

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE SIXTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
IN AND FOR PINELLAS COUNTY, FLORIDA

Case Numbers: 21-01513CFANO/21-01099CFANO

STATE OF FLORIDA,

Plaintiff,

VS.

CORNELIUS TREVON WHITFIELD,

Defendant.

DEPOSITION OF:

MICHAEL BLETSCH

TAKEN BY:

Counsel for the Defendant

DATE:

December 4, 2023

TIME:

10:44 a.m. - 11:06 a.m.

PLACE:

Pinellas Co. Justice Center
14250 49th Street - 1100-4
Clearwater, FL

REPORTED BY:

Tamara M. Pacheco, RPR
Notary Public, State of FL

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EXHIBITS

(No exhibits were marked for identification.)

1 WHEREUPON,

2 DETECTIVE MICHAEL BLETSCH

3 (the deponent herein, being first duly sworn, was examined
4 and testified as follows:)

5 EXAMINATION

6 BY MS. MANUELE:

7 Q Could you please state your name and occupation
8 for the record.

9 A Yes. Detective Michael Bletsch, police officer,
10 St. Petersburg Police Department.

11 Q And how long have you been with St. Pete PD?

12 A Approximately fifteen years.

13 Q Any prior law enforcement experience?

14 A No, ma'am.

15 Q What unit are you currently assigned to?

16 A The Major Crimes Unit.

17 Q How long have you been in that unit?

18 A A little bit over five years, I think.

19 Q Okay. Going back to February of '21, how were
20 you assigned at that time?

21 A Major Crimes Unit.

22 Q We're here today because you've been listed as a
23 witness in the State of Florida versus Cornelius
24 Whitfield, and I believe your subpoena should have two
25 case numbers or two report numbers on it. Is that right?

1 A Yes, ma'am.

2 Q Okay. So we have a homicide from
3 February 1st/February 2nd of 2021 -- February 1st I guess
4 of 2021 and then also from February 16th of 2021. Did you
5 write supplements in both of those report numbers?

6 A I did, ma'am.

7 Q Okay. And did you -- how many supplements do
8 you have total that you authored?

9 A Two, I believe.

10 Q One under each case number?

11 A That's correct.

12 Q Do you have copies with you today?

13 A I do.

14 Q And have you had an opportunity to review it?

15 A I have.

16 Q Okay. Was there anything in either of the
17 supplements that you found to be inaccurate or that you
18 would like to change?

19 A No, ma'am.

20 Q Was there anything in reviewing those
21 supplements that you realized you should have maybe
22 included more fully or completely or something that you
23 would like to add?

24 A No, ma'am.

25 Q What was your call sign back in February of '21?

1 A My call sign?

2 Q Uh-huh.

3 A I'm still D43.

4 Q Tell me how you first became involved in any of
5 the investigations involving Mr. Whitfield.

6 A The first one I was not called in. We're
7 talking about the one that occurred at Emerald Pointe
8 apartments?

9 Q (Nods head.)

10 A I was not called in. The following -- with
11 follow-up investigation, Detective Mensah asked me to
12 write a cell-site warrant for Mr. Whitfield's phone
13 number.

14 Q And I have that your supplement on the
15 February 1st date, the one from Emerald Pointe apartments,
16 your supplement date is February 18th of '21. Does that
17 sound right?

18 A Yeah. That's probably when I authored it.

19 Q And so were you asked on -- was it February 18th
20 that you were asked to get that warrant, or were you asked
21 some time before and it didn't happen until the 18th, if
22 that makes sense?

23 A I don't remember which day I was asked. That's
24 what I was tasked out with doing, and then I completed it
25 whenever the Judge signed it I believe.

1 Q You don't know when though you were tasked with
2 that?

3 A No. I would assume -- and this is just me
4 assuming -- it could have been the following day. It
5 could have been in a meeting, things of that nature.

6 Q The "following day" meaning the following day
7 after the first homicide or the following day after the
8 second homicide?

9 A What I'm saying is it occurred in a meeting. So
10 I can't give you an exact date of when I was actually
11 tasked with it.

