

TO: File

FROM: Daniel Aten, Commander
Internal Affairs Unit

DATE: October 10, 2025

SUBJECT: **Case Summary IA25-014**

Allegation:

Allegation of responding to a SWAT call under the influence of alcohol

Employee(s):

Sergeant Anthony Hamilton – Patrol Division

Reporting Party:

Commander Ian Thompson – Patrol Division

Witnesses:

Commander Mark Donohue | Golden Police Department

Commander Mike Touchton | Arvada Police Department

Sergeant Ray Horan | Arvada Police Department

Deputy Mike Pitton | Jefferson County Sheriff's Office

Specialized Unit Lead Rick Searle | Jefferson County Sheriff's Office

Police Officer Anthony Daniel | Arvada Police Department

Police Officer Justin Jackson | Arvada Police Department

Police Officer Trae Reik | Arvada Police Department

Police Officer Donato Santos | Arvada Police Department

Policy & Procedure:

JCSO P & P 580 Conduct:

Though differently assigned, and charged with separate responsibilities, each member of the sheriff's office will be above reproach in his/her actions, both on and off duty, and will be bound by the sheriff's office standards of conduct and performance. No rules can be established which embrace all cases arising from the general discharge of duties or in the personal activities of each individual. These standards and rules are guidelines, and any act or omission which an employee knows, or should know, to be contrary to the good order or discipline of the sheriff's office may also be considered a rule violation.

JCSO P&P 587 Drug Free Workplace

The Jefferson County Sheriff's Office is committed to maintaining a safe work environment by deterring the misuse and abuse of legal or illegal substances that create a threat to the safety and health of any employee or member of the public, or that interferes with any employees' ability to perform their essential job functions. The Jefferson County Sheriff's Office discourages alcohol and drug abuse and strives to achieve a workplace free from the influence of drugs and alcohol. The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework that will enable the sheriff's office to establish and maintain a safe, drug-free work environment; to establish formal requirements as a condition for certain specialized assignments; and to provide consistent and relevant guidelines for sheriff's office employees regarding substance abuse, and the misuse of alcohol and legal drugs. This policy is in accordance with Jefferson County Personnel Rules, which comply with the Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988.

Alcohol

Employees will not report for duty with any detectable amount of alcohol or controlled substance in their system except as described in this policy

Employees will not consume intoxicating beverages off duty to an extent in which their behavior would discredit the sheriff's office.

Investigation:

On September 23, 2025, Commander Thompson emailed me written directives regarding SWAT Team Leader Sergeant Anthony Hamilton who responded in a SWAT capacity to the Evergreen School shooting on September 10, 2025.

In Commander Thompson's directive he wrote that at about 1430 at Evergreen High School he was approached by Sergeant Hamilton inside the school. He (Thompson) was surprised to see him due to a recent request by him (Hamilton) to be "offline" for a few days to take care of family issues. Commander Thompson wrote that later in the day, Co-SWAT Commander Mark Donohue of the Golden Police Department informed him that a SWAT element was in the wrong area based on assignments. He advised that this element was being led by Sergeant Hamilton. Commander Thompson wrote that later that day at the command post he received a telephone call from SWAT Team Leader Deputy Pitton wanting to talk to him. Commander Thompson then met Deputy Pitton and Team Leader Horan of the Arvada Police Department who told him that a member of the team observed Sergeant Hamilton with having the odor of alcohol coming from his person.

Commander Thompson wrote that on September 16, 2025, at the Sheriff's Office he met with Sergeant Hamilton and asked him about the accusations from the SWAT operators at Evergreen High School and asked him if he had anything to drink the day of the shooting. Sergeant Hamilton said "no". Commander Thompson then asked him if he had anything to drink the previous evening. He said "no".

On September 17, 2025, at a SWAT team leadership meeting with Commander Donohue (Golden PD), Commander Touchton (Arvada PD), Deputy Pitton, and Sergeant Horan (Arvada PD), Commander Thompson told Sergeant Hamilton that more operators had come forward who smelled alcohol coming from his breath, and even though he had answered the questions the previous day he again asked if he had any alcohol to drink that day. Sergeant Hamilton was slower to answer but said “no”. Commander Thompson then asked if he had consumed any alcohol the previous night, he was slow to answer and said “yes”. Commander Donohue asked Sergeant Hamilton how much and he responded “a few”, and that he had not been sleeping well. Sergeant Hamilton eventually said he had a good part of a 12 pack. Commander Donohue asked Sergeant Hamilton to clarify when he went to bed, or had stopped drinking, Sergeant Hamilton replied 2 or 3am. Commander Thompson again asked Sergeant Hamilton if he had anything to drink on the day of the shooting. Commander Thompson wrote that Sergeant Hamilton was slow to answer but stated he had started drinking at about 8am the day of the operation, and said that he didn’t drink any hard alcohol, but admitted to drinking a 12 pack of beer that morning.

