

Investigative Report:**By Detective (Redacted), Monroe County District Attorney's Office****PSP – Stroudsburg barracks Officer Involved Shooting incident on 12/30/2020 (fatal)**

PSP incident # PA 2020-1812482/MCDA # 20210101M0001

Decedent, Christian Hall, Date of Birth: 10/31/2001**Location of Scene:**

Route 33 Overpass southbound in Hamilton Township, Lat/Long: N40 59 54 W75 16 12

Details of the incident:

On Wednesday, December 30, 2020 at 1:32:20 PM, the Monroe County Control Center received a call from (570) 730-7798. The caller wished to remain anonymous and stated "I think there is a possible suicider on top of 80 bridge, like right at the entrance outside Lowe's". There were several additional calls all concerning a possible suicidal person in the area of the bridge over interstate route 80. (Further investigation revealed that the initial call was made by the decedent, Christian Hall, Date of Birth: 10/31/2001, hereafter referred to as "Hall"). Troopers were dispatched and the first responding troop car was on scene at 1:40 PM. Troopers (#2 and #3) established contact with Hall upon their arrival on scene. Troopers immediately observed Hall standing on the ledge of the outside concrete barrier overlooking interstate route 80 westbound. The weather conditions were extremely cold and windy. The MVR footage from N6-06 revealed that the Troopers communicated the following: "How you doing sir How you doing? Can you come here Can you come here". They repeatedly asked him to come off of the ledge and talk to them, they approached with hands up to indicate they were not intending him harm and assured him they wanted to help him and that he was not in trouble. From their initial vantage point they could not see if Hall had anything in his left hand. However, at approximately 1:43 PM the Troopers recognized that he had something in his left hand and ask him to put his hands up. The Troopers retreated to behind the vehicle and continued speaking to Hall using the PA system.

By 1:44 PM it was clear to the Troopers that Hall had a gun in his left hand. Both ends of the bridge/overpass were closed, as well as, both lanes of interstate route 80. Tractor trailers were also positioned under the bridge to deter Hall from jumping and limit the distance should he fall or jump. At approximately 1:45 PM, Troopers #1 and another Trooper arrived on scene. Due to Trooper #1's education and past work in crisis intervention, he took over the PA and communicated with HALL. Trooper #1 began by reassuring Hall, speaking in a calm, deliberate manner. The MVR footage revealed the following was communicated to Hall, for specific details see the MVR footage from N6-06:

"You are not in any trouble, step off the overpass and come talk to us

Asks "what is your name? asks him to speak up..."

What's your name? Come on man, lets just talk this out.. you are not in trouble

My name is Ian, whats your name, say it real loud... Hall responds "CJ"

CJ lets talk this out... it's hard to do that when I'm on a PA and you are all the way over there... come on CJ – take a step back

We are here to help you, step down, we want to help you and get you feeling better

Nobody wants to hurt you here, you are not in any trouble, we are here to help you

(Ian speaking very calm.. slow and precise conversation)

CJ whats going on today? We are here to help you.. there's nothing going on right now that we can't help you with, that we can't get past"

During his interview Trooper #1 stated that his ultimate goal was to “be the Trooper filing out the 302 paperwork at the end of this”. A “302” is a mental health commitment under the Pennsylvania Mental Health Procedures Act. Trooper #1 asked the subject his name and he replied “CJ”. He continues to speak to HALL repeating his requests for him to come down off the ledge, asking if he’s ok, is he cold, can they talk this out, reassuring him he is not in trouble. Trooper #1 is using the PA system, but maintains a calm and comforting tone of voice.

Throughout Trooper #1’s efforts to deescalate the situation, Hall remains in possession of a gun. As a result, Troopers on scene are heard cautioning others arriving that HALL has a gun in his hand and to be aware. Trooper #1 continues to speak to HALL until approximately 1:58 PM when Trooper #4 takes over the conversation. During this time both Troopers #1 and #4 were attempting to converse with HALL, however; he asked for just one person to speak and Trooper #4 as a crisis negotiator for the Pennsylvania State Police took over communicating with Hall. The efforts to communicate with Hall continued for approximately 1 ½ hours. A review of the MVR footage from N6-06 of Trooper #4’s efforts to resolve the situation should be reviewed for the particulars. However, based on my review, Trooper #4 continued to use calm and concise statements to gain the cooperation of Hall and repeatedly told him they were there to help him, asking constantly that he put down the gun and talk with him in an effort to peacefully resolve the situation. Trooper #4 describes the gun as a black in color, semi-automatic handgun. Hall was taking the gun in and out of his waistband. While handling the gun in that manner, Hall was seen shaking his head “no” several times. Eventually, Hall puts the gun down ledge of the concrete barrier whereupon Trooper #4 thanked him for placing the gun down. Hall then retrieved a marijuana pipe from his backpack which was lying in the berm of the bridge and proceeded to smoke marijuana. Trooper #4 continued to address Hall, stating he was not in trouble and even stated he could continue to smoke while they talked if that helped him.

