



The Joint Federal/Provincial Commission into
the April 2020 Nova Scotia Mass Casualty
MassCasualtyCommission.ca

Commission fédérale-provinciale sur les événements
d'avril 2020 en Nouvelle-Écosse
CommissionDesPertesMassives.ca

Transcript of Recorded Interview

INTERVIEWEE: Stuart Beselt, RCMP Constable

INTERVIEWER: Roger Burrill, Commission Counsel
Christopher Lussow, Primary Investigator

LOCATION: RCMP Headquarters, 80 Garland Avenue, Dartmouth NS

DATE: Thursday, July 22, 2021

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END TIME: 12:23 PM AST

TRANSCRIBED BY: Trint Software

PROOFREAD BY: Sara Knežević, Supervisor of IM Services
Chris Lussow

Roger BURRILL [00:00:01] Again, it's July 22nd at 10:51, 10:51, OK, and we're at the RCMP headquarters at 80 Garland Avenue in Burnside Dartmouth right. I'm Roger BURRILL. I'm with the Mass Casualty Commission I'm here with five other people in the room and perhaps they can introduce themselves.

Anna MANCINI [00:00:20] I'm Anna MANCINI and also here with the Mass Casualty Commission.

Christopher LUSSOW [00:00:23] Christopher Lussow with the Mass Casualty Commission.

Laurie Ward [00:00:28] I'm Laurie Ward from Department of Justice Canada on behalf of the Attorney General of Canada and the RCMP

Stuart BESELT [00:00:34] Stuart BESELT from the RCMP. Thank you,

Roger BURRILL [00:00:38] Stuart. I'm going to ask you questions. Chris will probably ask you a few questions and I want to go. Perhaps we can get right to April 18th. I understand that ten o'clock you were on a shift working at the Bible Hill detachment, am I right?

Stuart BESELT [00:00:50] Yeah.

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Roger BURRILL [00:00:51] And that you received a transmission or a call about an incident in Portapique and you and some of your colleagues and I understand that to be Constable Patton, Constable Merchant and Constable Colford from the Bible Hill RCMP detachment responded to that call.

Stuart BESELT [00:01:08] That's right.

Roger BURRILL [00:01:08] OK, can you give us a sense of what happened, at least at that stage, without too much detail? You guys went and headed to Portapique. What was your understanding of what was going on?

Stuart BESELT [00:01:17] Well, the initial call came in that it was... A person was shot on the front deck. And so I took the call and I started making my way right away. Shortly thereafter, we got another call that somebody was calling in and saying their parents were dead. So, you know, it almost sounded like almost unbelievable, right? Like, you know, so, you know, it wouldn't be, you know, past the realm of believability that this was possibly a MHA call or mental health call. Right. So we were heading out... It's, Portapique is not close. Right. So, you know, the sergeant, Andy O'Brien, used to like to be apprized of anything major that was happening. So, you know, I was trying to get... I was trying to get information from Brian Rehill, the the risk manager, as much information as we could. And also, while I was driving, I was calling Andy and I said, you know, Andy, I don't know what's going on. We either have a double homicide or we have a mental health act. I don't know. I just want you to be aware of it. Right. Not knowing what all the communication were at the time, you know, through the OCC or from dispatch and all that sort of stuff. So anyways, we were... Well, I was... I had my vehicle to the floor. Right. Like I was going as fast as that old Tahoe would go. So, you know, en route, you know, I'm just saying, like, you know, this sounds like this guy could still be on the loose. We got to make sure that we're careful because, you know, my concern is ambush or anything like that. I'd been in the area a couple of times, like I've been in Colchester now for almost seven years. But it's not an area that we frequent. Right. So, you know, like, I don't I didn't remember anything about the area on my way out there kind of thing. Right. So, you know, I, I caution the guys. I said, you know, we should have our hard body armor HBA on and and be carbine ready. Right. So, you know, I ended up being the first one there. I pulled on to the... Sorry, I don't know all the street names very well. I think it's a Portapique Beach Road. Main road going in. I pulled over, I jumped out of the truck. I had my carbine, I threw on my HBA. And at that point in time, two cars approached towards me. And so then...

Roger BURRILL [00:04:04] Can I can I stop you?

Stuart BESELT [00:04:05] Sure.

Roger BURRILL [00:04:05] You've done a really good job. But I want to get you mentioned some things I think you said Andy O'Brien.

Stuart BESELT [00:04:12] Yeah,.

Roger BURRILL [00:04:12] Rehill. And and I'm trying to get where they fit into this picture in terms of your engagement with them or their engagement with the process.

Stuart BESELT [00:04:22] Well, Brian Rehill is the risk manager. He works there. He was working at the OCC. So kind of all major things are going through him. Right. Like he's kind of your, you know, like he's your coordinator kind of thing. Like, you know, he's feeding you some information. He's trying to maybe do some checks on different things. And, you know, like...

Roger BURRILL [00:04:47] So you're in communication with him?

Stuart BESELT [00:04:49] Yeah. You know, on the radio you're trying like, I think I was asking them for some more information and that sort of stuff. With Andy, I didn't really talk too much. I just like I got on the phone. I let them know this is what we're going to because he was at home, right, like it's a Saturday night, like he's not working, but he likes to, like he wanted to be aware of anything major that you had on the go. Right. So.

Roger BURRILL [00:05:13] You said he's your sergeant.

Stuart BESELT [00:05:15] Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:05:17] What does that mean? He's your...

Stuart BESELT [00:05:18] He's the detachment ops NCO or operations officer like. So he's he's he's in charge of the four shifts. Right. And so, like, I'm the acting corporal, so I'm in charge of the shift. Right. And so the sergeant works Monday to Friday kind of thing. And then, you know, so he's coordinating the four shifts and, you know, everything that happens on the street, right. During the shift, I'm in charge right like it's me, like. But he wants to be kept aware of anything major going on. So it's usually just a phone call and say this is what we got going. Right.

Roger BURRILL [00:05:58] So O'Brien is kind of running, Andy is O'Brien. Andy O'Brien

Stuart BESELT [00:06:02] Yeah,.

Roger BURRILL [00:06:02] He's on call pretty regularly.

Stuart BESELT [00:06:05] Well, it's not really even on call. He's just he's just basically wants to be aware. Right. So if he... You know, but I've worked with other sergeants that didn't... I never called, you know, like it's just Andy like to be aware.

Roger BURRILL [00:06:17] And did you say it was a cell phone call?

Stuart BESELT [00:06:19] Yeah, I was just making a cell phone.

Roger BURRILL [00:06:20] Alright. And the communications with the risk manager were...

Stuart BESELT [00:06:23] Over the radio.

Roger BURRILL [00:06:24] ...over the regular radio.

Stuart BESELT [00:06:26] Yes.

Roger BURRILL [00:06:27] OK. All right. Very good. Now, acting corporal means something to you. I'm not sure what that means. Are you able to describe that for me?

Stuart BESELT [00:06:33] Well, it just means I'm in on the shift supervisor. I'm I'm in charge of the team. Right. So.

Roger BURRILL [00:06:40] Right. And how many on the team?

Stuart BESELT [00:06:44] We usually have a team of six with, you know, me in charge. And then that night there was me and three others.

Roger BURRILL [00:06:52] ok So there's four on the team. that night.

Stuart BESELT [00:06:54] That night.

Roger BURRILL [00:06:54] Right on. And how long had you been acting corporal?

Stuart BESELT [00:06:57] At that time?

Roger BURRILL [00:06:58] Yeah.

Stuart BESELT [00:06:58] Well, I start year five next, well in two weeks.

Roger BURRILL [00:07:03] OK,.

Stuart BESELT [00:07:03] So I've been doing it since two thousand seventeen in August.

Roger BURRILL [00:07:07] Right on. OK, and as the acting corporal, what does that entail. Are there any specific job description elements to that?

Stuart BESELT [00:07:16] Yeah. Like you're, you're taking control of situations like this. Like I'm in charge. Right. And then you know, you're supervising your, you know, approving files. You're, you know, doing all that kind of stuff. Right.

Roger BURRILL [00:07:28] So you said that Portapique is a place that you had not frequented before.

Stuart BESELT [00:07:34] I have been there before, but not a lot. Right. Like, it's not I think in this, you know, I guess it was almost six years at the time or five and a half years. I'd maybe been there five times. Right. Like for different things. But it's not something that, you know, would stand out in my mind is, OK, this is here. This is here. This is here. And usually you're going in, you're dealing with whatever. And then you're you're coming right back out. Right. And it might be another year plus before you you're back in the right. It's not not a very busy spot. Right.

Roger BURRILL [00:08:06] And I imagine there's more places also very similar to that that you wouldn't frequent very regularly.

Stuart BESELT [00:08:12] Well, we do all the Colchester County. Right. So, you know, basically, you know, from Tatamoguche to Five Islands to Shubenacadie East, we're... That's our whole area. Right. So there's all kinds of these little areas that we don't frequent on a regular basis. Right.

Roger BURRILL [00:08:31] OK, so when you as the acting corporal, get a call like this, I know two things happened. You called the risk manager and you called your sergeant. Is there is there a protocol that kicks in or is there something that keeping in mind this could be a double homicide...

Stuart BESELT [00:08:50] Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:08:51] Is there some sort of program plan or protocol that's expected to be engaged?

Stuart BESELT [00:08:56] Well, not really till you get there, right. You have to kind of figure out what you're going...at first before, you know, like if it's you know, if you do have, like a murder suspect, you know, hold up, then you're going to try and make a

perimeter and and, you know, obviously bring in your resources, your team or whatever and that sort of thing. Right. So, you know, we didn't exactly know what we had when we were going because they were still that question of is this a mental health call, right. Because, you know, you just don't know. Right. Like, you just you have those kind of things where people say crazy stuff all the time. Right. So it wasn't really, you know, like until I talked to Andrew on the side of the road and, you know, the first car, and I know Andrew like I know him from hockey and and he's like, it's like Stew, I think I've been shot. And he feels his arm and he's like. I have been shot. He's got blood on his arm, right. And so then I'm like, who was it? He's like some guy in a white car and the next car behind him was white. Right. So literally, I'm geared up and ready. Like I drop on that car and it's you can tell it's a family and they're like, it's not us. It's not us. It's like, you know, like we heard the gunshots and we got the fuck out of there. Right. So I'm like, OK, I said, call 911. Let them know that you're a witness. And then, you know, by that time, Adam's right beside me and I'm like, let's go. You know, like my concern at that point in time is if we drive in, you know, you're driving a billboard, right. And, you know, the Moncton shootings and, you know, shootings in northern Saskatchewan and stuff like, you know, police officers die in their cars all the time. Police officers die in their cars. Right. So especially coming into something like this where we don't know where this guy is. You know, if he's anything like Moncton, he's a sharpshooter. And, you know, like you drive in there, he knows where you're sitting. Right. OK, you know,

Roger BURRILL [00:11:04] I hear you and I want to talk about that a little bit more later, but I want to get it clear in my mind about what was going on with McDonald in that white car that. Did you know who the folks were in the white car?

Stuart BESELT [00:11:14] No, I just like I think it was a husband or wife and maybe a kid in the back seat. Like, I just, you know, like I just didn't have the time to spend with them. Right. Like, right. You know, you know, basically we were figuring it's now an IR situation where we have an active shooter and, you know, active shooter means go.