Commander Thompson then advised Sergeant Hamilton that he was suspending him from the SWAT team effective that morning and later placed him on Paid Administrative Leave.

[See Commander Thompson's, Commander Donohue's, Commander Touchton's, Sergeant Horan's and Deputy Pitton's written directives for full versions]

Interview with Arvada Police Officer Daniel:

On October 1, 2025, at 9:20 a.m., I interviewed Officer Daniel with the Arvada Police Department. The interview was conducted in the Internal Affairs Unit with audio and video recording. The following is a summary of the interview, not a transcript. Refer to the recording for additional details.

I asked Daniel to tell me what his role was at the shooting in Evergreen High School on September 10th. He said he responded in the role of an assistant team leader on the Jefferson County Regional SWAT team. He said he was assigned to the exterior search and then moved into the interior of the school. He said he arrived sometime in the afternoon. I ask Daniel to tell me about his initial interaction with Sergeant Hamilton. He said Hamilton walked into the school not really saying anything to anyone, and then Daniel noticed Hamilton drinking a large cup of coffee which Daniel thought was strange. Daniel said he had a face-to-face with Hamilton, and at that moment it smelled like coffee. He said he thought he also caught a whiff of what smelled like alcohol but wasn’t quite sure, but Hamilton’s eyes were bloodshot and watery. Daniel said it was really brief and then Hamilton continued into the office. I confirmed with Daniel that Hamilton having a cup of coffee during a call like that was unusual. Daniel said the cup was like a normal white cup that Hamilton would have gotten from the break room. I ask Daniel if that was when he had a conversation with Hamilton. He affirmed they were in close proximity to each other, and he thought he caught a whiff of what smelled like alcohol. He said it was really brief and he then wondered if he had even smelled it. Hamilton went into the office which ended the interaction. I asked Daniel if after that interaction he had any additional contact with Hamilton. He said, as the

teams were clearing the basement, he had brief run-ins and noticed Hamilton was “really quiet and distant during those short interactions, acting out of the norm and kind of “checked out.”

Their last transaction at the end of the call confirmed his suspicions of alcohol. At the end of the call out, after the debrief was done, he saw Hamilton in the parking lot and gave him a hug. It was then that he definitely smelled alcohol. I asked Daniel to go back to the initial contact with Hamilton and tell me how long that interaction lasted. He said maybe 15 to 20 seconds. I asked him how long he felt the last interaction lasted. He said another minute, face-to face.

I asked Daniel if he had spoken with other operators about his alcohol suspicions. He said he spoke with Officer Santos after the first interaction with Hamilton. He said he told Santos what he suspected and asked Santos to let him know if he smells anything when he is around Hamilton. He said later, at the end of the night, Santos told him he smelled it. Daniel said after the team debriefing he brought it to the attention of team leader Pitton.

I ask Daniel if any other SWAT operators had suspicions of Hamilton drinking. He said, when they got back to the Sheriff’s Office and were putting away their gear, Arvada Police Officer Reik told him that it appeared Hamilton was intoxicated by the way he was walking, and he could smell it and see it. Daniel said later, when he was on his way home, he called Arvada Police Sergeant Horan who is a team leader and told him of his observations indicating that another operator had the same observations. He said a couple of days later Arvada Police Officer Jackson also brought it to his attention, saying from his observations, he felt that Hamilton may have been intoxicated.

I asked Daniel if, prior to the Evergreen High School interaction, he had felt or seen this behavior from Hamilton before. He said there was another instance when the SWAT team was called out to Park County where deputies were shot at. He said that day Hamilton showed up late, and Daniel said he thought he smelled alcohol but wasn’t certain.

Investigator Parreco asked Daniel, other than the smell of alcohol, did he notice any other symptoms or actions. Daniel said tired, watery, bloodshot eyes, his behavior being slowed compared to normal, and lower energy.

