

Officer Erik Nygren, Bronze Medal
Officer Ryan Waple, Certificate of Valor
Officer Carlos Rolon, Silver Medal
Officer Steven Escobar, Silver Medal

On June 16, at 6:08 p.m., Officer Erik Nygren responded to the 400 block of Hansen Lane for reports of a suspicious package. The property where the package was located is a single-family home surrounded by large trees and lots of vegetation. Officer Nygren quickly located the reported package and began to review its contents with the intention of identifying its owner.

Alarminglly, the contents of the backpack composed of a firearm, gas mask, explosive material, handcuffs, fireworks, and an abundance of ammunition. Even more alarmingly, Officer Nygren located a piece to a ghillie suit, a garment designed to camouflage a person in their natural environment. Taking into consideration the composition of these items and his surroundings, Officer Nygren decided to gather the items and return to a safer location where he further inspected the property. He took particular notice to an item which closely resembled an improvised explosive device. Officer Nygren immediately distanced himself from the device and requested a supervisor.

Officer Nygren contacted the ex-wife who confirmed that she still resided at the residence in the 400 block of Hansen Lane. She described her ex-husband as a person who possibly suffers from mental illness and aspired to work for a private security tactical team.



Meanwhile, officers evacuated nearby residents and maintained a perimeter around the device. The Arlington County Bomb Squad responded to the scene to assist with the inspection of the suspected explosive device. The Bomb Squad determined that the suspected explosive device posed a credible danger and performed a controlled detonation of the device. After it was rendered safe, a closer and more thorough inspection was performed which revealed that the suspicious device was likely not an explosive device, but rather a crude firearm sound suppressor (silencer).

The Fairfax County Helicopter Unit was requested to assist a search of the area using an infrared camera. The Helicopter Unit performed an extensive search, identifying only one area of concern. They advised that a "heat-signature" had been located in the backyard of 406 Hanson Lane.

Four officers were selected to investigate the unidentified heat-signature. Officer Rolon and his K-9, Xig-Xag, were selected to investigate the suspicious heat-signature. Officer Escobar and his K-9, Gracie, were selected to search for secondary explosive devices and safely guide the team through the area. Officer Waple had SOT experience and was assigned to provide coverage for the team. Officer Nygren was selected based upon his tactical abilities and his familiarity with the surrounding area. A safe plan of action was developed. All officers were equipped with additional safety equipment, including a carbine rifle, shotgun, ballistic plate carriers, and ballistic helmets.

The Fairfax Helicopter Unit assisted with leading the team of officers towards the suspicious heat-signature. Officer Rolon and Xig-Xag led Officer Escobar and Gracie into the area. They proceeded cautiously, ensuring the surrounding area was safe as they went along. As they approached the heat-signature, they were able to confirm that it was in fact a man on the ground, concealed under a ghillie suit. Officer Rolon provided verbal commands to the subject but did not receive a response nor see movement. Upon closer inspection, it was determined that the suspect was deceased as the result of a gunshot wound to the head. The



decision was made to evacuate the area because of the concern of secondary explosive devices. Officer Escobar and Gracie then safely lead the team of officers out of the area.

Officer Rolon, Officer Escobar, Officer Waple and Officer Nygren adapted their training and expertise to complete a unique and difficult task. Their willingness to take on such an assignment and work harmoniously as a group likely led to a successful conclusion.

Officer Nygren's discovery and his meticulous investigation saved Ms. Gimmel's life, and possibly the lives of others, including our officers. We award Officer Nygren a Bronze Medal in recognition of his heroic actions. We also award Officers Rolon and Escobar Silver Medals and Officer Waple a Certificate of Valor. K-9s Gracie (posthumously) and Xig-Xag are also recognized for their actions.