

Officer involved in his 6th shooting - Columbus Dispatch, The (OH) - March 27, 2018 - page 1B

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Some police officers go their entire career without having to draw their guns and fire a single round.

Others seem to find trouble, or trouble finds them.

Glenn Thivener, 50, a SWAT team member, has shot and killed four people during his 29-year career as a Columbus police officer. He's wounded two others.

Kaitlin Marie Demeo was barricaded with a rifle in a Southeast Side house during a standoff lasting more than three hours Saturday.

She fired off rounds hitting a nearby home and, in response, Thivener and another SWAT officer, 46-year-old Keith Kise returned fire. She was pronounced dead at the scene. It was Kise's second shooting.

All of Thivener's shootings before Saturday morning's incident have been ruled justified. It will be months before a grand jury reviews the latest shooting, and even longer before an internal police board reviews the level of force used.

Thivener, who has been a SWAT team member since 2008, is often the point man as the SWAT team enters a building. That means he's going to encounter a threat first, said Sgt. Dean Worthington, a spokesman for Columbus Division of Police.

"He's point because he's good at it," Worthington said.

Experts say SWAT officers, by the very nature of their jobs, are exposed to more high-risk situations and therefore likely to be involved in more shootings. In Thivener's case, none of the shootings have involved unarmed people. He's also fired alongside other officers.

Thivener's other fatal shootings were:

- Michael A. Lloyd, 48, a suspect in a string of business robberies, was under surveillance when he entered a Donatos at 2769 Northland Plaza while wearing a mask and carrying a gun in October 2011.
- Kevin Boozer, 28, who took his girlfriend hostage with a knife held at her throat at a home on the Far West Side in August 2012.
- Danny Thornton, 47, who went on a shooting rampage in November 2013. Thornton shot one

ex-girlfriend and then fatally shot the 9-year-old son of another ex-girlfriend in the face as the child opened the door. The boy died a day later.

One of the people Thivener wounded was Lincoln Rutledge, who shot and killed fellow SWAT officer Steven Smith.

"He's a SWAT officer who's trained to neutralize a threat," said William Terrill, a criminal justice professor at Arizona State University.

Police departments rule that their officers are justified in their actions about 98 percent of the time, Terrill said.

In a post-Ferguson era, where questionable officer-involved shootings resulting in death are highly publicized across the country, some may question an officer's involvement in so many shootings.

Police often refer to seasoned criminals as repeat offenders.

"From the public's perspective, he's a 'repeat officer.' I understand that from the public view, but from a policing perspective, that's your job," he said.

Within those perspectives, "the truth probably lies somewhere in between," Terrill said.

Police often don't look at earlier shootings when evaluating an officer's latest shooting incident, said Sean Walton, an attorney who has pending lawsuits against the city regarding some officer-involved shootings.

"I fully believe the use of deadly force is justified in situations," he said. "But because of the process they undertake, and the lack of investigation ... we can't tell the difference between a good shoot and bad shoot because the process is tainted."

Walton has advocated for an independent group to investigate officer-involved shooting.

Walton also believes officers should be offered more counseling because of the level of trauma they have inevitably been exposed to in shootings. Many return to work after a few days off, he said.

"There's no way someone on their sixth shooting should not be scrutinized a little bit more, offered more counseling," Walton said. "I mean, the guy's not a machine."

There isn't a lot of research on the cumulative trauma police officers collect, Terrill said.

"The culture of policing is, historically, this tough guy (saying): 'We don't need help,'" he said. "We don't know about the toll it takes, especially in the long term."

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