

INTRADEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

BPC #11-0448

November 14, 2011

12.3

TO: The Honorable Board of Police Commissioners

FROM: Chief of Police

SUBJECT: RECOMMENDATION FOR THE MEDAL OF VALOR

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

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

Police Officer II Alejandro Valencia, Serial No. 36292, Foothill Division
Police Officer II Fernando Sanchez, Serial No. 38209, Foothill Division

DISCUSSION

On the evening of July 10, 2010, Los Angeles Police Officers Alejandro Valencia and Fernando Sanchez were working Foothill Area assigned to a special enforcement unit. The officers' assignment that night was to provide a specific area of the division with directed patrol, while looking for any criminal activity.

As the officers proceeded north on Lankershim Boulevard near Cantara Street, they observed a vehicle being driven erratically and saw the suspect driver throw a beer can out the side window. Based on this information the officers believed the driver of the car was under the influence of an intoxicant. Officer Valencia activated the emergency lights and siren of their police vehicle to initiate a traffic stop and conduct a DUI investigation; however, the suspect failed to stop for the officers and sped away in an obvious attempt to evade them.

Officer Sanchez immediately broadcast that they were initiating a vehicle pursuit and requested the response of a back-up and an Air Unit. As additional units were responding to assist, the suspect continued to evade the officers by making a number of turns on several streets. Without warning the pursued vehicle came to an abrupt stop and the suspect exited his vehicle and began firing at the officers with a .40 caliber semiautomatic handgun. Before Officer Valencia could bring the patrol car to a stop the suspect's bullets began striking the officers' vehicle.

One of the bullets fired by the suspect struck Officer Valencia's right forearm before he was able to return fire. Despite being wounded, Officer Valencia opened his door while instinctively lowering himself in the front seat of the police vehicle. This allowed him to take advantage of what little cover was immediately available. As the barrage of bullets and shards of glass continued to fall on him he returned fire through the space between the police vehicle and the open door.

The Honorable Board of Police Commissioners

Page 2

12.3

While Officer Valencia was engaging the suspect, Officer Sanchez redeployed to a position outside of the police vehicle in order to return fire. As the suspect's bullets shattered the window on the passenger side, Sanchez began to work his way toward the rear of the police car. While in the process of redeploying Sanchez lost his footing and fell to the ground breaking his left wrist.

Officer Valencia observed Officer Sanchez fall to the ground and feared his partner had been shot. As the suspect continued shooting Officer Valencia immediately exited the police vehicle and moved to the rear to assist his partner. By this time, Officer Sanchez had gotten back onto his feet and reengaged the suspect providing cover as Officer Valencia was making his way to the rear of the police vehicle. Once Officer Valencia reached the rear of their patrol car, Officer Sanchez realized Officer Valencia had been shot in the arm.

As Officer Valencia took cover, Officer Sanchez continued to engage the suspect until he no longer presented a threat. Officer Sanchez maintained his position of advantage over the unmoving suspect who was now seated back in his vehicle. Officer Sanchez remained in this position until other officers arrived and took the suspect into custody.

Unknown to both of the officers at the time of the shooting, the suspect they encountered was a documented member of a well-known and violent criminal street gang. When the suspect was ultimately taken into custody it was discovered that he was armed with a second fully-loaded handgun. It is abundantly clear, based on his actions the suspect's intentions were nothing less than the cold blooded murder of two police officers.

Even though both officers were injured during this violent encounter they valiantly and courageously fought through this life-threatening ordeal. These officers are commended for their courage under fire, teamwork, and dedication. They displayed heroism, unwavering bravery, and made sound decisions that saved lives and prevented further injuries to all involved. Officers Alejandro Valencia and Fernando Sanchez are commended for demonstrating good judgment and presence of mind in a very dangerous life threatening situation and are therefore recommended for the Medal of Valor.

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 'C. Beck', with a stylized flourish at the end.

CHARLIE BECK
Chief of Police

LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT
COMMENDATION REPORT

16

DATE
 04/28/2011

NAME OF INDIVIDUAL/UNIT (If unit, list individuals at beginning of narrative) SERIAL NO. RANK DIVISION ASSIGNED
 Sanchez, Fernando *Sanchez* 38209 P.O. II Foothill

LOCATION OF OCCURRENCE DIVISION OF OCCURRENCE DATE AND TIME OF OCCURRENCE
 Claybeck Avenue/ Penrose Street Foothill 07/10/2010 1805

ITEMS ATTACHED TO THIS REPORT:
 ARREST REPORT SERGEANT'S LOG NEWSPAPER ARTICLES WITNESSES STATEMENTS: E.G., (Fire or Paramedic Personnel)
 CRIME REPORT SCALED DIAGRAM PHOTOGRAPHS OTHER

DESCRIBE THE ACTIVITY, TYPE OF ACTION, OR OCCURRENCE: RELATE FACTS INDICATING DEGREE OF HAZARD INVOLVED AND QUALITIES DEMONSTRATED (COURAGE, INITIATIVE, ETC.). INCLUDE TACTICS USED BY THE INDIVIDUAL(S) IF APPROPRIATE. LIST WITNESSES INTERVIEWED.

