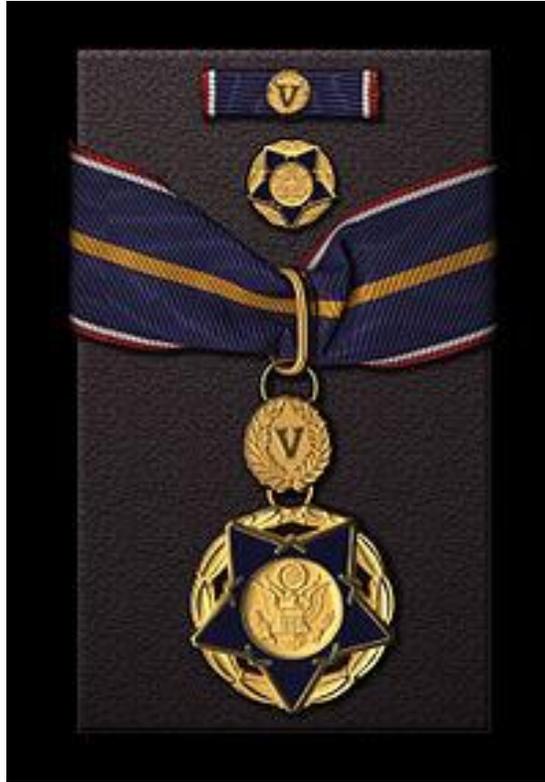


Public Safety Officer Medal of Valor

(Updated 26 July 2014)



Medal Awarded by the President of the United States to Firefighters, Law Enforcement Officers, and Emergency Services Officers





Current version being awarded with tightened up suspension.

It is awarded for "Actions above and beyond the call of duty; and exhibiting exceptional courage, extraordinary decisiveness and presence of mind; or an unusual swiftness of action, regardless of his or her personal safety, in an attempt to save or protect human life."

The Medal was first awarded in 2001. As of 31 December 2012 there have been awards to a total of 74 recipients including 2 Posthumous recipients.

This Presidential award ranks below the Presidential Citizens Medal, and is followed in precedence by the President's Award for Distinguished Federal Civilian Service Medal.

The Public Safety Officer Medal of Valor is the highest decoration for bravery performed by public safety officers in the United States, comparable to the military's Medal of Honor.

History

The original Medal of Valor was established on June 29, 2000 by President Bill Clinton with his issuance of Executive Order 13161 and was originally called the *Presidential Medal of Valor for Public Safety Officers*.^[1]

This award was later superseded to its current form with the enactment of the Public Safety Officer Medal of Valor Act of 2001 (Pub.L. 107-12, 115 Stat. 20, H.R. 802, May 30, 2001). It is still awarded and presented by the President of the United States but now it is done in the name of the United States Congress for five rather than ten public safety officers (police officers, firefighters, et cetera) per year as recommended by the eleven-member Medal of Valor Review Board. The Attorney General no longer makes recommendations directly to the President but can provide input into the process via the Department of Justice's National Medal of Valor Office's support of the Review Board. The medal can still be awarded posthumously.

Before the establishment of the Medal of Valor, there were no Federal awards to specifically acknowledge the bravery performed by public safety officers throughout the United States; police and firefighting departments typically award their members medals at a state or local government level. The establishment of the Medal of Valor fills a huge void in the civilian decorations system of the United States, which was all the more timely given the catastrophe in New York three-and-a-half months later on September 11, 2001. (In the end, however, the 442 public safety officers killed at World Trade Center and The Pentagon that day were awarded the 9/11 Heroes Medal of Valor, a similar but separate award.)

Symbolism

The Public Safety Officer Medal of Valor, which intentionally resembles the military's Medal of Honor, is a gilt, blue-enameled, five-pointed, upside-down star (i.e. one arm points downwards), with each arm formed by a letter "V" (for *Valor*), surrounded by a wreath of laurel. The central disc bears the obverse of the Great Seal of the United States. The reverse bears the legend "FOR EXTRAORDINARY VALOR ABOVE AND BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY", with the name of the recipient engraved at the center. The medal is suspended on a gilt disc bearing a letter "V" surrounded by a wreath of laurels, which is in turn suspended on a neck ribbon, blue with white and red edge stripes (the national colors of the USA) and a gold center stripe (symbolizing honor).

When the ribbon alone is worn, it carries a miniature silver gilt disc bearing a letter "V" surrounded by a wreath of laurels. There is also a lapel pin, which is the miniature of the medal without suspension.

As the award is presented by the President, the Public Safety Officer Medal of Valor Act of 2001 also repealed the previously awarded *President's Award For Outstanding Public Safety Service* ('*President's Award*') and revised the Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974 to remove the '*President's Award*' but keep the Secretary's Award For Distinguished Public Safety Service ('*Secretary's Award*'), which is an honorary award presented by the Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) or the Attorney General for the recognition of outstanding and distinguished service by public safety officers*.

- *The government defines "public safety officer" as a person (living or deceased) who serve(d) in a public agency, with or without compensation, as a firefighter, law enforcement officer (including a corrections or court officer, or a civil defense officer), or emergency services officer, as determined by the Attorney General.*



Every day, public safety officers risk their lives to protect America's citizens and communities. To honor that commitment, Congress passed The Public Safety Officer Medal of Valor Act of 2001, which created the Public Safety Officer Medal of Valor, the highest national award for valor by a public safety officer. The medal is awarded annually by the President to public safety officers who have exhibited exceptional courage, regardless of personal safety, in the attempt to save or protect human life.

A "public safety officer" is a person (living or deceased) who is serving or has served in a public agency, with or without compensation, as a firefighter; law

enforcement officer, including a corrections, court, or civil defense officer; or emergency services officer, as determined by the U.S. Attorney General.

