BCI still leading the investigation

By JAMES W. WADE III
Staff Reporter

The community has been in an uproar since Nov. 29 when 13 Cleveland Police officers fired 137 shots into two victims. Timothy Russell, 43, and Malissa Williams, 30, were both shot more than two dozen times in a school parking lot after a police chase that ended in the city ofEast Cleveland.

Mayor Gary Norton asked for help from the FBI in handling this case. “We owe it to the community to get the truth in this whole situation. It was tragic what happened with those two people; this should have never, ever happened. Our role was to help sort out the facts. We have just finished interviewing all 13 shooters. The next step is to interview the non-shooters and residents,” said Mayor Norton.

Mayor Norton shared with the Call & Post a portion of the conversation had with the FBI Tuesday afternoon. The State Attorney General's Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) is still the lead in the investigative team, which includes the Cuyahoga County Sheriff's Office and two East Cleveland Police Detectives.

Mayor Norton said BCI still has to do the underlined investigation. A liaison from the FBI will be working to find out if any civil rights violations were made. A report will be given to United States Attorney *Steven* M. *Dettelbach.*

"The FBI assured me they have full confidence in BCI," said Mayor Norton. "And with the help of their liaison, things should work out ok." Eighteen BCI staff members, including 16 agents, are working the investigation. They are processing evidence, interviewing witnesses and reviewing video camera footage, among other things. The investigative team's mission is simple: Find all the facts.

"Our BCI experts will aggressively and fairly piece together the facts from the evidence," said Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine. "Some of those facts may come from witnesses who haven't come forward to share what they know. I encourage anyone who thinks they might have some information that could help to call the Attorney General's BCI."

Congresswoman Marcia Fudge has all along felt someone else should step in. Congresswoman Fudge wrote a letter to the Special Litigation Unit in the Office of Civil Rights Department inWashingtonfor an independent review of the facts and circumstances in the use of deadly force.

Rev. Jawanza Colvin, senior pastor of the OlivetInstitutionalBaptistChurchalso wrote a letter to the Civil Rights Department asking for them to look into this matter. "While the details of this case continue to emerge, growing community concern regarding the use of excessive force and a pattern of racial insensitivity toward citizens of color is only heightened by this most recent event," Rev. Colvin said in the letter.

Right now the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation is handling this case with East Cleveland in collaboration with Cuyahoga County Prosecutor Tim McGinty. It becomes more and more realistic that Mayor Norton and the city of East Cleveland need to ask for assistance from the

FBI for someone to be fair and impartial to this case.

The Community Forum at Greater Abyssinia Baptist Church last week became heated a few times about the way Cleveland police officers treat Blacks. In the midst of the entire outcry for the Department of Justice to step in, no one has produced the gun that allegedly began the chase.

The Cleveland Branch of the NAACP stated that “no credible evidence has yet been provided to document the fact that the victims were, in fact, armed or even what justification existed for a police pursuit through several cities involving several different departments. Questions surrounding this unfortunate incident will only be answered following an independent investigation, hopefully, by the United States Department of Justice.”

“I think we need to turn this over to the FBI,” said East Cleveland Councilman Nathaniel Martin. “This was an execution. No one inCuyahogaCountyshould deal with this case. Bringing in someone like the FBI or the Department of Justice will at least be fair and objective, they have the expertise in this field.”

Attorney General DeWine pledges that this incident will be fully and fairly investigated. Findings will be reported to the Cuyahoga County Prosecutor.

Mayor Norton and the Cleveland Branch of the NAACP will have another Community Forum on the force of this deadly shooting at6 p.m.this Friday, Dec. 14 atShawHigh School.

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