12 Q Okay. So is it possible that you would have
13 been tasked February 2nd, and you wouldn't have done any
14 of that work or documented any of that work until
15 February 18th?

16 A I mean, it's possible, yeah. I mean, sometimes
17 you don't write supplements for a little while.

18 Q Okay. And so is there any way at this point for
19 you to figure out when you were given that task?

20 A No.

21 Q Okay. So potentially, if you had given -- if
22 you were given that task back on February 2nd and you had
23 completed that task back on February 2nd, then we wouldn't
24 have another triple homicide. Is that what we're saying
25 here?

1 A No, that's not what we're saying at all.

2 Q well, you're tasked --

3 A I don't understand that question actually.

4 That's kind of accusatory. That was weird.

5 Q Okay. So -- right. I'm trying to figure --

6 your task was to get the cell-site information for a

7 person who was accused of a homicide, right?

8 A That's correct.

9 Q And you don't know though if at that time that
10 person was accused of one homicide or four homicides. Is
11 that correct?

12 A No. That's not what I'm saying. What I'm
13 telling you is that it takes time in investigations to get
14 cellphone numbers, correct. So I don't know when
15 Detective Mensah got that cellphone number to provide to
16 me to do the cell-site warrant.

17 Q Okay. So in your report, you indicate that you
18 were provided information by Detective Mensah and that
19 Cornelius Whitfield's phone number was 352-835-8735.

20 A That's correct.

21 Q So when you wrote your report, you already had
22 that information, right?

23 A That's correct.

24 Q Okay. And then you went -- you got a warrant
25 signed by Judge Bulone on February 18th, right?

1 A That's correct.

2 Q Okay. So if in fact though she had asked you to
3 do that on February 3rd let's say and if it was done on
4 February 3rd, then presumably you would have known --
5 somebody could have known where Mr. Whitfield was prior to
6 February 16th?

7 A That's not how that works. This is a cell site
8 for the murder --

9 Q So you're getting --

10 A -- at Emerald Pointe apartments. It's a
11 historical cell site. It's not an up-to-date active ping
12 like a pen register warrant.

13 Q Okay. So did you have any involvement in
14 getting the pen register warrant?

15 A No.

16 Q So the only information you were obtaining was
17 historical cell-site data?

18 A Yes.

19 Q Okay. And is this the only phone number that
20 you were asked to get historical cell-site data from
21 regarding this investigation?

22 A Yes.

23 Q Okay. Then the -- but you didn't document
24 anywhere when you were asked to do that?

25 A No.

1 Q Okay. Anything else you were asked to do --
2 well, I guess, if you didn't include it in your report,
3 would you remember then?

4 A If I didn't include it in my report, then I
5 wouldn't have been tasked with it.

6 Q Okay. And so you weren't asked to do anything
7 else on the February 1st investigation?

8 A No. I didn't put it in my report, so no.

9 Q And did you speak to any witnesses in that case?

10 A In that case, no.

11 Q Did you ever respond to the hospital, to
12 Bayfront Hospital on February 2nd, 3rd, or 4th?

13 A Not to my knowledge.

14 Q Okay. And were you tasked with looking into any
15 other information on Mr. Whitfield?

16 A For that case?

17 Q Uh-huh.

18 A No.

19 Q Okay. So best we know, your first involvement
20 for the February 1st case was February 18th. Does that
21 sound right?

22 A That's just when I wrote the report.

23 Q Well, you said if it wasn't included in your
24 report, you wouldn't have done anything, right?

25 A That's just when I wrote the report, and then a

1 warrant takes a little while to write. So I was probably
2 in the process of writing it, and then it got signed on
3 that date.

4 Q So you believe that warrant you wrote -- say
5 that one more time.

6 A Okay. So a warrant takes a little while to
7 write, right? You have to gather all your facts. You
8 have to put everything together. So I could have been in
9 the process of writing it before that date. It got signed
10 on that date.