An act of valor is defined as:

- *Above and beyond the call of duty; and*
- *Exhibiting*
 - *exceptional courage, extraordinary decisiveness and presence of mind.*
 - *unusual swiftness of action, regardless of his or her personal safety, in an attempt to save or protect human life.*

Nominating Someone to Receive the Medal of Valor

To receive the Medal of Valor, public safety officers must be nominated by the chief executive officer of their employing agencies, recommended by the bipartisan Medal of Valor Review Board, and cited by the Attorney General. PLEASE NOTE: The background of Medal of Valor nominees may be reviewed as part of the selection process.

The Attorney General designated OJP's Assistant Attorney General to serve as the Federal point of contact for the Medal of Valor initiative. OJP's Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) assists in overseeing the Medal of Valor Initiative.

Nominations must be submitted through the online Medal of Valor Application System.

Collection of Press Releases of selected presentations by the Department of Justice.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 14 , 2003
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ATTORNEY GENERAL PRESENTS THE PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICER
MEDAL OF VALOR AWARD

Washington, D.C. - Attorney General John Ashcroft, joined by Vice President Cheney, today recognized the extraordinary achievements of ten individuals who received the Public Safety Officer Medal of Valor in a ceremony at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building. The event marked the first presentation of the Medal, which is the highest national award for valor by a public safety officer. The awards are in honor of outstanding heroic deeds these officers performed above and beyond the call of duty.

"With the presentation of this Medal, our nation recognizes the sacrifices and dedicated service of our public safety officers," said Attorney General Ashcroft. "They truly are our national heroes, and it is my privilege to recognize their tremendous courage, dedication to duty, and selfless commitment to their fellow citizens."

The recipients of the 2002 Public Safety Officer Medal of Valor are: Keith N. Borders of Las Vegas, NV; Robert Borer, Jeremy Hosek, Guy Jones, Ron Kennett, Rick Klein, and Mike Wright, all of Lincoln, NE; Robert Giorgio of Cherry Hill, NJ; Eric Svihovec of Miller Place, NY; and Sean VanAtter of Tampa, FL. A synopsis of the acts of valor is attached.

The Medal, authorized by the Public Safety Officer Medal of Valor Act of 2001, is awarded to public safety officers cited by the Attorney General. Public safety officers are nominated by the chiefs or directors of their employing agencies and recommended by the bipartisan Medal of Valor Review Board. More information about the Board members can be found on www.ojp.usdoj.gov.

Additional information about the award, including the design and image of the Medal of Valor and the application form can be found at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/medalofvalor/presmedalofvalorc.htm>.

Public Safety Officer Medal of Valor -- Synopses of Acts of Valor

1. Robert Giorgio, Fire Chief, Cherry Hill, New Jersey. Chief Giorgio arrived upon a scene where a vehicle had crashed from a highway overpass onto State Highway 295. The car, with its engine on fire, was suspended some five feet above ground, held in place by a small tree. Chief Giorgio placed himself beneath the suspended vehicle and worked to free the woman trapped inside. At any point, a shift in the car's position would have likely dislodged it from the tree, bringing the burning car down on top of Chief Giorgio. Even as the fire spread in the car, and parts of the car began to melt, Chief Giorgio risked his life to safely free the woman.

2. Keith Borders, Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department. Officer Borders responded to a 911 call in reference to a domestic disturbance. Officer Border successfully removed an endangered woman from the house and placed her safely behind his police cruiser. The suspect, armed with a .38 caliber revolver, a 9 mm semiautomatic handgun and a .12 gauge pump-action shotgun, emerged from the house and opened fire on Borders and the victim. Officer Borders suffered a head wound and significant blood loss. Maintaining his composure, Officer Borders shielded the woman from harm and returned fire, killing the suspect.

3. Eric Svihovec, Volunteer Firefighter, Miller Place Fire Department, New York. Eric Svihovec was in a shop when he saw the taillights of a car disappear off a boat ramp into the water during a storm. Winds were in excess of 30 miles per hour and heavy downpour had reduced visibility to almost nothing. Eric jumped into Mount Sinai Harbor, and found a young mother and her 2½-month-old daughter in the car. With the car already partially submerged, Svihovec rescued the mother and got her safely to the ramp. Svihovec returned to the car, which was still sinking. Diving underwater, and after three attempts, Eric Svihovec freed the baby from her car seat and brought her safely to the surface.

4. Sean VanAtter, Firefighter, Hillsborough County, Florida Fire Rescue. Firefighter VanAtter was returning to the fire station in a taxi after having just driven an ambulance to a hospital. On his return, VanAtter came upon an accident involving a tanker truck and a car. The car had slammed into a concrete barrier and was on fire with a family of five trapped inside. VanAtter had the taxi stop so he could rush to the aid of the victims, knowing that additional help would not arrive on time. VanAtter forced his way into the burning car and was able to pull the family out safely.

5. Ron Kennett, Rick Klein, Robert Borer, Mike Wright, Guy Jones, and Jeremy Hosek, Firefighters, Lincoln, Nebraska, Fire and Rescue. Workers were raising a digital telecommunications cable to the top of a 1,524-foot television communications tower – 67 feet taller than the Sears Tower – when a worker was accidentally struck by the cable. The worker was alive, but injured critically and hanging almost 1200 feet off the ground in his harness. Several other fire departments, the State Patrol and the National Guard all responded by stating that a rescue of this type was beyond their capabilities. Lincoln Fire and Rescue personnel Kennett, Klein, Borer, Wright, Jones, and Hosek received permission from the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency, the Mayor, and the Governor to attempt the rescue. The team arrived on the scene and began the more than two hour ascent of the tower. Tragically, the worker died before the rescuers could

reach him – but these brave individuals persisted in their climb, and successfully brought the victim to the ground.

