

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE SIXTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT  
IN AND FOR PINELLAS COUNTY, FLORIDA  
CASE NO. 2021-01513 CFANO

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STATE OF FLORIDA

vs.

CORNELIUS TREVON WHITFIELD

Defendant.  
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TAKEN BY: Defendant  
DATE: June 12, 2025  
TIME: 9:30 a.m. - 9:37 a.m.  
PLACE: Criminal Justice Center  
14250 - 49th Street North  
Clearwater, Florida  
REPORTED BY: Sharon K. Allbritton  
Shorthand Reporter  
Notary Public  
State of Florida at Large

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DEPOSITION OF  
OFFICER BRANDON A BILL  
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PAGES 1-25

## APPEARANCE:

THOMAS KOSKINAS, ESQ.  
ANTHONY BRADLOW, ESQ.  
Assistant State Attorney  
14250 - 49th Street North  
Clearwater, FL 33762

JULIA B SEIFER-SMITH, ESQ.  
MARGARET RUSSELL, ESQ.  
Assistant Public Defender  
14250- 49th Street North  
Clearwater, FL 33762

P R O C E E D I N G S

WHEREUPON,

OFFICER BRANDON A BILL

the deponent herein, being first duly sworn, was  
examined and testified as follows:

DIRECT EXAMINATION

BY MS. SEIFER-SMITH:

Q Can you please state your name for the  
record?

A Brandon Bill.

Q We're here in the matter of Cornelius  
Whitfield. I have a court case number of 2021-- it's  
not gonna be on your page.

A Yours is different. Yeah.

Q So 2021-01513-CF. I have a St. Petersburg  
Police Department case number of 2021-006023, which  
you probably are looking at right now.

A Yes.

Q Okay. My name is Julia Seifer-Smith. I'm an  
assistant public defender, together with Margaret  
Russell and Lamark McGreen, who may be joining us. We  
represent Mr. Whitfield in this matter. Also present  
is Tom Koskinas from the State Attorney's Office.

A Okay.

1 Q What is your title now?

2 A Police officer, city of St. Petersburg.

3 Q Officer Bill, what did you review in  
4 connection with this case before you were sworn in for  
5 the deposition?

6 A I did a followup report in reference to my  
7 actions as a member of the S.W.A.T. team at the time.

8 Q Okay. I have a supplement date of February  
9 17, 2021, and it looks like it's about one page.

10 Is that the same one that you have in front  
11 of you?

12 A Yes.

13 Q Having you reviewed that document, did that  
14 jog your memory as to your involvement in the case?

15 A It did.

16 Q Do you know if you had any body worn camera  
17 that you personally were wearing at the time?

18 A I don't recall. And this was in the  
19 transition phase of when we were wearing them as  
20 members of the team. And I believe I would have  
21 included it in the report if we were wearing them at  
22 the time.

23 Q I didn't see anything in evidence.com so I  
24 assume that either it would have been a mistake or it  
25 just didn't exist.

1           A       Yeah, I don't think we were wearing them on  
2       S.W.A.T. team yet.

3           Q       Got it. Having reviewed that document, did  
4       that kind of jog your memory as to what your  
5       involvement was in the case?

6           A       It did.

7           Q       So do you actually like independently recall  
8       what occurred on February 16th?

9           A       Yes.

10          Q       Okay. So can you give me a little bit of  
11       background about yourself in terms of your  
12       professional development, like what your job is now,  
13       what your job was then, when you started with the  
14       department and any prior law enforcement experience?

15          A       Sure. No prior law enforcement experience  
16       prior to St. Petersburg. I started in 2008 as a  
17       member of the Street Crimes Unit, Auto Theft Task  
18       Force, Community Service Unit, the Canine Unit and  
19       Marine Unit. At the time of this report I was a  
20       member of the Marine Unit and on the S.W.A.T. team.

21                 I started the S.W.A.T. team in 2011, if I  
22       remember right. So this was roughly 10 years on the  
23       team at the time, and I was assistant team leader on  
24       the team.

25          Q       I'm not super familiar with the S.W.A.T.

1 team, is that something that has like daily  
2 obligations, like you go in, you're on the S.W.A.T.  
3 team every single day?