11 Q Okay. But you said you would have noted if
12 there was something else in your report, right --

13 A Yes. Like I said --

14 Q -- some other day?

15 A -- if there was another task that I would have
16 been assigned, I would have put it in my report.

17 Q Okay. So we have no way of knowing now what day
18 you were doing that?

19 A No.

20 Q So then what's your involvement on
21 February 16th?

22 A February 16th, I got called in. I respond to
23 the station. Detective Harris asked me to complete some
24 cellphone subpoenas for like the records. I think there
25 was four separate people, five separate people and their

1 phone numbers.

2 Q So I'm looking at your supplement under case
3 number 2021-6023. In that one, you have a supplement date
4 of February 24th. Is that correct?

5 A That's when it was written, yeah, and put into
6 the system.

7 Q And then you specifically indicate that this
8 will detail your action on an investigation that occurred,
9 and you give the February 16th date, right?

10 A That's correct.

11 Q And then you indicate that you respond to the
12 station at a specific time on February 16th, correct?

13 A Correct.

14 Q So you document in that report the times that
15 you're doing these actions that are different than the
16 supplement date. Is that right?

17 A That's correct.

18 Q Is there anything that we should glean from
19 that? Meaning, your supplement was started on a different
20 date, so you document the dates. Would that be your
21 practice? Is there anything we should glean about perhaps
22 that your actions on the 18th actually occurred on the
23 18th since they're not documented as occurring on
24 different dates or no?

25 A I'm not sure. That was a very loaded question.

1 Can you --

2 Q So like on this supplement, right, you have a
3 different supplement date.

4 A Right.

5 Q And then you say on this specific date, this is
6 what I did, and on this different date, this is what I
7 did.

8 A I got -- I document because I got called in.

9 Q So, I mean, any like particular practice --
10 like, could we sit and glean from that then that on the
11 18th, since you didn't include any other dates, that that
12 all happened on the 18th, or is that completely just
13 happenstance?

14 A So once again, the 18th, you're locking on to
15 that because that's when the warrant was written, and
16 that's the supplement, my report and all that. I could
17 have been asked to write that as soon as we got that
18 information --

19 Q I'm trying to help you out and just explain,
20 like notice that you point out the difference, if that
21 refreshes your recollection or if that is any indication
22 of your practice or not at all, we still have no idea when
23 this order was given.

24 A Which one is that? Are we back to Emerald
25 Pointe?

1 Q The 18th, uh-huh.

2 A Once again, like I said, yes, we don't have
3 that.

4 Q Perfect. And then so on the -- going back to
5 your other supplement then, from the 6023 supplement, did
6 you ever respond out to the Emerson Avenue address?

7 A Not on that day I don't think, but I believe the
8 following day.

9 Q Okay. And at that time, you did phone subpoenas
10 for Shirleyleene Harila. Is that right?

11 A Yes.

12 Q Antonio Graham?

13 A Yes.

14 Q Sallie Whitfield?

15 A Yes.

16 Q And Patricia Whitfield Sharp?

17 A Yes.

18 Q Okay. What information did you request from
19 those phone subpoenas?

20 A I believe just call records. It wasn't a
21 warrant. It was just subpoenas.

22 Q Call records from what dates?

23 A I don't -- I don't remember. It's in the
24 subpoena. But the call records and then the subscriber
25 information and stuff like that, all that comes along with

1 the subpoenas.

2 Q You don't remember what dates you requested for
3 that, or do you have access to it now?

4 A I don't have access to the subpoena right now.

5 Q Do you remember -- did you ever see the
6 information that was returned from the subpoena or no?

7 A No. I sent it to the lead detective, Detective
8 Harris, the same as I did with the cell-site warrant.

9 Q Oh, now a response to my question. I'm sorry.
10 Okay. And then it looks like you go conduct an interview
11 on February 17th. Is that correct?

12 A Correct, with Detective Marzo.

13 Q All right. And how was that interview set up?

14 A We met her out at the -- what is it -- 2968
15 Emerson, requested she come back to the station with us.
16 We had a recorded interview in interview room one.

