



USE OF FORCE INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

DATE OF INCIDENT: 03/20/2024

INVOLVED PERSON: IDOC Ofc. Christopher Wilske

INVOLVED BPD OFFICER: Ofc. Wayne Anderson

WITNESS BPD OFFICER: Lt. Kevin Wittmuss

WITNESS BPD OFFICER: Ofc. Ryan Pollard

WITNESS BPD OFFICER: Ofc. Jacob Lee

OPA: OPA-0094

OIA: OIA24-0018

DATE OF REPORT: 02/19/26

CASE SYNOPSIS

In the early morning hours of March 20, 2024, Boise Police Department (BPD) officers were dispatched to a report that an officer had been shot and an active gunman was on site at St. Alphonsus Regional Medical Center (St. Al's). While responding, dispatch provided a physical description of the gunman and told officers that he was pointing a firearm towards the ambulance bay.

Within 2-3 minutes, four BPD officers and an Ada County Sheriff's Deputy arrived on scene. The officers entered the ambulance bay on foot searching for the gunman. They noticed a vehicle in the ambulance bay with a side window that appeared to have been shot but saw no activity or suspects.

Officers approached the sliding glass doors connecting the ambulance bay to the Emergency Department (ED). Ofc. Anderson saw a man matching the description of the gunman inside the ED just beyond the glass doors. The man was partially concealed behind a hallway corner and had a pistol in his right hand. Ofc. Anderson fired his rifle two times at the gunman's head, which was partially exposed. The man reacted to the officer's gunfire by moving back behind the corner and out of view. The officers entered the ED in search of the gunman.

Inside the ED, officers encountered staff members and a uniformed Idaho Department of Corrections (IDOC) officer. BPD officers then learned that IDOC officers had transported a high-risk inmate from the prison to the ED for treatment. While leaving the ED with the inmate, a criminal accomplice of the inmate ambushed the IDOC officers in the ambulance bay, wounding two of them with gunfire. The inmate and his accomplice escaped and left the hospital in a car. The man who Ofc. Anderson shot at and wounded was an IDOC officer who was guarding the ED entrance.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF INCIDENT

In the early morning hours of March 20, 2024, three IDOC Officers assigned to the Idaho Maximum Security Institute (IMSI) near Boise transported a high-risk inmate, Skylar Meade, to the ED at St. Al's. The inmate reported that he had swallowed razor blades and ingested another inmate's medications to harm himself. He was also bleeding from self-inflicted cuts from a razor blade.

Medical staff determined that inmate Meade had not swallowed any foreign objects but had elevated levels of aspirin in his system. When they suggested additional bloodwork to determine the level of toxicity, Meade became uncooperative, refused further treatment and was discharged. At approximately 2:16 a.m., the IDOC officers escorted Meade from the ED into the ambulance bay where their transport van was parked. As they began to load Meade into the van, a man approached and shot two of the IDOC officers with a handgun, inflicting serious wounds. IDOC Officer Wilske, who was not wounded, dragged one of the wounded officers into ED. The other wounded officer rolled underneath the van to avoid being shot again. The attacker took inmate Meade and escaped in a car parked nearby. The wounded officer who was underneath the van got to his feet and ran into the ED.

Inside the ED, medical staff immediately began treating the two wounded IDOC officers. A fourth IDOC officer, who was present in the ED for an unrelated inmate transport, and Ofc. Wilske then took positions of cover at opposite hallway corners which permitted them to guard the ED entrance and see a portion of the ambulance bay. Ofc. Wilske used his cell phone to call his supervisor at IDOC and report what had occurred. None of the on-scene IDOC officers called 911 to report the shooting and escape, or the armed IDOC officers' presence at the ED¹.

Several members of the hospital staff called 911 and reported information about the incident, although none of callers observed the shooting and escape and could not provide thorough information.

Based on the information provided to dispatch, responding officers were told via radio:

- An officer had been shot in the ED bay.
- Suspect was described as "6'0, dark beard, light skin."
- Hospital security was trying to locate the gunman using their camera system.

