

H.R. 218/S. 253: It's About Officer Safety

When the Fraternal Order of Police talks about the passage of H.R. 218/S. 253 as an officer safety issue, we mean it. A police officer may not remember the name and face of every criminal he or she has locked behind bars, but criminals often have long and exacting memories. A law enforcement officer is a target in uniform and out; active and retired; on duty and off.

We have compiled the following information from data obtained by the National Law Enforcement Officers' Memorial. The fifty-eight (58) officers listed below appear, or will appear, on the Wall of Remembrance in Judiciary Square because they were killed in the line of duty. But, unlike most officers on the Wall, these officers were not "on-duty" when they were killed. Yet even though they were not on the clock, the circumstances of their death qualified them as having died "in the line of duty."

Law enforcement officers are a dedicated and trained body of men and women, who, unlike other professionals, are rarely "off-duty." When there is a threat to the peace or to public safety, the police officer is sworn to answer the call of duty. The men and women listed below were off-duty and, to the best of our knowledge, they were unarmed when they answered the call—and paid the ultimate price. If they had been armed, would they have lived? More than one hundred armed and uniformed officers die in the line of duty each year. But one thing is certain: even one life saved demonstrates the need for this legislation.

Detective Thomas G. Newman, a twelve-year veteran of the Baltimore City Police Department in Maryland, had been shot and wounded while off-duty in 2001. He testified against his assailant, who was sentenced to thirty years in prison. On 23 November 2002, Detective Newman was shot to death by three suspects—friends and relatives of the criminal that Detective Newman had sent to jail—in an act of criminal retaliation.

Police Officer Joseph Jerome Daniels, a ten-year veteran of the Birmingham Police Department in Alabama, was shot and killed on 11 November 2002. The officer was eating his dinner at a local restaurant when a man entered, announced that he was robbing the establishment and ordered everyone on the floor. Officer Daniels immediately took action and was shot several times in a struggle with the robber. He died of his injuries on the scene.

Deputy Sheriff Damacio S. Montano, a three-year veteran of the Valencia County Sheriff's Office, was with his brother, State Patrolman Eric Montano, at a restaurant on 6 October 2002. They assisted the owner of the restaurant in breaking up a fight and escorted two suspects outside. An unknown gunman opened fire on the officers, wounding his brother and killing him.

Detective Jaime Betancourt, a nine-year veteran of the New York City Police Department, was knifed to death on 31 May 2002 while attempting to make an off-duty arrest of the man who had previously dated his girlfriend. The man was attempting to force entry into the woman's home when Detective Betancourt attempted to make an arrest. The attacker drew a knife and stabbed the officer to death.

Detective Donald Miller, a ten-year veteran with the New Bern Police Department in North Carolina, was off-duty on 23 December 2001. He and his wife had just completed a visit to their newborn child in the hospital when the detective observed a man driving recklessly through the hospital parking lot. He confronted the man, who drew a handgun and fired—striking Miller in the head. Detective Miller, father of two, died two days later on Christmas Day.

Detective Kevin Darrell Rice, Sr. was off-duty on the evening of 3 August 2001 when he approached two suspicious men loitering near the construction site of his new home. The fourteen-year veteran of the Rockford, Illinois Police Department was shot and killed by the men he confronted.

Officer Dominick J. Infantes, Jr., a seven-year veteran with the New Jersey City Police Department, was attacked by two men wielding a pipe on 4 July 2001. He died two days later from severe head injuries. Infantes was off-duty when he asked two men to stop setting off fireworks near playing children. He identified himself as a police officer, ***but the two killers did not believe him because Infantes did not have a gun.***

Officer Jose Torres-Rodriguez, a five-year veteran with the Puerto Rico Police Department, was killed on 11 March 2001. He was off-duty when he arrived at a local restaurant. A couple there was having a violent argument, so he identified himself as a police officer and offered his assistance. The male suspect drew a handgun, fired and killed the officer.