Monday, March 22, 2004

MEDAL OF VALOR RECIPIENTS HONORED AT JUSTICE

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Deputy Attorney General James Comey and Associate Attorney General Robert McCallum honored the recipients of the Public Safety Officer Medal of Valor during a public ceremony at the Department of Justice. The six recipients of the award represent fire, police and emergency medical services from across the nation. The Medal is the highest national award for valor by a public safety officer, honoring outstanding heroic deeds performed above and beyond the call of duty.

"Your sacrifice to our nation is inspiring," said Deputy Attorney General Comey. "You have proven your commitment to keeping our citizens safe by willingly risking your own safety and lives. This is the ultimate act of patriotism," he said.

Prior to this afternoon's ceremony at the Justice Department, President Bush met with the Medal of Valor recipients at the White House.

The recipients of the 2003-2004 Public Safety Officer Medal of Valor are: James Ahern of Boston, MA; John Ahern of Boston, MA; Kevin Fitzhenry of Bayonne, NJ; Michael Muniz of San Antonio, TX; Barry J. Ralston of Amarillo, TX; and Marcus Young of Ukiah, CA. A description of the acts of valor is attached.

THURSDAY, JULY 14, 2005

The recipients of the 2003-2004 Public Safety Officer Medal of Valor are: Rodney Lee Chambers, Washington, D.C.; Jennifer Fulford-Salvano, Orange County, Fla.; Andrew J. Phillips, Marietta, Ga.; and Thomas D. Richards, Lexington, Ky. In addition, a team of six from Kansas City, Mo., includes Phillip Atwood, David Bradley, Marvin Donaldson, Stephen Johnson, Patrick Martin, and Sean McKarnin. A description of the acts of valor is attached.

THURSDAY, MARCH 16, 2006

The recipients of the 2004-2005 Medal of Valor are Timothy Greene, Rock Hill, SC ; Edward F. Henry, Charleston, SC ; Bryan S. Hurst (deceased), Columbus, OH ; Peter Alfred Koe, Indianapolis , IN.; Gene F. Large, Jr., Fort Walton Beach, FL.

Earlier today, the President presented the Medals of Valor during a White House ceremony in the Oval Office. A description of their acts of valor is attached.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2007

The recipients of the 2005-2006 Medal of Valor are Kevin Howland of Citrus Heights, CA; David Loving of Mechanicsville, VA; Todd Myers of Simsbury, CT; Brian Rothell of Richmond, VA; and Kirk Van Orsdel of Hemet, CA. Earlier today, the President presented the Medals of Valor during a White House ceremony in the Oval Office. A description of their acts of valor is attached.

Wednesday, September 22, 2010

VICE PRESIDENT BIDEN AND ATTORNEY GENERAL HOLDER HONOR
14 PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICERS WITH MEDAL OF VALOR

WASHINGTON - Vice President Joseph Biden and Attorney General Eric Holder today awarded the Public Safety Officer Medal of Valor to 14 police officers, firefighters and paramedics who exhibited exceptional courage in saving and protecting others and whose heroic actions were above and beyond the call of duty.

The Medal of Valor, authorized by the Public Safety Medal of Valor Act of 2001, is awarded by the President of the United States to public safety officers cited by the Attorney General. Public safety officers are nominated by the chiefs or directors of their employing agencies and recommended by the Medal of Valor Review Board. The Attorney General designated Laurie O. Robinson, Assistant Attorney General in the Department's Office of Justice Programs (OJP), to serve as the Federal point of contact for the Medal of Valor initiative. OJP's Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), led by James H. Burch, II, BJA's Acting Director, assists in overseeing the Medal of Valor initiative.

Including today's awardees, a total of 55 medals have been presented since the first recipients were honored in 2003. More information about the award, past recipients, the Medal of Valor Review Board members, and the nomination process is on OJP's Web site at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/medalofvalor>.

Today's honorees represent nine law enforcement and fire and rescue agencies from six states. Below are the synopses of the acts of valor for which today's recipients were honored.

Deputy Carl A. Beier, Sheriff's Office, Jefferson County, Missouri

On September 8, 2007, Deputy Carl Beier responded to a report of a violent disturbance at a rural residence in an unincorporated part of Jefferson County, Missouri. As Deputy Beier approached the house, an individual came outside, holding what appeared to be an AK-47 assault rifle, and began charging toward the deputy. Throughout the episode, Deputy Beier kept the 9-1-1 dispatch center and the other responding deputies informed of the situation, and actually ordered the deputies *not* to pull into the driveway, fearing that the man would ambush them. Deputy Beier, without regard for his own life, stood his ground while under continuous fire, incapacitated an enraged suspect, and protected lives.

Chief Randy D. Poindexter, Fire Department, Kingfisher, Oklahoma
Lieutenant Brian S. Sturgill, Oklahoma Highway Patrol

On August 19, 2007, Lieutenant Brian S. Sturgill and Chief Randy D. Poindexter worked together to coordinate multiple rescues of individuals who were stranded as a result of Hurricane Erin, which had flooded parts of Oklahoma the previous night. In one of their rescues, Lt. Sturgill and Chief Poindexter assisted two occupants of a submerged pickup truck. Lt. Sturgill maneuvered the helicopter's skids so they were just under the water and Chief Poindexter was able to remove the first occupant. The rescue of the second occupant was riskier because Lt. Sturgill positioned the helicopter's skids so they were deeper under the water. Lt. Sturgill's efforts enabled Chief Poindexter to reach both occupants and ride with them to safety.

Lieutenant Paul R. Pender, Jr., Acting Lieutenant Gerald J. Murphy, and
Firefighter Frederick C. Johnston, Fire Department, Brookline, Mass.