¹ Once Ofc. Wilske's offsite supervisor was notified of the situation, an ISMI Deputy Warden reported he called Ada County Dispatch and Idaho State Police Dispatch. OPA was unable to confirm the call with documentation available at the time of the release of this report.

- An additional caller reported the man was pointing a gun at the ambulance bay.

BPD Officers Anderson, Lee, Pollard, Lt. Wittmuss, and Ada County Sheriff's Deputy McKone arrived outside the ambulance bay at about the same time. They moved into the bay on foot to locate the gunman. Inside the bay, officers observed a vehicle window that appeared to have been shot. They saw a law enforcement-type duty belt on the ground near the ED entrance.

Using available cover and concealment, the officers moved towards the ED doors where they believed the gunman might be. Ofc. Anderson then observed a man just inside the ED sliding glass doors. The man was partially concealed behind a hallway corner with a handgun in his right hand. He was within feet of an area of the ED that Ofc. Anderson knew was used by hospital staff and patients. Ofc. Anderson also saw a female staff member hiding behind a desk near the man. Fearing that the man may shoot the female staff member or others inside, Ofc. Anderson fired two shots from his rifle through the glass doors at the man. The man reacted as if he had been hit and moved behind the corner towards the ED trauma bays.

The officers attempted to use the ER door code to enter but were unsuccessful as the hospital was in lockdown. Officers then used an expandable baton to break out enough glass to enter the ED.

Once inside officers began simultaneously searching for the gunman, clearing rooms, and talking to witnesses. They encountered the IDOC officer who was present for an unrelated inmate patient transport. That IDOC officer told BPD officers about the initial shooting and escape and that the man BPD shot was IDOC Ofc. Wilske. BPD officers learned that after being shot, Ofc. Wilske was taken into a trauma room and was being treated by hospital staff. Officers contained and cleared the ED for any remaining threats.

The IDOC officers ambushed during the escape survived their gunshot wounds. Ofc. Wilske also survived the wounds to his face and head from the two shots that fragmented as they passed through the commercial plate glass doors.

Detectives determined that inmate Meade's accomplice was a former IDOC inmate, Nicholas Umphenour. They were apprehended approximately 36 hours later in Twin Falls after an extensive investigation. Meade and Umphenour have since pleaded guilty and been sentenced on felony charges related to the escape and shooting of the IDOC officers.

Meade and Umphenour have also pleaded guilty in Nez Perce County, Idaho, to the murder of James L. Mauney and the murder of Gerald Henderson. Meade and Umphenour each received two consecutive life sentences without the possibility of parole.

SCOPE OF REVIEW

Boise City Code Title 2 Chapter 10 defines the authority and duties of the Office of Police Accountability (OPA). As the City's police oversight entity, the OPA is authorized to investigate and evaluate the conduct of Boise City police officers involved in critical incidents. Critical incidents include the use of force or any other police or law enforcement action that results in the death of one or more persons, or serious bodily injury requiring hospital admission. OPA is also authorized to make BPD policy, procedure, practice, and training recommendations to the Mayor, the City Council, and the Chief of Police.

BOISE POLICE DEPARTMENT POLICY²

A. 1.001 USE OF FORCE AUTHORIZATION, *in part*:

A police officer shall never employ unnecessary force or violence and shall use only such force in the discharge of duty as is objectively reasonable in all circumstances.

B. 1.003 USE OF FIREARMS IN THE LINE OF DUTY, *in part*:

An officer shall be authorized to discharge firearms in the line of duty under the following conditions:

- To use their firearm to protect themselves or others from what they reasonably believe to be an imminent danger of death or serious bodily injury.
- To use their firearm to affect the capture or prevent the escape of a felony suspect whose freedom is reasonably believed to represent a significant threat of serious bodily injury or death to the officer or other persons.

INVESTIGATIVE FINDINGS

A. CRITICAL INCIDENT TASK FORCE FINDINGS:

After the officer involved shooting incident, the Ada County Critical Incident Task Force (CITF) was activated, led by the Ada County Sheriff's Department. The CITF conducted a forensic investigation of the scene, interviewed witnesses, interviewed the involved

² This policy manual has been updated effective April 1, 2024, See <https://www.cityofboise.org/media/16346/bpd-policy-manual-4124.pdf>. The referenced policies in effect at the time of this incident are available through a public records request to BPD.

officers, collected dispatch records and audio/video evidence, and produced numerous reports. The investigation was detailed and thorough.

