

Investigative Synopsis of the Officer Involved Death (OID) of Michael L. Nguyen

On Tuesday, November 5, 2019, the Wisconsin Department of Justice – Division of Criminal Investigation received a request from the Monroe County Sheriff's Office to investigate an officer-involved death (OID). The OID occurred at The Cotter Pin Bar located at 20671 State Highway 27, Sparta, Wisconsin. This is the mailing address of the bar, but the physical address is Leon, Wisconsin.

The Monroe county Sheriff's Office received a 911 call from the bar in reference to a domestic dispute, which occurred at a residence in Leon, WI. The female victim left from the residence with her child and went to The Cotter Pin Bar to call 911. The female victim said she was being threatened by Michael Nguyen; Nguyen had attempted to choke the female and he was now in possession of a handgun.

Officers from the Monroe County Sheriff's Office, Sparta Police Department and the Wisconsin State Patrol responded to the scene. Nguyen was confronted in the parking lot of the bar by officers. Nguyen was in the possession of a 9mm handgun and pointed the gun at himself and officers. After negotiations with Nguyen, he continued to not comply with officer's orders to drop the gun. Nguyen broke the front window of the bar and fired the gun toward officers. Sgt. Ryan Oswald, Deputy Jason Rice both from the Monroe County Sheriff's Office and Officer Kyle Guralski from the Sparta Police Department returned fire at Nguyen. Nguyen then went a crouching position in front of a vehicle in the parking lot. Nguyen was still in possession of the gun and pointed it toward officers; officers fired again at Nguyen. Nguyen fell to the ground.

Law enforcement and EMS provided medical treatment to Nguyen and he was transported to the hospital in Sparta, WI. As a result of his injuries, Nguyen was pronounced deceased.

Numerous DCI agents responded to the scene. Special Agent in Charge (SAIC) Robert C. Powell supervised the OID investigation. S/A Joseph Welsch was lead investigator. The Wisconsin State Patrol Traffic Reconstruction Unit (WSP TRU) assisted with the investigation/created a scene diagram. The Tomah Police Department assisted with witness interviews.

The wife of Michael L. Nguyen was provided with the death notification by DCI. Wisconsin Office of Crime Victim Services (OCVS) forms were provided to the wife. The mother, father and brother were also provided death notification by the Sacramento County Coroner's Office, California. The family of Michael L. Nguyen was provided with the contact information for OCVS.

On November 7, 2019 an autopsy of Michael L. Nguyen was conducted at the University of Wisconsin Hospital by Forensic Pathologist Dr. Michael Stier and Autopsy Technicians Lindsay Smith and Stacy Patterson. The autopsy was attended by the following:

- S/A Lourdes Fernandez, Wisconsin DOJ – DCI
- John Ertl, Wisconsin State Crime Laboratory (WSCL)
- Michelle Obst, Wisconsin State Crime Laboratory (WSCL)

The preliminary autopsy report dated November 12, 2019 revealed:

- The decedent died from firearm injuries sustained during an engagement with law enforcement.

DCI agents interviewed involved deputies from the Monroe County Sheriff's Office, Sgt. Ryan Oswald and Deputy Jason Rice. Agents also interviewed Sparta Police Department Officer Kyle Guralski. Two additional Troopers from the Wisconsin State Patrol were also interviewed by DCI agents.

Body cameras worn by the officers and squad video were recovered and reviewed. Surveillance video from the bar was also recovered and reviewed.

Evidence from this investigation collected include, firearms, spent cartridge casings, spent bullets and cellular telephones. The evidence was transmitted to the Wisconsin State Crime Laboratory (WSCL) and DCI- Digital Forensic Unit (DFU) for forensic examination.

On November 25, 2019, S/A Welsch turned over an interactive case file to the Monroe County District Attorney's Office for review.