

# NewsWatch 16 Investigates: Report Evaluates PSP Manhunt for Eric Frein

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BLOOMING GROVE -- It has been more than a year since the massive manhunt for an accused cop killer ended in the Poconos.

NewsWatch 16 investigates has obtained a report from the state police looking at the successes and failures of that costly and drawn out operation.

It's called an after-action report and improvement plan. Troopers compile them after major incidents or events like the pope's visit to Philadelphia.

We requested a copy of this report that takes a close look at the Blooming Grove shooting last September and the 48-day search for Eric Frein.

It was nearly two months last year that caught the country's attention and thrust the Poconos into the middle of an all-out search for a fugitive on the FBI's ten most wanted list.

From Pike County to Monroe County, in the sky and on land, the massive manhunt involved troopers from all over the state, law enforcement from neighboring states, as well as the feds.

And on October 30, U.S. Marshals finally caught Eric Frein.

"Mission was to identify, to apprehend, and to bring to justice a cowardly domestic terrorist," explained Ray Hayes. "Was that mission accomplished? I believe it was."

#### IN THIS STORY

[More on Eric Frein](#)

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Ray Hayes was with the Pennsylvania State Police for 25 years. He headed up public safety in Scranton and now teaches criminal justice at Keystone College. We asked for his help to interpret the internal report on the entire operation, detailing strengths and weaknesses, as well as instituting a plan for improvements.

"There is always room for improvement. You always build on the last incident," he said.

The after-action report gives, in detail, a timeline of events from the night of the ambush that killed Corporal Bryon Dickson and wounded Trooper Alex Douglass, to

## the capture and everything in between.

The report includes the discovery of Frein's Jeep more than 48 hours after the attack. A few days later, investigators tracked his cell phone about three miles from his Canadensis area home.

Out of the 50 or so pages in this after-action report obtained by NewsWatch 16 from the Pennsylvania State Police, much of the information is redacted. That goes back to the right-to-know law which provides for exemptions for information that might jeopardize public safety, or even a criminal case like the one against Eric Frein.

"It shouldn't be for our eyes," said Theresa Stratton of Waymart. "I do believe it will jeopardize the case and it could set the guy free."

We showed some folks how state police identified major strengths, things like being able to house, feed, and equip thousands of officers, and handling the news media.

"We don't know how to actively hunt fugitives, or terrorists for that matter, in a wilderness setting. And I think the improvements should be known so we can improve these situations," said Kyle Keller of Lake Wallenpaupack.

The report also points out problems with the state police radio system.

But when it comes to what's behind all this black ink, we may never know what led to the manhunt that cost more than \$11 million.

State lawmakers, however, still plan to hold a hearing on the investigation and manhunt once the capital case against Eric Frein is complete.

"By no means am I intending that it's delayed forever," said Senator Lisa Baker, (R) 20th District. "I'd like to make sure that we continue to hear because there are things we need to know and things we need to take into account moving forward."

In all, this report says there were 3,000 troopers involved in the search. That's about three quarters of the force. That doesn't include local and out-of-state police or federal agents.

[Click here to read the entire redacted Blooming Grove After-Action Report.](#)



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