On July 10, 2010, at approximately 1805 hours, Los Angeles Police Officers II, Fernando Sanchez, Serial No. 38209 and his partner, Alejandro Valencia, Serial No. 36292, were working Foothill Division while assigned to a special enforcement unit. They had been tasked with providing a specific area of the division with directed patrol while looking for any criminal activity. The officers were in full uniform and driving a black and white police vehicle.

As the officers were driving north on Lankershim Boulevard near Cantara Street, they observed a gray Honda Civic being driven erratically. They also saw the driver (suspect) of this car throw a beer can out the driver side window, which was a violation of the California Vehicle Code. Based on the officers' observations, training and experience, the officers believed the driver of the car was driving under the influence (DUI) of an intoxicant and by being so, was a danger to himself and the community.

Continued on page 2

RECEIVED
 #411 MAY 31 2011
PERSONNEL GROUP

PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT REPORTING SUPERVISOR (NAME, RANK, SERIAL NO.) CO, COMMENDED EMPLOYEE OR UNIT (NAME, RANK, SERIAL NO.)
 Scott Kennedy, Sergeant II, 26227 Jerry Rodriguez, Captain, 25066

RECOGNITION FOR FOUR MINOR COMMENDATIONS WITHIN 12 MONTHS REPORTING SUPERVISOR (Signature) CO, COMMENDED EMPLOYEE OR UNIT (Signature)
[Signature] *[Signature]* 25066

BUREAU REVIEW BUREAU COMMENDATION FORWARD TO COMMENDATIONS BOARD BUREAU CO (Signature)
[Signature]

ACTION TAKEN BY COMMENDATIONS BOARD

<p>INDIVIDUAL (BRAVERY)</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Medal of Valor <input type="checkbox"/> Police Medal <input type="checkbox"/> Awarded Police Star <input type="checkbox"/> Life Saving Medal <input type="checkbox"/> Bureau Commendation <input type="checkbox"/> LAPD Purple Heart	<p>INDIVIDUAL (SERVICE)</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Police Distinguished Service Medal <input type="checkbox"/> Police Meritorious Service Medal <input type="checkbox"/> Police Meritorious Achievement Medal <input type="checkbox"/> Police Commission Distinguished Service Medal <input type="checkbox"/> Police Commission Integrity Medal <input type="checkbox"/> Community Policing Medal <input type="checkbox"/> Human Relations Medal <input type="checkbox"/> Bureau Commendation	<p>UNIT</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Police Commission Unit Citation <input type="checkbox"/> Police Meritorious Unit Citation <input type="checkbox"/> Bureau Commendation
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DECS
 May 5-27-11

ACTION TAKEN BY COMMENDATIONS BOARD: **7/27/11 - Recommended Medal of Valor** COMMENDATIONS, AWARDS & DECORATIONS BOARD CHAIR (Signature)
[Signature]

ACTION TAKEN BY AWARDS AND DECORATIONS COMMENDATIONS, AWARDS & DECORATIONS BOARD REVIEWING OFFICER, OSS (Signature)
[Signature]

LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT
COMMENDATION REPORT

(16)

DATE
 04/28/2011

NAME OF INDIVIDUAL/UNIT (If unit, list individuals at beginning of narrative) SERIAL NO. RANK DIVISION ASSIGNED
 Valencia, Alejandro Valencia 36292 P.O. II Foothill

LOCATION OF OCCURRENCE DIVISION OF OCCURRENCE DATE AND TIME OF OCCURRENCE
 Claybeck Avenue/ Penrose Street Foothill 07/10/2010 1805

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On July 10, 2010, at approximately 1805 hours, Los Angeles Police Officers II, Alejandro Valencia, Serial No. 36292 and his partner, Fernando Sanchez, Serial No. 38209, were working Foothill Division while assigned to a special enforcement unit. They had been tasked with providing a specific area of the division with directed patrol while looking for any criminal activity. The officers were in full uniform and driving a black and white police vehicle.

As the officers were driving north on Lankershim Boulevard near Cantara Street, they observed a gray Honda Civic being driven erratically. They also saw the driver (suspect) of this car throw a beer can out the driver side window, which was a violation of the California Vehicle Code. Based on the officers' observations, training and experience, the officers believed the driver of the car was driving under the influence (DUI) of an intoxicant and by being so, was a danger to himself and the community.