Correctional Officer Leslie John Besci, a sixteen-year veteran with the North Carolina Department of Corrections, was beaten to death with a baseball bat in an unprovoked attack. The officer had just returned from work when he was attacked by two former inmates of the prison where he worked.

Corrections Officer Anthony L. Brown, a seven-year veteran from Nassau County Sheriff's Department in New York, broke up a fight between a man and his girlfriend while off-duty. The man returned later and shot and killed the officer.

Officer Robert Buitrago of the Winston-Salem Police Department in North Carolina observed a robbery in progress while off-duty. He was shot and killed in an attempt to apprehend the suspect.

Officer Ernesto Caballero-Vega, a three-year veteran with the Puerto Rico Police Department, was off-duty and traveling with his father when he witnessed an attempted car-jacking. He approached the criminal, identifying himself as a police officer. The suspect shot the officer and his father to death.

Officer Glanville Christopher-Figueroa of the Puerto Rico Police Department was shot and killed while attempting to stop a robbery in progress. He was off-duty.

Auxiliary Officer Milton S. Clarke, a three-year veteran with the New York City Police Department, was off-duty when he went to investigate gunshots from outside his home. After he identified himself as a police officer, he was shot and killed.

Officer Ralph Dols, a three-year veteran of the New York City Police Department, was off-duty when he was ambushed in front of his home. He was attacked by three men who shot him a total of six times. The investigation into the officer's murder suggests that the killing was in retaliation for the officer's identification of suspects in a robbery who may have had some connection to organized crime.

Officer Carlos J. Diaz-Martinez of the Puerto Rico Police Department was off-duty when he walked into a barber shop where a robbery was in progress. He was shot and killed when he tried to take action.

Deputy Antranik Geuvjehizian, a seven-year veteran with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, was investigating a suspicious person lurking around a neighbor's house while at home and off-duty. He was shot and killed after confronting the suspect and identifying himself as a law enforcement officer.

Detective Charles Edward Harris, a twenty-year veteran with the Southern Pines Police Department in North Carolina, was at home and off-duty when drug suspects rang his doorbell. The suspects targeted the officer after he attended a "crime watch" meeting at an apartment complex. The officer was shot and killed, and his wife, home at the time, was also shot.

Officer Jose Ramon Hernandez-Rodriguez, a six-year veteran with the Puerto Rico Police Department, was shot and killed while attempting to prevent the robbery of himself and his family. Though off-duty and out of uniform, one of the suspects recognized him as a police officer and then shot him.

Officer Clayton Wayne Hicks, Jr., a two-year veteran of the Memphis, Tennessee Police Department, was killed on 14 November 2000. It was his day off and he attended a party thrown by a friend. He was confronted there by a suspect whom he had arrested earlier on a domestic violence charge. The suspect shot Officer Hicks twice with an AK-47 assault rifle, killing him.

Deputy Clarence Hill IV, a three-year veteran with the Harris County Sheriff's Department in Texas, was off-duty on 19 June 2000, when he witnessed a shooting. He followed the suspects when they fled in their vehicle. When they stopped, he approached their car and identified himself as a police officer. The suspects seized his arm and dragged Deputy Hill along the pavement. A second car, driven by friends of the shooting suspects, intentionally struck and killed him.

Officer Milagros T. Johnson, a two-year veteran of the New York City Police Department, was the victim of an armed robbery while off-duty. She identified herself as a police officer and was shot and killed by the suspects.

Officer Robert L. Johnson, Jr., a police officer with Metropolitan Police Department in Washington, D.C., was off-duty and with another off-duty officer when he was involved in a parking dispute with a paroled offender. The pair identified themselves as police officers and the offender vowed to come back. He did—shooting and killing Officer Johnson and wounding the other officer.

Detective Edward Stefan Kislo, an eighteen-year veteran with the Los Angeles Police Department, was off-duty when he confronted a prowler in a neighbor's yard. The suspect shot and killed him.