On April 16, 2008, the Brookline Fire Department responded to a report of a house fire which indicated that someone in a wheelchair was trapped on the second floor. Due to the heavy smoke and volume of the fire, all the firefighters were ordered out of the building. During the evacuation, a backdraft caused the partial collapse of the second floor ceiling. At the same time, Firefighter Stephen Nelson was knocked down and was partially buried under debris. The backdraft also knocked down several firefighters at the second floor doorway, sending one of them tumbling down the stairs, taking Acting Lieutenant Gerald Murphy with him. Acting Lieutenant Murphy quickly recovered and immediately crawled back up the stairs, found the nozzle of Engine Co. 1's line, and began moving into the heavily involved fire. At the same time, Lieutenant Paul Pender and Firefighter Frederick Johnston rushed up the stairway and Acting Lieutenant Murphy directed them to Firefighter Nelson. Without hesitation or concern for their own safety, they all

advanced into the second floor, located Firefighter Nelson, and rescued him. Afterwards, all four men were treated for second-degree burns.

Detective Jared T. Reston, Sheriff's Office, Jacksonville, Fla.

On January 29, 2008, Detective Jared Reston was working off-duty at the Regency Square Mall when he received a call about two shoplifters. One suspect had been taken into custody, but the other had fled on foot. Detective Reston ran after the fleeing suspect and caught up with him in the 9400 block of Atlantic Boulevard, where the suspect turned and shot Detective Reston several times with a Glock .45 pistol. In spite of his wounds, Detective Reston managed to regain his focus and, while still lying on the ground, drew out his service weapon and returned fire, striking the suspect several times and ending the pursuit.

Officer Pedro Garcia, III, Police Department, San Antonio, TX

On September 8, 2008, Officer Pedro Garcia and his partner responded to an "officer in trouble" call to assist three patrol division officers who had come under gunfire while attempting to serve a felony warrant at a residence. Officer Garcia immediately formulated and directed a rescue plan to remove a wounded officer. As he approached the wounded officer, Officer Garcia was struck in the face by a bullet or bullet fragment. Despite his injury, Officer Garcia reached the wounded officer and pulled her out of the building into the fenced backyard, while returning fire. Because Officer Garcia could not safely remove the wounded officer from the backyard without putting them both back into the direct line of fire, he directed another officer to use a patrol car to create an opening in the fence so they could escape. While the gunfire from the house continued, Officer Garcia carried the wounded officer to his patrol car. He drove her down the street to a waiting EMS unit and then returned to the scene to coordinate with his fellow officers until a SWAT Team relieved them.

Captain Edwin Lynn O'Berry, Fire/Rescue, Palm Beach County, FL

On April 8, 2009, Fire Rescue Captain Edwin O'Berry was one of several firefighters at the Palm Beach County Fire Rescue Station 31 changing shifts when they saw Officer Doug Rua of the Palm Springs Police Department struck in the head and rendered unconscious by a robbery suspect. Captain O'Berry retrieved his personal firearm from his vehicle, jumped a 6-foot fence with barbed wire on it, and ran to Officer Rua's aid. Another firefighter followed Captain O'Berry, and he dragged Officer Rua to safety while Captain O'Berry covered them with his weapon. The suspect, still carrying Officer Rua's handgun, then ran into a 3-foot-

wide alley behind a nearby apartment building and Captain O’Berry followed. Once the suspect realized he was cornered, he turned toward Captain O’Berry and pointed the handgun at him. Fearing for his life, Captain O’Berry and a responding police officer fired four rounds at the suspect. Afterwards, Captain O’Berry immediately began rendering aid to the suspect, who was flown to the local trauma center where he later succumbed to his injuries.

Officer Vidal Alberto Colon, Police Department, Milwaukee, WI

On April 11, 2009, Officer Vidal Colon and his partner responded to the report of a “subject with a gun” who was threatening citizens during a dispute. During his foot pursuit, Officer Colon chased the subject through residential yards to the rear of a house. As Officer Colon neared him, the subject stopped to retrieve the handgun he had dropped. Officer Colon was about 10 feet away and ordered the subject not to move; however, almost simultaneously, the subject fired his weapon at Officer Colon, hitting him in the abdomen. Despite his injury, Officer Colon and the subject continued to exchange fire until both their weapons were empty. When other police officers arrived, Officer Colon was able to rise to his feet and make it to the front of the residence to direct these officers to the suspect, so he could be taken into custody.

Fire Lieutenant William Ervin Appel, Firefighter/Paramedic Andrew Charles Neff, Firefighter/Paramedic Michael Scott Chellis, and Firefighter/EMT Timothy Allen Wisely Fire Department, City of Maplewood, MO

On July 21, 2008, Lieutenant William Appel, Firefighters Ryan Hummert, Timothy Wisely, Michael Chellis, and Andrew Neff were dispatched to a reported vehicle fire. When they arrived, they found a small pick-up truck engulfed in flames in the driveway of a house. As Firefighters Hummert and Wisely advanced a hose toward the burning vehicle, there was a loud explosion and Firefighter Hummert fell to the ground. Firefighter Wisely began medical treatment of Firefighter Hummert and quickly saw that he had been shot in the head. Firefighter Neff ran to assist Firefighter Wisely in treating Firefighter Hummert. None of the firefighters knew the location of the gunman and while waiting for an ambulance, there was another gunshot. This time it was Maplewood Police Officer Adam Fite who had been shot. Firefighter Neff administered emergency medical treatment to Officer Fite while they both were still in the line of fire. Ultimately, Firefighter Neff was able to drag Officer Fite to safety and stayed with him until the ambulance arrived. When Lt. Appel realized where the gun shots were coming from, he directed the firefighters to take cover. Unfortunately, Firefighter Hummert

had sustained a mortal injury and Firefighter Wisely, who didn't want to leave him, was moved out of the line of fire by Lt. Appel and Firefighter Chellis. Throughout the incident, Lt. Appel provided key information to the command staff until the St. Louis County Police Department Tactical Team arrived and removed the firefighters in an armored vehicle.