Roger BURRILL [00:11:32] Right. So you've just expressed an IR situation. Yeah, that's a technical term. That means something to you, something to me. But yeah, make sure that I'm clear on that. And I think Nova Scotian are going to want to know what that is as well. Yeah. Are you able to explain that to me?

Stuart BESELT [00:11:45] Well, it just means that you basically have an active shooter or, you know, a situation where you're, you know, like your your main concern is stopping the threat, right. Everything else is irrelevant at that point in time, you know.

Roger BURRILL [00:12:00] OK, so in your mind, do you think this IR situation has emerged?

Stuart BESELT [00:12:05] 100 percent and

Roger BURRILL [00:12:06] that this is something different than an MHA or anything?

Stuart BESELT [00:12:10] Oh, yeah, once Andrew said that he'd been shot and I know, like, this guy is shooting random people. Right. So, you know, we were like, OK, let's go. Right. So we... I made the decision to run in and I'm I'm glad I did. I think it kept me alive, to be honest with you, like I said. But you know

Roger BURRILL [00:12:31] that decision that you made to run in...

Stuart BESELT [00:12:33] Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:12:36] Can you explain that a little bit more to me?

Stuart BESELT [00:12:37] I feel like I think I just said, like, you know, police officers die in their cars and, you know, like he's got he's got the advantage at that point in time because police cars drive in and, you know, he could light them up and you never see him. Right. So, you know, like you're wanting to get in there as stealthily as possible, basically, and and try and and, you know, have some advantage of of, you know, darkness or whatever the case may be. Right. Like, you know, we don't have bulletproof cars, right. So, you know, and I've like I've been a police officer for 24 years. Right. So I've I've lived through some of these not having to be involved in. But, you know, we're police officers are getting killed because they they're not even getting out of their cars and they get a chance to thank you.

Roger BURRILL [00:13:29] Thank you, that's really informative. The gear that you had, you said the hard body armor.

Stuart BESELT [00:13:33] Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:13:33] In the car, behind, any any other gear that you had at that stage in terms of your ability to respond?

Stuart BESELT [00:13:40] Yeah, about eighty pounds. Yeah. Well you're wearing your soft body armor like your your normal vest. Right. Your, your gun belt, your taser. You know, like...

Roger BURRILL [00:13:50] I never wore one of these before.

Stuart BESELT [00:13:52] So your gun belt's like 30 pounds. Right. Your Tasers may be a pound and you know, like your, your soft body armor's maybe a couple pounds,

like the hard body armor is probably close to 30 pounds. Like it's just it's just a big two big steel plates. Right. Like it's, you know, and then your carbine is, you know, weighty too. Right. So, you know, running around with that, I'm probably pushing over 300 pounds, right.

Roger BURRILL [00:14:20] You know, headgear, anything of that nature?

Stuart BESELT [00:14:22] No.

Roger BURRILL [00:14:22] No, OK, all right. And you said something about the dark that you felt that was potentially advantageous to you.

Stuart BESELT [00:14:29] Well, as opposed to driving in, you know, with a fully marked, you know, police car that lights up with it and you light. Right. So, you know.

Roger BURRILL [00:14:38] Before I move on, I want to make sure I understand the conversation with Andrew McDonald. You said the guy in a white car. He told you a guy in a white car?

Stuart BESELT [00:14:44] He said.. That's all he told me. He said a guy in a white car.

Roger BURRILL [00:14:47] Did he know anything at all about a police car?

Stuart BESELT [00:14:48] No, not not Andrew. Not at that time. He might have told that to Erin or something. But the initial was, you know, in the initial call was it looked like a police car. Right, grader, it looked so, you know, there was a lot of question of, well, how much does it look like a police car. Right. Like we were, we're trying to decipher that, right, without knowing, you know, like when we ran by Wortman's place at the beginning when there's a Taurus in the driveway. Well, that looks like a police car, like, you know, does it have, you know, markings on it? You know, it was all kinds of old police cars that are decommissioned that still have some of the stickers on them that, you know. Is that what they mean? Like we didn't know, right? Like we just didn't know at that time.

Roger BURRILL [00:15:30] Did you have a name at that time?

Stuart BESELT [00:15:32] Well, we had Gabriel, right. So we had Gabriel and then they were searching the area. And I think fairly early on they were able to search the area and like, find a Gabriel Wortman.

Roger BURRILL [00:15:45] So who's they?

Stuart BESELT [00:15:47] The OCC.

Roger BURRILL [00:15:47] OK. Yeah, Rehill and his...

Stuart BESELT [00:15:49] Yeah, that was Rehill and them, right. So..

Roger BURRILL [00:15:50] OK.

Stuart BESELT [00:15:50] So they, they found this Gabriel Wortman. So we kind of were fairly confident it was probably this Gabriel Wortman. But you know we, we didn't know. Right. Like we didn't...We had no clue.

Roger BURRILL [00:16:03] So when you went in there...

Stuart BESELT [00:16:04] Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:16:06] What, what was your plan or what, what exactly, if you had one, I don't know, what was the plan?

Stuart BESELT [00:16:10] Well, we were just trying to go to you know, what we saw was, you know, like because we saw the light, the fire, the first Wortman's house was on fire. So, you know, that was drawn your attention first. And OK, so we went past Wortman's and, you know, saw the car there. And, you know, obviously it didn't look like anyone was around there. So then we you know, we.. At this point in time is just Adam and I, we kind of go around and if you had a map, it would be much easier.

Roger BURRILL [00:16:39] But it's OK,

Stuart BESELT [00:16:42] So, you know, so we kind of go around the bend there a little bit. We can look at the end of those. There's the two houses on Faris there are at the corner of Faris and, and I don't...the Portapique Beach Road or whatever it is. And so they look all right. So then we're like, OK, doesn't look like anything's moving down there. And so at that time, like Patton caught up to us and then we're like, OK, we can see more smoke through the trees. So let's just cut through the trees and and see what we can find going there. Like we're just trying to go...

Roger BURRILL [00:17:11] Yeah

Stuart BESELT [00:17:11] Keep going. Right. Keep going forward. And so then we come to the back of the shop and obviously the shop's completely engulfed and it's exploding and and, you know, so we're like, you know, kind of thing...

Roger BURRILL [00:17:24] OK. Um, it would be really helpful to me in terms of what's going on. But I'm wondering about these decisions that you're making as you're going there. And to be very clear, I myself would not have wanted to be in that situation. But I'm wondering, when you're making these decisions, are you getting any direction as to where you're going or is this you and your team at this stage...

Stuart BESELT [00:17:44] Yeah, it's just ...

Roger BURRILL [00:17:46] ...Making spontaneous decisions?

Stuart BESELT [00:17:48] Yeah. Basically, we're just trying to get in there and, you know, keep going forward. Keep going forward. We're trying to figure out where we should be. Right. You know, like the area is so vast and and it's pitch black other than the light of the fires. Right.

Roger BURRILL [00:18:02] So, what is it that's drawing you from place to place?

Stuart BESELT [00:18:06] We can see smoke, fire, you know, kind of thing like bright light from the fires.

Roger BURRILL [00:18:12] And so keep in mind that I've read your your statement and I looked over the communications. You went through a path at that stage?

Stuart BESELT [00:18:20] Well, we broke through the trees and kind of stumbled upon a path. And then I think the path went right to Wortman's shop there.

Roger BURRILL [00:18:28] And did you know about that path?

Stuart BESELT [00:18:29] Oh, no.

Roger BURRILL [00:18:30] Just luck to find that path?

Stuart BESELT [00:18:33] Yeah. We just go through the trees and happen to find a clearing. Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:18:37] OK, can you tell me about that path descriptively? What, what's it like? Is it footpath? Is it a car path or is it a cart path? How would, how navigable... Wrong word. You know we're not...

Stuart BESELT [00:18:48] Yeah, no. I suppose a car would be able to drive down it, right. Like it was just cleared, you know, like it wasn't, it wasn't like it was well traveled through it. Like it is just kind of a path. Right.

Roger BURRILL [00:18:59] Yeah. And did it come out on the Portapique Beach Road?

Stuart BESELT [00:19:04] I don't know where the other end of it was. It came out at the back of the shop.

Roger BURRILL [00:19:08] Right. Right. But the end that you got on or ...

Stuart BESELT [00:19:10] we didn't get on it at at the end, we were going through the trees and came across it.

Roger BURRILL [00:19:15] OK, right. OK, OK. So you don't know where it came up.

Stuart BESELT [00:19:17] I don't know where it started. We just happened on it the midway.

Roger BURRILL [00:19:21] So when... This is going on, I get a sense that it's kind of, you know, you're instinctively moving and because of what you said.

Stuart BESELT [00:19:29] Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:19:30] What type of communication is going on with with the OCC or with the people?

Stuart BESELT [00:19:38] Well, we're just kind of trying to keep them apprized of what we're doing. Right. Like, you know, we're we're heading towards this or that. Right. Like we cut through the trees. We you know, we're, you know, OK, you know, basically. So they because, you know, the cars have GPS, but we don't. Right.

Roger BURRILL [00:19:56] You don't have GPS?

Stuart BESELT [00:19:59] Not on our persons, no. So, like, you know, they don't know where we are in their right unless I'm relaying that to them. And so that's a lot of my communications is like, OK, you know, I think you can hear it later on. Like, I'm reading a plate number. This house is on fire, right. You know this. And I'm trying to give them as much indication because I know everything's being recorded in, you know, logged. So if I can say what I'm doing, then it shouldn't fall on the log, right.

Roger BURRILL [00:20:31] So what do you think about that in terms of would it have been better had you have had portable GPS or personal GPS? Would that have made any difference to your job at that stage?

Stuart BESELT [00:20:41] No, no.

Roger BURRILL [00:20:43] OK, why's that?

Stuart BESELT [00:20:45] Well, it just makes their lives easier to know where we are, right. If we if they can follow us or track us, you know. You know, for me, it would just be another thing to carry. Right. Like we're on the. Yeah. Like you just you just piling us on with more and more stuff. You know, basically, you know, like, you know, like we were using our cell phones to try and map the area to try and figure out... Because it was very confusing in there, cutting through the trees and and and all of a sudden you pop out on the road and you're like, like, which way am I going here? Right. And so...

Roger BURRILL [00:21:22] Do you have any way when you're doing this to know where you are? Like, I'm thinking even personal GPS.

Stuart BESELT [00:21:28] Well, just my cell phone. Right. Like your mapping function on our phone. Right.

Roger BURRILL [00:21:31] OK, tell me about that. Is it like me when I'm driving through Montreal, I'm putting in the coordinates.

Stuart BESELT [00:21:37] Well, we're not putting on coordinates. You're just looking at the blue dot on your cell phone. And I got I've got an iPhone and you're basically OK. I'm right there, you know, like,.

Roger BURRILL [00:21:45] OK. So it's not it's not a... An RCMP issued thing...

Stuart BESELT [00:21:48] I do have an RCMP issued phone, but I just use it for phone calls. I feel more comfortable with... I use my iPhone, so... Right. So I'm basically looking at the maps on my ah, the Google Maps on my iPhone going, OK, this is where we are and we're trying to decipher where we need to be or where, you know, you know, like.

Roger BURRILL [00:22:08] So you and the IR Team are doing this on your personal phones?

Stuart BESELT [00:22:12] Basically. Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:22:13] OK, OK. And that seems problematic to you or you were comfortable with how that was going? And you can see what I'm asking you. In terms of how would the job have been easier, if at all, for, for you in that setting.

