

Lt. Anthony Filipski, Officer Dominic Schwartz "take on" Dollar General shooter

By **Jim Herr** - November 16, 2017



Lt. Anthony Filipski and Officer Dominic Schwartz at police headquarters on November 16th. (Jim Herr/Cheektowaga Chronicle)

CHEEKTOWAGA – The active shooter incident at the Dollar General store on November 14th unfolded in a matter of minutes and arriving police officers had to react instantly.

“All I have is my sidearm” is what Lt. Anthony Filipski was thinking as he responded down Union Road in his patrol car. He didn’t know if he could “take on” the suspect, [29-year-old Travis Green](#) if he turned to shoot at the police.

He knew Officer Dominic Schwartz was nearby with an AR-15, but the last thing he wanted to do was get into a shootout with the suspect.

“I knew the area and we’re accountable for our rounds also, and God forbid we hit some innocent person that’s not involved – you have to live with that,” said Lt. Anthony Filipski.

When Officer Schwartz arrived he began pursuing the gunman on foot shortly after the owner of [Daryll’s Car Auto](#) disoriented Green by chasing him down with his car.

"Told him to stop, get down on the ground, he refused," said Officer Schwartz. "Kept repeating the commands as I was chasing after him. He refused."

Through the yelling and screaming on the radio and seeing Officer Schwartz chasing the suspect, Lt. Filipski now had to decide how much force was necessary to stop Green.

"You make the determination in a split second," said Filipski. At first, he thought of hitting Green with his car, but he didn't have anything in his hands. He didn't feel deadly force was justified at that time.

"We meet force with force," said Lt. Filipski. He says the fleeing suspect was not a threat to anybody. "I thought at the time, the best the way was to tackle him over the guardrail," said Lt. Anthony Filipski.

"I didn't want to go into the street and get hit by a car or by another police car coming. I didn't want to go over the top of him because with my luck I would crack my head open and knock myself out."

It was his thinking to disorient Green in case he had another weapon somewhere on his body.

"A lot goes through your head and you worry is he going to carjack somebody, there's a big truck there – is he going to get into the truck and force the driver to start ramming people as we've seen all over the country," added Lt. Filipski.

The pair says they shot their weapons before but only to euthanize an injured deer. As the event unfolded, Officer Dominic Schwartz thought he was going to have to kill somebody.

"When you pull up to a situation like that especially with everything that was reported to us and with what has been happening around the country you're definitely thinking that you're going to get into a gunfight," said Officer Schwartz.

Lt. Filipski says that is the last thing any police officer wants to do. "Nobody wakes up and says 'I want to go to work today and kill somebody' it just doesn't happen. It's an unfortunate part of the job."

As the moments unfolded and [information was being relayed to responding officers by the public safety dispatchers](#), they didn't know if the call was a setup, kids playing around, or a

diversion tactic.

"They have people down, multiple shots fired, the dispatchers are hearing the shooting – we didn't know if there was more than one shooter," said Lt. Filipski.

To complicate matters for the arriving officers, information was passed to them saying both the person shot and the shooter were wearing lime green shirts.

Lt. Anthony Filipski, Sgt. Scott Grant, Police Officers Dominic Schwartz, Mark Zimmerman, Anthony Devententises, and Jeffery Fial were the initial officers on scene and credited with the arrest by Cheektowaga Police Chief David Zack.

"Under the circumstances these officers faced, they performed heroically, they performed as they have been trained, our dispatchers in a clearly confusing situation did a remarkable job," said [Chief of Police David Zack Tuesday night](#).

In Lt. Filipski's opinion, the ongoing use of force training the Cheektowaga Police Department receives is the determining factor why Travis Green is alive and sitting in a jail cell.

"I believe that's part of the problem all across the country – not enough training for officers. It's budgetary, these small departments can't send people everywhere, they don't have trainers."

He says it was a big goal of Chief David Zack to get the department's use of force numbers down. The Cheektowaga Town Council supports the efforts by allowing the officers to travel out of town to receive the most recent use of force training. Those officers bring that knowledge back home to the rest of the department.

Officers annually train on the proper amount of force allowed by law, and what signs to look for from a subject to engage in that force.

"People are still citizens, everybody is a human being, we're all human beings. We're not judge, executioner, or jury. Our job is to make people safe, get people in custody, get them in front of a judge, and let the system run its course," said Lt. Filipski.



(From L to R) Lt. Anthony Filipski, Police Chief David Zack, P/O Dominic Schwartz, Sgt. Scott Grant, Detective Michael Isbrandt, P/O Anthony Devententises. Officers Mark Zimmerman and Jeffery Fial were not present as they were guarding the suspect at the hospital. (Jim Herr/Cheektowaga Chronicle)