17 Q So you said that you met her at the 2968
18 Emerson?

19 A Yes. Correct. I believe it was the following
20 day.

21 Q Okay. And was she staying there, or had you
22 contacted her in advance and asked her to meet you at that
23 location?

24 A I'm pretty sure the house was knocked down, so I
25 think we just saw her out there. Detective Marzo had her

1 contact info. And that's Detective Webster. She's gotten
2 married since this.

3 Q And so you guys -- you don't know how -- like
4 you just went out there and happened to see her, or it was
5 arranged ahead of time?

6 A Like I said, we went out there. I believe
7 Detective Webster/Detective Marzo had her contact
8 information and had spoken to her, but we also saw her out
9 there.

10 Q Okay. And then was there a conversation at the
11 scene recorded?

12 A No.

13 Q Okay. Was your conversation during transport
14 recorded?

15 A No.

16 Q why not?

17 A we weren't talking about anything. We were
18 giving her a ride to the police station so we could
19 interview her in a recorded interview room.

20 Q So why not record it?

21 A It's not my practice. I just don't do that with
22 a witness at this point, victim.

23 Q You don't -- your practice is to not record
24 witness or victim statements?

25 A That's not what I said. I said my practice is

1 to not record everybody out in the open or record
2 everybody in a car when I'm transporting them. We already
3 had a plan to record her statement at the station.

4 Q Okay.

5 A Yeah.

6 Q So no reason other than your practice is to not
7 do that?

8 A Just weren't talking to her about anything from
9 what I remember. If it would have been important about
10 anything, I would have documented it.

11 Q Okay. Who's driving?

12 A Couldn't tell you.

13 Q Okay. So we don't really have a great
14 recollection of that ride then, do we?

15 A I drive all the time, so I couldn't tell you.

16 Q So we don't know who was driving?

17 A No.

18 Q And what were -- what was -- not Ms. Whitfield
19 -- Ms. Harilal wearing?

20 A I couldn't tell you.

21 Q Okay. And as far as who she arrived to the
22 scene with, who was that?

23 A Don't remember.

24 Q All right. And then how long did the interview
25 of her last?

1 A From what I remember, it was like -- I want to
2 say she was in the room for about 45 minutes. I don't
3 think the interview lasted the entire time. But roughly
4 45 minutes.

5 Q And so no conversation that took place outside
6 of that room would have been recorded?

7 A No.

8 Q And you don't include any detailed statement in
9 your report. Is that right?

10 A No. I specifically say that it is documented
11 via audio and video and to refer to the actual video of
12 her talking.

13 Q And then you don't include anything in your
14 report about any conversation that took place leading up
15 to the interview or after the interview, right?

16 A No.

17 Q Were -- at any point did you -- were you made
18 aware of Elizondo's interview of Ms. Harilal back on
19 February 3rd?

20 A Not that I remember.

21 Q As far as you know, did you ever review that
22 interview from February 3rd?

23 A I did not.

24 Q Did you -- is Ms. Harilal the only witness that
25 you participate in the investigation of?

1 A That I interviewed, yes.

2 Q And did you have any subsequent contact with
3 her?

4 A Not that I remember.

5 Q The cell-site warrant that you authored, what
6 dates did you ask for that for?

7 A It's in the warrant. I don't have access to
8 that, but I would assume for the full day of the first
9 homicide. But like I said, I don't have access to that
10 warrant.

11 Q Is there anything in your report or any way we'd
12 be able to tell from that?

13 A No. I write the warrant, and that's the
14 documentation for it.

15 Q Did you upload the video of the interview?

16 A I don't know who uploaded it to be honest. We
17 usually don't upload them. We just put evidence -- like
18 an evidence entry in, and then it's just gleaned off that.
19 So we don't download it and then upload it. It would be
20 Detective Marzo I would assume who did it.

21 Q On evidence.com?

22 A Yeah, or --

23 Q We'd be able to find it there?

24 A I don't know. To be honest, I didn't download
25 it from what I remember.

1 Q Did you ever watch it?

2 A Yeah, I watched it.

3 Q How did you watch it?

4 A Me? I just watched it off of -- we have a -- I
5 forget the name of it, but it's like a video player. It's
6 not a CD player or anything like that. It's like our
7 server where we can go back in time to a specific date and
8 view it.

