



## Sheriff Bob Gualtieri

### Pinellas County Sheriff's Office

*"Leading The Way For A Safer Pinellas"*

December 16, 2021

Chief Anthony Holloway  
St. Petersburg Police Department  
1301 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North  
St. Petersburg, FL 33705

Dear Chief Holloway:

The following are the results of the Pinellas County Use of Deadly Force Investigative Taskforce investigation regarding the officer-involved shooting by St. Petersburg Police Department (SPPD) Officer Leighton Williams on October 20, 2021.

On October 20, 2021, at approximately 3:56 p.m., SPPD notified the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office (PCSO) that an officer-involved shooting had occurred at 2488 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, St. Petersburg. It was reported that Christopher Deon Tonsel Jr. (Tonsel) committed an aggravated assault with a firearm on Officer Williams and that Officer Williams shot Tonsel. Tonsel was transported to a hospital with life threatening injuries. Tonsel survived his injuries and has subsequently been released from the hospital and is currently incarcerated at the Pinellas County Jail.

The Pinellas County Sheriff's Office is the supervising agency for this investigation under the Taskforce Agreement, and as Sheriff, I am responsible for supervising the investigation and making determinations. Accordingly, I have conferred with taskforce investigators and have personally reviewed the evidence in this case.

The Taskforce responded to the scene, and after an initial briefing by SPPD commanders, the Taskforce assumed the investigation. Taskforce agencies participating in addition to the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office were the Clearwater Police Department and the Pinellas Park Police Department. The Pinellas County Sheriff's Office, Forensic Sciences Division, processed the crime scene and all evidence. The State Attorney's office also responded to the scene and conducted an independent investigation.

Taskforce investigators interviewed multiple witnesses and reviewed the following: physical evidence at the scene; documents obtained from SPPD and other sources; video and audio recordings, including body-worn cameras; and other miscellaneous evidence. The following summarizes the investigation's results. All of the underlying recordings, transcripts, and documents are included with this summary or will be subsequently provided to SPPD.

## **TONSEL'S CRIMINAL HISTORY AND POLICE CONTACTS**

We begin with an overview of Tonsel's police contacts and criminal history. The following is not an exhaustive list of all Tonsel's law enforcement interactions. In addition to the following interactions Tonsel is a documented 8-Hype gang member.

**Date: 10/18/2021**

**Report: 2021-039036 (Grand Theft Motor Vehicle – SPPD)**

**Involvement: Suspect**

Summary: Tonsel is listed as a suspect in this open investigation.

**Date: 10/17/2021**

**Report: 2021-038980 (Armed Robbery – SPPD)**

**Involvement: Suspect**

Summary: Tonsel and an accomplice committed a robbery on a 16-year-old and a 10-year-old. Both defendants have been arrested. The accomplice gave information that Tonsel stores stolen property and guns at his residence and stolen vehicles pull into the rear of his house to load and unload.

**Date: 09/20/2021**

**Report: 2021-035151 (Violation of Pre-Trial Release – SPPD)**

**Involvement: Suspect**

Summary: Tonsel was the subject of a No Contact Order in a domestic related Burglary/Battery case. Tonsel was arrested on the victim's property and admitted to making contact with her via telephone in violation of the order.

**Date: 07/06/2021**

**Report: 2021-025131 (Burglary/Battery – Domestic Related – SPPD)**

**Involvement: Suspect**

Summary: Tonsel broke into [REDACTED] home through her bedroom window and got into a physical altercation with her and stole personal items. Tonsel was subsequently arrested.

**Date: 06/23/2021**

**Report: 2021-023402 (Found Property – SPPD)**

**Involvement: Other**

Summary: Tonsel's grandmother reported that she found a Ruger LCP .380 handgun under the couch at the exterior of her residence.

**Date: 06/21/2021**

**Report: GP21-11510 (Grand Theft Motor Vehicle – Gulfport Police Department)**

**Involvement: Suspect**

Summary: A vehicle was stolen and after forensic processing, Tonsel's DNA profile was discovered on the steering wheel. Tonsel was arrested.