The Valley County Prosecuting Attorney reviewed the CITF investigation and determined that under the circumstances, Ofc. Anderson's use of deadly force against Ofc. Wilske was reasonable and justified under Idaho law. The Valley County Prosecutor noted that Ofc. Anderson's act of shooting Ofc. Wilske was committed "under an ignorance or mistake of fact which disproves criminal intent" pursuant to Idaho Code 18-201 (1).

B. BOISE POLICE DEPARTMENT FINDINGS:

BPD conducted an administrative review of this critical incident, which included reviewing the CITF investigation in its entirety and administrative interviews with each involved officer.

BPD's administrative review found that Ofc. Anderson believed he was responding to an active shooter at the hospital. Upon arriving at the scene, Ofc. Anderson observed a man who matched the description of the shooter pointing a handgun towards the ED bay doors in the direction of officers including himself. BPD found Ofc. Anderson believed the armed man was the suspect and that the suspect posed an imminent threat to himself, civilians inside the ED, and other officers.

BPD found that Ofc. Anderson's actions in firing at the man he believed to be an active shooter was reasonable, justified, lawful, and within policy. BPD noted that Ofc. Pollard, although not in a position to fire, saw the man, believed he was the suspect, observed him point the gun towards them, and believed the man posed a deadly threat to officers and others.

Communications

BPD's review identified communications issues that significantly contributed to the misidentification of Ofc. Wilske as an active shooter suspect. These included:

- IDOC did not advise Ada County Dispatch that they were transporting a high-risk inmate to the hospital for treatment.
- IDOC does not have direct radio communications with law enforcement agencies in the Boise area. If they had such radio communications, they could communicate directly with law enforcement officers or dispatch to coordinate a safe response to an incident.
- Hospital staff called 911, but they had not observed the shooting incident or the escape. They could only report information based on individual perceptions that an active shooter was still on scene.

- Dispatch did not communicate sufficiently among themselves. A review of all 911 calls and information provided to responding officers yielded information that dispatch knew but did not provide to officers. As an example, one caller told dispatch that an inmate was being treated and IDOC officers were accompanying him. If this information had been passed to BPD officers, it is likely that responding personnel would have coordinated with IDOC and obtained further information before entering the scene.

Officer Response

BPD made the following additional findings regarding BPD's response to this incident:

- The officers followed training and protocol for responding to an active threat and did an excellent job of responding swiftly and professionally. There was no opportunity to slow down and pre-plan a response as the circumstances were emergent.
- Officers who approached on foot appropriately used cover and angles to their advantage when approaching the ED doors.
- De-escalation tactics and less-lethal weapons were not used and were not appropriate in this active shooter situation.
- The initial supervisors on scene identified necessary tasks and led small teams of officers as they arrived to accomplish those tasks. However, no supervisor took overall command and control of the incident for approximately 15 minutes. A supervisor should have assumed overall command earlier in the incident.
- Officers had difficulty breaching and entering the locked down ED sliding glass doors.

Training

BPD made no training recommendations specific to the individual officers involved in this incident but identified the following department-wide areas for training and action:

- Refresher training in ALERRT tactics (a specific law enforcement active shooter response protocol).
- Command and control training emphasizing the necessity for someone, ideally a supervisor, to assume overall control earlier in an incident.
- Training and proper equipment for breaching windows and glass doors.
- Coordination with IDOC to establish protocols for high-risk inmate transports to non-law enforcement facilities within BPD's jurisdiction, including advance notice to ensure efficient communications and a safe law enforcement response if necessary.

C. OFFICE OF POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY FINDINGS:

OPA concurs with the CITF's and BPD's findings in this incident.