Vice President Biden Honors Public Safety Officers with Medal of Valor



Vice President Joe Biden congratulates Officer Reeshemah Taylor of the Osceola County Corrections Department after presenting her with the Medal of Valor, during a Medal of Valor ceremony with Attorney General Eric Holder, in the South Court Auditorium at the White House, Feb., 20, 2013. (Official White House Photo by David Lienemann)

February 20, 2013

Background on Medal of Valor Ceremony

On Wednesday, February 20, 2013, the Vice President will host a Medal of Valor ceremony with Attorney General Eric Holder. The Vice President and Attorney General will deliver remarks at this ceremony. Below is background

information on the Medal of Valor and the recipients of the Medal at Wednesday's ceremony.

Watch this event live on Wednesday at 1:30 PM ET at www.whitehouse.gov/live

THE PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICER MEDAL OF VALOR:

The Public Safety Officer Medal of Valor, authorized by the Public Safety Officer Medal of Valor Act of 2001, is the highest national award for valor by a public safety officer. The medal is awarded to public safety officers who have exhibited exceptional courage, regardless of personal safety, in the attempt to save or protect human life. Including today's awardees, a total of 78 medals have been presented since the first recipients were honored in 2003.

To receive the Medal of Valor, public safety officers must be nominated by the chief executive officer of their employing agencies, recommended by the bipartisan Medal of Valor Review Board, and cited by the Attorney General. The Attorney General designated Mary Lou Leary, Acting Assistant Attorney General in the Department's Office of Justice Programs (OJP), to serve as the Federal point of contact for the Medal of Valor initiative. OJP's Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), led by Director Denise E. O'Donnell, assists in overseeing the Medal of Valor initiative.

More information about the award, the Medal of Valor Review Board members, and the nomination process is available at: www.ojp.usdoj.gov/medalofvalor.

RECIPIENTS OF THE PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICER MEDAL OF VALOR:

2009-2010 Medal of Valor Recipients

**Officer Julie Olson
*Maplewood Police Department, Minnesota***

On September 7, 2009, Officer Julie Olson was called to assist North St. Paul Officer Richard Crittenden. A woman had called the police concerned that her estranged husband had returned to her apartment and might be inside. North St. Paul's police department had dealt with the suspect several times in

the past, including as recently as the previous night when the suspect fled before squads arrived. The woman had an Order of Protection against the suspect.

Officer Olson and Officer Crittenden arrived on the scene at the same time. They initially searched a vacant apartment, knowing the suspect had hidden there in the past. They were then let into the complainant's apartment, which was next door to the vacant apartment. As they entered the darkened apartment, Officer Crittenden observed a flaming cloth advancing in his and the residents' direction. He pushed the residents out of harm's way and was struck in the face and side of the head with an accelerant-soaked t-shirt. The suspect grabbed Officer Crittenden in a "bear hug." After a brief struggle, the suspect then grabbed Officer Olson in an apparent effort to disarm her. He then disengaged with Officer Olson and re-engaged with Officer Crittenden. The suspect grabbed Officer Crittenden's sidearm from his holster and fired one round at point-blank range at Officer Crittenden's head, killing him.

The suspect then turned the gun on Officer Olson. When Officer Olson heard one round sail past her ear, she responded as she had been trained, and side stepping and returning fire. Another round struck Officer Olson's spare magazine on her duty belt, shattering it and causing pieces of the round to enter her strong-side arm. Now injured, Officer Olson returned fire on the suspect, striking him five times. While under the extreme pressure of the moment, she had the wherewithal to do a combat reload as she backed out of the apartment, only to find she had attempted to reload with the shattered magazine. She subsequently dropped the shattered magazine and reloaded with another magazine, as Officer Lonn Bakke entered the apartment building. Officer Olson and Officer Bakke then re-entered the apartment to disarm and handcuff the suspect, who subsequently died at the scene.

Officer Reeshemah Taylor
Osceola County Corrections Department, Florida

On June 22, 2009, Officer Reeshemah Taylor was assigned to the Medical Unit of the Osceola County Jail. While performing her duties, Officer Taylor was confronted by a high-risk inmate who had taken one officer hostage and changed into that officer's uniform. The inmate placed a fully loaded 9mm semi-automatic handgun to Officer Taylor's head as she walked into the room where the inmate and the captive officer were located. This inmate had a history of violent felony charges and was already serving three consecutive life

sentences with no possibility of parole within the Florida Department of Corrections. The inmate was being held at the Osceola County Jail pending trial for a violent armed robbery. The inmate was also a well-known member of the “Los 27” and “La Nieta” gangs domiciled out of Puerto Rico, who are notorious for their violent acts against law enforcement personnel. Through the subsequent criminal investigation of this attempted escape, it was determined that this inmate planned to walk out of the jail dressed as a corrections officer. The gun was factored into his plan and would be used if someone attempted to stop him or intervene. According to investigators, there was no doubt that this inmate would have used the firearm to ensure that his escape was successful. He was prepared to shoot anyone who might attempt to avert him from his plan, as he felt he had nothing to lose and did not want to return to prison.

During Officer Taylor’s face-to-face confrontation with the inmate, a struggle took place for the weapon. While the weapon was pointed at Officer Taylor, she immediately grabbed the weapon with both hands, diverting it from her direction, and delivered a knee spike to the inmate’s groin. The inmate dropped to the floor, dislodging the weapon from his hand. The gun dropped several feet away from Officer Taylor and the inmate. Officer Taylor placed herself on top of the inmate, with one arm around his head to fashion a headlock, and her legs scissoring his lower body, to keep him on the floor and away from the gun. With her free hand, she utilized her portable radio to announce the code and summon assistance. Officer Taylor engaged an inmate that was far superior in size, strength, motivation, and intention. She successfully subdued this inmate through sheer determination, instincts, will, and courage. Her efforts, in the face of imminent death, saved the lives of many.