Senior Corporal Richard A. Lawrence was a twenty-two year veteran with the Dallas Police Department in Texas. He was off-duty when he was warned of two suspects lurking in the bushes near a parked car. He went to investigate and was ambushed and killed by the two suspects, who were attempting to steal the car.

Sergeant Keith R. Levine, a six-year veteran of the New York City Police Department, was off-duty when he observed a suspect robbing a man at an automatic teller machine. He was shot and killed by the suspect.

Sergeant Rudy Lopes was shot and killed on 11 October 2000. Sergeant Lopes, a fifteen-year veteran with the Bexar County Sheriff's Department in Texas, was off-duty when he was robbed by two killers, who took his wallet and truck, bound his hands and, discovering he was a law enforcement officer, shot him in the head and left him in an abandoned building, where he was discovered the next day.

Patrolman Michael D. Love, a five-year veteran of the Rochester Police Department in Pennsylvania, was off-duty when the woman he was dancing with at a club was shot. The officer tried to act and was shot and killed by the woman's assailants.

Officer Alejo Maldonano-Serrano, a ten-year veteran of the Puerto Rico Police Department, was off-duty when he was attacked by an individual whom he had arrested several months earlier. The officer was killed in this act of revenge.

Detective Donald James Manning, a six-year veteran of the Fort Worth Police Department in Texas, was shot and killed by one of four suspects while off-duty in an unprovoked attack following a robbery.

Officer Angel Luis Marquez-Rivera of the Puerto Rico Police Department was off-duty and out of uniform when suspects, identifying him as a police officer, shot and killed him during a robbery attempt.

Officer Johnny L. Martin, a four-year veteran with the Chicago Police Department in Illinois, was off-duty when he observed a suspicious person tampering with some cars. The suspect, once observed, shot and killed the officer.

Officer Shynelle Marie Mason, a two-year veteran with the Detroit, Michigan Police Department, was shot and killed on 14 July 2000 by a man she had previously arrested for carrying a concealed weapon. She encountered the man while off-duty; he confronted her and shot her several times in the chest.

Officer Todd Merriwether, a one-year veteran with the St. Louis Police Department in Missouri, was off-duty when an individual attempted to rob him. After identifying himself as a police officer, the suspect shot and killed him.

Correctional Officer Andre Motley in Essex County, New Jersey, was off-duty and on his way home when he stopped to break up a fight in his neighborhood. He was shot and killed by one of the brawlers.

Sheriff Ben P. Murray of Dimmit County, Texas, had been a law enforcement officer for twenty years. He was shot and killed in his home while off-duty by suspects with a vendetta against him.

Patrolman James M. O'Connor was a two-year veteran with the Chicago Police Department in Illinois. While off-duty, he witnessed a robbery and pursued the fleeing suspects. They shot and killed the officer.

Police Agent Santos Febus Ocasio, a fifteen-year veteran with the Puerto Rico Police Department, was attacked, shot and killed while off-duty because he was working on anti-narcotics activities in the department.

Officer Carmelo Ortiz-Rivera was off-duty when he was shot and killed in front of his home by drug suspects. The officer was doing undercover drug work and expected to testify in court against the suspects who shot him.

Sergeant Tomas Pantojas de Jesus, a 25-year veteran of the Puerto Rico Police Department, was off-duty and at a gas station when a robbery occurred. He was shot and killed attempting to stop the suspects.

Investigator Ricky J. Parsian was an eight-year veteran with the New York State Police. While off-duty, the officer was shot and killed attempting to stop an in-progress robbery.

Agent Lawrence B. Pierce, a 15-year veteran with the Border Patrol, attempted to subdue a suspect who had, within the sight of the officer, fatally stabbed another man. When Agent Pierce identified himself as a law enforcement officer, the suspected attacked and killed Pierce.

Officer Louis Anthony Pompei was shopping off-duty when he witnessed a robbery in progress. The seven-year veteran of the Glendora, California Police Department was shot and killed while attempting to stop the robbery.