9 Q Like on evidence.com or something else?

10 A No, something else.

11 Q Okay. Explain to me. So you're able to see all
12 of your videos? Explain that to me.

13 A You can go back historically. Let's say I did
14 an interview in 2019. I pick the date, go back to that
15 date, and I can view it.

16 Q You can view only yours or anyone from the
17 agency on that date?

18 A Anyone's.

19 Q And how would they -- like how do they -- are
20 they saved in order for you to view them?

21 A I'm not like a technical guy. It's a server
22 where all of our interviews are kept on. It's part of the
23 whole package with the cameras and all that.

24 Q All of the interviews from just the interview
25 room or the AXON cameras and such?

1 A From the interview rooms. I have nothing to do
2 with the AXON cameras.

3 Q So it's just the interview room videos?

4 A Yes.

5 Q And does that give you any information about how
6 it would be uploaded or by who it would be uploaded
7 potentially in evidence.com?

8 A I have no idea if this was uploaded in
9 evidence.com. I don't -- you create an evidence voucher
10 that says that this interview is there. That's it.
11 There's no downloading or anything like that. I'm sure
12 they've probably been downloaded, but I had nothing to do
13 with it.

14 Q I'm just trying to figure out how I can find it
15 because there's 180 videos associated with this case on
16 evidence.com, and I can't find this one.

17 A I don't know.

18 Q Can you e-mail it to us then?

19 A I don't know what to do to help you with that to
20 be honest.

21 Q So then e-mail us the video if you're able to
22 watch it. How about that? We'll send you a disk, and you
23 can copy it.

24 A How about they do that? I'm not going to go
25 back and forth with you about this. I'm just going to be

1 honest. I'm not going to e-mail you interviews. I'm just
2 not. That's not my practice. You can get them through
3 the state through discovery.

4 Q Okay. Are you willing to interview the state
5 attorney the interview?

6 A Interview the state attorney the interview?

7 Q E-mail the state attorney the interview so that
8 they can get it to me.

9 A I'm pretty sure that they have access to it, and
10 that goes through our Department of Records.

11 MS. MANUELE: Okay. So we don't have it guys.

12 MS. TAKTIKOS-DANZIG: I'll get it.

13 MS. MANUELE: I don't have any other questions.

14 Do -- oh, I do actually.

15 Q (By Ms. Manuele) Do you have any sustained IA
16 complaints?

17 A No.

18 Q Any internal complaints or complaints that came
19 from outside the agency that were investigated?

20 A I guarantee I've had plenty of complaints, but
21 none have been sustained.

22 MS. MANUELE: Okay. Do you have any questions?

23 MS. RUSSELL: I do not.

24 MR. KOSKINAS: That's it. You're all done.

25 Read.

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MS. MANUELE: Good to go.

(Deposition concludes at 11:06 a.m.)

1 COUNTY OF PINELLAS)

2 STATE OF FLORIDA)

3 CERTIFICATE OF OATH

4

5 I, the undersigned authority, certify that
6 DETECTIVE MICHAEL BLETSCH personally appeared before me
7 and was duly sworn.

8 witness my hand and official seal this 20th day
9 of December, 2024.

10

11

Tamara M. Pacheco

12

Tamara M. Pacheco, RPR
COMMISSION # 474485
EXPIRES: March 30, 2028

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CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

STATE OF FLORIDA)

COUNTY OF PINELLAS)

I, Tamara M. Pacheco, certify that I was authorized to and did stenographically report the Deposition of MICHAEL BLETSCH; that a review of the transcript was requested; and that the transcript is a true and complete record of my stenographic notes.

I further certify that I am not a relative, employee, attorney or counsel of any of the parties, nor am I a relative or employee of any of the parties' attorney or counsel connected with the action, nor am I financially interested in the action.

Tamara M. Pacheco

Tamara M. Pacheco, RPR