Continued on page 2

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 [Signatures]

BUREAU REVIEW BUREAU COMMENDATION FORWARD TO COMMENDATIONS BOARD BUREAU CO (Signature)
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<p>INDIVIDUAL (BRAVERY)</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Medal of Valor <input type="checkbox"/> Police Medal <input type="checkbox"/> Awarded Police Star <input type="checkbox"/> Life Saving Medal <input type="checkbox"/> Bureau Commendation <input type="checkbox"/> LAPD Purple Heart	<p>INDIVIDUAL (SERVICE)</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Police Distinguished Service Medal <input type="checkbox"/> Police Meritorious Service Medal <input type="checkbox"/> Police Meritorious Achievement Medal <input type="checkbox"/> Police Commission Distinguished Service Medal <input type="checkbox"/> Police Commission Integrity Medal <input type="checkbox"/> Community Policing Medal <input type="checkbox"/> Human Relations Medal <input type="checkbox"/> Bureau Commendation	<p>UNIT</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Police Commission Unit Citation <input type="checkbox"/> Police Meritorious Unit Citation <input type="checkbox"/> Bureau Commendation
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DECS
 Aug 5-27-11

ACTION TAKEN BY COMMENDATIONS BOARD: **7/27/11 - Recommended Medal of Valor** COMMENDATIONS, AWARDS & DECORATIONS BOARD CHAIR (Signature)
 [Signature]

ACTION TAKEN BY AWARDS AND DECORATIONS COMMENDATIONS, AWARDS & DECORATIONS BOARD REVIEWING OFFICER, OSS (Signature)
 [Signature]

At this time, Valencia, who was the driver officer, activated the emergency lights and siren of their police vehicle in order to initiate a traffic stop and conduct a DUI investigation. The Suspect failed to stop for the officers and sped away. It was clear to the officers that the Suspect was trying to evade them. Sanchez immediately broadcast that they were initiating a vehicle pursuit and requested the response of a back-up and an Air Unit.

As other units were responding to assist Valencia and Sanchez, the Suspect continued to evade them by making a number of turns on varying streets. After approximately sixty-three seconds, the Suspect came to an abrupt stop on Claybeck Avenue at Penrose Street. Without provocation or warning, the Suspect exited his car and began to fire upon the officers with a .40 caliber semi-automatic handgun. Even before the officers could bring their car to a stop, bullets began ripping through the officers' police car. Relying on their training, instincts, and their will to survive, the officers immediately reacted to this threat upon their lives.

Before Valencia was even able to return fire, one of the bullets fired by the Suspect struck his right forearm after piercing through the windshield of the police vehicle. Without hesitation, Valencia opened his door while instinctively lowering himself in the front seat of the police vehicle. This allowed Valencia to take advantage of what little cover was immediately available to him behind the dash of his police vehicle. As a barrage of bullets and shards of glass descended upon Valencia, he canted his body-position toward his left, which allowed him to return fire through the opening between his police vehicle door and its windshield.

As this was happening, Sanchez was also reacting to the deadly attack upon both of their lives. While his partner was engaging the Suspect, Sanchez was redeploying to a position outside of the police vehicle in order to return fire upon the Suspect. As the Suspect's bullets shattered the window on the passenger side of the police vehicle, Sanchez began to work his way toward the rear of their vehicle. While doing this, he lost his footing on the shards of broken glass and fell to the ground breaking his left wrist.

During the barrage of gun fire, Valencia saw Sanchez fall to the ground out of his peripheral view and thought Sanchez had been shot by the Suspect. Wanting to render aid to his partner, Valencia exited the police vehicle and moved back toward his partner. He did this in spite of the unrelenting barrage of bullets being fired at them and with no regard for his personal safety. During this time Sanchez was getting back up on his feet and reengaged the Suspect with gunfire, thus providing cover for his partner's movement.

Once Valencia reached the rear of their police vehicle, he and Sanchez realized Valencia had been shot in the arm. As Valencia took cover behind their police vehicle, Sanchez re-engaged the Suspect until he no longer presented a threat to him or his wounded partner. Sanchez then covered the Suspect who was now not moving but was still seated in the driver's seat of the Honda. Sanchez continued to cover down on the Suspect until other officers arrived and were able to take the Suspect into custody. Sanchez only mentioned the injury to his wrist after his partner was being treated for his injuries. It was later determined that Sanchez had sustained a fractured wrist during his fall, but managed to fight through the pain and engage the Suspect.

Unknown to both of the officers at the time of this shooting was the fact that the Suspect was a documented and active member of a well known and violent criminal street gang. After the shooting, it was also discovered that the suspect was armed with a second fully loaded handgun. This weapon was located in the suspect's pants pocket, after he was taken into custody. This "back-up" weapon was a loaded .25 caliber semiautomatic handgun. It is evidentially clear, based on his actions, that the Suspect's intentions were nothing less than the cold blooded murder of two police officers.

Even though both officers were injured during this event, they both valiantly and courageously fought through the pain and immeasurable intensity of this life threatening ordeal.

Officers Valencia and Sanchez were thrust into this fight for their lives with someone that initially had the tactical advantage on them. Their heroic and courageous actions serve as an example for police officers everywhere, on how to respond when faced with a similar life threatening situation.

It is an honor and privilege to recommend that Officers Valencia and Sanchez be awarded the Los Angeles Departments Medal of Valor for their bravery and heroic actions during this incident.