I asked Daniel if Hamilton was leading a SWAT element. Daniel said he was, and Hamilton was clearing the first lever, which was not assigned to them. He said there were clear instructions on who clears what area. He said it was out of the norm and not like Hamilton for him to fail to follow instructions.

Interview with Arvada Police Officer Santos:

On October 1, 2025, at 9:35a.m., I interviewed Officer Santos with the Arvada Police Department. The interview was conducted in the Internal Affairs Unit with audio and video recording. The following is a summary of the interview, not a transcript. Refer to the recording for additional details.

I asked Santos to tell me what his role was when he responded to Evergreen High School on September 10th. He said he responded in a SWAT capacity. I then asked him to tell me about his interaction with Sergeant Hamilton. He said he was originally told that Hamilton would not be responding to future call-outs. He said it wasn't until the exterior search of the school was completed that he first saw Hamilton walk into the school. Santos said while inside the school he was in close proximity to Hamilton while Hamilton was making coffee. I confirmed with Santos that he saw Hamilton making coffee in the lounge. He said "Yes." I asked him if that was odd. He said it seemed odd since they had just finished the exterior, and they were getting ready to brief. He assumed that, as a Team Leader (TL), Hamilton would want to be involved. I ask Santos about his observations of Hamilton. During that first interaction with Hamilton as he walked near him, Santos said he thought he smelled alcohol. Originally, when he smelled it, there was hand sanitizer everywhere, and he had just put some hand sanitizer on. That made him question if it was the hand sanitizer he smelled or if it was alcohol.

Santos said he then sat down in the lobby area and was approached by Officer Daniel who asked Santos if he could smell alcohol. He said he had spent two and half years as a DUI car, so Daniel was asking if his nose was still good at detecting the odor of alcohol on people. He said, "yeah it is." Daniel asked if he smelled Hamilton at all. Santos told him that he hadn't. Daniel then asked Santos to go near Hamilton to see if he could smell him. Daniel said he did not trust his sense nose and was not sure if he was imagining it. Santos said, if Daniel was not the only person getting the hint odor of alcohol, then it might not be the sanitizer.

I asked Santos if there were any other indications or if he had observed anything else that would have made him believe Hamilton was under the influence of alcohol. Santos said, during the clearing of the basement and on the stair landing next to Hamilton, he could really smell the odor of alcohol. Santos also said it seemed to him that Hamilton's "head wasn't in it." He said he didn't know what Hamilton had going on previously or before that day, but each team had specific instructions. He said Hamilton directed operators to search areas that were not his responsibility. He said another Team Leader, Sergeant Horan, came over and asked why operators were in rooms that were not in their area of responsibility. He said Commander Donahue then came over and said, "What the fuck are you guys doing?" to which Hamilton responded, "I don't want to leave these rooms uncleared. Donahue said it was not their assignment to do, and told Hamilton to stick to their assignment. He said it was "weird" that Hamilton was there and that he was trying to do things that were not their assignment. I asked Santos who he had spoken to about what he had seen concerning Hamilton. Santos said, after clearing the lower level, he was with Daniel and told him that he could smell alcohol on Hamilton. He said Sergeant Horan is a Team Leader and knew he could speak with him. However, he was busy, so he spoke with Deputy Pitton and told him what he had observed and smelled coming from Hamilton. I asked him if he later ever discussed this with Sergeant Horan. He said he spoke with Horan about his interactions with Hamilton the next day.

Investigator Parreco asked Santos if, besides the smell of alcohol and how Hamilton conducted the searches, there were any other signs that he was intoxicated. Santos said "No," other than Hamilton drinking coffee. He also said Hamilton seemed to be actively avoiding people the whole

day. He said everyone is really good about sticking together as a team during the downtime, but Hamilton was obviously avoiding everybody to the point of Hamilton hanging in the back, not up with the command and other team leaders.

Investigator Parreco said it sounded like Santos has experience with alcohol detection and asked if Santos had ever been around someone who had been on a “binger” and had an old alcohol smell emitting from their pores, as opposed to someone who is actively drinking. He described the odor, comparing it to the “sweet smell” you smell when you pull someone over who has been drinking.