4 A No. The S.W.A.T. team is more a part time  
5 S.W.A.T. team. So we train monthly, if not more,  
6 depending on if you have kind of specialty. But  
7 minimum monthly. And it's as needed. It's not a  
8 permanent-- it's not a every day assignment.

9 Q Are you still on that team?

10 A I am not.

11 Q What are you doing now?

12 A I am in patrol in District 3 of the city.

13 Q That seems very different.

14 A Yeah.

15 Q Can I ask why the change?

16 A In 2022 I had a timekeeping issue that was  
17 brought up, and received a suspension for that and was  
18 moved back to patrol.

19 Q So 2022 until now on patrol?

20 A Yes.

21 Q Any kind of issues since you've been there?

22 A No.

23 Q Was the timekeeping stuff associated at all  
24 with like your work in S.W.A.T.?

25 A No.

1           Q     So tell me about your work that particular  
2     day.

3           A     So that particular day we were actually in  
4     a -- it was-- I can't remember the day of the week but  
5     we were in part of our-- we do a week long training  
6     every year. Well, not every year. But at that point  
7     we were doing it. And we were actually training that  
8     day so we were all available.

9                     Most of our training was done at the canine  
10    compound/firefighter annex, which is not too far from  
11    the address where the incident occurred, so we were  
12    pretty quick to respond on that day.

13          Q     How serendipitous.

14          A     Yes. That's what we thought.

15          Q     How big is the team?

16          A     Roughly 30 to 40 members any given time.

17          Q     Do you think it was 30 or 40 members who  
18    responded that day?

19          A     Probably pretty close to that, because the  
20    majority of the team would be allocated to be at the  
21    training.

22          Q     Okay. And do you know how you were alerted  
23    to like the need for a S.W.A.T. team?

24          A     I think word of mouth initially and then we  
25    received an actual page. So we have department phones

1 and we receive a page. And I have this, going back in  
2 my report, at 1615, which is 4:15 we received a text  
3 message/page on our phones.

4 Q Okay. And do you recall what that text  
5 message or page said? I see quotes for a mass  
6 shooting but I'm not sure if that's the same.

7 A I don't recall what the page said. I just  
8 remember on that day we were hearing before the page  
9 actually came out that something had happened in  
10 reference to the defendant, and it being a mass  
11 shooting.

12 Q I'm sorry, you said before that day?

13 A No, before the page actually came out, the  
14 official page. I think we were getting word of mouth  
15 that something was going on.

16 Q Do you recall any information about like what  
17 was going on?

18 A No, not -- I mean, I can speculate. I think  
19 we learned that there was a shooting and that patrol  
20 is responding to it.

21 Q Okay.

22 A And then we were starting to get bits and  
23 pieces and then the official page came out.

24 Q When you started to hear those rumors were  
25 you or anybody on the team like starting to get ready,



1       like did you anticipate needing to be involved, or  
2       were you just listening to whatever kind of chatter  
3       was going on?

4           A       We started to transition our gear. So on  
5       that we use simunitions typically for training, which  
6       requires a different barrel stuff. So we used kind of  
7       the same gun but simunitions.

8           Q       Seems safer.

9           A       Yes, of course. So we had to switch that  
10      kind of stuff out. But most of our gear would have  
11      been on hand already.

12          Q       And was the name mentioned to you, like in  
13      the rumors or in the page, if you know?

14          A       I don't recall that.

15          Q       When it was, because at some point you were  
16      provided the name Cornelius Whitfield, was that name  
17      familiar to you?

18          A       Not to me, no.

19          Q       Anybody on your team mention like, oh hey,  
20      this rings a bell?

21          A       I don't remember.

22          Q       Is there a particular protocol that your team  
23      would follow when you're alerted to a, quote, "mass  
24      shooting"?

25          A       Yes. So it's -- so being that we were all

1       here-- I'm gonna say that we weren't all here to the  
2       protocol. So you would start responding to the  
3       station and get -- we have all kinds of equipment we  
4       need to get ready, vehicles, different sorts of  
5       equipment, electronic equipment. But we were already  
6       there so most of that stuff was already on hand. I  
7       don't know if that answers your question or not.

