

CUMBRIA POLICE AUTHORITY

18th January 2006

AGENDA ITEM 9

Cumbria Police Authority Award For Bravery

1 SUMMARY

At the Police Authority meeting of 14th February 2003 it was agreed that the Authority would make an annual award for bravery in conjunction with the Police Bravery Awards organised nationally by the Police Federation. The nominees would then progress to the National Bravery Award "recognised" formally by the Members of Cumbria Police Authority, the Constabulary and Police Federation.

The National Award ceremony is sponsored by the Sun Newspaper and held every year in July at the Dorchester Hotel in London, receiving extensive media coverage, both nationally and locally.

The criterion for the award is as follows:

"In the opinion of the national selection committee the most outstanding act of courage or bravery by a member of the police service in England and Wales in placing themselves at risk of death or serious injury for which a medal, commendation or other recognition was made during the calendar year under consideration."

The incident leading to the nomination could have occurred at any time, but the act has to be "recognised" in the year before the award takes place.

This year members are asked to consider the attached nomination in respect of Constables 966 Iain Martin Carruthers and 549 Barrie John Cox for their actions on the night of the 19th December 2003 in the town of Aspatria.

2 RECOMMENDATION

1. Members concur with the proposed nomination attached.
2. That the Cumbria Police Authority award for Bravery, an Elterwater slate shield, be presented to the nominees at the Constabulary Award Ceremony at the Roundthorn Hotel on 21st March 2006 by the Chair of the Police Authority or his nominee.
3. That the nominees receive a lifelong certificate from the Police Authority to accompany this shield.

3 DETAIL

On attachment

Michael Baxter, QPM.
Chief Constable

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Detail of Bravery Citations

At 1909hrs on Friday 19th December 2003 the police received a call from the Spar Supermarket on Queen Street Aspatria. The initial information was that a customer had been stabbed, followed by other confused information of a similar nature. Patrols were immediately dispatched to this location.

A man had been stabbed in the neck outside the Spar Shop, and brought inside by staff who then locked the front door to keep the offender outside. The injury to this man was later described by an attending doctor as a 'hairsbreadth' away from proving fatal. He repeatedly stated that he would never again see someone so miraculously lucky. Another man aged 15 years, had also been stabbed in the neck outside the Spar Supermarket suffering lesser injuries.

It was believed that the alleged offender was in possession of either a large knife or possibly a sword, and had made off from the scene. Reports were received of others stabbed and a suggestion made that the suspect was running amok with the weapon in the town center, randomly stabbing members of the public.

Scene protection and preservation had to be balanced against a need to locate and possibly contain the offender in order to safeguard the public against clear ongoing danger.

Constables 549 Barrie Cox and 966 Jack Carruthers were directed to patrol the town centre area with a view to locating the offender ascertaining the scale in terms of victims, and safeguarding the public. They were warned not to take any unnecessary risks, as further backup was en route to the town.

The officers gained information that the offender may be in Brough Street. The officers attended this location and saw the offender standing in the open doorway of a terraced house, holding a large knife, which was being swung back and forth. The officers alighted and approached him. Constable Carruthers ordered him to put down the knife twice, but he did not comply.

Constable Carruthers used CS spray on the man without any apparent effect. Constable Cox then used CS spray on him, which caused him to drop the knife to his side. There were several excitable males visible inside the terraced house and it was not clear if they posed a threat or were supportive to the suspect. The officers took hold of the offender arrested him. He resisted and struggled violently and was wrestled down onto the road surface where he was handcuffed.

The suspect continued to resist wildly as he was placed in the rear of the police van. A knife was subsequently seized. It was only then that the officers had the opportunity to let their colleagues know that an suspect was under arrest. At the time radio communication was limited and poor making their decisive actions all the more creditable.

Subsequently a third victim was found suffering from stab wounds and it is impossible to say what may have occurred if the officers had not approached the suspect putting an end to his rampage.

The suspect was initially arrested for three attempted murders. Having stabbed each victim in the same place on the neck the intent was clear. He was ultimately convicted of Section 18 Wounding at Preston Crown Court where he received 8 years imprisonment (8 years and 5 years concurrent).

The bravery of Constables Cox and Carruthers, coupled with clear regard for public safety is commendable and exceptional.

This is an abstract of the original report from Sergeant 401 Andy Wadeson

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The Area Commander Chief Superintendent R Smith commented:

Officers involved did their job professionally and used their range of personal protective equipment to good effect. The consequences could have been far more serious and I support the award of a Commendation for taking swift and decisive action against an armed offender.

Sgt A Mason

Secretary of the Cumbria Police Federation Joint Branch Board commented:

The Executive of the Joint Branch Board have unanimously agreed that our nominations for the 2006 bravery award are Constables Iain 'Jack' Carruthers and Barrie Cox, both from Wigton.

Chief Constable Michael Baxter commended the officers at an awards ceremony on 8th April 2005

The officers' prompt and courageous actions were at no considerable risk to themselves and their action was effective in preventing further injury to members of the public.

The actions of PC Carruthers and PC Cox exemplify their bravery and dedication to duty in the best traditions of the service.