Interview with Arvada Police Officer Reik:

On October 1, 2025, at 9:59 a.m., I interviewed Officer Reik with the Arvada Police Department. The interview was conducted in the Internal Affairs Unit with audio and video recording. The following is a summary of the interview, not a transcript. Refer to the recording for additional details.

I asked Reik to tell me what his role was during the Evergreen High School shooting. He said he responded in a SWAT capacity and participated in checking the exterior of the school. He said he then went into the interior of the school to do a clearance. Reik asked him who was leading the element he was assigned to. He said he was assigned to Sergeant Hamilton. I asked him to tell me about his initial interaction with Hamilton. He said Hamilton arrived quite sometime after everyone else, and they got their next assignment, which was clearing the lower level. He described how their team began clearing and indicated the way it was conducted did not make sense to him. He said, when he passed near Hamilton, he smelled an alcoholic beverage coming from Hamilton’s breath. He said he first thought maybe his sense of smell was off. Then a little bit later they were clearing rooms that were not assigned to them in a manner that was not their usual method. He said it was at a fast pace, saying, “It was odd to me. It wasn’t normal.” I asked Reik who else was assigned to that team. He said Santos, a K9, and another operator were there.

I asked him if he observed any other indications that Hamilton could have been under the influence. He said later, after the first contact, they were waiting to clear other areas when he observed Hamilton and saw his eyes were bloodshot and his face was very red. He said, after everything was done and they were debriefing and as Hamilton was walking to the command bus, he noticed Hamilton was walking very rigidly, basically trying his best to walk in a normal manner. He said this “put the nail in the coffin” for him. He said he knew what he saw, saying, “He was intoxicated.” He said those were the three things that really indicated to him that Hamilton was intoxicated.

I asked Reik if he talked to anyone about his observations. He said he spoke with Officer Jackson during the ride from the high school. He said he asked Jackson if he noticed anything weird about Hamilton. He said Jackson responded, “yeah” and asked what Reik saw. Reik told Jackson what he observed. They discussed how they should report it. Reik said he later spoke with Officer Daniel and asked him if he (Daniel) had noticed anything off with Hamilton. Reik said Daniel replied “yeah.” Reik said “drinking?” and Daniel said “yeah.”

I asked Reik if he had anything additional he would like to discuss. He said there were times he could see Hamilton's eyes, and he said Hamilton was walking by him with a cup of coffee, which was "strange." He felt Hamilton was trying to cover up the smell of alcohol with the coffee. He also said Hamilton was wearing sunglasses inside the school, which was "also weird." He said it is not normal for most people to wear sunglasses inside. He said there were a lot of things that were out of the ordinary: the sunglasses, the coffee, the way Hamilton walked, the way they were randomly clearing rooms, the smell of alcohol, the bloodshot eyes, and the fact that Hamilton showed up an hour late to a SWAT callout.

Interview with Arvada Police Officer Jackson:

On October 1, 2025, at 10:20 a.m., I interviewed Officer Jackson with the Arvada Police Department. The interview was conducted in the Internal Affairs Unit with audio and video recording. The following is a summary of the interview, not a transcript. Refer to the recording for additional details.

I asked Jackson to tell me what his role was at the Evergreen High School shooting on September 12th. He said he responded in a SWAT capacity and was tasked with clearing the lower level of the school. He said Sergeant Hamilton's team was assigned to hold at the stairway leading to the rest of the lower level, and Sergeant Horan's team, which Jackson was assigned to, was tasked with clearing the lower level. He explained that there were three tactical teams: Jefferson County SWAT, which was assigned to the lower level, CSP's tactical team, and West Metro SWAT. He said, after clearing the lower level, they went back upstairs. When Sergeant Horan asked Pitton where Sergeant Hamilton's team was, Sergeant Hamilton was on the main level, which was not their assignment, adding that Hamilton was clearing rooms with some operators. Jackson thought this was kind of odd, because that was not their area of responsibility (AOR).

He said he was around Hamilton only for a short time. He said Hamilton "took a back seat after that point of time." He said the only thing he saw about Hamilton that was indicative of him being intoxicated was his demeanor, clearing areas outside his (AOR), which he said was "kind of weird," since he is usually a very "dialed in" person. He said he did observe some of the physical signs: bloodshot, glassy eyes and flushed face. He said later, when the operation was done and he was driving back from the school with Reik, Reik told Jackson he noticed the smell of alcohol, which Jackson hadn't noticed. Reik then he said that made sense to him based on seeing some of those physical symptoms.