8           Q       That does. What kind of equipment are we  
9       talking about?

10          A       So we have armored vehicles. We have drones.  
11       We have certain kinds of cameras. We have rams, pry  
12       bars, shields. Snipers would have to get sniper  
13       equipment ready. That's the main thing. Gas.  
14       There's people that are specialized in gas so they'd  
15       have to get gas stuff ready.

16          Q       I see that on your report it indicates that  
17       you were an assistant team leader. Does that come  
18       with any particular responsibilities?

19          A       Yes. So the team is broken down into team  
20       leaders, assistant team leaders and then operators.  
21       The assistant team leader would help if the team  
22       leader, your team, your element got split. So you'd  
23       be another leader while main leader lead half. So  
24       basically if you got split you would help the team  
25       leader run the groups.

1           Q     And so the premise being that there's like  
2     everybody is able to respond so the whole 30 or 40 on  
3     the team. How many team leaders are there?

4           A     Roughly, I believe there's four, and broken  
5     down in basically four 10 man teams. But it's nothing  
6     set in stone, per se, as far as teams go. But there  
7     should have been four at that time, team leaders.

8           Q     And about how many assistant team leaders,  
9     same number?

10          A     Same, yes.

11          Q     And would you have been considered part of  
12     that 10 man team then.

13          A     So I don't recall how many people --

14          Q     Or approximate 10?

15          A     Yes. And then it's broken down as needed.  
16     So each situation dictates what's needed.

17          Q     Okay. I have some questions about some of  
18     the equipment.

19          A     Uh-huh.

20          Q     It's sounds like you're familiar with all the  
21     equipment that would have been used by S.W.A.T., not  
22     necessarily the gas? It sounds like you weren't a gas  
23     specialist; is that fair?

24          A     We have basic working knowledge of the gas,  
25     but I was not a gas person, no.

1           Q       So in terms of the drones, you mentioned  
2       drones plural. What kind of drones? Are these-- and  
3       if you don't know the specific like models, I just  
4       want to know what they do.

5           A       Yeah, that's not a good question for me. I  
6       know we had them but I don't know the specifics of  
7       them.

8           Q       Do you know generally like what you-- like if  
9       you were on a team and you were asking for like drone  
10      support, like what you were asking for?

11          A       So the drones have capability of flying in  
12      doors and out doors. And obviously they can go where  
13      people can't. And they can safely go to places where  
14      people could, if needed, prior to people.

15                 I remember we had drones overhead that day.  
16      And, if needed, we could potentially get what the  
17      drone was seeing at a team level. But typically that  
18      was at the command post and they would relay what they  
19      were seeing to us via radio.

20          Q       So the drones have cameras on them?

21          A       Yes.

22          Q       Are the drones also armed, or are any of them  
23      armed?

24          A       No.

25          Q       Okay, so non-armed, just the ability to like

1 have live video?

2 A Yes.

3 Q And would the live video have also been like  
4 downloaded, like available to you all later?

5 A I believe so. I don't know how that works.  
6 But I believe the video would probably be uploaded but  
7 I'm not sure on that.

8 Q Okay. And you said there was drone support.  
9 Do you know how many drones?

10 A No.

11 Q And you mentioned cameras. It sounds like  
12 those were probably specialized cameras?

13 A Yes. So we have like cameras you put on  
14 their doors. And a lot of stuff that's kind of  
15 becoming obsolete because of the drones. We have  
16 robots with cameras on them. We have throwable  
17 cameras. It's like a big ball with cameras all over  
18 it and you can throw it and it can look into rooms.

19 Q Do you know if any of those were used?

20 A I don't.

21 Q Definitely drones, not so sure about these  
22 other specialized cameras?

23 A No.

24 Q Okay. And just looking like further in your  
25 report it looks like there were a couple of armored

1 vehicles, at least two that were used that day?

2 A Yes.

3 Q More than two?

4 A No. We only have the two.

5 Q And they are both named. One is a Rook, one  
6 is a BearCat. Is there a difference between the two?

7 A Yes. The Rook is, if you can picture a small  
8 skid loader, bulldozer type vehicle. And then the  
9 BearCat is like a big SUV, armored SUV like almost an  
10 ambulance size.