**Date: 06/16/2021**

**Report: 2021-022467 (Grand Theft Motor Vehicle – SPPD)**

**Involvement: Suspect**

Summary: A vehicle was stolen and after forensic processing, Tonsel's fingerprint was located on the exterior of the front driver's door. Tonsel was arrested.

**Date: 06/07/2021**

**Report: 2021-021340 (Conveyance Burglary – SPPD)**

**Involvement: Suspect**

Summary: Tonsel matched the description of a suspect running from the police. Probable Cause was not developed.

**Date: 06/07/2021**

**Report: 2021-021286 (Resisting an Officer without Violence – SPPD)**

**Involvement: Suspect**

Summary: Tonsel ran from officers regarding a previous vehicle burglary call. He was not apprehended or identified by officers, however a cell phone was located that belonged to Tonsel. Probable Cause was not developed.

**Date: 05/03/2021**

**Report: 2021-016402 (Dwelling Burglary & Conveyance Burglary – SPPD)**

**Involvement: Suspect**

Summary: A vehicle was burglarized and a garage door opener used to steal lawn equipment from the residence. After forensic processing, Tonsel's DNA profile was located on the center console handle. Tonsel was arrested.

**Date: 04/09/2021**

**Report: 2021-013139 (Criminal Mischief – SPPD)**

**Involvement: Suspect**

Summary: Tonsel broke the bedroom window of [REDACTED] Tonsel was not arrested.

**Date: 11/24/2020**

**Report: 2020-042305 (Aggravated Battery – SPPD)**

**Involvement: Victim**

Summary: Tonsel was shot in the lower left leg/calf while sitting on the porch of 1014 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, St. Petersburg.

**Date: 08/02/2018**

**Report: 2018-021013 (Trespass Warning – Manatee County Sheriff's Office (MCSO))**

**Involvement: Suspect**

Summary: Tonsel was issued a Trespass Warning at a mobile home park.

**Date: 07/09/2018**

**Report: 2018-018821 (Trespass Warning – MCSO)**

**Involvement: Suspect**

Summary: Tonsel was issued a Trespass Warning at a motel.

**Date: 12/08/2016**

**Report: 2016-035633 (Unlicensed Firearm, Tampering with a Witness, Firearm on School Property, Possession of Marijuana – MCSO)**

Summary: Tonsel possessed a stolen firearm and threatened a witness. Tonsel was arrested.

**Date: 12/05/2016**

**Report: 2016-035334 (Armed Burglary of a Conveyance – MCSO)**

**Involvement: Suspect**

Summary: Tonsel possessed a stolen firearm that was taken in a vehicle burglary near his residence. Tonsel was arrested.

**Date: 09/07/2016**

**Report: 2016-026426 (Simple Battery – MCSO)**

**Involvement: Other**

Summary: Tonsel was one of three juveniles who pushed and punched another juvenile. The victim refused to prosecute.

**Date: 07/01/2016**

**Report: 2016-030195 (Armed Burglary of a Conveyance – SPPD)**

**Involvement: None**

Summary: The victim reported a vehicle burglary and Tonsel possessed the gun stolen in the burglary.

**Date: 06/14/2016**

**Report: 2016-017439 (Burglary to a Dwelling – MCSO)**

**Involvement: Suspect**

Summary: Tonsel was one of four juveniles observed inside the victim's residence. Tonsel was arrested.

**Date: 06/14/2016**

**Report: 2016-017435 (Conveyance Burglary & Resisting an Officer without Violence – MCSO)**

**Involvement: Suspect**

Summary: Tonsel was one of four juveniles observed behaving suspiciously as they entered backyards of houses. One of the offenders was seen attempting to break into a vehicle while the rest assisted him as look outs. Tonsel was arrested.

### **SUMMARY OF FACTS LEADING UP TO AND DURING THE SHOOTING**

The following is a summary of the facts leading up to and during the shooting on October 20, 2021.

