wright had pulled a gun on Officer #1. The other two RCPD officers rendered aid to Wright.

FORENSIC EXAMINATION

The South Dakota Forensic Laboratory (SDFL) conducted firearm testing on the revolver recovered at the scene. The revolver was found to not be fully functional, as intended by the manufacturer, due to a missing cylinder rod to align and secure the revolver cylinder within the frame of the revolver.

The recovered 9MM cartridge casings were consistent with being fired from Officer #1's firearm.

MEDICAL REPORTS AND CRIMINAL HISTORY

A drug screen and blood alcohol test were conducted on Officer #1 with negative results.

An autopsy performed on Wright showed that he suffered multiple gunshot wounds. A drug screen showed a positive presence of methamphetamine and marijuana in Wright's system. Wright's blood alcohol content was .010.

During a criminal history check, it was discovered that Wright had absconded from parole and had an active arrest warrant. Wright had an arrest history for crimes including theft, obstruction, false personation, and drug offenses.

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 unfolded in seconds. Ira Wright was a clear and present danger to the public and the officer present at the scene. Officer #1 believed they were in a situation in which Wright attempted to inflict serious injury or death, so the officer responded with deadly force.

It is the conclusion of this report and the Attorney General that Officer #1 was justified in firing their duty weapon and using lethal force

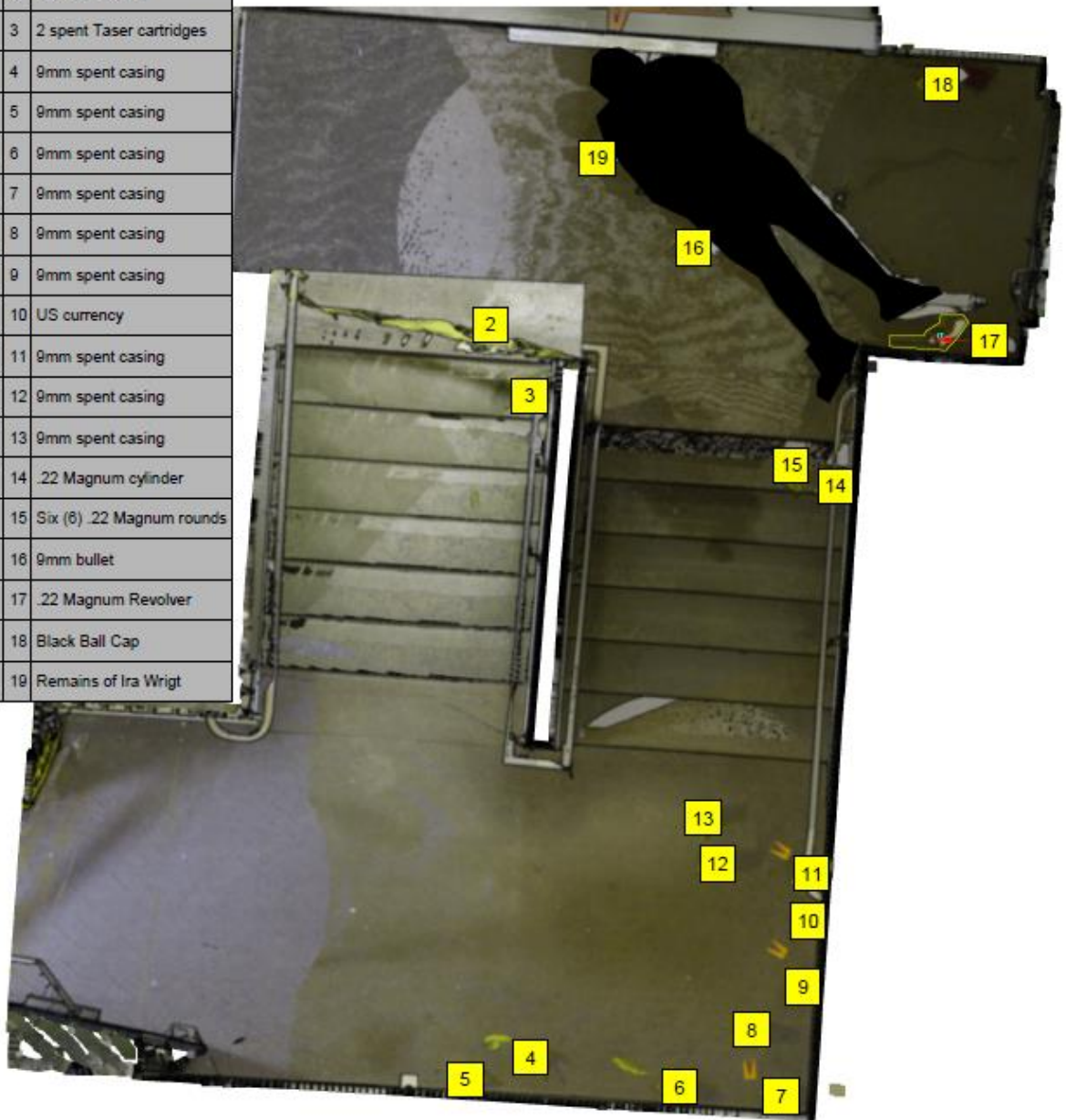


Cutline: Rapid City Police Officer No. 1 attempts to taser Ira Julian Wright as Wright runs into an apartment building. A gun is visible in Wright's hand. (From Rapid City Police Officer No. 1 body camera video).



Cutline: Ira Julian Wright points a gun at Rapid City Police Officer No. 1 as Wright flees up a flight of stairs. (From Rapid City Police Officer No. 1 body camera video).

Evidence Legend	
2	2 yellow bandana
3	3 2 spent Taser cartridges
4	4 9mm spent casing
5	5 9mm spent casing
6	6 9mm spent casing
7	7 9mm spent casing
8	8 9mm spent casing
9	9 9mm spent casing
10	10 US currency
11	11 9mm spent casing
12	12 9mm spent casing
13	13 9mm spent casing
14	14 .22 Magnum cylinder
15	15 Six (6) .22 Magnum rounds
16	16 9mm bullet
17	17 .22 Magnum Revolver
18	18 Black Ball Cap
19	19 Remains of Ira Wrigt



Cutline: Diagram of the shooting scene (created by the SD Division of Criminal Investigation and SD Highway Patrol)