

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR PINELLAS COUNTY, FLORIDA
21-01099-CF
SECTION M

STATE OF FLORIDA

Vs.

CORNELIUS TREVON WHITFIELD Person ID: 1566510,
Defendant.

DEPOSITION OF OFFICER NICHOLAS J. CARDINAL

Taken on Behalf of the Defendant

DATE: March 18, 2025

TIME: 1:43 p.m. to 2:03 p.m.

PLACE: Pinellas County Justice Center
14250 49th Street North
Clearwater, Florida 33762

Examination of the witness taken before:

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Executive Reporting Service

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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 THE REPORTER: We are on the record. Today
3 is March 18th, 2025 and the time is 1:43 p.m.

4 Mr. Cardinal, please raise your right hand.
5 THEREUPON,

6 OFFICER NICHOLAS J. CARDINAL
7 was called as a witness and after having been first
8 duly sworn, was deposed and testified as follows:

9 THE REPORTER: Thank you.

10 You may begin.

11 DIRECT EXAMINATION

12 BY MS. RUSSELL:

13 Q. Is it Lieutenant Cardinal?

14 A. No. No, I was a detective at the time, but
15 it's just plain old Officer Cardinal.

16 Q. Officer Cardinal now?

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. Okay. Officer Cardinal --

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. -- my name is Margaret Russell. I'm here with
21 my cocounsel of Julia Seifer-Smith and Lamark McGreen.
22 We're here to ask you some questions today for your
23 deposition.

24 There were two cases involving Cornelius
25 Whitfield. But to be clear, I'm only going to ask you

1 questions today in case 21-01099-CF. Your supplemental
2 report was 2021004037, in terms of the case number.
3 Does that make sense?

4 A. So I have a case -- I have a supplement on a
5 different case number?

6 Q. I'm not sure. I just want to make sure that
7 we're limiting our discussion today to this one --

8 A. The --

9 Q. -- supplement and the one case number.

10 A. The case number provided was -- when I looked
11 it up was in regards to the case involving police being
12 called to his house -- the SWAT call up, and they ended
13 up taking him into custody at -- at the home on -- is
14 it Fairfield? Is that the correct case number?

15 Q. No.

16 A. I did not -- I did not -- that was the one I
17 was subpoenaed under, and I did not complete a report
18 because I didn't arrive on that scene. I was called
19 there because of the SWAT call up. So I'm -- if
20 there's a different case, I'm not aware of it.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. I'm not prepared to answer --

23 Q. (Cross talk), and we can pull up your
24 subpoena --

25 A. -- unless you have a copy of --

1 Q. -- (cross talk).

2 A. No. I'm sorry. I -- I looked up the number
3 that I was subpoenaed under, and that was the case that
4 came. And everybody gets subpoenaed when they're even
5 attached to the call. I just figured you'd want to ask
6 me if I got there, if I had any observations, but I
7 don't have any knowledge of -- I'm not familiar with
8 the case you're talking about where I created a
9 supplement.

10 Q. Okay. Would you like to look at your
11 supplement and see if you'd like to wrap up today or --

12 A. Sure. Yeah, that's fine.

13 Q. And we can give you the --

14 A. If you don't mind, yeah --

15 Q. -- (cross talk) --

16 A. -- if I can look at it.

17 Q. -- if you want to --

18 A. Okay.

19 Q. -- take a peek at it.

20 MR. KOSKINAS: And I don't mind handing over
21 my laptop --

22 MS. RUSSELL: Okay.

23 MR. KOSKINAS: -- if you want, just so then
24 you can ask questions, and he can --

25 MS. RUSSELL: I have --

1 MR. KOSKINAS: Do you have an extra?

2 MS. RUSSELL: I have --

3 MR. KOSKINAS: Okay. Good.

4 MS. RUSSELL: Yeah, I'm sort of like a -- I

5 just don't print a paper.

6 MR. KOSKINAS: Oh.

7 MS. RUSSELL: I bring large quantities of

8 paper and many copies.

9 MR. KOSKINAS: All good.

10 MS. RUSSELL: I should have -- did you want

11 to look at what I gave him to make sure it's --

12 MR. KOSKINAS: I trust that it is the --

13 MS. RUSSELL: All right.

14 MR. KOSKINAS: -- right one. So all good.

15 THE WITNESS: 4037?

16 MR. KOSKINAS: It should say page 120 and 121

17 at the bottom, I think, right?