Sunny Daniels (Daniels) is a maintenance person employed by the City of St. Petersburg and he is assigned at the Wildwood Recreation Center, located at 1000 28<sup>th</sup> Street South. He observed Tonsel and [REDACTED] arguing inside the park and attempted to defuse the situation by asking them if they wanted a bottle of water. He felt that by intervening that they may stop arguing. Daniels does not know Tonsel or [REDACTED]

Daniels left the area where the couple argued and soon thereafter heard a commotion by the pool. Daniels observed Tonsel pinning [REDACTED] against a wall with her arms raised. Daniels could hear Tonsel and [REDACTED] arguing over her telephone and money. Daniels again tried to intervene by telling Tonsel there were cameras in the park, but the argument continued. They then moved toward picnic benches and Tonsel was pressing his forearm across [REDACTED] throat. Daniels believes Tonsel struck [REDACTED] two times. Tonsel and [REDACTED] then moved towards a fence and Daniels observed a pistol handle in Tonsel's pocket. Daniels took two photos of the subjects and called 911 to report the argument and that the male had a gun.

Based on Daniels' 911 call, SPPD dispatched officers to the Wildwood Recreation Center. The computer aided dispatch (CAD) notes informed responding officers that the male was approximately 19 to 20 years old, approximately 5'04", with a medium build. He was last seen wearing a red sweater and gray sweat pants, and the gun had a black handle. The CAD notes informed officers that the male had pushed the female.

Officer Bryan Santiago responded to the scene and met with [REDACTED] Tonsel had fled the scene on foot. [REDACTED] told Officer Santiago that she allowed Tonsel to look through her telephone while they were in Wildwood Park. Tonsel saw pictures of her with another male and an argument ensued. Tonsel refused to return [REDACTED] phone. [REDACTED] later told investigators that she and Tonsel had been dating "off and on" for approximately three years and they have had numerous altercations, mostly over infidelity. [REDACTED] stated that Tonsel called her the night before the incident and they decided to meet the next day. [REDACTED] argued with Tonsel to retrieve her phone and at some point during the argument Tonsel took approximately \$90.00 from her purse. [REDACTED] said Tonsel was upset that the police were called because he was carrying a gun.

After speaking with [REDACTED] and observing an area of redness on her face, combined with other information, Officer Santiago established probable cause to arrest Tonsel for domestic battery. Officer Santiago communicated to other officers via radio that there was probable cause for Tonsel's arrest and the officers established a perimeter around the area.

Officer Derrin Knoop arrived in the area and believed he saw movement outside the residence at 2563 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, which he thought may have been Tonsel hiding. Because of Officer Knoop's possible sighting, Officer Williams arrived at the 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue South address and walked around the residence with his K-9.

Officer Williams saw Tonsel in the alley near this residence and when he went to his cruiser he then saw Tonsel walking east on 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue South. Officer Williams reentered his cruiser with his K-9 and drove east on 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue South until he saw Tonsel near the porch of 2498 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue South. Tonsel then walked along the side of this residence. Officer Williams deployed with his K-9 as Tonsel fled behind 2488 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue South.

When Officer Williams reached the rear of the residence, he observed Tonsel reaching for a gun in his right pocket. Officer Williams saw the black handle of the gun. Tonsel kept his body bladed away from Officer Williams. Officer Williams ordered Tonsel to "put the gun down." Tonsel refused to follow Officer Williams' command. Officer Williams saw the gun in Tonsel's right hand as he reached across his body with his left hand, repeatedly glancing back toward Officer Williams as if acquiring a target. Tonsel kept his right hand on the firearm during the entire incident and appeared to pull out the firearm and turn toward Officer Williams. Officer Williams stated that he was in fear for his life and fired one round from his agency-issued firearm striking Tonsel in the area of his left ribcage/abdomen. Officer Williams' body worn camera (BWC) captured the shooting and the video is consistent with Officer Williams' statements as to what occurred.

Officers Christopher Cruz and Derrin Knoop responded to the scene and assisted with first aid until EMS arrived. Officer Cruz observed Tonsel's firearm on the ground. Officer Knoop handcuffed Tonsel. Officer Cruz rode in the ambulance to the hospital and did not hear Tonsel make any statements.