Stuart BESELT [00:22:33] Like you just can't know everywhere. Right. So you need you need the maps. Right. Like when I was saying when we were heading out...yeah,

like going out there, we were trying to map the area like was we ever, or our MWS's in the car. It has a map. Right. So we're trying to bring that up and I'm looking at it as OK, like there's looks like there's only one road in. Right. So if we set up on that road kind of thing, there's only one road in. Right. Like he's got to come out that we had no idea there's a blueberry field, like a road through a blueberry field. Right. Like, I didn't know that. That's local knowledge that, you know, as a like as a police officer, you just don't know. Right. Like, you know, to for him to drive through a blueberry field. Right. Like, as far as we could tell, we we were in good position, you know, because the next wave, like the first wave, is getting in and trying to to stop the threat. And then the next wave is setting up, trying to almost like a perimeter. Right. So we were the first wave and we tried to get in. And then, you know, the next wave is, you know, they're trying to set them up on roadblocks in case he does get out.

Roger BURRILL [00:23:39] Yeah. And did you have any knowledge of the second wave as your...

Stuart BESELT [00:23:44] Other than Vicky...

Roger BURRILL [00:23:46] Or did you even bother to at that point?

Stuart BESELT [00:23:46] Well, you know, a little bit, but not like, you know, that's that's where you're, you know, Rehill comes into place as he's coordinating the assets to go where they need to go. Right. So, you know, if I wasn't in in the shit, then I would be trying to do some of that myself. But because I'm leading the IR team in, I you know, I have I'm focused on that. Right. And then you've got other people that are, you know, obviously coming in to take care of that.

Roger BURRILL [00:24:14] Want to go back a little bit, forgive me for my circular circuitous questioning, but the IR methodology, I'm going to use that.

Stuart BESELT [00:24:22] Right.

Roger BURRILL [00:24:23] That's something special in terms of training and and engagement of of the officers. Am I right that in that regard?

Stuart BESELT [00:24:31] Yeah, basically, yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:24:32] Yeah. You would have had some training in that particular...

Stuart BESELT [00:24:35] Yeah. Yeah. It's like we do it a bit on our block training and then you know, for outdoor type stuff we were to watch videos, you know, like depot or not depot...um....Ottawa puts out videos.

Roger BURRILL [00:24:48] So is this an updated or a regular thing in terms of IR training and I'm going to call it either training. I don't know if that's the type.

Stuart BESELT [00:24:56] Yeah, well basically our block training is every two years, and they include all use of force and, you know, training.. On job training, right.

Roger BURRILL [00:25:06] Sorry, and block training means you take a time out of your..

Stuart BESELT [00:25:09] it's a week or two weeks, I think it's a week of of just kind of like use of force and and making sure all of that your options, like your Taser and your OC and your baton and all these different things are are current, right.

Roger BURRILL [00:25:24] Yeah. OK, so you do that every two years and that's at the detachment or do you travel to...

Stuart BESELT [00:25:29] No, that's, they've got a whole building in Dartmouth here that they they do all that kind of stuff.

Roger BURRILL [00:25:35] OK. All right. And are you able to recall how recent your training was in terms of the block training before April 2020?

Stuart BESELT [00:25:43] Yeah, I did it in, I would say May of 2019, somewhere around there.

Roger BURRILL [00:25:50] OK, OK. All right. You said something about outdoor training videos. What was that about?

Stuart BESELT [00:25:58] Well, that's the the IR, you know, like before we went for our block training, we were supposed to watch a bunch of videos on IR, you know, and that was the the you know, the different scenarios or the different amounts of manpower. Right. Like if you're by yourself, if you have a partner, like up to, you know, however many officers you have in being able to go into a situation. Right. So you can't

Christopher LUSSOW [00:26:23] If I can just jump in here for a second.

Roger BURRILL [00:26:24] Absolutely.

Christopher LUSSOW [00:26:26] So when you do your IARD training, so your immediate action, rapid rapid deployment is it two phases? One is all your interior ones and then the next round would be an exterior?

Stuart BESELT [00:26:44] Well...

Christopher LUSSOW [00:26:44] Or outdoor.

Stuart BESELT [00:26:46] Basically, the outdoor was just on video. Right. We did most of our stuff, like they have it all set up so that you can do this stuff in a building. Right. Like it's like a you know you know, they have a big gymnasium type thing and then they have upstairs is all hallways and rooms for clearance and and different stuff. Right. So you need more time is spent on the indoors than the outdoors. But yeah.

Christopher LUSSOW [00:27:10] OK, so you're in the interior room tactics. You have a simulated, you know, structure, school, whatever, because generally we do schools.

Stuart BESELT [00:27:21] Right. The school are...Yeah.

Christopher LUSSOW [00:27:24] Active attackers. You say from the outdoor video, are you saying you just watch video.

Stuart BESELT [00:27:29] Watch videos, yeah.

Christopher LUSSOW [00:27:30] So it wasn't like with the Oculus system where it's video 3D and you're in an empty warehouse and it mimics things like.

Stuart BESELT [00:27:37] No.

Christopher LUSSOW [00:27:38] OK, did they, did you go into detail about like to rural like it was in Portapique in the bush, or was it more outdoor, like big parking lot to getting to buildings?

Stuart BESELT [00:27:51] Yeah, more. More just like, you know, you're approaching buildings and you're going through parking lots. Yeah. Basically, it wasn't a lot of rural stuff.

Christopher LUSSOW [00:27:59] Well, yeah, like field tactics. And I'm not sure if you had prior military training...

Stuart BESELT [00:28:05] No.

Christopher LUSSOW [00:28:05] Or, you know, OK, I just thought because you mentioned Quonset hut in your statement and

Stuart BESELT [00:28:10] I'm from Saskatchewan.

Christopher LUSSOW [00:28:12] There we go. That explains it. All right. Yeah. So OK, so we just want to see whether the the outdoor was parking lot versus...

Stuart BESELT [00:28:22] Yeah.

Christopher LUSSOW [00:28:23] Field

Stuart BESELT [00:28:24] Yeah, not a lot of, you know, that's kind of learnt on the fly I think.

Christopher LUSSOW [00:28:27] OK, thank you.

Roger BURRILL [00:28:28] And that's important. I mean do you think yourself that would have made any difference, it would have provided you any assistance in terms of what you were experiencing then?

Stuart BESELT [00:28:39] No, we like basically we're chasing our tails in there. Like, you know, like you, you know, we're trying to... You're trying to go forward and go forward. But you you know, you have no idea where he is, you know, and then, you know...

Roger BURRILL [00:28:54] No, no, chasing your tail is a very interesting expression. How could you not chase your tails with that?

Stuart BESELT [00:29:00] Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:29:00] It's not, like, productive use of your resources.

Stuart BESELT [00:29:04] Yeah, no. Like, if we had an idea where he was, you know, we could we could, you know, try and, you know, narrow it down and, you know, get to a point where you're, you know, like as long as he's shooting, you're moving. As soon as he stops shooting, you're trying to set up your perimeter. Right. Like, basically. And, you know, like even at one point in time, like Andy's like, well, should you guys stay still? And we're like, I can't tell if he's shooting or if they're explosions Andy. So, as far as I'm concerned, we have an active shooter and we're going ahead. Right. Like we're not stopping until, you know, there's no more shots being heard. Right. And, you know, now

you realize it's probably those were more explosions, but, you know, you can't tell. I couldn't tell. Like, it's just you got stuff popping off and it sounds like gunfire, right?

Roger BURRILL [00:29:52] Yeah.

Stuart BESELT [00:29:52] And you're finding bodies all over the place. And and, you know, like, it's, you know, we didn't even stop. We looked. Yeah. Dead. Go, keep going. Right. And you're like this is like literally this is a murder that I'm ignoring right now because I've got more, you know, things that are concerning.

Roger BURRILL [00:30:11] Yeah. You had mentioned that you had some knowledge with your experience of Moncton and I think you said Saskatchewan.

Stuart BESELT [00:30:20] Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:30:21] What do you mean by that?

Stuart BESELT [00:30:22] Well, just knowing in these situations where these members are getting shot in their cars. Right. Like they're they're basically never even got out of their cars. Like there's two members in northern Saskatchewan and then the Moncton members or, you know, dog man, everybody tried to return fire out of his car. But, you know, that's

Roger BURRILL [00:30:39] So, that knowledge that you had on that was related to getting out of the car.

Stuart BESELT [00:30:42] Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:30:42] Was it related to any other maneuvers that you were undertaking that night? Anything else? I mean...Monctons the car thing.

Stuart BESELT [00:30:51] Yeah. I just like, I just... Yeah, well, even I was kind of involved with Tatamoguche there and and, you know, like you just the members that were on the front of that because I was on the back,.

Roger BURRILL [00:31:04] Yeah.

Stuart BESELT [00:31:04] They're like he's shooting at the cars or shooting over the cars. Right.

Roger BURRILL [00:31:08] Is this the one from the cemetery?

Stuart BESELT [00:31:09] Yeah. So basically I'm like, well, you know, like, get away from your car, really. You know, it's just.

Christopher LUSSOW [00:31:15] It's a bullet magnet.

Stuart BESELT [00:31:17] That's right. That's right. You know, like they if they're going to shoot at something, they're going to shoot at the car. Right. And if you're driving in the car, they know that you're in the driver's seat. Right. Like, you can't you know, like they don't have to pick a big area to shoot at. They just shoot at the driver's seat.

Roger BURRILL [00:31:31] Yeah, I gotcha you.

Stuart BESELT [00:31:32] So...

Roger BURRILL [00:31:33] You're making it clear to me.

Stuart BESELT [00:31:34] Yeah, yeah. Like, get away from your car. Right.

Roger BURRILL [00:31:38] The the interesting thing to me when I was looking at this material was it was three of you in there. Right?

Stuart BESELT [00:31:44] Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:31:45] You, Merchant, and Patton.

Stuart BESELT [00:31:47] Right.

Roger BURRILL [00:31:48] It's not a lot or at least from a layperson's point of view, it's not a lot of people. Did that bother you at all or was that important to you or did...

Stuart BESELT [00:31:55] No.

Roger BURRILL [00:31:56] ...even a consideration as you're...

Stuart BESELT [00:31:57] Well, being not knowing where he was.

Roger BURRILL [00:32:00] Yeah.

Stuart BESELT [00:32:00] At that point in time, you know, like with... You know, if you flood the area, you're risking blue on blue. Right. Like you're risking you know, it's may be different if you have a tactical team that are all together and that sort of thing. But if you if you start sending in teams and you don't know where they're at, right, and all of a

sudden you're coming up on them like you're already in a very, you know, stressful situation, you don't want to have somebody, you know, get shot that, you know.

Roger BURRILL [00:32:32] So you were comfortable, at least at that stage that you were and your colleagues were the only ones in that...

Stuart BESELT [00:32:38] Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:32:39] ...Active shooter zone? And that was something that you were comfortable with.

Stuart BESELT [00:32:43] Yeah, yeah, yeah. If we had them if we had them pinned down, well then OK, bring more in and bring more in and set up your, your containment. Right. But when you don't know where he is you don't want teams tripping over each other.

Roger BURRILL [00:32:58] Yeah, yeah. I hear you. When you're moving through Portapique Beach Road through the path and then on Orchard Beach Road, are you getting any assistance in terms of the communications from the OCC and the people in the command structure that's being set up? Are you feeling that there's an engagement such that they had a sense of what's going on?

Stuart BESELT [00:33:20] Well, we were trying to keep him updated.