18 THE WITNESS: 123 and --

19 MR. KOSKINAS: Okay.

20 THE WITNESS: -- 206.

21 MR. KOSKINAS: Well, let me take a look just

22 to make sure you're looking at the one I have, but it

23 should --

24 MS. RUSSELL: I think there was two sets --

25 MR. KOSKINAS: It's going to be the same.

1 MS. RUSSELL: -- because I only got, like, an
2 updated one (cross talk) --

3 MR. KOSKINAS: Yeah, it's the same one.

4 MS. RUSSELL: -- a little different.

5 THE WITNESS: Okay. Yeah.

6 MS. RUSSELL: Why don't we go off the record
7 for a minute? And --

8 THE REPORTER: Okay.

9 MS. RUSSELL: -- Officer, we can let you take
10 some time to review the report and refresh your
11 recollection.

12 (Recess taken)

13 THE REPORTER: I'll say back on the record at
14 1:49 p.m.

15 MS. RUSSELL: Officer Cardinal, would you
16 mind introducing yourself to the court reporter?

17 THE WITNESS: Officer Nicholas Cardinal, St.
18 Petersburg Police.

19 BY MS. RUSSELL:

20 Q. So we're here to ask you some questions again
21 about your deposition in case number 21-01099-CF. As
22 far as I can tell, the supplement that you authored in
23 that case is number 2021004037. Does that make sense?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Now, I'm going to ask you what you did to

1 prepare for your deposition today with the
2 understanding that we just provided the supplement in
3 this case --

4 A. Um-hum.

5 Q. -- a few moments ago.

6 A. I read the supplement you're referring to.

7 Q. Okay. Was there anything else that you did to
8 prepare for your deposition today?

9 A. No.

10 Q. Okay. And just to be clear, for the record,
11 you were thinking that you were -- or you thought you
12 were subpoenaed in a different case?

13 A. Yeah, I was subpoenaed under a different case.

14 Q. Under a different case, which would've been
15 case number 21-01513-CF?

16 A. That could've been an error on my part. I'm
17 sorry.

18 Q. No worries. And to be clear, we've provided
19 you a copy of the supplement to refresh your
20 recollection.

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. And you're testifying looking at that today?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Okay. Do you have any independent
25 recollection, as you sit here, of the events that

1 occurred on Tuesday, February 2nd of 2021?

2 A. No.

3 Q. All right. I'm going to ask you some
4 questions about your background.

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. How did you first get started in law
7 enforcement?

8 A. I went to the police academy at Allstate
9 Center and St. Petersburg College. I applied for St.
10 Petersburg Police Department, and I was hired December
11 12th, 2012.

12 Q. And what was your first assignment?

13 A. Patrol, like everyone else.

14 Q. And what other jobs have you done since you've
15 been at St. Pete?

16 A. I've been assigned to the SWAT team, the
17 Economic Crimes Unit, which is financial crimes, as a
18 detective, and patrol.

19 Q. Any specialized training in that time that
20 you've been with the St. Pete Police Department?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Like, what?

23 A. I have investigative -- or just a lot of
24 investigative training, interview training. It's --
25 the list is kind of long. I don't remember all of them

1 off the top of my head.

2 Q. That's fair. What was your actual job
3 description in the time period of February 2nd of 2021?

4 A. I'm sorry?

5 Q. What was your actual job description?

6 A. I was a detective assigned to the Economic
7 Crimes Unit.

8 Q. And --

9 A. I was also assigned to the SWAT team at the
10 time.

11 Q. And how did you first become involved in this
12 case?

13 A. I was asked to assist in a major case
14 investigation. Our Major Crimes Unit was working this
15 case and asked for assistance doing the neighborhood
16 canvass.

17 Q. So how did you even show up at the scene? Did
18 someone call you? Did you get dispatched? How did it
19 work?

20 A. Yeah, I was -- it -- I was requested through
21 my supervisor and told to go down and assist.

22 Q. Who was your supervisor?

23 A. At the time, I believe it was Sergeant
24 Cluster.

25 Q. Did Sergeant Cluster tell you anything about

1 what you were walking into?

2 A. I don't -- I don't recall.

3 Q. Do you recall whether you had a phone
4 conversation or a radio conversation?

5 A. I don't recall. I would've been briefed on a
6 basic understanding of what occurred and what -- what
7 to look for.

8 Q. So would that have been a briefing on the
9 scene, or would that have been a --

10 A. Probably in-person.

11 Q. -- briefing by phone?

12 A. Probably in person.

13 Q. Is that normally the way it occurs?

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. But you don't have any independent
16 recollection of what you were told?

17 A. I don't.

18 Q. All right. You were tasked with doing a
19 neighborhood canvass?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. What does a neighborhood canvass mean to you?