11 Q I see that you have a badge through Army.

12 A Yes.

13 Q These sound like these are military vehicles.  
14 And I think you might have mentioned that they're kind  
15 of like semi military. Is this something that you  
16 were familiar with from your time in the military?

17 A No. They're used by police departments all  
18 over the country. I suppose they could be used in the  
19 military, but the military would use different  
20 vehicles, at least when I was in.

21 Q What did you do in the military?

22 A I was airborne infantry.

23 Q For how long?

24 A Three years.

25 Q Just before joining St. Pete?

1           A     No. There was a, from '99 to '01 and then--  
2     or '02. I'm sorry. And then there was a gap before I  
3     started.

4           Q     Okay. Before you arrived did you receive any  
5     other information about the type of incident this was  
6     or what was gonna be needed from S.W.A.T.?

7           A     I'm going off my report, and that it was  
8     being a mass shooting. And I believe we learned --  
9     well I'm actually gonna go right to the report.  
10           Yes, so we learned of the defendant and then  
11     there was believed to be three victims shot inside.

12          Q     Okay. Who did you get that information from,  
13     if you know?

14          A     I don't recall.

15          Q     And you're provided with the name Cornelius  
16     Whitfield and some descriptors. Do you know how you  
17     received that information, was it like a printout, was  
18     it provided to everybody, was it just a debrief?

19          A     So back to my report. We had a picture come  
20     through on your department phones.

21          Q     Okay. And do you know like where that  
22     information came from, like did it say if it was from  
23     DAVID, from a booking photo?

24          A     Yeah, I don't know where the picture would  
25     have come from.

1           Q     When you saw that picture did he look  
2 familiar to you for any reason?

3           A     No.

4           Q     And you said the information about like  
5 potential victims, you don't know where that came from  
6 either?

7           A     No.

8           Q     And there was information that Mr. Whitfield  
9 was still inside the address you were given; is that  
10 right?

11          A     That's right.

12          Q     So knowing that what did you decide to do at  
13 that point?

14          A     I was assigned to a rescue team. Detective  
15 Porter was the team leader for the team, and we  
16 deployed to the alley side of the house.

17          Q     Were you able to see anything in the home  
18 from where you were?

19          A     Not really, no. We were focused on the back  
20 door and the vehicle.

21          Q     And I know you said that there was a drone up  
22 with like video or at least like photography really.  
23 Did you ever receive any kind of like video or photos  
24 of like the interior of the home while you were in  
25 your particular position?



1 A Not that I recall. I don't believe so.

2 Q Did you hear anything from your position?

3 A Yes.

4 Q What did you hear?

5 A So I could hear another officer hailing from  
6 the loud speaker of the BearCat calling out to  
7 Whitfield inside of the residence.

8 Q Did you hear what was said?

9 A I don't remember the exact wording, no.

10 Q Do you remember kind of like vaguely what  
11 would have been said?

12 A It would been us identifying ourselves as the  
13 police and for him to come out.

14 Q So when you say hailing, like encouraging him  
15 to exit the residence?

16 A Yes.

17 Q And do you know if he responded to that?

18 A I believe he did.

19 Q There was a line in your report, eventually  
20 Whitfield was observed inside of the residence.

21 Did you make that observation?

22 A No, I did not.

23 Q So this is just based on like your colleagues  
24 reports from the scene?

25 A Correct.

1           Q     And then it says further that you learned by  
2     your radio that Mr. Whitfield came out of the home and  
3     was taken into custody.

4                     Were you involved in that detention?

5           A     No.

6           Q     Were you able to see that detention happen?

7           A     No.

8           Q     Okay. So what did you do once it appeared  
9     that Mr. Whitfield was out of the residence?

10          A     We were asked to go in and clear the  
11     residence.

12          Q     And what does that mean?

13          A     So go in and make sure nobody else is inside  
14     or, you know -- well, make sure nobody else is inside.  
15     And then after we do an initially fast clear we would  
16     slow down and do what's called a deep clear. It's  
17     mentioned in my report. A deep clear is once we know  
18     it's pretty well safe we're looking in every nook and  
19     cranny.