At this time, the gun was still on the ledge and not in Hall’s immediate possession. Hall moved several feet away from the gun and towards the Troopers. In an effort to cut off Hall’s access to the gun, Corporal #1 and Trooper #4 began walking along the berm opposite Hall. Prior to their forward movement, Trooper #4 advised Hall that they would approach, they meant him no harm and they wanted to talk explaining that it was difficult to hear Hall from their original location. Corporal #1 held a ballistic shield for cover with Trooper #4 following him, hand on shoulder. During this time, The Troopers continued to engage Hall. During a subsequent interview, Trooper #4 advised that Hall disclosed certain details about his life. Hall indicated that he had been in prison for eight (8) years, explaining that it occurred when he was a juvenile. Hall added that he would not be going back to jail. When asked how they can help him Hall stated “you just don’t get it”. Trooper #4 asked Hall to explain

it to him. At one point, Hall asks Trooper #4 if they, referring to the Troopers, are trained to shoot if they are shot at. Hall during this time repeated the phrase "make it quick" several times.

The Troopers had only advanced a short distance and after engaging with Hall for several minutes Hall begins to move backwards toward his gun. At that point both Corporal #1 and Trooper #4 return to the cover of the patrol vehicle. Trooper #4 explained that he felt he was too far from Hall to successfully deploy a Taser and Hall was wearing a heavy coat. Trooper #4 also rejected his idea to use mace due to the heavy winds and the distance. Hall once again picked up the gun and held it in his left hand, at times putting it under his shirt/in his waistband. The negotiation continued for approximately twenty (20) more minutes in this same fashion with Trooper #4 trying to reason with Hall to put down the gun and surrender himself. The final minutes of the incident consisted of a fully one-sided exchange, but the context was the same and consisted of the following statements by Trooper #4:

14:59:45 "you are tougher than this.. whatever is going on .. you did 8 years in jail, you know you are tough. You can do it.. take your phone with you. We can talk wherever you want, we gotta get off this bridge. Come on CJ. (still very calm)

CJ, put the gun on the bridge and walk up here to me. Bring your phone and we will get it charged, you can talk to whoever you want. Come on man.. I don't think you want to stay out here all night, right?

Put the gun down and walk toward me. Put the phone in your pocket and take the gun out for me. You did it before you can do it again... you aren't getting any warmer and neither are we.

Lets get you warmed up and we can tackle whatever is going on in your head today.. put the gun down for me. Come on you can do it. Put it on the ground for me..

CJ, lets not let this go any further. This is nothing put the gun down and walk up here and we can get this over

There's someone out there that loves you, they don't want to see you out here

Put the gun down at your feet and walk toward me. It's been an awful year, lets not end on a worse note.

Put the gun down at your feet and walk up here, bring your phone.

It's just gonna get colder.. 15:03:58

Come on man, you can do it. I'm not gonna hurt you. Come on CJ. It's easy to do, put that gun at your feet and walk on up here. That's all you gotta do. Lets not make it any worse for you. Put that gun at your feet, that's all you gotta do. Put the gun down, put it at your feet, I'll take care of it.

No one is going to hurt you. Put is down, bend over and put it down. Come on man, you gotta do it. CJ, put that dun down.. don't take any more steps until you put the gun down

Put it on the ground man, you gotta put that gun down. Put it down and we will come talk to you like men. I didn't lie to you did I?

Just put it down, that's all you gotta do. CJ, we are not gonna hurt you, put it down,.

We're not gonna hurt you , but you gotta put that gun down... CJ, put the gun down.

Put that gun down, put it on the ground, we are not gonna shoot you, you gotta put it down.

CJ, put the gun down. It's not gonna go the way you think. Drop the gun, CJ

Put it down, you don't need it. You don't need it. CJ, you don't need that gun.