Wildlife Officer Michael Neal
Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, Arkansas

On May 20, 2010, Officer Neal answered a call for assistance after two West Memphis Police officers had been shot and killed during a traffic stop along Interstate 40, and engaged two suspects in the Walmart parking lot. The two suspects were engaged in a firefight with Sheriff Dick Busby and Chief Deputy W. A. Wren. The Sheriff and Deputy, armed with only handguns, were taking fire from an AK-47 assault rifle and a handgun.

Officer Neal used his truck to ram the suspects’ van to prevent the suspects

from being mobile and possibly harming innocent bystanders, and to divert the suspects' attention away from the Sheriff and Deputy. Once Officer Neal rammed the suspects' van, the suspects opened fire on Officer Neal's truck, firing several rounds through his windshield. Officer Neal avoided being hit by the AK-47 rounds and returned fire with his issued AR-15. He disabled the driver and possibly the passenger before putting his truck in reverse and backing out of the line of fire so other officers could continue the firefight. Both suspects were pronounced dead at the scene. By putting himself in harm's way, Officer Neal's actions undoubtedly saved the lives of Sheriff Busby and Deputy Wren, both of whom were injured by the suspects. Officer Neal was only slightly injured.

Officer Sean Haller
Officer Rafael Rivera
California Highway Patrol, California

On February 25, 2010, the Fresno County Sheriff's Office attempted to serve a search warrant in the town of Minkler. As deputies attempted to breach the main door of the residence, they came under intense gunfire from within the building, which fatally wounded one of the deputies. The deputies immediately broadcast "shots fired" over the radio.

Officer Haller monitored the "shots fired" call over the radio and responded to the scene. Upon arriving at the scene, he heard gun shots. Officer Haller stopped his patrol vehicle and engaged the suspect in gunfire. Fellow California Highway Patrol Officer Rivera arrived and took cover behind Officer Haller's patrol vehicle. Both officers were engaged in gunfire with the suspect for an undetermined amount of time until someone on scene gave a "cease-fire" command. This was followed by approximately 30 minutes with no shooting.

The suspect again began firing from within the home. Fearing for their safety and the safety of the other officers at the scene, both Officers Rivera and Haller returned fire. During this exchange, Officer Rivera overheard someone say, "Officer down!" and moved toward the location of the downed officer. He found the downed officer on the passenger side of a marked patrol vehicle. Officer Rivera recognized the fallen officer as Officer Javier Bejar of the Reedley Police Department and attempted to remove him from the line of fire. The suspect began shooting directly at Officer Rivera as he attempted to rescue the downed officer. Seeing this, Officer Haller broke cover and moved

into the line of fire. He engaged the suspect and provided cover fire to assist with the removal effort.

Officer Rivera was able to move the downed officer to a location of cover. Although Officer Bejar did not survive his injuries, Officers Rivera and Haller exhibited great personal courage, while putting themselves in danger in their efforts to save Officer Bejar's life. The assailant in this incident subsequently committed suicide by shooting himself prior to the officers' entry into the residence.

**Trooper Robert Lombardo
Fallen Trooper Joshua Miller
*Pennsylvania State Police, Pennsylvania***

On June 7, 2009, a subject arrived at his estranged wife's residence in Nazareth, Pennsylvania. After threatening his wife with a handgun, the subject abducted his 9-year-old son and fled the scene in a black Honda Civic with his son seated in the right front passenger seat. The Nazareth Borough Police Department became involved in a high speed pursuit of the subject. Troopers Joshua D. Miller and Robert K. Lombardo, as well as other Swiftwater Station members and local police department officers, assisted in the pursuit. The pursuit went on for some 40 miles and ended on State Route 611 in Coolbaugh Township, Monroe County, Pennsylvania, when Trooper Miller employed the PIT maneuver to bring the vehicle to a stop. The PIT maneuver is a method by which the pursuit car forces the other vehicle to abruptly turn sideways towards the direction of travel. This causes the driver to lose control and stop.

Recognizing that the child was in extreme peril, Troopers Miller and Lombardo immediately approached the driver's side of the Honda in an attempt to arrest the subject and rescue the child. Troopers Lombardo and Miller both used their collapsible batons to shatter the driver's side window of the Honda. The subject then fired three shots from a 9mm Taurus, striking Trooper Lombardo once in the left shoulder, and Trooper Miller in the right thigh and neck. Troopers Miller and Lombardo returned fire, striking the assailant eight times. The force of the impact of being shot spun Trooper Lombardo to his left. Despite knowing Trooper Miller was wounded and his own left arm was now paralyzed, Trooper Lombardo did not seek cover. Trooper Lombardo chose to continue to engage the assailant with one arm. Only after the threat was neutralized did Trooper Lombardo seek treatment

for his wounds. The suspect's son was rescued uninjured.

Trooper Miller was subsequently flown to Lehigh Valley Hospital in Allentown where he was pronounced dead. Trooper Lombardo was taken to Community Medical Center in Scranton, Pennsylvania, where he was treated for his wounds. Trooper Lombard recently returned to duty. Trooper Miller gave his life and Trooper Lombardo risked his life to rescue the 9-year-old boy. They were/are dedicated officers of the law, committed to serving the citizens of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

2010-2011 Medal of Valor Recipients

Firefighter Peter Demontreux
New York City Fire Department, New York

On August 30, 2010, Firefighter Peter Demontreux's unit responded to a fire in a 4 story brownstone. On arrival they encountered heavy fire at the front door and up the stairway to the third floor preventing entry until a hoseline was put in place. Instead of waiting for a hoseline, Firefighter Demontreux climbed an aerial ladder to a third floor window. There he encountered a civilian who stated that his friend was still trapped inside the burning apartment. After assisting the civilian onto the ladder, Firefighter Demontreux immediately entered the apartment to conduct a search. He located the victim deep within the apartment.

