Witness: Christopher Boyer

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Day 1 of 2 for this witness

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Direct Examination by Dave Harris

D. HARRIS: Sir, can you tell us if you have any connection with the Contra Costa Sheriff's Department?

BOYER: Yes, sir, I do. I'm both a volunteer and I am employed by them. My employment is a Senior Emergency Planning Coordinator in the Office of Emergency Services as a volunteer. I'm the captain of the Search and Rescue Team.

D. HARRIS: I want to go, just touch on these things a little bit there. line 10 Office of Emergency Services, what is that?

BOYER: That is the civilian component of the Sheriff's Department that does the planning for emergencies and disasters.

D. HARRIS: And in your reserve capacity as a captain with the search and rescue, what is that?

BOYER: I'm the administrative leader of the search and rescue team, which is a volunteer team of about a hundred members that work for the sheriff's department that work for missing persons.

D. HARRIS: When you say search and rescue teams, what type of teams does the Contra Costa Sheriff's Department have or employ when looking for lost persons?

BOYER: We, rather than call them teams, they're actually resources under the search and rescue team. We have resources that include ground searchers, equestrian searchers, divers, K-9 handlers of different types, communications, support people, that sort of thing.

D. HARRIS: And with regards to your particular assignment there, how long have you been a reserve deputy?

BOYER: I've been a volunteer with the search and rescue team for almost nine years and a reserve deputy for almost eight.

D. HARRIS: Now is there a difference between a volunteer and a reserve?

BOYER: Yes, there is. As a volunteer with the search and rescue team, I have no peace officer powers. As a reserve deputy with the department, I have peace officer powers in the presence of another peace officer.

D. HARRIS: And when you're talking about a volunteer, what does that mean with regards to the search and rescue of other individuals?

BOYER: I applied for the team, passed a background check with the department, which includes a standard background check they would do on all regular deputies or all regular employees that they would hire. Went through a series of trainings of approximately 100 hours to become a certified member.

D. HARRIS: Maybe it's just kind of obvious, does a volunteer mean that these individuals are not paid?

BOYER: Oh, yes, sir. A volunteer means that we are employees of the department only in the sense that we are covered for workmen's comp when we're out on a search or being used by the county, but we are not compensated in any way, shape or form.

D. HARRIS: As members, as a volunteer member of the search and rescue, do you have equipment that you have to provide?

BOYER: Yes, sir, we have to provide our own equipment.

D. HARRIS: So that's something that's not paid for by the Sheriff's Department?

BOYER: No, sir.

D. HARRIS: Now these volunteers that you mentioned something about K-9's, do you have any background education or training in the area of K-9's?

BOYER: Yes, sir. I am also a K-9 handler with our search and rescue team.

D. HARRIS: What is a K-9 Handler?

BOYER: A K-9 handler is a member of the team that would get a dog that is useful for search and rescue, would train that dog themselves, purchase it, house it, train it themselves, and then test it for certification within the state for search and rescue in any number of different disciplines. It could be a wilderness or an air scent dog which is looking for live people in the wilderness. It could be a disaster dog that would be looking for people in rubble piles. It could be a trailing dog, which is a discriminate search dog which looks for an individual or path an individual's gone on. It could be a cadaver dog which looks for human remains.

D. HARRIS: Now with regards to, do you have a dog?

BOYER: Yes, sir, I have two.

D. HARRIS: And can you give us your, your experience or what you've done with these particular dogs?

BOYER: The first one is a black labrador retriever. I certified her in cadaver work with the State Office of Emergency Services, which is the overall guideline organization for the state. The second dog is a blood hound, which I was training in trailing until she developed hip dysplasia and I had to retire her.

D. HARRIS: Can you explain that for us?

BOYER: The hip dysplasia or the retirement?

D. HARRIS: Why don't we do both.

BOYER: Both. The blood hound developed a problem with her hips where the hips bones don't, the joint doesn't work right, and so she went through some very extensive surgeries at UC Davis to save those hip bones and to save her life, but because of that she would not be able to work and run has a regular dog so now she's just a pet. We got through approximately six months of an 18-month training regimen that would have been required to get certified.

D. HARRIS: Now you're going back, you had mentioned something in your previous, something about the overall state something or other. I want to get back to that particular point. When you're talking about certification, what were you talking about?

BOYER: There are a number of groups that certify dogs within the state. One is called, by the acronym is CARDA, which represents the California, California Association for Rescue Dogs. There is one called Monterey Bay Search Dogs, MBSD. There's CASSDA, which is a group that is closed now, California Swiss Search Dog Organization. And there's a group called WOOF, which is the wilderness finders. CARDA is the largest organization with approximately 95 certified handlers in the state. WOOF has got about 24. MBSD has five or six. The state regulates how they, let me say the state regulates the guidelines under which they train and they would test.