22 A. Going door-to-door, trying to find witnesses
23 or video footage that might be material to the case.

24 Q. When you find witnesses, is it a critical
25 aspect to get their contact information so you can

1 reach out to them again in the case that they do have
2 something --

3 A. Of course.

4 Q. -- helpful? And you would say that's best
5 practices?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Okay. So how did you start your canvass?

8 A. We were -- Detective Rolson (phonetic) and I
9 met in the area, and we began just kind of working as a
10 team, splitting the area, and we were going to door-to-
11 door separately.

12 Q. So are you aware -- understanding that you
13 don't really remember too much outside of what's in
14 this report, but are you aware, as you sit here, if
15 there was another team assigned to do canvassing in a
16 different area or in an adjacent part of the apartment
17 complex?

18 A. I'm sure there was. There usually is.
19 There's usually several detectives from other units
20 that go out. And we -- the easiest thing to do is just
21 to split the area and divide and conquer, essentially.

22 Q. Do you have any idea how many teams were doing
23 the canvass on this day?

24 A. On this particular one? No. I did this quite
25 often.

1 Q. So how did you begin your canvass?

2 A. I started going door-to-door.

3 Q. Okay. Let's see. You went to 310 72nd Avenue
4 Northeast?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. And you spoke with a white female resident?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. What was her name?

9 A. I don't recall.

10 Q. Did you get any contact information for her?

11 A. No, I did not.

12 Q. Okay. The next stop presumably was --

13 A. And that's --

14 Q. -- 300 72nd Avenue?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. White female resident?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Name?

19 A. I don't recall.

20 Q. 250 72nd Avenue Northeast, Ring doorbell?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Any evidence there?

23 A. No.

24 Q. 210 72nd Avenue?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. IP camera?

2 A. That's what the report says.

3 Q. And you saw nothing --

4 A. It's what --

5 Q. -- because the camera was aimed too low?

6 A. It's noted -- it -- it's noted in the report.

7 I have no recollection outside of that. The report
8 says, "There are two residents, did not see or hear
9 anything. I was able to view the camera footage, and
10 the camera angle was too low to show any activity on
11 the street or the sidewalk."

12 Q. Okay. It looks like 200 72nd Avenue
13 Northeast, Building 1, you spoke to a few people. No
14 one had observations. On the blanks next to the
15 apartment -- so it looks like, you know, on the report,
16 it's 200 72nd Avenue Northeast Building 1, 101, 102,
17 103, 104, 105, 106, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206,
18 right?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. So 100 apartments were first floor?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. 200 apartments second floor?

23 A. That sounds right.

24 Q. Notes next to each building if you actually
25 spoke to a person?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. And are the blanks basically for --

3 A. No answer.

4 Q. No answer. Was there --

5 A. On the fifth line -- or fourth line of the
6 report, it says, "If no notes are listed after the
7 address, there was no answer at the door."

8 Q. Okay. Did you leave contact information on
9 any of the open door -- or on any of the doors where
10 you couldn't find someone?

11 A. No. It was noted they were to be revisited.

12 Q. Do you have any idea if anyone did revisit?

13 A. I don't, no.

14 Q. Ring doorbell at 163 74th Avenue Northeast,
15 business card was left?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Was that your business card?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Any idea if you ever got a follow-up call?

20 A. I -- it would've been documented if I did.

21 Q. Okay. And again, on the other location, 7401
22 1st Way Northeast, 118 74th Avenue Northeast, 174th
23 Avenue Northeast, no answer, no answer, no answer, and
24 business card left?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. At 7401 1st Street Northeast, you spoke to a
2 male resident who said he would check the motion
3 activation?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Any name of that man?

6 A. No.

7 Q. Any contact information?

8 A. No.

9 Q. Okay. Moving forward at 174th Avenue, 7302
10 Americana Place, 7306 Americana Drive, and 7316
11 Americana Drive, you either had no answer or no
12 observations?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. What happened at 7334 Americana Drive?

15 A. As the report reads, I spoke to a resident,
16 Jackie Click (phonetic), who checked her motion
17 activated camera facing 1st Street Northeast. One
18 motion was captured at 01 hours just after midnight on
19 2/2, where the crosswalk light was set off. No
20 vehicles or pedestrians are seen in the footage.

21 A second motion was captured at 0009 hours on
22 2/2, where a dark colored vehicle drove past
23 northbound. I collected both clips, which are entered
24 into evidence.

25 Q. When you say you "collected both clips," how

1 do you do that?

2 A. I would have either sent them a link to
3 Evidence.com, or I would've captured it through my cell
4 phone, depending on what -- what they were able to do
5 as far as work their DVR.