On November 24, 2021, Tonsel was discharged from Bayfront Medical Center and transferred to the Pinellas County Jail. The State Attorney has charged Tonsel as an adult and he was booked into the jail on charges of: Aggravated Assault on a Law Enforcement Officer, Carrying a Concealed Firearm, and Possession of a Firearm by a Person Under 18 Years of Age. Tonsel was arrested on two outstanding Juvenile Pickup Orders for Burglary and Grand Theft Motor Vehicle.

An FDLE firearms report established that Tonsel's gun, a Springfield XD .40 caliber semi-automatic pistol (SN# US267309), was operable at the time of the shooting.

## **TIMELINE OF EVENTS LEADING UP TO AND DURING THE SHOOTING**

The following is a summary timeline of the events leading up to and during the shooting on October 20, 2021. The timeline is approximate because detectives had to estimate some of the times based on video evidence.

1528 hours: Sunny Daniels called 911 and reported that a male was "walking around with a gun in his pocket" at Wildwood Recreation Center.

1532 hours: Daniels took two photographs of Christopher Tonsel on top of [REDACTED] at a picnic bench in the park and he appeared to be striking her.

1535 hours: SPPD arrived in the area of Wildwood Recreation Center and Tonsel fled on foot with [REDACTED] chasing him.

1535 hours: Officer Bryan Santiago made contact with [REDACTED] on Langdon Avenue near Yale Street South.

1535 hours: Officer Williams arrived at 2563 13th Avenue South and walked around the residence because Officer Derrin Knoop believed he saw movement there and believed that Tonsel may be hiding behind the residence.

1537 hours: Officer Williams deployed with his K-9 into the alley behind 2563 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue South and observed Tonsel to the east.

1538 hours: Officer Santiago announced via radio that he had probable cause to arrest Tonsel for Domestic Battery.

1538 hours: Officer Williams deployed with his K-9 and chased Tonsel behind the residence at 2488 13th Avenue South.

1539 hours: Office Williams encountered Tonsel and challenged him to "put the gun down." Officer Williams fired one round from his gun striking Tonsel in the area of his left ribcage/abdomen.

1548 hours: Paramedics arrived and began lifesaving procedures.

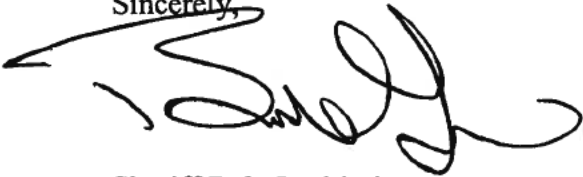
1552 hours: Tonsel was transported to Bayfront Medical Center.

Based on the Taskforce investigation, including officers' statements, physical evidence, video evidence, and witness statements, it is clear that SPPD officers had probable cause to arrest Tonsel and that he resisted arrest by fleeing from them.

When Officer Leighton Williams encountered Tonsel behind 2498 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, Tonsel was armed with a loaded and operable semi-automatic pistol. Tonsel refused to follow Officer Williams' command to "put the gun down." Tonsel committed an aggravated assault with a firearm on Officer Williams. Tonsel's movements and refusal to follow Officer Williams' commands created Officer Williams' well-founded fear for his life and he fired one round at Tonsel to protect himself from being shot. Officer Leighton Williams' actions were lawful and proper under the circumstances pursuant to F.S. 776.012.

The Taskforce investigation is closed and this matter is referred to you for any further review you deem appropriate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bob Gualtieri", written in a cursive style.

Sheriff Bob Gualtieri  
Pinellas County, Florida

BG/sj

Enclosure



# Redaction Log

Total Number of Redactions in Document: 17

## Redaction Reasons by Page

Page	Reason	Description	Occurrences
2			1
5			14
6			1
7			1

# Redaction Log

## Redaction Reasons by Exemption

Reason	Description	Pages (Count)
		5(14) 6(1) 7(1) 2(1)