D. HARRIS: Let's go back through that. Now you say that the state regulates how these dogs are trained. What particular department or what organization of the state deals with that particular issue?

BOYER: Within the state the Governor's Office of Emergency Services, also referred to as OES by the acronym guides that. There's a law enforcement branch of state OES which oversees all search and rescue. There's a deputy chief there by the name of Matt Sharper who's the state SAR coordinator and, he, along with a committee, come up with the guidelines for the state and set those.

D. HARRIS: Let me go back a minute. You used an acronym, SAR?

BOYER: SAR, I'm sorry, SAR stands for search and rescue.

D. HARRIS: You were telling us that you're employed by the Office of Emergency Services, is that the state office that you're referring to?

BOYER: No, sir, actually, I have a relationships with both OESs. My employment is with the county OES office through the Sheriff's Department. I have a relationship with the state OES as well as an instructor for them and as a dog handler.

D. HARRIS: So we're clear about this, so the state has an office of emergency service and at least your county also has an office of emergency service?

BOYER: Actually, it's legislative that each county would have some level of emergency services department. They may call it something else, like emergency services division or something like that, but they all have one.

D. HARRIS: And you're saying that you had some type of connection with the state's office that you were an instructor and handler. I want to go through that. Let's break that up starting with the handler portion of that. What do you mean by that, you had a connection with the office, State Office of Emergency Services?

BOYER: I'm a member of the committee for the State Office of Emergency Services that sets the guidelines for all of the search and rescue dogs in the state. I'm the backup dispatcher for the State Office of Emergency Services. When someone in the state needs a search dog, they call state OES, which then talks to their primary dispatcher to try to find the right dog within the state. If that person's not available, then they call me and I try to find the right dog for that job within the state. I'm also an evaluator for cadaver dogs only within the state due to my experience with cadaver dogs and the area that they're working in. I go around the state and I evaluate other dogs to see if they meet the guidelines.

D. HARRIS: Now when you were mentioning talking about the connection there, you're saying that you're part of this committee, is this the committee that establishes what the criteria is for a dog to be certified in the state?

BOYER: Yes, sir, they set the guidelines and they're specifically called guidelines not certifications. Some of the search, some of the other dog groups, like CARDA or WOOF, will have a specific certification. The guidelines for the state, their certification must meet or exceed the guideline for the state.

D. HARRIS: And what are the guidelines for the state?

BOYER: It depends on what discipline of the dog you're talking about, sir, whether it's a trailing dog, a cadaver dog, a wilderness dog, an avalanche dog, a dog that finds bodies under water, things like that. It just depends on which discipline you're referring to.

D. HARRIS: Since you're talking about the State Office of the Emergency Services which establishes the guidelines for the dogs, do the individual counties get to do this as well?

BOYER: You mean set their own committees, sir, or participate in the state's committee?

D. HARRIS: Well, let me try and rephrase that.

BOYER: Please.

D. HARRIS: At the county level for the offices of emergency services or whatever search and rescue, can you establish your own guidelines for using K-9?

BOYER: Absolutely, sir, the state supports that sort of environment and bond with the counties.

D. HARRIS: And if the county meets at least the minimum requirements set forth by the state, would that be sufficient to meet the state guidelines?

BOYER: Absolutely, sir. Yes, they must meet or exceed that guideline, yes.

D. HARRIS: And with regards to those particular guidelines, the county can set them higher than the state guidelines?

BOYER: Yes, sir, they may, and counties do do that.

D. HARRIS: Now, go back to the first of two parts that you had a connection to the office?

BOYER: The instruction part, sir.

D. HARRIS: Go to that particular part. What is your relationship with the State Office of Emergency Service with regards to instruction?

BOYER: I teach for the State Office of Emergency Services in a number of areas. I teach a class on child stranger abduction homicide. I teach classes on search management. The class is specifically called the Direction Control of the Search Function. It's a class that all search managers in the state of California must take before they can manage a search. And, then, finally, I teach classes in search scent theory for dog handlers and in dog management for dog managers.

D. HARRIS: Now this class that you teach, let me just kind of break that down. Would it be safe to say that this is, if I use the smaller term a scent theory kind of class?

BOYER: The class on scent theory, yes, sir, it talks about and educates dog handlers and also search managers that would be task dog managers that be would be how the dog works with the environment, how the environment affects what the dog's trying to do and how to best utilize that canine.

D. HARRIS: And how many instructors are there that teach, let me back up. The scent theory class, I believe you said that this is a class that's required of certain individuals at the state level?

BOYER: At the state level for the state guideline all handlers have to have a scent theory class of some sort, WOOF and CARDA both require scent theory for their handlers. I don't know if Monterey Bay does or not.