Roger BURRILL [00:33:21] Yeah.

Stuart BESELT [00:33:21] I don't think that, like, I don't recall a lot of, you know, like, you know, basically we're skulking around in the dark, like, I don't want to be on the radio the whole time. Right. So, you know, like, I don't know, I might even had my radio turned down because I'm, just like we're here, you know, we found a body. We're you know, we're trying at this door, right, like, you know, knocking and the kids answer and, you know, like, you know, kind of thing. Right. So..

Roger BURRILL [00:33:48] Are you getting any useful information in terms of assisting you skulking in the dark, or is that something that's just not even possible?

Stuart BESELT [00:33:57] Not even possible.

Roger BURRILL [00:33:58] Not even possible.

Stuart BESELT [00:34:00] Not even possible.

Roger BURRILL [00:34:00] OK, no. OK, that is the the risk manager at that stage is sort of dependent on information...

Stuart BESELT [00:34:08] From work...from, we're providing him

Roger BURRILL [00:34:11] ... As opposed to ...

Stuart BESELT [00:34:12] And then he's setting up his other resources that are flooding the area. Right.

Roger BURRILL [00:34:15] Right.

Stuart BESELT [00:34:16] So ...

Roger BURRILL [00:34:18] When those other resources, though Constable Beselt, what are you understanding those to be?

Stuart BESELT [00:34:22] Well, Millbrook was coming. Cumberland was coming, you know, and then I find out, like, you know, after Pictou was arriving, you know, like just everybody kind of flooding to the area. Right. So...

Roger BURRILL [00:34:33] OK. All right. Once again, it's just so that I'm clear, resources are being oriented towards the area, but is there anything specific as to assist you and the IR team at that point?

Stuart BESELT [00:34:46] No, there's nothing they can do. All right. Like, it's it's like we're the boots on the ground. We're the ones that are relaying information back to them at that point. Right.

Roger BURRILL [00:34:53] OK, yeah. Good. Thank you. All right. So you had described, and I interrupted you, getting it to the warehouse and explosions...

Stuart BESELT [00:35:02] We didn't go in it. We couldn't even get close to it. It was blowing up, right. Like it... We got about, you know, I don't know, fifty, hundred feet and it rocked us back with one of the explosions. Right. So we're like, oh, do not go close to that because it was completely engulfed. Right.

Roger BURRILL [00:35:18] What did you know about residents of Portapique at that stage? That is who was actually in that hot zone, if I can call it that, that is citizens? Did you have any information?

Stuart BESELT [00:35:28] No, not really. No. No.

Roger BURRILL [00:35:31] Did you know anything at all about the children at that point?

Stuart BESELT [00:35:34] No.

Roger BURRILL [00:35:35] OK.

Stuart BESELT [00:35:36] No.

Roger BURRILL [00:35:37] All right. So while the warehouse is exploding and...

Stuart BESELT [00:35:40] Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:35:41] ...Very descriptive in what you you saw and felt, what what were your next steps?

Stuart BESELT [00:35:48] Like I said, just we just want to try and keep moving forward. Right. So we went out onto the road. You know, that's the first body that we saw.

Roger BURRILL [00:35:55] Yeah.

Stuart BESELT [00:35:56] Beside the road. And, you know, so we went and checked it. Well, first, we weren't sure if it was just the suspect playing possum or whatever, but so we went up. No, that one's..that one's dead, you know, and then we.. I don't know. I don't even know why I went to the house. I like, to be honest with you, I just felt like we had to go to the house. And so I was knocking on the door and I'm like, you know, then these kids answered the door. And because I don't remember that... I didn't know the addresses, right. Like, so, you know, the calls for service and all that, like the like, we barely knew where we were, right. So I didn't know addresses other than, you know, I'm like this a red house like it's an A-frame house, the Red House, right. And, um...

Roger BURRILL [00:36:39] That was the first house you actually went to, wasn't it, Constable Beselt?

Stuart BESELT [00:36:42] Yeah. Yeah, it was the first one I knocked on the door and I don't even know why I knocked on the door. It just I just decided to knock on the door and the kids answered. And I'm like, where are your parents? And the one kid's like, Yeah, our parents are outside. And I'm like, OK, well, that's probably the dead guy outside because we haven't found the other body yet. And the other two kids are like, yeah, your parents are dead next door. And it's just like so nonchalant. You're like, oh my God, this kid just told me that his parents are dead next door and and he just seems OK with it. Right. It was just craziness, right?

Roger BURRILL [00:37:15] Yeah. Were they on the phone at the time?

Stuart BESELT [00:37:17] I didn't know they were on the phone, but I, I, you know, I after the fact, I found they were on the phone like, you know, so, you know, we still hear a lot of stuff popping off. Right. So, you know, at that point in time I'm like, well, you know, I'm trying to make a decision to... Do I stay with these kids or do we keep going? And I'm like, you know, Aaron and Adam are like. We've got to keep going, got to keep going. And I'm like, OK, yeah, you guys go downstairs and hide and then we'll we'll come back for you. Right. And so then we go out and then that's when we see the brother or whatever coming down the road.

Roger BURRILL [00:37:51] Right. Just before we get to the brother of Ellison

Stuart BESELT [00:37:52] Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:37:53]Ellison, the kids you say you told them to go down and hide.

Stuart BESELT [00:37:56] Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:37:57] They went down in the basement. You facilitated that in some fashion or manner, did you? You know, helped them out do that?

Stuart BESELT [00:38:03] No.

Roger BURRILL [00:38:03] No.

Stuart BESELT [00:38:03] No, we literally told them go down in the basement,.

Roger BURRILL [00:38:05] Oh, is that right.

Stuart BESELT [00:38:06] Just go in the basement, yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:38:06] And that was he didn't have enough time to do that?

Stuart BESELT [00:38:09] Well, no, because we're moving forward. Right. We want to keep moving forward. Right. So,.

Roger BURRILL [00:38:14] Yeah.

Stuart BESELT [00:38:16] Forward in our minds, like, you know, keep going towards the threat or what we...

Roger BURRILL [00:38:20] And I'm right to say there were still sounds of explosions?

Stuart BESELT [00:38:23] Oh, yeah. Like that was it was crazy. Like the amount of stuff that was popping off around us. Right. So,.

Roger BURRILL [00:38:29] OK. And in your communications with the OCC, anything at all about knowledge of those kids? Did you know that the kids were there or that the kids had called in? Did you know anything?

Stuart BESELT [00:38:38] I didn't realize that those were the kids that called in the beginning until, you know, kind of like I said, I don't know why I went to the house. I really don't. I just knocked on the door because I was pounding on the door and, you know, so then they answered the door. And I guess they realized ...I'm like, we're knocking on this door. And and maybe they told the kids to answer it because the police or whatever I don't know about.

Roger BURRILL [00:39:01] But you would have been communicating...

Stuart BESELT [00:39:03] Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:39:04] ...With the dispatch as to where you were?

Stuart BESELT [00:39:05] Yeah. Yeah. That's like basically trying to keep them apprized.

Roger BURRILL [00:39:08] And that's the connection perhaps?

Stuart BESELT [00:39:10] Yeah. Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:39:11] Very good. All right. I interrupted you. Sorry.

Stuart BESELT [00:39:13] Well, no, we just we came out onto the road again and we see the flashlight bopping down the road. And it was quite a ways away and it was just a flashlight. That's all we could see, it's just a light. And you can tell somebody walking with a flashlight. So obviously we think it's the suspect. You know, we pruned out, you know, like laid out carbines, ready. And, you know, like I'm on the radio. I'm like, is there anybody in here? Because we're about to, you know, fucking light this guy up. Like, if there's somebody in here, let us know. And, you know, so then all of a sudden we're just like we're just waiting. And it was just kind of out of the capabilities of our our flashlights because, you know, like my line in the sand is if this guy runs, I'm shooting. Right. Like, you know, basically, you know, like I'm going to try and stop the threat. Right. And if he's going to try and get away, I'm going to try and shoot him. Right. And so, you know, so

I'm set up, I'm ready. And, you know, all of a sudden light goes off and in it you can kind of see the movement go towards the trees, to his right, my left, right. And so I'm like, oh, shit. He heard me on the radio. He's going to try and flank us, right. So I turned to the back of the house and Adam and Aaron kept going forward. And then we just kind of waited there to see if we could find any movement. And then we lit up the area with our flashlights as best we could because our carbines had flashlights on them. Right. So right. So they, you know, like that's what we were using for flashlights. And they're pretty good flashlights. But, you know, so we light up the area with our carbines and, you know, that's when we found the next body. And we're like, is that, you know, once again, the suspect just playing possum or, you know, so then we check that and then, you know, obviously, no, they're they're completely deceased.

Roger BURRILL [00:41:03] I want to ask you about that communication you made about if there's anybody in here they're going to get lit up?

Stuart BESELT [00:41:08] Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:41:09] At that stage, you were, it was... You understood it was just the three of you

Stuart BESELT [00:41:15] Just the three of us. Yeah. But you never know if

Roger BURRILL [00:41:17] This is a double check.

Stuart BESELT [00:41:18] Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:41:19] Last call.

Stuart BESELT [00:41:20] Yeah. Basically. Right. Yeah. Because you never know. Somebody could be in there that you know, just because like I want to help. Right. And run in. Right. So.

Roger BURRILL [00:41:29] OK. All right. Good. I guess what I'm wondering is in your communications with the dispatch before that, if anybody's in here, I'm going to light them up, was there was there any discussion of anybody else coming into that hot zone?

Stuart BESELT [00:41:46] No, I just I was just checking.

Roger BURRILL [00:41:48] Gottcha, gottcha. OK. All right. Before we move on narratively, this is good, I want to ask you about your communications. And I've asked quite a few... The radios. This is a rural area...

Stuart BESELT [00:42:01] Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:42:02] On this Fundy shore. How were the radios working?

Stuart BESELT [00:42:05] Radios work pretty good considering.

Roger BURRILL [00:42:07] Yeah. So were you having or experiencing any technological difficulties communicating with people in the command structure, even with your colleagues?

Stuart BESELT [00:42:17] Not really. Like Aaron, Adam and I were together, so we weren't using the radios to communicate with each other. We're all basically right together. But no, I don't recall having, you know, like I call it being Gonged out, you know, where you just can't, you know, we have a worse problem getting our radios in our detachment because they put a metal roof on it than I did in Portapique, right. But yeah, no, it was it was actually not too bad at all. Like, I don't recall ever having radio problems. The only problem you might have is when people are talking over each other if they're...

Roger BURRILL [00:42:49] Yeah, but did you have that?

Stuart BESELT [00:42:51] I don't. Like I said, I don't remember other than me saying on the radio, like when I read over the transcript, I'm like, I wonder if this is more than one channel because I don't remember all this stuff happening on the radio a lot like our a lot of that on the on the channel that I was listening to. Right. Like, you know, your channels are broken up. We have Colchester, we have Enfield or East Hants. We have like each of these districts have their own channel. And then, you know, basically if they have a major incident, they can go like a tac channel or, you know, you know, a mutual aid channel. Right. Which that brings in the fire department or other police forces or EHS. Right. So...

Roger BURRILL [00:43:34] But at this stage, there was

Stuart BESELT [00:43:36] I was just on my normal channel and I don't remember

Roger BURRILL [00:43:39] And no direction to switch or patch or

Stuart BESELT [00:43:42] No, no, we just stayed on our channel.