Analysis of Shooting

In addition to the detailed description of the incident and findings above, OPA notes that Ofc. Wilske's uniform consisted of khaki pants, a black polo shirt, and a duty belt. He was not wearing an equipment carrier type vest or body armor. Other than a cloth badge sewn on the chest of the polo shirt, he had no law enforcement markings on his clothing. Surveillance camera video inside the ED showed that Ofc. Wilske effectively used the hallway intersection corner for cover, preventing officers outside the ED from seeing his duty belt and cloth badge. This, along with a lack of information that any armed officers were on scene, made it impossible for Ofc. Anderson to know that Ofc. Wilske was a law enforcement officer. Additionally, dispatch described the shooter as a light skinned male, with dark hair, approximately 6 feet tall. This description is consistent with Ofc. Wilske's appearance.

Thus, Ofc. Anderson's own observations, including: the shattered window of the van, the shooter's physical description, the fact that the man was armed with a firearm, all corroborated the information provided by dispatch.

OPA finds that based on the information he had at the time, Ofc. Anderson reasonably assessed that the armed man posed an immediate deadly threat to the female staff member he could see, others inside the ED, to Ofc. Anderson, Ofc. Pollard, and other officers with them. Ofc. Anderson believed the man could begin killing people inside the ED within seconds and that he could not prevent it if he didn't fire at that opportune moment. OPA finds that Ofc. Anderson's belief that the man posed an imminent threat to ER staff and officers was logical, reasonable, and that his decision to fire was justified by law and BPD policy.

Communications

OPA concurs that communication failures in this incident were significant. While the extent of training IDOC officers receive is unknown, generally, law enforcement officers are trained and through experience know that concise, specific, detail-oriented communications between officers, and between officers and dispatch are essential. Specifically, law enforcement officers are trained to communicate their locations and threat-related information in an active violent event to avoid friendly fire.

In analyzing the timeline of events, OPA determined that IDOC officers on site who were not wounded had 2-4 minutes to call 911 and report vital information needed by BPD to

formulate an effective and safe response. Vital information that should have been immediately communicated included:

- Armed IDOC officers were on site inside the hospital ED.
- No known threat was inside the ED.
- The inmate and accomplice had escaped. Their location was unknown.
- The armed IDOC officers were securing the ED entrance to prevent any attacker from accessing the ED.
- Wounded officers were accounted for and being treated in the ED.
- Identity of the escaped inmate, circumstances of the ambush, and description of the attacker and vehicle if known.

Once BPD officers were inside the ED, an IDOC officer effectively communicated his presence by yelling out a specific code word used generally by law enforcement to identify themselves to avoid friendly fire incidents.

Officer Response

Overall, OPA finds that the initial response by the first wave of officers including Ofc. Anderson, Lt. Wittmuss, Ofc. Pollard, Ofc. Lee, and Deputy McKone was swift and decisive. They did not hesitate to enter the ED bay when faced with the risk of being shot by an armed active gunman they believed was present.

POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTING FACTORS AND MITIGATION EFFORTS

This incident was set into motion by a prison inmate and gang leader with a history of violence who was serving a lengthy prison sentence. His accomplice did not hesitate to violently ambush and wound IDOC officers in aid of his comrade. Thankfully, they were quickly apprehended by law enforcement after an extensive investigation and are serving life sentences as a result. This incident would not have occurred but for the deeply ingrained, violent criminal thinking and actions exhibited by these two men.

It is fortuitous that both shots by Ofc. Anderson were disrupted by the thick, commercial plate glass doors. This incident is a sobering reminder of the risks law enforcement officers often face. These occasions also provide lessons learned, opportunities to refine protocols, training, and to enhance officer and public safety through critical analysis and taking corrective action where necessary.

OPA will continue to track data on potential contributing factors for evaluation of community support and response, as well as aggravating or mitigating factors by officers to inform best policing practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

OPA concurs with BPD's training and equipment recommendations and makes no further recommendations.

LINK TO DOCUMENTS

The Critical Incident Task Force report, the officer body-worn camera video, and BPD news releases of this critical incident may be viewed at <https://www.cityofboise.org/departments/police/critical-incidents/> under "2024 Critical Incidents" and "March 20, 2024."

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