

September 24, 2010  
12.3

**TO:** The Honorable Board of Police Commissioners

**FROM:** Chief of Police

**SUBJECT:** RECOMMENDATION FOR THE MEDAL OF VALOR AND THE POLICE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL

#### **RECOMMENDED ACTIONS**

1. That the Board of Police Commissioners award the Medal of Valor for bravery.

Police Officer Custodio Ponce, Serial No. 27071, Hollenbeck Area  
Detective Rafael Acosta, Serial No. 26780, Hollenbeck Area  
Detective Daniel Hanabusa, Serial No. 30828, Hollenbeck Area  
Police Officer Rudolph Rivera, Serial No. 34735, Hollenbeck Area  
Police Officer Jose Salazar, Serial No. 35827, Hollenbeck Area  
Police Officer Benjamin Aguilera, Serial No. 36361, Hollenbeck Area  
Police Officer Roy Reza, Serial No. 32491, Hollenbeck Area

2. That the Board of Police Commissioners award the Police Distinguished Service Medal for service.

Detective Steven Razo, Serial No. 26761, Gang and Narcotics Division

#### **DISCUSSION**

##### **MEDAL OF VALOR**

###### **POLICE OFFICER CUSTODIO PONCE**

On February 1, 1996, Officer Custodio Ponce and his partner were assigned to the Hollenbeck CRASH Unit on patrol for gang suppression. The officers saw a male standing in the roadway drinking from an open bottle of beer. The suspect started to walk away when he observed the police. Officer Custodio Ponce put the police vehicle in reverse and passed the suspect in order to position the vehicle in front of the suspect. The suspect dropped the bottle of beer and started to walk away. As the suspect approached the intersection of Murchison Street and Lancaster Avenue, Officer Custodio Ponce saw him turn and point a gun at them. Officer Custodio Ponce advised his partner that the suspect had a gun. The suspect turned and ran out of view. Officer Custodio Ponce followed in his vehicle as the suspect turned to flee northbound in a driveway

leading into a parking lot. The suspect slipped and fell on the pavement. Officer Custodio Ponce drove into the driveway and stopped. Officer Custodio Ponce exited and deployed to the left front fender. Suddenly the suspect stood, turned toward the officers and began shooting, shattering the right front door window.

Officer Custodio Ponce returned fire at the suspect and quickly looked for additional cover. Officer Ponce moved to a block wall to reengage the suspect as he continued shooting at the officers. The officers fired additional rounds at the suspect as he dropped to his knees and spun around the corner out of sight. The suspect then fired two to three more rounds. Officer Custodio Ponce returned fire, causing the suspect to drop the gun and fall to the ground. The officers requested help and approached the suspect. He was taken into custody without further incident and was transported to the hospital where he expired. Officer Custodio Ponce sustained gunshot wounds to his left hip and leg and was transported to the hospital. He was released several days later and returned to full-duty after a month.

Officer Custodio Ponce is commended for bravery in confronting a violent and armed suspect who continued to engage the officers. As he was assaulted by gunfire, Officer Custodio Ponce demonstrated good judgment and presence of mind in a life-threatening situation.

#### MEDAL OF VALOR

DETECTIVE RAFAEL ACOSTA  
DETECTIVE DANIEL HANABUSA  
POLICE OFFICER RUDOLPH RIVERA  
POLICE OFFICER JOSE SALAZAR  
POLICE OFFICER BENJAMIN AGUILERA  
POLICE OFFICER ROY REZA

On June 5, 2008, Hollenbeck's Narcotics Enforcement Detail personnel were conducting surveillance in preparation of serving a search warrant. The surveillance operation was in its third day, as the officers waited for the right combination of dangerous members from the "Krazy Ass Mexican" (KAM) criminal street gang to assemble at the location that was suspected of manufacturing and selling illegal narcotics. Members of the surveillance team observed several key drug dealers arrive at the location and conduct activity related to drug sales. Long-time KAM gang members were observed very active at the location, so the team called to have the search warrant served. The officers assembled and planned their service of the search warrant. They climbed into the rear of a rented bobtail truck and stopped in an alley behind the target location. The team was to enter through the rear in order to avoid being compromised by a surveillance camera that overlooked the front door and sidewalk area. As the team reached the rear door they found it secured. When the suspect refused to let the officers enter, the door was breached allowing the officers to enter the rear door's threshold.