Officer Robert Porter, a seven-year veteran with the Philadelphia Police Department, was killed in an ambush. While dropping off an item at a local tavern, his partner was confronted by several bar patrons whom he had previously arrested. The two officers left the tavern when the argument was settled and drove away. The three suspects caught up with the two partners, drove up to the passenger side and fired into the vehicle. Officer Porter, though not the intended target, was killed.

Officer Ronald Levert Richardson served nine years with the Washington, D.C. Department of Corrections. He was shot and killed outside his home by suspects seeking to prevent him from testifying at a drug trial.

Officer Armando Rosario, an Auxiliary Officer with the New York City Police Department, interrupted a robbery in progress. He was shot and killed when he moved to thwart the robbers.

Officer Carlos William Sepulveda-Caraballo, a three-year veteran with the Puerto Rico Police Department, attempted to intervene in a heated and escalating argument. He was shot and killed after identifying himself as a law enforcement officer.

Officer Hilario Serrano, a six-year veteran with the New York City Police Department, attempted to stop a robbery in progress. He was shot and killed by the armed robbers.

Officer Benjamin Louis Short, a seven-year veteran with the Police Department in Detroit, Michigan, was off-duty at a local bar when a fight broke out. He intervened after one of the brawlers drew a handgun, and was shot and killed by that suspect.

Officer Oliver Wendell Smith, Jr., of the Metropolitan Police Department in Washington, D.C., was off-duty when he was robbed at gunpoint. Upon discovering the victim was a police officer, the robbers shot and killed him.

Officer Deadrick Taylor, a nine-year veteran with the Sheriff's Department in Shelby County, Tennessee, was killed in an ambush. Four men, reportedly gang members directed by an inmate in the county jail where Taylor worked, attacked and killed the officer just outside his home following his shift. The men shot Officer Taylor repeatedly with a handgun and an AK-47 assault rifle.

Officer Rudolph P. Thomas, Jr., a two-year veteran with the New York City Housing Authority Police, was shot and killed during a robbery attempt.

Officer Charles Kirksey Todd, a three-year veteran of the Police Department in Mayfield, Kentucky, was attending a wedding off-duty when one guest attacked another with a knife. The officer was fatally stabbed trying to subdue the attacker.

Officer Joey Tremayne Vincent, a six-year veteran with the Greenville Kentucky Police Department, was killed on 27 June 1999. His mentally-ill cousin, Terry Wedding, had been involuntarily committed to a mental hospital by the family. Officer Vincent's parents asked him to accompany them while he was off-duty because they felt they might need a police officer, but believed that Terry would feel better if he were with family. The trip turned into a massacre—Terry Wedding shot and killed Officer Vincent, his wife and parents.

Officer Ernest Andrew Whitten, a twelve-year veteran of the Albertville Police Department in Alabama, was shot and killed in his home because of a case he had made against the suspect.

Corporal Amos Williams, a five-year veteran with the District of Columbia Department of Corrections, was confronted by two assailants while off-duty. He was shot once and while the criminals were patting him down for his wallet, they discovered his badge. They subsequently shot him once in the back of the head, killing him.

Officer Thomas Bentley Worley, a Safety Police Officer in Los Angeles County, was shot and killed during a robbery in progress. The off-duty officer attempted to keep the suspect from leaving the scene when he was killed.

Deputy Sheriff Shayne Daniel York, a Deputy Sheriff in Los Angeles County, was off-duty and unarmed at a hair salon when it was robbed by armed men. After seeing York's badge, the robbers shot him in the back of the head—execution style.

Law enforcement is a dangerous profession; there is no legislation, act of Congress or government regulation which will change this sobering fact. However, there are ways to increase the level of personal safety for police officers. One of the most important officer safety issues for the F.O.P. is the adoption of H.R. 218/S. 253, which would enable qualified active and retired law enforcement officers to carry their firearms when traveling outside their home jurisdictions.