Roger BURRILL [00:43:45] You told me about the iPhone with the map. And so you use your cell phone at all, communicating with anybody in the command structure?

Stuart BESELT [00:43:55] No, I don't think so.

Roger BURRILL [00:43:57] OK. All right. already, keeping in mind that you were, I'm going to call you the shift commander, I don't know if that's correct, but that's...um...Were you taking instructions from anybody while you were in there as the IR Team?

Stuart BESELT [00:44:13] No.

Roger BURRILL [00:44:14] No. OK, so every decision was made between yourself and with your colleagues at that time?

Stuart BESELT [00:44:20] Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:44:20] Yeah. No direction from anybody at the, at the...

Stuart BESELT [00:44:24] Well, just other than like Andy came on and said, well, you guys, should you guys stop? And we're like, no, like as far as we know, we still got we still have shots being fired, right?

Roger BURRILL [00:44:35] Yeah.

Stuart BESELT [00:44:35] So until we got back to pick up Billy Neil and then, you know, we asked for direction because, like, it was kind of dying down at that point in time. That's the only time they said, no, hunker down and we'll come in and get you. That was the first time that I took direction from somebody else.

Roger BURRILL [00:44:52] Yeah. I mean, it's interesting because you probably read in the communications as well as I did about Billy Neil, the Constable Neil saying one or two times, I think I read it saying I'm not entirely sure who's in charge here or something of that nature.

Stuart BESELT [00:45:05] Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, I don't remember.

Roger BURRILL [00:45:07] No, no, no, but you remember reading it.

Stuart BESELT [00:45:09] Yeah, yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:45:10] Yeah, yeah. How about yourself? You know, Constable Neil we can talk to did you have any concerns at all about who was in charge at any time?

Stuart BESELT [00:45:19] No, I was in charge.

Roger BURRILL [00:45:21] OK, fair enough.

Stuart BESELT [00:45:22] And the people that I was working with, you know, like Billy is coming in from Pictou.

Roger BURRILL [00:45:26] Yeah.

Stuart BESELT [00:45:26] So that's why I don't remember Billy coming in and asking that stuff on the radio, right. You know, like basically everybody that was there that from Colchester knew that I was in charge.

Roger BURRILL [00:45:38] Yeah.

Stuart BESELT [00:45:39] And then, you know, any... Anything above that is the risk manager, right? Until somebody comes in and and, you know, like you have, you know, I can't remember the word I'm looking for, but basically a somebody that comes in and takes control of the situation like they're...

Christopher LUSSOW [00:45:59] Incident commander.

Stuart BESELT [00:45:59] That's right. Incident commander.

Roger BURRILL [00:46:00] You were you were way before that set up.

Stuart BESELT [00:46:03] Oh, yeah. Like, you're like you're just in there, like, basically you're you're leading the IR, right. And I'm focused on the IR. And, you know, I saw that in the transcript. I don't remember Billy saying that on the radio. You know, like there was some things I do remember because I did respond to some things, but I don't remember anything like that, you know, and it just could have been basically what I was doing at the time. Right. So

Roger BURRILL [00:46:29] Given the geographic confusion that you've described earlier in the your iPhone.

Stuart BESELT [00:46:33] Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:46:33] Would there be any way to improve the your ability to know your surroundings or whereabouts as you trudged through or I think you said skulked through?

Stuart BESELT [00:46:43] Yeah...um.

Roger BURRILL [00:46:45] Any... Anything that come to mind in terms of helping you in that very pointy end of the stick?

Stuart BESELT [00:46:51] No, it's like, you know, can you go in and memorize every street in your city? Like, it's inconceivable, right. And..

Roger BURRILL [00:46:59] But I'm thinking technologically, you know, because I can't, you know, no cab driver memorizes every street, but they do know how to get to First Avenue by pushing it on a button...

Stuart BESELT [00:47:11] Yeah. Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:47:12] ...on a screen, you know, and I'm just wondering if you have any insight on that.

Stuart BESELT [00:47:15] It's kind of one of those things where, you know, the more technology you have, the more you're distracted from the thought of having, you know, like a homicidal maniac with a firearm, right. You know, you're kind of basically focused on self-preservation at that point in time, right.

Roger BURRILL [00:47:33] Yeah. OK. OK. All right. I interrupted you again and you were telling us about Mr. Ellison with the flashlight and that flashlight disappeared.

Stuart BESELT [00:47:43] Oh, yeah. It disappeared. Right. So then we, you know, we checked the area and then we were like, Aaron and Adam wanted to go after him. And like, we got to about the tree line. I'm like, oh, well, boys, this is suicide. Like, we're literally committing suicide if we go in here because, you know, like, all he has to do is turn around and wait and we can't see him. And, you know, like, you know, having night vision would be helpful, you know, which they do have a couple old ones that they've given us now. But, you know, basically, you know, like you don't carry that, like there's only one or two people that had that or, you know, like have the ability to take that and you're like, so... You know...

Roger BURRILL [00:48:29] So, I mean, that's something, you know.

Stuart BESELT [00:48:32] Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:48:33] You can see what I'm asking.

Stuart BESELT [00:48:34] Yeah. Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:48:35] In terms of of, you know, how it would be easier for a professional like you...

Stuart BESELT [00:48:41] Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:48:41] In that context. And it would have been easier if you had had the night vision goggles...

Stuart BESELT [00:48:47] Sure.

Roger BURRILL [00:48:47] That's what you're saying.

Stuart BESELT [00:48:48] Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:48:48] And that they are now issued...um

Stuart BESELT [00:48:50] Well we have a detachment has like two or three pairs of now.

Roger BURRILL [00:48:54] OK, so I presume the shift commander then or I'm using that expression, the active corporal, it would have been useful to have those night vision goggles.

Stuart BESELT [00:49:03] It would have been useful to have them in that situation. Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:49:05] OK, ok. All right. Very good. So you you've told us then about Mr. Ellison going into the woods. You weren't sure entirely who it was. You said it would be suicide to pursue him and then what happened?

Stuart BESELT [00:49:22] So then I we we fell back a little bit and then we went back. It was like that Red House was kind of like our muster point, if you will, because we went back to the Red House here. No, actually, we went down the street... Like we ended up going down the street and we were

Stuart BESELT [00:49:41] called...

Roger BURRILL [00:49:42] You say going down. You mean the opposite direction...

Stuart BESELT [00:49:44] Yeah. Like he was there. And then, you know, there was more fires and stuff this way. So we started, you know, like if the Red House is pointed

that way, we start we were we're halfway like I'm like, I don't know, a little ways down this way.

Roger BURRILL [00:49:58] I'm sorry, Constable, like there is a North and South to Portapique. Right?

Stuart BESELT [00:50:01] Yeah. See, I still don't know.

Roger BURRILL [00:50:03] OK, good.

Stuart BESELT [00:50:04] Like, I'm like I'm so mixed up in my mind.

Roger BURRILL [00:50:07] Yeah.

Stuart BESELT [00:50:07] About where, like so the shop is here, the Red House is here, right.

Roger BURRILL [00:50:11] Yeah.

Stuart BESELT [00:50:11] So when we were pruned out we were on this side of the house, this side of the house and the flashlight was coming from that direction.

Roger BURRILL [00:50:20] Right. So what you're doing is you're just making a physical motion.

Stuart BESELT [00:50:23] Yeah. Yeah. Basically that's the house. Right. We're on this side of the house, pointed down this way to the left of the house. And then so he ran this way. That's where, you know, and we you know, I think we went back here for a second and then we started going down this way because there was more... I thought there was more fires that way, and then so to the right... But then we got called back. The kids yelled, they thought that they heard somebody in the house

Roger BURRILL [00:50:51] Let me see if I can describe that just for the record. What you're...

Stuart BESELT [00:50:53] Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:50:54] ...This way and that way, it's hard.

Stuart BESELT [00:50:55] Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:50:55] But it looks to me like you were headed in one direction.

Stuart BESELT [00:50:58] Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:50:59] With the person that went into the woods and then you headed, you stand... To stand down or came back and went in the other direction.

Stuart BESELT [00:51:06] Yeah. Because there was more, like....yeah. It sounds weird I guess, but. And then so we had gone right. And then the kids were yelling that there's somebody in the house and I'm like, oh my God, we let them die, kind of thing. So we come running back, we check the house around.

Roger BURRILL [00:51:22] Did you say they were yelling?

Stuart BESELT [00:51:24] Well, like they were on the on the like that's they were saying on the phone like that somebody let them in the house or somebody was at the house.

Roger BURRILL [00:51:30] So, you were hearing that ...

Stuart BESELT [00:51:31] The dispatch was letting us know that they're all the kids are saying somebody is in the house,.

Roger BURRILL [00:51:35] OK. OK.

Stuart BESELT [00:51:35] So then, you know, like in my mind, I'm thinking we let them die. Right. And so anyways, we come back, we check around, we're like, OK, it doesn't look like there's been any forced entry into the house. So we go back to the house and knock on the door. And and I think what they were hearing was the concussions of the shop blowing up. Right. And so anyways, that's where I'm like, OK, well, I'm going to make this cool for them. So that's where I'm like, OK, you guys got a code word. You're code word's pineapple. Don't don't come out unless you hear somebody say pineapple. Right, like, because I'm just thinking, OK, well, you know, you know, I said like just hide, just do not like find a great hiding spot and don't come out unless you hear them say pineapple because then that's the police will say pineapple. Right.

Roger BURRILL [00:52:22] And what about at that point? And I wish to acknowledge to you that I don't want to be a Monday morning quarterback or somebody that's looking back at this, but extra personnel at that point at the children's house, did... Was there a thought..

Stuart BESELT [00:52:38] Well,.

Roger BURRILL [00:52:38]That that is I can't, oh, my God, leave these kids to die.

Stuart BESELT [00:52:41] Yeah, well, that's.. We... Stuff was happening so quick. Right. And so as we're, as we ... We left them again and kept going towards what we thought was more gunfire. And maybe that's what drew us that way is more more sounds of of of fire that way, you know, then like, we you know, then we got called to Ferris and, you know, like, you know, seeing a map is one thing and having an appreciation with how big this space was. You know, like I was saying yesterday, I like Erin's watch said, I think we ran like ten K or ten miles. That's like. Yeah. So like we were, you know, so we went, you know, to get to Ferris, we're like, somebody's in the yard on Ferris and, you know, like he's already ...we found paths in, you know, like he he knows the area a lot better than we do. Right. Yeah. How fast could he get there. Right. Like that's kind of the thing. Right. So, you know, we'd made the decision to get to Ferris and as we're on the way to Ferris, I'm like, I can't leave those kids in there. And I said, can we get a couple of members in to go get those kids out? Right. And because I just, you know, like

Roger BURRILL [00:53:53] Remind me again, why did you go to Ferris? I think you told me

Stuart BESELT [00:53:56] There was a... We got a report that there was somebody in the yard with a flashlight.

Roger BURRILL [00:53:59] Gottcha.

Stuart BESELT [00:54:00] Right. So, you know, so we're like, OK, great. Somebody somebody spotted him. Let's go, you know? And then that brought us back to Portapique Beach Road, because we cut through the yards again. And then as we cut through the yards again,

Roger BURRILL [00:54:17] Sorry. The yards or the path? The same path or

Stuart BESELT [00:54:19] No, yards. Right. We went through and, you know, we managed to get through the yard.

Roger BURRILL [00:54:26] It's, Constanble Beselt, when you say yard, do you mean...