Detective Daniel Hanabusa was the first one through the door that led into a dark kitchen and immediately and without warning came under attack by heavy gunfire. As he returned fire from a seated position, Detective Daniel Hanabusa was struck by two rounds. One hit his ballistic

helmet just above the right eye and the second round struck him on the left knee. Officer Jose Salazar observed the suspect firing his pistol and Detective Daniel Hanabusa down on the kitchen floor. He walked toward the gunfire, and fired back at the suspect. He heard Detective Daniel Hanabusa yell, "I'm hit, I'm hit." Officer Jose Salazar continued to engage the suspect as Detective Rafael Acosta entered the tiny kitchen. Officer Jose Salazar grabbed Detective Daniel Hanabusa's by the vest and shirt collar and began to pull him back to the rear entrance. Detective Rafael Acosta, now in the kitchen, heard Officer Jose Salazar yell, "Officer down." He observed Officer Jose Salazar begin the rescue effort, when he saw muzzle flashes coming from the living room doorway where the suspect stood.

Detective Rafael Acosta fired cover fire at the muzzle flashes coming from the suspect's weapon as Officer Jose Salazar pulled Detective Daniel Hanabusa to safety. As Officer Jose Salazar and Detective Daniel Hanabusa neared his position, Detective Rafael Acosta stopped firing and assisted Officer Jose Salazar pull Detective Daniel Hanabusa to safety. Detective Rafael Acosta then fired additional rounds at what he believed to be multiple suspects firing at them. Officer Benjamin Aguilera had stepped into the kitchen as Detective Daniel Hanabusa went down and observed muzzle flashes and felt rounds coming by him. He was not able to see the suspect firing, but fired cover fire as Detective Daniel Hanabusa was dragged out.

After Detective Rafael Acosta backed out of the residence, Officer Rudolph Rivera observed the suspect in the kitchen doorway, firing his pistol at the officers who were exiting the location. Officer Rudolph Rivera moved towards the gunfire and fired at the suspect, then backed away from the rear door of the residence. Officer Roy Reza was assigned to the outside containment when he heard the exchange of gunfire inside. He immediately put out an "officer needs help" call over the radio. When he heard Detective Daniel Hanabusa yell that he had been shot, he left his position of cover and crawled past the bullets being fired over his head to reach the wounded detective. Officer Roy Reza grabbed Detective Daniel Hanabusa and pulled him away from the rear of the residence into an alley behind the location. At the rear of the location, the officers began to render aid to Detective Daniel Hanabusa until a rescue ambulance arrived. The investigation revealed that the suspect fired a total of eight rounds from his .45 caliber pistol at the entry team as they entered. He then took his own life with a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head. A second suspect inside the residence surrendered to police officers shortly after the shooting ceased. The Hollenbeck Narcotics and Gang officers named in this incident displayed heroism, unwavering bravery in the line of fire, reacted quickly, and made sound decisions that saved lives and avoided further injuries. They also displayed sound tactics and communication skills that resulted in a team effort to extract a wounded fellow officer.

POLICE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL

DETECTIVE STEVEN RAZO

Detective Steven Razo has distinguished himself in Newton Division by his tenacious pursuit of robbery suspects. His direct involvement in the robbery caseload resulted in the arrest of suspects involved in 46 robbery cases. Detective Steven Razo's efforts began in April 2008. He met with the Newton Area robbery detectives and evaluated the patterns of robberies. The

robbery detectives identified possible suspects through investigation, but needed further field investigation in order to gather additional evidence and apprehend the suspects. Many of the street robberies involved a get-a-away vehicle and more than one suspect. Often the suspect brandished a firearm at the victim while other times bodily force or a knife was threatened to gain compliance of the victim. The suspects often victimized single pedestrian females, targeting gold necklaces, other visible jewelry, iPod electronic devices and purses. In several cases of serial robbery, the victims chosen were specifically Asian businesswomen.

Detective Razo devised surveillance plans that placed him and other team members into the middle of these active crime locations. The skill and professionalism used resulted in the suspects often unaware of Detective Steven Razo's presence up until the moment of arrest. The absence of non-categorical and categorical uses of force and injuries to the officers and suspects is testimony to his professionalism given the high potential for violent confrontation. The primary tactics used by Detective Steven Razo and his team consisted of stationary and rolling surveillance culminating in an eventual physical arrest. His surveillance required hours of patient, concealed waiting and "fitting into" neighborhoods. When suspect movement was detected, effective pre-planned communication and arrest plans were put into action. The tactics used were consistent in identifying and isolating a suspect in a location where an arrest could be safely made. In addition, this plan called for uniformed units to respond and assist, if needed.

Detective Steven Razo is highly commended for his high level work ethic and "can do" spirit in facilitating positive progress on the Newton Area robbery problem. His actions helped Newton Area Detectives clear 46 robberies by making 30 arrests.

Should you have any questions, please contact Police Administrator Gloria Grube, Commanding Officer, Personnel Group, at (213) 486-4720.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "CHARLIE BECK".

CHARLIE BECK  
Chief of Police