15:08:02 Come on man. I will come there and talk to you, put that gun down. This is a minor hiccup CJ, put it down.. put it down now"

The shooting:

Hall continued to defy the commands from Troopers to put down the gun. Nearly an hour and a half into the incident, Hall slowly begins to advance towards the Troopers. A review of the MVR footage N6-23 discloses that Hall takes a total of approximately fourteen (14) steps forward. Each step is a slow, halting step with a pause in between as if expecting the Troopers to fire. While advancing in that manner Hall removes the gun from the waistband area of his person. Throughout the entire action the Troopers can be heard shouting for Hall to stop and to drop the gun. At that point, Corporal #1 discharges his firearm a .45 cal Sig Sauer department issued firearm approximately three (3) times. None of these shots appear to strike Hall. Hall then raises the gun outward toward his side and then upwards by bending his elbow at a ninety degree angle. After ignoring further commands to drop the gun, both Corporal #1 and Trooper #1¹ fire a total of approximately eight (8) shots striking Hall who falls to the roadway.

Troopers immediately approach Hall, remove the weapon and summon EMS personnel. EMS is on scene in moments and Hall is transported to Lehigh Valley Health – Pocono where he is pronounced dead.² At autopsy it was determined that Hall was struck three (3) times causing the fatal injuries. At the time of this writing we are waiting the completed autopsy report.

Evidence of Hall's suicidal intent:

As previously noted, Hall himself made the original call to 911 to report a suicidal male on the bridge over interstate route 80. This action prompted police response. A female named (associate of Hall) was interviewed by investigators. She is identified as a friend of Hall's. She indicated that on the day of the incident Hall called her around 8:00 AM and told her that he 'got sent home from work', but had

¹ Trooper #1 fired his personal 9 mm Springfield sub-compact firearm which he has qualified with and has authorization to carry on-duty

² Upon examination Hall's gun was found to be an airsoft pellet gun bearing a remarkable similarity to an actual semi-automatic firearm.

nowhere to go. She stated they had “hung out at her house”, they also smoked marijuana and they went to WaWa. Investigators also interviewed Hall’s ex-girlfriend. She reported having received a text message that contained a recording made by Hall on Wednesday, 12/30/20 at 1:31 PM one minute prior to his 911 call. In the recording Hall states: “if you are seeing this it means that I’m gone, consider this a suicide letter or video I don’t care either way. I just want to let you know that I love you...” Hall goes on to apologize for what he has done, he doesn’t know how to fix it and he wishes he was the (former paramour of his ex-girlfriend), Hall continues by saying he was scared to let her see the real Christian. He says he hopes the pain will be gone now. He tells her not to blame herself and that there is so much she cannot understand.

At approximately 1:35 PM, Hall posted to his SnapChat (profile NBA.Vodi420) a photo of Route 80 that appears to be from the bridge/overpass itself and adds the text “who would miss me”. A few moments later, he posted a photo of himself and a female that was taken a few weeks prior and adds the text “RIP CHRISTIAN HALL 10/31/2001 – 12/30/2020 Any questions call (Redacted)”³ Hall also posted a photo of interstate route 80 that had been taken approximately one week prior and added the text “They say when your one step from death your life flashes before your eyes. They also say that you see whose fake and whose real in your life. Don’t let anyone tell you anything. Let their actions speak for them. Anyone can say anything but their actions speak louder”.

The evening prior to Hall’s death he had posted to SnapChat a photo that appears to be a bedroom and added the text “I FUCKING HATE MY LIFE. I hate myself and hate who I am. I hate being the toxic asshole I am. I hate ruining relationships I have I hate moving on. I don’t want to But I’m afraid if I don’t move on all that’s gonna happen is more people around me are gonna be hurt. NGL this is the most painful decision I’m going to make” followed by various emoji’s including black heart emojis and crying emojis. Another SnapChat posted the same evening was a black background with the following text “How many would mourn me not because of guilt but because the(y) cared I am a nobody I am worthless I am toxic I don’t want to love anymore I don’t want to be cared abt I hate my life. I hate this fucking year I hate this new year. I’m not ever gonna be the same The only thing that’s going to be the same is that I smile and wave an I tell ppl I’m ok When your ready for work long before your alarm Bc you didn’t sleep”.

The total of Hall’s conduct on the bridge clearly evidenced a suicidal state of mind. By refusing multiple commands to relinquish the gun, advancing on the Troopers while armed, asking the Troopers to “make it quick” with reference to their shooting him in case of a threat, Hall persisted in a course of conduct designed to compel officers to use deadly force against him.