Stuart BESELT [00:54:29] Well, there was like a couple of houses back to back there. So it was easier to get through than going through a whole wooded area. Right.

Roger BURRILL [00:54:36] Yeah, yeah, and you're not but you're not going through that warehouse path, you know?

Stuart BESELT [00:54:40] No,.

Roger BURRILL [00:54:40] You were going further down.

Stuart BESELT [00:54:41] Yeah,.

Roger BURRILL [00:54:41] Through some backyard.

Stuart BESELT [00:54:43] Through some backyards. Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:54:44] Interesting. Now, were they backyards or were they... Were they trails or were they..

Stuart BESELT [00:54:48] No, they were pretty close that like the, the, the road kind of you know gets narrower. So you can, you can make your way through like two yards and get back to the other road.

Roger BURRILL [00:55:00] OK.

Stuart BESELT [00:55:00] So then when we were doing that then all of a sudden, you know, like the I think it was a little red Kia or something comes, you know, so we're pruned out on this car coming up. And then all of a sudden it's like these old...

[digital recorder stopped recording here]

Roger BURRILL [00:00:01] OK, we're just, for the record, we're back on the recording, And its now, 11:55 in that area. We had to switch batteries, so we'll just carry on, if you don't mind, Constable Beselt

Stuart BESELT [00:00:13] So, yeah. So anyways, we were you know, we were kind of, this car was approaching and it was an older couple. And and so at that point in time, you know, basically we still didn't know what was going on, right. Like, I, I you know, I question whether or not he was lighting the fires to get people to come outside so that he could shoot them, you know, like so I'm like, get out. You just go out. Right. Like, go to the there's a checkpoint. I knew there was a checkpoint at the end of the road. I said, go to the checkpoint and just get out. Right. And so I said, we have an active shooter in the area. They just go, right. So then I'm like, OK, well, you know, there's a couple more houses on the way to Faris. I'm like, I'm going to knock and see if anyone's there and try and get, you know, more people evacuated. Right.

Roger BURRILL [00:01:00] OK, now, that's the point, if I'm not mistaken, I think there was some communication that you had with dispatch about a public broadcast or potentially...

Stuart BESELT [00:01:08] Yeah, that was it was in that area.

Roger BURRILL [00:01:10] What was that about?

Stuart BESELT [00:01:11] Well, I just you know, I'm like, can we get like I'm just, like, trying to save people's lives. So you're thinking, well, can we get some kind of a broadcast out to tell people to go hiding in their basements? Right. Like, don't don't answer your doors or, you know, because there's there's a whole there's a whole bunch of houses in there. Right. Like, you can't possibly go to all of them. So...

Roger BURRILL [00:01:33] But what kind of broadcast did you have in mind?

Stuart BESELT [00:01:35] I don't know. Like just like, you know, emergency alert or something or like, you know.

Roger BURRILL [00:01:40] What did you know about the emergency alert at that stage?

Stuart BESELT [00:01:43] Not a lot. Right. Other than, you know, like I know that they can put them out for Amber Alerts or whatever kind of thing. Right. So there is something that they can put out.

Roger BURRILL [00:01:51] Did you have any experience with emergency alert...

Stuart BESELT [00:01:53] No.

Roger BURRILL [00:01:54] ...Before?

Stuart BESELT [00:01:54] No.

Roger BURRILL [00:01:54] OK, and when you were made that that transmission, was that what was on your mind with the dispatch in terms of...

Stuart BESELT [00:02:03] Not specifically. I'm just like, can we put something out that was....

Roger BURRILL [00:02:08] Sorry, I interrupted you.

Stuart BESELT [00:02:08] No, it just put something out that, you know, warn people, you know, to shelter and hide. Right. Like...

Roger BURRILL [00:02:15] And did you get a response to that?

Stuart BESELT [00:02:17] No, not really.

Roger BURRILL [00:02:19] OK. Did you take it up again at that point?

Stuart BESELT [00:02:22] No, I kind of said it and, you know, now and then the next thing I thought was, you know, like, you know, just we're evacuating people. We need somewhere for them to go. So, you know, like, you know, like going through, you know, when evacuations and previous incidents where I've been involved with, you know, like, it's one thing to evacuate. I mean, you've got to have them have somewhere for them to go. Right. So, you know, like that was my next thing is like, you know, working these people go, you know that we're evacuating here.

Roger BURRILL [00:02:51] I'm getting the impression and correct me if I'm wrong because I can be, is that you at this stage took it on to go to doors on Portapique Beach Road and heading towards Farris.

Stuart BESELT [00:03:03] That's right.

Roger BURRILL [00:03:03] And so that would be the start of that undertaking. Up until that point you, other than being at 135 with the kids...

Stuart BESELT [00:03:10] Right.

Roger BURRILL [00:03:11] ...You weren't at any houses.

Stuart BESELT [00:03:12] No.

Roger BURRILL [00:03:12] And why is it again that you were going to the houses at that point?

Stuart BESELT [00:03:17] Well, I just you know, after we had after we had been to the Red House and, you know, found the dead bodies, erm like, is this why he's starting the fires? Like, I just didn't know, you know. So I'm thinking, you know, I would rather have people getting out than, you know, having their house turned on fire just so that they come outside and shop. Right.

Roger BURRILL [00:03:36] Yeah, yeah. Yeah. How many houses would you get to? Any idea?

Stuart BESELT [00:03:42] Umm...in total along there, like three or four. Like there's not a lot of houses there. Right.

Roger BURRILL [00:03:47] Did you have communication with some folks?

Stuart BESELT [00:03:49] Yeah, well there is the people that we're pulling up to their driveway and we told them to get out. I told another lady to get out. And then I think the other house was...um.. I didn't get an answer at. And then, you know, once we got to Faris like now, so when we came around that bend again, now this this house on the corner was completely engulfed. Right. Like it wasn't on fire the first time we saw it. And now it's like a Roman candle. Right. So, you know, from our perspective, things were still active. Right. Like, you know, stuff was still active going on in there. So anyways, we you know, we had a little trouble finding who is calling in the flashlight. But then once we got there, we you know, we kind of secured their yard and got them to their cars and got them out.

Roger BURRILL [00:04:41] So in terms of your communication with folks along the Portapique Beach Road, what was the reception like? Were people aware of the severity of the situation?

Stuart BESELT [00:04:50] Well, people were just like, what the hell's going on? And like, because they didn't know. And so we're like, there's an active shooter, like, go get out, like, you know, get your stuff in.

Roger BURRILL [00:04:58] And do they comply? With your ...

Stuart BESELT [00:05:00] Yeah, yeah, everybody everybody got out that we asked to get out.

Roger BURRILL [00:05:04] OK, and in that context, keeping in mind the urgency that you're experiencing at that time, would there have been a different way to do it in terms of communicating with these these folks or facilitating their evacuation?

Stuart BESELT [00:05:17] Well, I think they said that they're trying to notify people through 911 address.

Roger BURRILL [00:05:22] Right, what did that mean?

Stuart BESELT [00:05:23] Well, they were making phone calls. Right. So...

Roger BURRILL [00:05:27] And did you have any impression of that as a methodology for communicating with people?

Stuart BESELT [00:05:33] I thought, that's great. If you can get a hold... If you can get them that way. That's great. Great. But, you know. The advent of cell phones has made our job a lot more difficult because not everybody's in the phone book anymore. Right.

And most people a lot or not, say most people, but a majority of people only carry cell phones now. And there's no white pages for cell phones. So...

Roger BURRILL [00:05:56] Right. But there is one way to reach cell phones, I suppose. And you had made reference to it earlier.

Stuart BESELT [00:06:01] Yeah, sure. Right. Right.

Roger BURRILL [00:06:02] OK, and your experience with that cell phone alerts was what again?

Stuart BESELT [00:06:07] Well, other than just I think like Amber Alerts or something like that.

Roger BURRILL [00:06:11] Forgive me. What's an Amber Alert?

Stuart BESELT [00:06:12] Like a missing child or, you know, kidnaped child.

Roger BURRILL [00:06:15] Right. And is that in Nova Scotian an experience or a Saskatchewan experience, or an...

Stuart BESELT [00:06:18] I'm just thinking in general experience. So...

Roger BURRILL [00:06:20] OK. Right. Gotcha. All right.

Stuart BESELT [00:06:23] I don't remember having ever put out a bulletin for, you know, in my 24 years of, you know, putting out some kind of alert. But this was something that I thought maybe we could put out an alert for. Right. Like it was like, you know, such grandiose that it was, you know, if there was a situation, this was it.

Roger BURRILL [00:06:44] And that occurred to you at that time when you made that request?

Stuart BESELT [00:06:46] Well, yeah. Like, is there something because when I started evacuating houses, I'm thinking, well, you know, can we put something out that, you know, people know to hunker down. Right. And and hide. Right.

Roger BURRILL [00:07:00] OK. All right. Good. The...um...There became eventually you went to Ferrus. You facilitated the evacuation of 4 Farris, and I understand as well, there was a search of other cottages/ buildings along Faris Lane there as well.

Stuart BESELT [00:07:22] Well, not really. We didn't we didn't go too much. Like we just we were trying to find which address. And I think we got hung up because we weren't...um... Weren't sure the address and there was one with a gate and we're like, is this it? Or, you know, so then we they're like, no, it's the first one. So we just walked backwards.

Roger BURRILL [00:07:37] Who's saying that?

Stuart BESELT [00:07:38] The dispatchers were. Like, because they have it on on our maps, if we were in our car, it wouldn't be a big deal. Right, because our cars, you can punch in the address and it pops right up. Right. Like, you know, it it's it's a it's a map, you know, but it just shows houses on it. Like, it just it's not a satellite view. It's just a regular map. Right.

Roger BURRILL [00:07:58] But you didn't have that where.. You all you had was your cellphone.

Stuart BESELT [00:08:01] All we had was our cellphone.

Roger BURRILL [00:08:02] Yeah. And I had asked you earlier whether having that map would have been of some assistance to you and your response was...

Stuart BESELT [00:08:12] Well...yeah, sure, it would be assistance, but but, you know, like your what do you have? Like, you don't have like other than your cell phone or something with your cell phone. You don't you don't have that capability of carrying another NWS or whatever. So that

Roger BURRILL [00:08:26] Gottcha. So it's a technological issue, I mean, in terms of having it capable enough to be portable and reliable.

Stuart BESELT [00:08:34] Yeah, that's basically right.

Roger BURRILL [00:08:36] And we don't have the technology for that?

Christopher LUSSOW [00:08:41] What about....Since we're talking about GPS and stuff like.

Stuart BESELT [00:08:43] Yeah.

Christopher LUSSOW [00:08:43] I completely understand when you get overloaded with kit at times. And you personally, GPS, let's say through your TMR obviously this is not going to really help you see, but dispatch can see you. Would that be...

Stuart BESELT [00:09:02] Well, I think it was TMR. If it was on a radio, that'd be great because we have a radio all the time. Right.

Christopher LUSSOW [00:09:05] Right. And in that way, dispatch could see where you are, or a risk manager can see you are where you are.

Stuart BESELT [00:09:12] Do they have that technology? I don't even know.

Christopher LUSSOW [00:09:15] Yeah.

Stuart BESELT [00:09:15] Oh, well, there you go.

Christopher LUSSOW [00:09:16] That way they could sing to you, possibly, you know, turn around, it's like, you know, three hundred meters from the direction you just came. That's that's just fine. Do you think that would be helpful...