D. HARRIS: So the majority of these classes require a scent theory class and the state guideline to be a state kind of certified dog requires, or dog handlers, requires that someone take a scent theory class?

BOYER: That's correct, sir.

D. HARRIS: And how many of these scent theory instructors are there in the state?

BOYER: There are probably only two or three of us at current that do that sort of work.

D. HARRIS: And for you to teach this scent theory for the State Office of Emergency Services, did you receive any or do you have any background education or training in that particular area?

BOYER: There really isn't any area to get scent theory from this from dog handlers. It's not something offered at Berkeley or locally. You have to end up doing a lot of research on your own. Most of it's very basic knowledge. You know, humans have been using dogs to do work and find things for centuries and so most of that education really can find in high school level-type classes in microbiology, human physiology, chemistry and physics, as well as going to seminars like at UC Davis at the School of Veterinary and that sort of thing.

D. HARRIS: These are the type of things that you can instruct in a particular scent theory class?

BOYER: Yes, sir.

D. HARRIS: Now when we talk about scent theory, let's just break it down to the real basic element. What is scent theory?

BOYER: Scent theory to a dog handler, the way we want them to understand it is how is the scent, presented to the environment, how it's actually produced and presented to the environment, how the dog will react to that and read it and what to do with that in your training to make your dog better at finding what you're looking for.

D. HARRIS: And what is it you teach?

BOYER: The class is actually an eight-hour class and it involves everything from how a human generates scent from their body to how the canine's physiology is actually able to bring in a smell or an odor into their nose and how that dog processes that in its training to realize what its looking for.

D. HARRIS: We're not going to ask you to give us the eight-hour version of this.

BOYER: That's good.

D. HARRIS: But I don't know if you can finish it in six minutes. e 14 I don't know if the Court wants to break early or do you want

JUDGE: Is there something you can ask him that will take five minutes?

D. HARRIS: We'll see what we can do. Captain, let's go through this. What's, what kind of the basic component that you're looking at when you're trying to teach scent theory to these dogs?

BOYER: We're trying to help them put the dog in the best position to find what they're looking for. Can you explain the question a little further for me in less than five minutes?

D. HARRIS: I'll do my best. What is it that you refer to when we're talking about scent? What is it that actually produces this scent that the dogs are following?

BOYER: What is the odor. Let me work on a, an assumption that we're going to talk about trailing here versus cadaver and other things. We'll just talk about a trailing example. The human body creates scent in a number of ways. One is through sweating. If we didn't create that way then the antiperspirant business wouldn't be in business today. And so we produce it through sweat glands. And there are two types of sweat glands, we have apocrine and eccrine. And they produce two different types of sweat from us. One's an oily and one is more of a water-based that evaporates quicker. We also shed skin cells, about 150,000 skin cells an hour. Most people refer to it as dander. In your house that dander that you find under the bed, and that's not always just dirt and dust. It's also human skin cells. Sometimes these skin cells are

connected to each other and they make what is called a skin raft, r-a-f-t. And they have also other biologicals attached to them, like bacteria, and that bacteria consumes and feeds on those skin rafts and eats it and produces a by-product of molecular smell. And that's basically what we're looking for is those two things. And the skin raft, the easy way to explain that is to imagine a person covered in post-it notes. And as they walk along, those post-it notes fall off, they get blown on the ground and get moved around and that leaves the trail that the trailing dog would follow. A cadaver does something different because it's not moving; its smell stays in one place and so that's a different conversation altogether, but that's the trailing component what we're looking for.

D. HARRIS: Now when we talk about these, the skin raft, using your example of these post-it notes, when a person is moving along, since we're talking about this trailing, do they deposit these wherever they've been?

BOYER: Yes, sir. Actually, you do is you go through the course of your day, they're left everywhere that you are in a, quote, trail, unquote, of where you've been. So you leave that much like you would leave a series of fingerprints or other things from where you go from one point to another.

D. HARRIS: And are there things that work on this particular trail that would affect how a dog works?

BOYER: Absolutely, sir. There are a number of environmental variables that either make it easier or harder for the dog to find that trail. Those could be sunlight. As the sun dries that skin raft out, it's harder for the bacteria to heat it so it doesn't produce as much smell or odor. It could be rain or humidity. That's good for the bacteria. Like that water, they need it to process that odor. And once the air becomes heavier and more humid, the odor sticks around a lot longer and stays there, so that makes it easier for the dog. When you take those post-it notes and move it around, even the surface that you're moving across has a lot to do with it. If you're walking across a sheath of polished marble, less post-it notes or scent rafts will stick to that polished marble, they'd be floating around a lot by the wind and air currents. But if you're going across something that is a lot more friction oriented, like a sidewalk or something that's more porous, then a lot more of those skin rafts would be caught into the small holes and the cavities of that porous area and they would stay there and provide a much richer trail for the dog.

<evening recess>