20          Q     Can you describe to me what you did and what  
21     you saw in more detail?

22          A     Sure. So I'm gonna refer back to my report.  
23     I do remember sort of. I think the door we went  
24     through led into the kitchen area, which led into a  
25     door to the garage. And I ended up in the garage with

1 nowhere else to go.

2 Q And at the same time are your colleagues on  
3 the team also doing the same thing, like going into  
4 the home for the purpose of a clear?

5 A Yes.

6 Q Are you talking to each other?

7 A There would be communication. We do a lot of  
8 nonverbal communicating, but there's also verbal  
9 stuff.

10 Q Do you remember anything that was said?

11 A No.

12 Q And did you see any -- well, can you describe  
13 to me kind of generally what you saw like in terms of  
14 the condition of the part of the home that you were  
15 in?

16 A Sure. So I, like I said, I ended up in the  
17 garage pretty quick. I didn't get to the main portion  
18 of the house. Just the path I took led me to the  
19 garage. And the garage was full of all kinds of  
20 household goods. It was pretty packed.

21 Q Did you go in to any other part of the house  
22 besides that kind of adjacent kitchen area and garage?

23 A No.

24 Q Okay. And did you see anything in those  
25 spaces that you thought might have any kind of

1 relevance to the case?

2 A I did not.

3 Q And you didn't see the victims in the case or  
4 anybody else?

5 A Not that I recall, no.

6 Q When you came out of the home did you see Mr.  
7 Whitfield anywhere?

8 A I don't believe so, no.

9 Q And were you involved in any further searches  
10 of the home?

11 A So once I ended up in the garage, it was  
12 packed full of things, I ended up taking the majority  
13 of my vest and all my gear off so I could climb up and  
14 kind of look deeper in the garage over things, and I  
15 didn't see anything in there.

16 Q I'm assume at some point you left the home?

17 A Yes.

18 Q Did you speak with any of your colleagues  
19 about either what they did or what you did?

20 A We would have had a debriefing, but I don't  
21 remember what exactly was said and it's not included  
22 in my report.

23 Q Would the debrief have happened like that  
24 very same day?

25 A Yes.

1 Q Would it have happened on scene?

2 A No. Typically we go back to the station or  
3 somewhere more secure.

4 Q Would the debrief be with like the entire  
5 team, so like team leaders, assistant team leaders and  
6 everybody who was operating that day?

7 A Yes.

8 Q And it sounds like today you don't really  
9 remember what would have been discussed?

10 A No.

11 Q Would the detectives involved in like the  
12 homicide investigation have been a part of that  
13 debrief at all?

14 A They could have been but I don't remember.

15 Q And do you remember seeing Mr. Whitfield at  
16 all like while you were outside of the home?

17 A No.

18 Q Do you remember seeing any other civilians  
19 outside of the home?

20 A Not that I remember, no.

21 Q And no contact with any other civilians?

22 A No.

23 Q I don't think I have any further questions.

24 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Ms. Russell.

25 MS. RUSSELL: No, I don't. Thank you.

1 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: State.

2 MR. KOSKINAS: That's it.

3 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: All right. We'll reserve  
4 your right to read.

5 (DEPOSITION CONCLUDED AT 9:37 A.M.)

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## CERTIFICATE OF OATH

STATE OF FLORIDA )

COUNTY OF PINELLAS )

I, the undersigned authority, certify that  
OFFICER BRANDON A BILL, personally appeared before me  
and was duly sworn.

WITNESS my hand and official seal this 13  
day of JUNE, 2025.

*Sharon Allbritton*

---

Sharon K. Allbritton

Notary Public  
State of Florida  
Commission# HH307873  
Expires: January 1, 2027





1       STATE OF FLORIDA       )

2       COUNTY OF PINELLAS   )

3           I, SHARON K. ALLBRITTON certify that I was  
4       authorized to and did stenographically report the  
5       deposition of OFFICER BRANDON A BILL; and that the  
6       transcript is a true record of the testimony given by  
7       the deponent.

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

13           Dated this    13    day of JUNE, 2025.

14  
15  
16                                   *Sharon Allbritton*

                                  \_\_\_\_\_  
17                                   SHARON K. ALLBRITTON  
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