Stuart BESELT [00:09:27] Oh, of course.

Christopher LUSSOW [00:09:28] ...Thing? And also from an officer safety issue.

Stuart BESELT [00:09:31] Yeah, sure.

Christopher LUSSOW [00:09:33] OK.

Roger BURRILL [00:09:34] OK. Tell me about after you're at 4 Faris, the family was evacuated, we can call them a family, then your next steps were to do what?

Stuart BESELT [00:09:46] Well sometime in there I was like, you know, we know sometime in there I'm like, we can't let these kids be alone. Like we got to send somebody in. Is there can we get somebody to go in and get these kids out? Right. And so, like, you know, as the three of us were chatting about it, we were like, you know, like, can we get somebody to go in? And that's where ah, Billy and Grund went in to get them. And so then they're like, we'll just drive them out in the family car kind of thing. Or like that's you know, that was our suggestion to them. And, you know, so that left Billy there alone. Right. So I knew Billy was there alone because Grund had driven them out. And and so I'm like, well, we can't leave Billy alone. So we got to go back to Billy and then we can make four and go from there. Right.

Roger BURRILL [00:10:38] And Billy Neil, somebody you had known from your, your...

Stuart BESELT [00:10:42] Oh, I've known him for, yeah, for hockey playing hockey with him and stuff.

Roger BURRILL [00:10:45] You know a lot of people from hockey.

Stuart BESELT [00:10:47] Yes. I meet more people through hockey than anything else. Right.

Roger BURRILL [00:10:51] So you traversed back up Portapique Beach Road?

Stuart BESELT [00:10:56] Yeah. Went...

Roger BURRILL [00:10:57] Once again. Are we going to houses?

Stuart BESELT [00:10:58] One house. I went to one house there to there was an older lady that with her dog we got out her own then. And then that was basically all the houses that we came across. Right. We tried. And so all of those people left I think like three people left and then one I don't think was home and then we so we cut through again. And that's when we came to what's his name. I called him the German but I don't know if he's ...

Laurie Ward [00:11:27] It's Bjorn.

Stuart BESELT [00:11:27] Bjorn, right. So...

Roger BURRILL [00:11:27] So, you cut through

Stuart BESELT [00:11:29] We cut through a yard and ended up coming into Bjorn's yard. And, you know, we, you know, like I think we had some information that he was staying behind and, you know, he he might have a gun. And so anyways, we come we come up on him. We snuck up on him. No problem. And, you know, his gun's over there. He's got a he's got a fire hose or a garden hose ready to put out a fire if it starts and we're like, no, get the hell out of here. Like, just go, you know? So I don't know. I don't know if you even left, but he drove and then he might have turned around. I don't I don't even know. But anyways. So then. Yeah, so then we started going back and then it was like, you know, that's really where our cell phones were like, OK, how do we get back to where we were, you know, like, you know? So we're looking at our phone. And I think at one point in time I tried to send Bill my location so that we could share locations and he didn't even have a cell phone with them. So it didn't work. But, you know, like just on... You can share your location on an iPhone. Right. So basically, we eventually found them and then, you know, just that's when.

Roger BURRILL [00:12:49] But when you say you eventually found them, without a technological assist, it's just you continuing to ...

Stuart BESELT [00:12:55] No, we were using our cell phones to try and be like, OK, I think it's up here. Right? So we just kept going in the direction of where we thought we needed to go.

Roger BURRILL [00:13:03] OK, all right. I got it. And then you you met with Constable Neil.

Stuart BESELT [00:13:10] Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:13:10] Four of you then formed a unit.

Stuart BESELT [00:13:13] Right.

Roger BURRILL [00:13:14] And the expression I read periodically was hunkered down at that.

Stuart BESELT [00:13:18] Yeah. Yeah. They told us to to stay put at that point. Because a lot of the...

Roger BURRILL [00:13:23] Who's they?

Stuart BESELT [00:13:24] Um, well, at that point in time, the incident commander was on. Yyou know, Jeff West was on.

Roger BURRILL [00:13:29] OK. When did Jeff West come involved? When did the incident commander in terms of your time in Portapique, do you have any idea when there was that...

Stuart BESELT [00:13:37] It wasn't much before that, like it was somewhere around that at that time.

Roger BURRILL [00:13:41] Were you aware that...

Stuart BESELT [00:13:43] I heard that Jeff West... Yeah, Jeff had taken over command as the incident commander.

Roger BURRILL [00:13:49] OK. Did you communicate with him in terms of your whereabouts or what you were seeing or was that...

Stuart BESELT [00:13:53] We were we were constantly kind of, you know, like this is on fire. This is, you know, they're, you know, trying to, you know, keep them apprized of where we were. Right. So.

Roger BURRILL [00:14:04] Right. But there was a shift from Rehill in terms of...

Stuart BESELT [00:14:07] Yeah. When Jeff West came on, like he announced that he as it was the incident commander.

Roger BURRILL [00:14:12] And was that clear to you? Did you....

Stuart BESELT [00:14:14] Oh yeah. Yeah, I think I heard that on the radio clear loud as day.

Roger BURRILL [00:14:17] OK, so your communications then in terms of provision of information would have been with the incident commander as opposed to the risk manager?

Stuart BESELT [00:14:25] Anybody. We're not, we're not... hey Brian, you know, like we're just like we're doing this right. We're doing that. Where... This house is on fire. This is there. You know, like...

Roger BURRILL [00:14:36] On that point, though, when I hear what you're saying, I hear Andy O'Brien was involved.

Stuart BESELT [00:14:42] Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:14:42] Sergeant, the risk manager Rehill, Brian Redhill was involved.

Stuart BESELT [00:14:47] Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:14:47] As the risk manager and the incident commander, Jeff West. Right. Anybody else at that time providing direction to you that you recall or have some....um

Stuart BESELT [00:14:56] Not really, no.

Roger BURRILL [00:14:58] No, OK. Do you a.... Do you recall any specific instructions and other than hunker down from anybody, the CIC that the incident commander..

Stuart BESELT [00:15:07] No.

Roger BURRILL [00:15:08] ...the risk manager?

Stuart BESELT [00:15:09] No, because basically we're we're the ones on, like I said, we're the ones with boots on the ground. We're...you know, we're the ones that are trying to make that decision at that point in time, whether or not we should go forward. Right. Like, you know.

Roger BURRILL [00:15:23] So you hunker down. How long you had you had to hunker down?

Stuart BESELT [00:15:27] It was around three o'clock when we got there, I think. Somewhere around two thirty, three o'clock.

Roger BURRILL [00:15:32] When you got to 135 or

Stuart BESELT [00:15:34] back to get to Billy,.

Roger BURRILL [00:15:35] OK.

Stuart BESELT [00:15:36] Yeah. And then that's when they told us to stay put.

Roger BURRILL [00:15:38] OK, and how long did you stay put, do you know? Any recollection?

Stuart BESELT [00:15:43] It felt like a long time because I was, I was soaked and soaked right through my uniform.

Roger BURRILL [00:15:47] With sweat?

Stuart BESELT [00:15:47] Yeah. It's like sweat just from, you know, like it was it was a cool night. It was like minus two or something like that. But it wasn't a frig...freezing night until we stopped. And then once we stopped, you know, we're like, you're soaked. So, you know, then you just freeze up, right?

Roger BURRILL [00:16:04] Yeah.

Christopher LUSSOW [00:16:04] When you hunker down with it in the house, the red house or is there...

Stuart BESELT [00:16:09] Well, we were outside and then like, I started freezing. Billy didn't even have a jacket with them, like he and he had been there for longer than we had. Right. So we we decided to because the door was still open, we just stood at the door and and kind of watched out the door. And and then Adam and Aaron were at the back of the house

Roger BURRILL [00:16:30] What, doing the same thing in the doorway?

Stuart BESELT [00:16:31] Yeah. And I don't know if they were in the doorway or not, but

Roger BURRILL [00:16:34] that was to get some heat.

Stuart BESELT [00:16:35] Yeah. Just to try and keep some heat. Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:16:38] Yeah, yeah. What about, what about leaving. I mean you traversed a lot...

Stuart BESELT [00:16:44] And I would have been happy to walk out at that point in time, believe me. But they told me to sit still so I sat still. Right. They said we'll extract you. So...

Roger BURRILL [00:16:54] OK. All right. Perfect. What do we know about ERT? It's the Emergency Response Team.

Stuart BESELT [00:17:02] Emergency Response Team. Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:17:02] OK. And are you familiar with the workings of of ERT?

Stuart BESELT [00:17:09] Um, no. Like I don't like... I just know that, you know, like I know what you have to do to get them there and then, you know, like you basically you've got basically you're usually turning the perimeters over to them. Right. You know, if you're on the inside perimeter, you know, like, you know, like you'll you'll be watching and then all of a sudden you get a tap on your shoulder and you get out. Right. Like, you know, like I don't know what they do all the time. I'm not an ERT trained guy. Right. So.

Roger BURRILL [00:17:34] So how long did you say you'd been in Bible Hill? Like, for years before this.

Stuart BESELT [00:17:38] Well, since fall 2014.

Roger BURRILL [00:17:41] So, yeah. OK, I've had you had an engagement with the ERT team at all previous to April 18, 2020?

Stuart BESELT [00:17:50] Oh well, yeah. You're always there's there's every now and then you're having an ERT call where you're having an ERT call out. Right.

Roger BURRILL [00:17:57] OK. OK. And did you have any discussions, communications with the with the ERT team directly while you were in Portapique?

Stuart BESELT [00:18:05] No.

Roger BURRILL [00:18:06] None at all?

Stuart BESELT [00:18:07] No.

Roger BURRILL [00:18:07] OK, did anybody from ERT ask you about your impressions and or what you had personally observed while you were in Portapique?

Stuart BESELT [00:18:17] No.

Roger BURRILL [00:18:18] OK, you know who I mean by Corporal Tim Mills?

Stuart BESELT [00:18:22] I know the name. Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:18:24] You know the name. Do you have any communication with Tim Mills that night?

Stuart BESELT [00:18:28] No.

Roger BURRILL [00:18:29] OK, in terms of your engagement that night in Portapique, when was the first time you had any contact with ERT personnel?

Stuart BESELT [00:18:38] When I was struggling to get my seized body into the TAV.

Roger BURRILL [00:18:43] Oh, really?

Stuart BESELT [00:18:44] Yeah. Yeah. Like I heard them on the radio, right?

Roger BURRILL [00:18:46] Yeah.

Stuart BESELT [00:18:47] I heard them on the radio, but they were kind of going on a wild goose chase, too, because somebody on the other side of the river said, I see a flashlight. So they they went over to the other side of the river and then, you know, piddled around there for a couple of minutes or, you know, what seemed like eternity until they cut...came back and then, you know, then they were dealing with the brother, trying to get him out of the woods and we could see their lights down the road, you know. So anyways, you know, so then they're like, we're we're just down the road from you. I could see your lights from the top. Right.

Roger BURRILL [00:19:22] In terms of protocol or communication rules, would you be permitted to communicate with the with the ERT team under those circumstances, or is that something that would be frowned upon?

Stuart BESELT [00:19:33] Oh, sure. There's there's times where, you know, like, you know, I've been on my way to other calls and just been like this, you know, calling ERT and just have them on kind of a standby, almost straight. But in this situation, I... It's all going through Jeff. Right. Like Jeff is... At that point in time. Right. Or Brian or, you know, whoever's, you know, doing that coordination on. On the level, you know.