In the ensuing minutes, Firefighter Demontreux executed one of the most remarkable rescues ever witnessed. As he assisted the victim through the apartment, the entire third floor suddenly exploded into flames setting both rescuer and victim ablaze. According to the on-scene Battalion Chief's report, Firefighter Demontreux, now on fire, made the split second decision that he would not leave victim behind. After reaching the window, Firefighter Demontreux insured the victim was safely on the aerial ladder before diving out himself. Both men were extinguished by a hoseline and though badly burned- the civilian victim received burns over 50% of his body- both survived. Firefighter Demontreux's protective equipment was subsequently tested and found to have been subjected to temperatures in excess of 1,000 degrees.

Firefighter Hope Scott

Battalion Chief William Reynolds
Virginia Beach Fire Department, Virginia

On October 12, 2010, the Virginia Beach Fire Department received multiple 911 calls for a house fire with people trapped in a single family dwelling. Engine 7 with Captain William Reynolds and Firefighter Hope Scott, arrived on scene. Captain Reynolds reported heavy fire from the corner of the first floor spreading to the second floor. Two family members were on the porch roof attempting to enter the structure and were screaming that a baby and was in the second floor bedroom and the great grandmother was still inside. Heavy smoke and heat conditions forced the civilian would-be rescuers to withdraw from their rescue efforts.

Captain Reynolds, hearing the pleas of the family and realizing time was of the essence, made the tactical decision to enter the second floor window with Firefighter Scott without the protection of a fire hose. This tactic is known as Vent-Enter-Search in the fire service, and is considered a high risk maneuver to the personnel making the entry. Captain Reynolds and Firefighter Scott climbed a ladder and entered the second floor window without the protection of a charged fire hose (hand-line). They encountered high heat and zero visibility conditions. Captain Reynolds was equipped with a thermal imaging camera to aid in the rescue effort. However, the high heat conditions rendered the camera ineffective and they were forced the crew to crawl blindly through the assorted debris. The fire still raged underneath the bedroom, made the floor so hot that Firefighter Scott could feel the heat through her protective gear. Captain Reynolds encouraged Firefighter Scott to keep pushing on as they knew the child was located somewhere in the room.

Approximately two minutes into the search, Firefighter Scott heard what she thought was a faint cry. She started sweeping the floor with her arms and located an infant lying on a mattress located on the floor covered in makeshift bedding material. Firefighter Scott scooped up the infant and handed the lifeless infant to Captain Reynolds as he was positioned near the window. Captain Reynolds handed the infant through the window to firefighters who were standing on an egress ladder. The infant was not breathing and unresponsive once she was removed from the structure. Resuscitation efforts were immediately started and EMS personnel transported the infant to Norfolk General Hospital Burn Center. The infant has since made a full recovery without any major medical issues or deficits.

After Firefighter Scott located the infant, she and Captain Reynolds continued to search the second floor for the other reported fire victim. Other responding personnel found the 73 year old woman, lying on the stairs leading to the second floor. She was unconscious and unresponsive, suffering from smoke inhalation. She was removed from the structure and resuscitation efforts immediately started. Unfortunately, she died from her injuries three days later.

Captain Reynolds and Firefighter Hope Scott demonstrated incredible bravery and self sacrifice in their decision to enter the floor directly above the uncontrolled fire without the protection of a charged hose-line and placed themselves at one of the greatest risks recognized in the fire service. Their fast, decisive actions and disregard for their own safety truly resulted in the saving of the life of a young infant who would have succumbed from the smoke and fire if not for their brave actions.

Deputy Sheriff Krista McDonald
Kitsap County Sheriff's Office, Washington

On January, 23, 2011, the Kitsap County Sheriff's Office had been given information on the location of a possibly armed suspect, accompanied by an underage female who was reported as missing from Utah and a runaway. Deputies Stacy and Ejde approached the suspect and his 13 year-old companion as they sat outside the entrance to a Walmart Store in Port Orchard, Washington. These deputies were assisted by Deputy Krista McDonald who had responded as an additional back-up.

The suspect refused to identify himself, and attempted to run from the location. Deputy Stacy tried to grab the suspect but missed and fell. Deputy Ejde ran after the suspect as he attempted to run across the street and into the parking lot. Halfway across the roadway, the suspect drew a semi-automatic handgun hidden on his person, turned and fired multiple shots. He struck Deputy Ejde twice, in the left shoulder and right arm. Deputy Ejde went down into a raised flowerbed. By this time Deputy Stacy had regained his footing and was running after the suspect. The suspect shot and wounded Deputy Stacy in the right shoulder. Deputy Stacy also fell to the asphalt. Deputy McDonald began firing at suspect from her position at her patrol vehicle, approximately 90 - 100 feet distance. The suspect then directed his attention toward Deputy McDonald as she started to move toward her two downed colleagues. The suspect continued to shoot at both Deputy McDonald and

Deputy Ejde.

Advancing toward the suspect without benefit of protective cover, Deputy McDonald stayed in the gunfight and returned fire. The suspect was struck in the left leg and dropped to the pavement where he continued to fire on the deputies. By this time Deputy McDonald had moved to within 60 feet of the suspect, placing herself in the line of fire to distract the suspect. The young girl, witnessing this, ran over to the suspect. As she approached she was shot by the suspect and mortally wounded. Moments later the suspect then committed suicide when he turned his handgun on himself.

**Officer Timothy McClintick
Officer Max McDonald
Officer Douglas Weaver
Sergeant Karl Lounge Jr.
Fallen Sergeant Thomas Baitinger
*Saint Petersburg Police Department, Florida***

On January 24, 2011, a Federal Fugitive Task Force arrived at a residence in Saint Petersburg in an attempt to locate a violent fugitive who had been on the run from law enforcement for several months. The fugitive's wife eventually advised officers that he was hiding in the attic of the house.