Background information on Christian Hall:

During the course of this investigation, I learned that Hall has a significant mental health history,

³ The telephone number (Redacted) is the telephone for Gareth Hall, Christian’s father.



Background Trooper #4:

Trooper #4 has been a Pennsylvania State Trooper for twenty-five (25) years. He has been in the Patrol division for most of those years, but has been on the Specialized Emergency Response Team (SERT) as a crisis negotiator since 2005. To become a Crisis Negotiator with SERT, he was subject to a written test, interview and put through various scenarios. After completing that process and being accepted into the program, he attended and successfully completed an eighty (80) hour course in Crisis Negotiation. To maintain his position, he is required to attend sixteen (16) hours of continuing education training every month and Trooper #4 has done so for the past fifteen (15) years. He has also attended several National level seminars and trainings in Crisis Negotiation over the course of his career to ensure he is current in all tactics and techniques for peaceful resolution. Over his career he has worked on dozens of incidents with SERT in his role as Crisis Negotiator.

Trooper #4 was on duty and at the Stroudsburg barracks when this incident was dispatched. He was specifically assigned to the incident to interact with Hall in his position as Crisis Negotiator. He arrived on scene and took over the conversation that had been started by Trooper #1. During his interview Trooper #4 went through the attempts he made to gain the trust of Hall including offering him a coat, reminding him over and over that he wasn't in trouble, that he was there to help him. Trooper #4 qualified the exchange as "mostly one sided" which plays out in the MVR footage from N6-06 that this investigator was able to review. Trooper #4 related that the behavior of Hall in the last moments (I am referring to the last 10-15 minutes of the incident AFTER Hall retrieved the gun the final time and starts approaching the Troopers) were indicative of him "giving up". He specifically referred to a noticeable change in demeanor, Hall began texting which in his experience is him saying his final goodbyes, Hall appeared to bless himself and commented "make it fast". All of his behaviors and the limited exchange support the idea that Hall had decided his life would end this day.

Background Trooper #1:

Trooper #1 has been a Pennsylvania State Trooper since 2014. His current assignment is as a Criminal Investigator at the Stroudsburg barracks. He has been a member of the crime room since 2018. Prior to working as a Pennsylvania State Trooper, #1 worked as a Crisis Intervention Specialist. Trooper #1 has his undergraduate degree in Psychology from East Stroudsburg University and a Master's Degree in Counseling and Clinical Health Psychology from the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine. After graduation he worked three (3) jobs for several years before being hired as a Trooper. He was working full-time as the night shift Crisis Intervention Specialist at the Pocono Medical Center (now LHVH – Pocono), a student counselor at Northampton Community College and at a local private practice counseling teenagers. As a Crisis Intervention Specialist, Trooper #1 was responsible to do the initial screening for all mental health admissions through the Emergency Room, he would interview anyone presenting to the ER with mental health issues and rate them for admission and service needs, after his interview he would meet with the attending physician to consult for admission and services. Many of these admissions would come to the ER after police intervention and this ultimately led to Trooper #1 seeking employment in the law enforcement field. At Northampton, Trooper #1 was a part-time student counselor, working with students on their educational issues, as well as, mental health struggles that are common in college students. He also worked part-time in the private sector counseling teenagers on various issues, although generally low risk persons.

During his interview concerning this incident Trooper #1 advised that on the day of this incident, he had been working a missing juvenile case. He was in East Stroudsburg interviewing the missing juvenile's boyfriend and mother. His partner that day was Trooper (Redacted). After completing the interview they were headed back to the barracks and while exiting interstate route 80 West, came upon the incident as it was unfolding. Due to his background in crisis intervention, Trooper #1 immediately used the PA system in the vehicle on scene to begin a dialog with Hall. He became aware the subject had a gun almost immediately upon arriving on scene which was why the decision to use the PA was made. As he arrived on scene he became aware of the efforts to stop traffic, but focused his efforts on Hall. Trooper #1 indicated it was clear the subject was in distress, he was standing on the concrete ledge of the overpass and #1 did observe the gun in his left hand.

