

THE NEW ZEALAND BRAVERY MEDAL (N.Z.B.M.)

Officer C New Zealand Police

Date of action: 13 February 2020

Date of award: 6 December 2024

Citation

On the evening of 13 February 2020, four Armed Offenders Squad (AOS) members, including Officer A, were on patrol in two Police vehicles when they were alerted to a vehicle in the Tauranga City area linked to an offender being sought for a recent double homicide. The AOS team located the vehicle, following it to attempt to stop it.

The sole occupant of the vehicle began shooting at the AOS team as he drove, hitting the windscreen of the lead patrol vehicle driven by team leader Officer B, with Officer C in the passenger seat. Officer A drove the second patrol car, with Officer D in the passenger seat. With traffic and pedestrians using the roads at the time, the AOS team determined the offender posed a significant risk to the public and needed to be apprehended. They decided to follow the vehicle until it reached an area where risk to the public would be minimised.

As they followed, the offender drove at a normal speed in his lane and aimed deliberate shots at the AOS team over several minutes, with rounds hitting and ricocheting off the lead patrol vehicle. The AOS team warned other Police personnel in the area that they were following the offender, to avoid other Police encountering the vehicle and becoming targets. At one point, the offender stopped in a residential area to open his door and take aimed shots from around 20 metres away at Officer C and Officer B in their vehicle. The officers allowed the offender to continue given the proximity of the public. Officer B kept his patrol car close to the offender's vehicle while pursuing to minimise attention on civilian vehicles, while Officer A kept the second patrol car close behind to provide immediate support.

When the offender stopped again on southbound State Highway 2, the AOS team decided that the location was sufficiently isolated to attempt to apprehend the offender. Officer B stopped the lead patrol vehicle around 10 metres from the offender's vehicle and Officer A stopped his patrol vehicle a further five metres behind.

The officers saw the offender moving in his vehicle and expected he would begin shooting again. Officer A had positioned himself to use his patrol car to immobilise the offender's vehicle if required. From the passenger seat of the lead car, Officer C fired his rifle at the offender's vehicle. Officer D exited the second patrol car and moved into the open, between his car and the offender's, firing through the offender's back windshield. Officer C and Officer D ceased firing and saw the offender slump in his seat and the offender's vehicle begin rolling off the road onto the grass. At this time, Officer B had exited the lead vehicle to assist, while Officer C and Officer D ran alongside to take the offender into custody, though the offender had been killed during this engagement.

Officer C demonstrated bravery in pursuing a motivated offender, who continually took deliberate aimed shots at the AOS team over an extended encounter in proximity to the general public. Officer C made a key contribution to the AOS team stopping the offender, thereby removing the risk to the public and to other Police personnel.