Additional units were called to the house to help secure the perimeter. After the fugitive failed to respond to any attempts to establish contact, Officer Yaslowitz and US Marshal Ley obtained a ladder and entered the attic. They subsequently located the fugitive laying face down some 15 feet from the attic opening. The fugitive was initially compliant to direction, but as Officer Yaslowitz attempted to handcuff him, the fugitive began to aggressively resist. During the struggle, Marshal Ley deployed his Taser, and then heard a single muffled shot followed by three additional shots. Officer Yaslowitz collapsed and Marshal Ley was subsequently shot twice, causing him to fall through the attic opening onto the floor below.

During the ensuing minutes, the fugitive continuously fired multiple rounds through the ceiling at the officers below. Officer McClintick saw a bloodied Marshal Ley on the floor and realized that he was wounded. He reached into the hallway and grabbed Marshal Ley's foot and tried to drag him back into the bathroom. Unable to get enough leverage, Officer McClintick came out into the hallway, directly under the attic opening and under fire, to grab

Marshal Ley and pull him out of the kill zone and into the bathroom. There, he performed lifesaving measures to control the bleeding of Marshal Ley while continuing to provide cover from the assailant.

The assailant then moved Officer Yaslowitz's body to the attic opening, and positioned him so that his foot protruded over the opening. This was an apparent attempt to lure responding officers out into the open. It was later learned that he had also tied Officer Yaslowitz's body in place so this it could not be moved while he continued to wait in ambush. During this time officers could hear Lacey moving around in the attic, and firing at anything he heard below.

A Rapid Response Team quickly came together to rescue the officers inside the house. Sergeant Thomas Baitinger had arrived at about the same time as Sergeant Karl Lounge. Officer Max McDonald was present, along with Officer Doug Weaver. Sergeant Lounge was carrying his AR15 and a ballistic shield from his cruiser. They only knew that a suspect had shot multiple officers inside the house, that the suspect or suspects were inside the house, and wounded officers were trapped inside, perhaps as hostages. Sergeant Baitinger, a Rapid Response Instructor, recognized that he was the best qualified to handle the shield and lead the entry and assumed that role.

Sergeant Baitinger and Officer Weaver moved into the hallway at the far end of the house and observed the open attic and a stepstool under it. A Sergeant, positioned by the front door, warned that the assailant and Officer Yaslowitz were in the attic, and to be careful, that the assailant had been shooting down through the ceiling.

Sergeant Lounge and Officer McDonald covered the hallway and attic opening from the living room. Sergeant Baitinger put the shield up over his head as he passed under the attic opening and into the threshold of the bedroom, right at the end of the hall. As Sergeant Baitinger entered the kill zone, a hail of gunfire erupted from the attic above. The other officers in the house reported that Sergeant Baitinger was struck once in the back, stopped by his vest. The impact knocked him forward and spun him around. He brought up the shield and yelled, "I'm hit, I'm OK, I can see Yaz in the attic, get him out!" Another burst of gunfire rained down from the attic and Sergeant Baitinger was fatally wounded by a round passing over the shield.

During this extensive gun battle, all the involved officers continued to come

under fire by the assailant. Sergeant Tom Baitinger, Sergeant Karl Lounge, Officer Doug Weaver, Officer Max McDonald, and Officer Timothy McClintick each demonstrated incredible courage and professionalism under very difficult circumstances. They braved heavy gunfire while attempting to rescue the wounded officers, with Sergeant Baitinger making the supreme sacrifice. Officer McClintick braved heavy gunfire, moving into the kill zone, directly under the attic opening where two officers had already been shot, and another was later killed, to rescue the wounded U.S. Deputy Marshal. The incident ended when the assailant was killed during an exchange of gunfire with the St. Petersburg TAC Team on scene.

**Fallen Deputy Cameron Justus
Fallen Deputy William Stiltner
*Buchanan County Sheriff's Office, Virginia***

On March 13, 2011, Deputy William Stiltner was at home when he heard through his scanner that two fellow officers were shot while responding to a larceny call at a local salvage yard. Deputy Stiltner headed to the scene to find that a sniper was shooting from the woods above the salvage yard, and both officers were lying on the ground. Without hesitation Deputy Stiltner along second deputy went to aid their fellow colleagues by trying to move them out of the range of the shooter and into safety. As the deputies carried fallen Deputy Rasnake to a nearby car, a shot rang out from behind them. The car window shattered and Deputy Stiltner fell to the ground fatally wounded.

Shortly afterwards, Deputy Cameron Justus, who was also off duty, heard that a gunman had shot three of his fellow deputies, and that officers were trapped at the scene by the gunman. By the time Deputy Justus arrived at the salvage yard, he already knew the gravity of the situation. An unknown assailant armed with a high-power rifle had taken refuge in the tree line behind the property. This skilled sniper who had already shot three deputies multiple times, had the advantage of being perched above them on the mountainside. Deputy Justus met with Sheriff Ray Foster and both officers took cover behind their vehicle. Armed with his M-16 rifle, Deputy Justus suddenly spotted a shadowy figure in the pine trees. He called out to the sheriff that he had the man in his sights and was going to take the shot. Just as Deputy Justus pulled the trigger and the bullet erupted from his rifle, simultaneously the sniper fired from his weapon, fatally wounding Deputy Justus. After refusing to surrender, the assailant was shot and killed by other deputies on the scene.

Deputy Stiltner's heroic efforts to save the lives of his fellow deputies, along with Deputy Justus' courageous actions putting him in a dangerous position in order to safeguard the lives of his fellow deputies unquestionably demonstrate performance that went above and beyond the call of duty.



Vice President Joe Biden puts on a bracelet given to him by Paige Baitinger, wife of Medal of Valor Recipient Thomas Baitinger of the St. Petersburg Police Department, during a Medal of Valor ceremony with Attorney General Eric Holder, in the South Court Auditorium at the White House, Feb., 20, 2013. (Official White House Photo by David Lienemann)

Learn more about the 18 heroes who were honored today at the White House.

References

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