In the last moments of the incident, Trooper #1 observed a shift in behavior of Hall. He kept his eyes down, was less responsive to commands and defied the orders to put down the gun by continuing to take steps towards the Troopers with the gun in his hand. Trooper #1 saw him bless himself, point to his head and then pull the gun from his waistband and point it in the direction of the Troopers. It was at this point that Corporal #1 fired multiple shots from his weapon, Hall did not go down and in fact, during the pause took an additional step towards the vehicle, raised his hands and Trooper #1 fired several rounds. The subject fell and action was taken to render aid. Trooper #1 was not wearing body armor so he was prevented from approaching the subject by another Trooper, instead he turned and ran for the EMS crew/ambulance that was on scene. Trooper #1 assisted the ambulance crew in getting the stretcher to Hall, loading him and assisted them by driving the ambulance to Lehigh Valley Health – Pocono.

Background Corporal #1:

Corporal #1 has been a Pennsylvania State Trooper since 1999. His career has primarily been concentrated in patrol and he has been a Patrol Supervisor at PSP- Stroudsburg since January, 2014. Corporal #1 has his BA in Criminal Justice and was a Municipal Police Officer at several local police departments in Northeast Pennsylvania before joining the Pennsylvania State Police.

During his interview concerning this incident, Corporal #1 advised that he had been working a scheduled 6:00 AM – 2:00 PM shift and was in the parking lot at headquarters completing some paperwork when the incident was dispatched. As a supervisor, he responded to the Route 33 southbound overpass off Route 611 which is approximately a mile from the Stroudsburg barracks.

Corporal #1 was one of the first on scene after Troopers (Redacted). When he arrived, he saw the subject, later identified as Hall, standing on the ledge of the overpass. He could see that Hall had something in his hand and soon after arriving was aware it was a gun, appearing to be a black, semi-automatic. Trooper #1 was speaking to Hall over the PA system in the beginning and he recalled at some point that Trooper #4 took over. Corporal #1 first concerned himself with closing down the overpass in both directions and then closed down interstate route 80 in both directions. Corporal #1 wanted to be sure to remove as many persons from the vicinity as possible to limit the risk to the general public. Corporal #1 also called for Troopers staged on the interstate to move tractor trailers that were stalled in traffic to position themselves under the bridge/overpass as a life saving measure. Corporal #1's training and experience was such that this measure could possibly deter Hall from trying to jump and would lessen the distance if he would jump or fall. Once the traffic was limited to the best of his ability, he took a position behind vehicle N6-06 and maintained cover for Trooper #4 during the negotiation.

At a point in the negotiation where Trooper #4 had gotten Hall to put down the gun and move a slight distance from it, Corporal #1 provided cover by holding a ballistic shield in his left arm and walked forward with Trooper #4 towards Hall's position. Corporal #1 reported that they were able to get approximately 35' from Hall, remaining on the opposite berm and Trooper #4 continued to try to convince him to come surrender himself to them and let them get him help. After a brief time, Hall moved back towards the gun and the Troopers retreated to the cover of the vehicle once again. Corporal #1 indicated shortly after this, Hall started to disengage, kept his head down and had the gun in his hand for the remainder of the incident. Corporal #1 stated that due to the significant distance between himself and Hall being over 25', the Taser was not an option for them and using pepper spray would have been ineffective due both to distance and heavy wind conditions.

Corporal #1 recalled Hall being 15-20 yards from the Troopers when he began to close the distance. He and the other Troopers on scene continuously commanded Hall to put the gun down, drop the gun, but he continued to take steps towards them and then raised his hand while holding the gun. Corporal #1 fired three (3) initial rounds towards center mass, but believes he missed Hall. There was a pause, during which they continued to order him to drop the weapon which he did not. Hall took another step or two forward, raised the gun and Corporal #1 fired additional rounds. Trooper #1 also fired at Hall at that moment. Corporal #1 reported that these rounds stopped Hall and he fell to the ground, he holstered his weapon immediately and provided cover using the ballistic shield while he, Trooper #4 and

Trooper (Redacted) approached Hall, removed the gun from his grip and checked him for vitals. EMS personnel was on scene almost immediately after they checked on Hall and Troopers assisted with loading him and his transport to Lehigh Valley Health - Pocono via ambulance.

Conclusion:

Based upon a thorough review of the facts and circumstances surrounding the death of Christian Hall there is no doubt that the use of deadly force was justified under the circumstances. Halls continued possession of the gun, refusal to obey commands and advancing toward the Troopers while armed unfortunately left them with no choice. Hall's suicidal intent was clearly manifested not only by his actions on the bridge, but his communications to others via social media and text. The Troopers involved displayed their good training, professionalism, competence and compassion in dealing with this very difficult situation.