Roger BURRILL [00:20:01] Yeah, OK.

Christopher LUSSOW [00:20:03] ...Jump in. You worked in Saskatchewan before...

Stuart BESELT [00:20:08] Yeah.

Christopher LUSSOW [00:20:09] ...Coming here. No.. Any interaction with ERT out there?

Stuart BESELT [00:20:12] Yeah. Few ERT calls. Not a lot.

Christopher LUSSOW [00:20:14] Did he run a containment team in Saskatchewan?

Stuart BESELT [00:20:19] Moose Jaw? See Moose Jaw is very similar to Bible Hill. Right. Like you have. It's not a big city. You know, you had four guys on the street basically, and and for a city of 35000 and and no, you know, you're basically doing the same thing. You're.. If you're lucky, if you've got your inner perimeter and then you're trying to get resources to come in for anything more than that. Right. Right.

Christopher LUSSOW [00:20:42] So they didn't have a structured containment team. You don't have one here?

Stuart BESELT [00:20:49] No.

Christopher LUSSOW [00:20:49] And some divisions will have a containment team. Right. And then you move up to like to an ERT team.

Stuart BESELT [00:20:56] Yeah.

Christopher LUSSOW [00:20:56] It's kind of like you're ...

Laurie Ward [00:20:58] I'm just not sure if it's clear you were not with the RCMP, then?

Stuart BESELT [00:21:01] No, I was with Moose Jaw City Police.

Christopher LUSSOW [00:21:02] Oh, OK. Sorry.

Stuart BESELT [00:21:05] Yeah, I did 11 years with Moose Jaw City Police and then I switched over to the RCMP in 2009.

Roger BURRILL [00:21:11] OK, got it.

Christopher LUSSOW [00:21:12] OK, all right.

Roger BURRILL [00:21:17] This can be a hard question to answer because I'm not sure how to ask it. That is, given the chaos that you experienced, I think that's I hope that's a fair word. Would you would you agree, though?

Stuart BESELT [00:21:28] Yes.

Roger BURRILL [00:21:28] Yeah.

Stuart BESELT [00:21:29] It's usually chaotic.

Roger BURRILL [00:21:30] What could have helped your situation there?

Stuart BESELT [00:21:35] I don't know. I played the scenario out in my mind.

Roger BURRILL [00:21:39] You have.

Stuart BESELT [00:21:41] Um...I don't know if anybody could have gone in there and done anything differently. Right? Like, I kind of feel like we did everything just about as best as we could.

Roger BURRILL [00:21:51] Yeah.

Stuart BESELT [00:21:53] You know, obviously, it would have been nice to have a helicopter, you know, like somebody, you know, that could have had, you know, obviously, you know, FLIR or whatever, like that sort of thing. You know? But given the scenario that we were given, I don't know what else somebody could have done. I really don't... You know, like

Roger BURRILL [00:22:18] Sometimes you look back and I know it's hard that, you know, if there was more information available to you, less information available...

Stuart BESELT [00:22:25] Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:22:25] ...Things would have been different. And I'm not making any judgments, and I wasn't there. I'm just wondering, from your point of view, would there have been anything that could have assisted you, information wise, resource wise or otherwise?

Stuart BESELT [00:22:39] Sure. Well, you would love to have 100, 100 Mounties, you know, all go in together. But, you know, like, given the you know, the limitations that you're you're you're dealing with...

Roger BURRILL [00:22:50] Way back an hour and a half ago, you said that there was four on shift that night....

Stuart BESELT [00:22:53] Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:22:54] ...And there's usually six.

Stuart BESELT [00:22:55] No, we have teams of six. But, you know, we got some guys get maybe get transferred or this or that or I think I had one guy on pat leave, you know, so, you know, four is our minimum. Right. So we had four.

Roger BURRILL [00:23:08] Right. Four, and four when you say the minimum is the potentially the usual that you're dealing with?

Stuart BESELT [00:23:13] A lot of times you're dealing with four.

Roger BURRILL [00:23:15] OK. Right. Very good. Look, a couple of things I just want to generally tie up. You gave a statement on April 23rd, I know you've reviewed it, to the RCMP investigators. Anything in that that document or that material that you might think now after the passage of time is inaccurate or you're comfortable with what you said on the 23rd?

Stuart BESELT [00:23:35] The only thing, like, they sent me the the transcript from the radio communication, I think the only thing I messed up on there is when we went back to see the kids. Right. I think I had put it af.. Like ...Yeah. There's just that there's just a little bit of an error there. But otherwise it's it's pretty straightforward. Like, I still remember the night pretty well. Right.

Roger BURRILL [00:24:04] The next kind of informal question is, how are you doing?

Stuart BESELT [00:24:08] I'm actually like, so, you know, like I was saying this before you guys came in, you know, there's there's two things that really eat up police officers raid. Is like, A, you're helpless or B, you have regrets. Right. So I don't feel helpless because I was in it. Right. Like I know speaking to a lot of members that were listening, you know, or if I would have been involved on Sunday, I would have felt helpless, like you would have just been like, I want to stop this as quick as I can. Right. So, you know, and you're just you literally you're trying and trying and trying. Right. To find them. I don't feel helpless because I... You know, I went out there and like I said, I feel fairly content in knowing that I did everything I could. Right? Um..regrets, um, you know, right after the incident and up to a couple of days after, you know, I was, you know, obviously I got up on the Sunday morning and watched the news like everybody else and and was kind of, you know, flabbergasted. See, right when ERT was calling the brother out of the woods there, right at the end of our night, there was one loud crack. And I'm like, or he just did himself in the woods. Right, because he thought he's being called out of the woods. Right. So that was my understanding. That was my thought process is, you know, we heard one last loud crack and it was like, nah, he just he knows the gig's up. He just shot himself and and, you know, so when I woke up Sunday morning, I kind of felt like the situation was over. They'll find him in the woods kind of somewhere. Right. And so then when, you know, I started getting text messages from buddies out west, they're like, oh, my God, this shit still going on. And, you know, and it's like, oh, you know. So then I'm like, I had my shot. You know, when the brother was walking up, we thought that was the suspect. I had my shot. I didn't take it, right. And so then I was like, I was a mess for like two days until I talked to Deon Sutton on on the Monday. And he's like because he was there and he was like with the TAV and all that kind of stuff. And he's like, no, man, that was the brother. And I'm like, and then I was putting two and two together because I'm like, Oh, OK, well that makes sense because he was hiding in the woods for hours. He was he was called out of the woods just down the road from where we were. And then I'm like, it was just like a weight lifted off my shoulder because I'm like, OK, well now there's nothing I could have done differently. I didn't. Yeah. Because I, you know, I would have been in the same shoes as Terry and Dave that, you know, shot and and, you know, because like I said to them, you the only thing that you guys did that I didn't do is is shoot. Right. Like, you know, your line in the sand was the same as mine. And I would have done the same thing if the guy ran. Right. Like 100 percent. Right. You think this is him. And he runs when you challenge them, you're thinking, you know, this is all you have is a dark figure walking in the woods kind of thing and like it could have so easily been different, right.

Roger BURRILL [00:27:15] Yeah. Let me ask you about your feelings, OK, to potentially testifying.

Stuart BESELT [00:27:21] Yeah, whatever.

Roger BURRILL [00:27:27] Whatever? Testifying is not the most, you know...

Stuart BESELT [00:27:29] I'll testify.

Roger BURRILL [00:27:30] I know. I can tell.

Stuart BESELT [00:27:32] Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:27:32] I can tell. And I can tell your, your level of comfort with communicating with suits. Right. But if you said to me, look, there's a level of discomfort I have, we take that into account. If you say...

Stuart BESELT [00:27:45] No, if I can prevent other people from having to go through this process and that I would be more than happy.

Roger BURRILL [00:27:51] Yeah. What do you mean by that?

Stuart BESELT [00:27:53] Well, I just know that there's people that are struggling that don't want to live this again or live through it or recount it or whatever.

Roger BURRILL [00:28:00] And when you say that, are you referring to your your immediate IR team colleagues?

Stuart BESELT [00:28:04] Well, Vicki, or I don't think Adam or Aaron are doing too bad. I know Vicky struggles. I know Billy hasn't been back to work. Grund is starting to come back to work, but he's been off for a long time. And and so, like, you know, whatever I can do to just minimize the other members having to go through this again.

Roger BURRILL [00:28:22] Yeah, OK.

Stuart BESELT [00:28:26] I've I've expected that I was going to be called. I was a supervisor that night. Like, it's kind of, you know, I kind of figured I would be, but ..

Roger BURRILL [00:28:33] Yeah, yeah.

Stuart BESELT [00:28:34] You know.

Roger BURRILL [00:28:35] No, I... I hear you. But Chris, you have anything further?

Christopher LUSSOW [00:28:39] No, no, no.

Roger BURRILL [00:28:43] Now, of course, we ask the questions, really invite you to ask us any questions if you have for us in terms of the commission and what's happening. Nothing?

Stuart BESELT [00:28:54] Not really. I don't know. It's kind of out of my lane.

Roger BURRILL [00:28:58] It's not out of your lane, man. It's a, you know, a you lived it.

Stuart BESELT [00:29:02] Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:29:03] And we respect that, you know.

Stuart BESELT [00:29:05] The only thing that cheesed me off is the way that, you know, with the RCMP taking like six weeks to acknowledge that we did an IR response, you know. Because all those questions were thrown out there, like, why didn't they go in? They said they sat on the shoulder on the sidelines, didn't even go in. And they're like, yeah, we fucking went in. Like, what more do you want us to do? Like, and then it wasn't until, like, June....

Roger BURRILL [00:29:28] Yeah.

Stuart BESELT [00:29:29] ...When they came out on that press conference and by that time it was just like a, you know, you know, nobody cared anymore. Yeah, we did an IR response. OK. Then they were moving on to other things that they had a problem with. But it was like this big thing about for a while and they never acknowledged it. And, you know, it kind of turned into a life of its own. And all they had to do at the beginning is like, yeah, members did an IR response and were in, you know, you know, searching for the suspect. Right?

Roger BURRILL [00:29:55] Yeah. And that, you know, from a public information point of view that that's significant, obviously. And that's kind of what the commission is about, right?

Stuart BESELT [00:30:04] Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:30:05] Yeah. OK, all right. Well, listen, it's been a privilege to meet you. I know we'll talk again.

Stuart BESELT [00:30:13] Yeah.

Roger BURRILL [00:30:13] And, you know, I'll leave you a card. And if there's anything that you want to talk to her, or have Laurie talked to, will be happy to sort of deal with

that. I can't tell you what the plans are. I'm not the big cheese. I'm just a piece of cheese.

Stuart BESELT [00:30:25] Yes.

Roger BURRILL [00:30:26] We'll we'll see what happens.

Stuart BESELT [00:30:28] Sure.

Roger BURRILL [00:30:28] Very good. Everybody everybody comfortable? Laurie, have anything? Sorry I should have ...um.

Laurie Ward [00:30:33] No, I think we're good. Did you want to talk about anything, or, before you go? Or...

Stuart BESELT [00:30:39] Nope.

Roger BURRILL [00:30:40] We're good. Good.

Laurie Ward [00:30:43] OK.

Roger BURRILL [00:30:43] Yeah, here's a here's my card.

Christopher LUSSOW [00:30:45] So we'll just stop the recording now at 12:23.

Roger BURRILL [00:30:48] Yeah.