6 Q. And as a detective, you don't have a body-worn
7 camera, so --

8 A. No.

9 Q. -- it would've been impossible to record it
10 with a body-worn camera, correct?

11 A. No.

12 Q. All right. Was there any other work that you
13 did in order to assist with the investigation of this
14 case?

15 A. I don't believe so.

16 Q. Have you ever met Cornelius Whitfield?

17 A. I don't believe so.

18 Q. Did you talk to any of your colleagues or the
19 other detectives about what had happened in this case?

20 A. Probably. I don't have any recollection.

21 Q. But no specific recollection --

22 A. No.

23 Q. -- of what you talked about?

24 A. No.

25 Q. Did you have any contact with any of the

1 victims in this particular case? I'm speaking of
2 21-01099-CF.

3 A. I don't believe so.

4 MS. RUSSELL: All right. I don't have any
5 further questions for you, Officer Cardinal, but I'll
6 turn it over to my colleagues.

7 MR. MCGREEN: None for me.

8 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Just a quick question.

9 DIRECT EXAMINATION

10 BY MS. SEIFER-SMITH:

11 Q. I know you thought that you were subpoenaed on
12 the other case number.

13 A. Um-hum.

14 Q. Were you able to access any kind of reports
15 with regard to the other case number? And I have it
16 as, like, St. Pete 20216023.

17 A. It's difficult for us to look and see our case
18 number which is assigned to yours. So especially when
19 there are two active cases that are currently going
20 through court proceedings --

21 Q. Right.

22 A. -- I go into my report, and I have to
23 basically look for the time frame where the defendant
24 would've been arrested.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. And I did see that -- that report. I did have
2 recollection of being dispatched to that call, and so I
3 assumed it was that call. This is -- I -- I -- I --
4 probably twice a month I would get called to assist in
5 a -- in a -- usually a case with Major Crimes in this
6 capacity where I know pretty limited information about
7 the case.

8 Q. I just didn't see your name associated with
9 the other call.

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. And so --

12 A. Because I was --

13 Q. -- I was just wondering if you found something
14 that I didn't find.

15 A. No, that was a SWAT call up, and that was what
16 I was prepared for. I figured that was all it was.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. I still generally get a subpoena, even though
19 I have no observations to add.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. It happens quite frequently. In that
22 particular case, just so we're clear, I never even
23 arrived on that scene. I never -- I -- I did not
24 observe him in any capacity on that day. I merely saw
25 his name attached to the report. I saw that I was

1 momentarily attached to that case.

2 Q. But do you recall having any kind of
3 conversations with colleagues about --

4 A. I don't.

5 Q. -- anything of substance regarding that case?

6 A. No.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. Three years ago, I don't.

9 Q. And even now, like, when you kind of saw the
10 address that you were likely dispatched to in
11 connection with SWAT, did that jog any kind of memories
12 regarding the investigation?

13 A. Like I said, no. No.

14 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Okay. I don't have any
15 further questions. How about you, State?

16 MR. KOSKINAS: That's it. Thank you, sir.

17 MS. RUSSELL: All right.

18 MR. KOSKINAS: You're free to go. You want
19 to read or waive?

20 THE WITNESS: I'll -- I'll waive.

21 MR. KOSKINAS: Waive?

22 THE WITNESS: Yeah.

23 THE REPORTER: Off the record at 2:03.

24 (Deposition concluded at 2:03 p.m.)

25

CERTIFICATE OF OATH

STATE OF FLORIDA
COUNTY OF PINELLAS

I, Jill Brown, the undersigned authority, certify that
NICHOLAS J. CARDINAL appeared before me via videoconference
on March 18, 2025, and was duly sworn.

WITNESS my hand and official seal this 26th day of
March, 2025.



Jill Brown

Notary Public, State of Florida

Commission No.: HH 132691

Commission Expires: 5/23/2025

Produced Identification X Type of Identification Produced FL DL X Appeared X physically

CERTIFICATE OF TRANSCRIBER

STATE OF FLORIDA

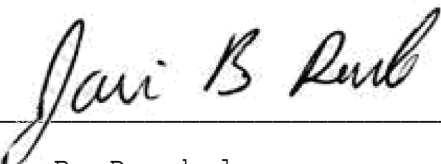
COUNTY OF PALM BEACH

I, Jani B. Drushal, transcriber for the Executive
Reporting Service:

Do Hereby Certify that the foregoing transcript, pages
1 through 23, inclusive, constitutes a true and correct copy
of the proceedings (transcribed to the best of my ability).

I FURTHER CERTIFY I am neither an attorney or counsel
of any of the parties hereto, nor a relative or employee of
any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor
financially interested in the event of said cause.

DATED this 26th day of March, 2025.



Jani B. Drushal

AAERT CER-2242

Executive Reporting Service

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