I asked him if there were any other things that he noticed. He said the main thing was Hamilton's flushed face and his eyes. He said, "I wasn't really around him that much." Considering what Reik told him about smelling alcohol, Jackson said his observations made more sense.

I asked him if he later had talked with anyone about Hamilton. He said he spoke with Daniel about one week later. He said he briefly went over what he saw with Hamilton.

Specialized Unit Lead Rick Searle:

[Rick Searle was not interviewed see his written statement]

Interview with Sergeant Anthony Hamilton:

On October 7, 2025, at 1:25 p.m., I interviewed Sergeant Hamilton. The interview was conducted in the Internal Affairs Unit with audio and video recording. Commander Eveslage was present in the interview. The following is a summary of the interview, not a transcript. Refer to the recording for additional details.

I asked Hamilton if, on September 10th the day of the Evergreen High School shooting, he was on SWAT page and responding to SWAT calls. He said normally he would have been, but he contacted other team leaders on the team to let them know he would need some time away, time “off of the page.” I asked him if he was under the influence of alcohol when he responded to Evergreen High School on September 10th. He said, “Yes”. I asked him what type of alcohol he drank in the 12 hours prior to responding to the high school. He said, “Beer”. I then asked him how much he drank. He said he drank, “the better part of a 12 pack so, maybe 9 or 10,” the morning of the incident. I asked him, during the morning prior to responding to the high school, what the approximate time of his last drink was. He said, “It’s hard to say, maybe about 11:00 a.m.” I confirmed with him that was roughly 1 to 2 hours prior to the response. I asked him, on a scale of 1 to 10, at what level of intoxication he felt he was. He said 3 to 4. I asked him if, taking into account what he knows from his law enforcement training, he would have considered himself above the legal limit and legally intoxicated. He asked, “Like, reference to, like, driving?” I said, “Yes.” He then said, “Yeah.”

I asked him if he responded to the high school in his department take-home vehicle. He said, “Yes.” I asked him if he responded code. He said, “Yes, I did.” I asked him what he was wearing when he responded. He said he was wearing his SWAT green uniform. I asked him what weapons he had with him that day. He said, “I had my sidearm, handgun and my department-issued rifle.” I asked him at what time he thought he left the school that night. He said it was evening time, saying, “The sun had started to go down. It was starting to get dark, so maybe 6 or 7 at night, maybe later than that.” I asked him if it was after the team debriefing. He said it was.

Commander Eveslage asked Hamilton what time he got up that morning and at what time he started drinking. He said he was up about 6:30 or 7:00 a.m. Eveslage asked when he started drinking. Hamilton said, “pretty much right away.” Eveslage asked him if there was anything about his conduct at the school that would be of question or anything that would cause concern. He said a few of the other leadership had questioned a tactical decision he made. He elaborated, “It was, quite literally, to go right instead of left, down a hall. He said he had passed several classrooms in an area of responsibility (AOR) that was assigned to a different team. He said he didn’t feel comfortable standing there and waiting for part of the Jeffco SWAT team to finish up the lower level that was not connected to the main lower level, which was their AOR. He said he was waiting for them to finish up before he took the team down the other staircases to get down into the main part of the lower level. He said they had set up on one of the stairwells where there were several classrooms that had yet to be checked. He said he did not feel comfortable standing there waiting for the rest of the team to join them while those classrooms hadn’t been searched. He said he made

the decision to start back clearing, which ended up in an AOR issued to another team. I asked him if that was a tactical decision or a training decision he made, as opposed to a decision that was caused by the impairment of alcohol. He said, "Correct, that was a tactical decision."

I asked him if he had anything else to add. He said, "No, offhand, that is the bulk of it. Um, as I mentioned, there are some circumstances why I texted the other team leaders that he was going to take some time off, and, um, quite frankly, that it was a school shooting was pretty significant which drove my decision to respond." He said, if it was more of a conventional-type SWAT callout, he was prepared not to respond. He said his mindset was that he did not expect that a school shooting would happen, and that was the reason he responded. He knew his team would need help. He said that was the wrong decision, stating, "That was the reason why, and I regret few things in my life more."

Deputy History:

See concise report

Disposition:

Forwarded to Division Chief Kleinschmidt for review