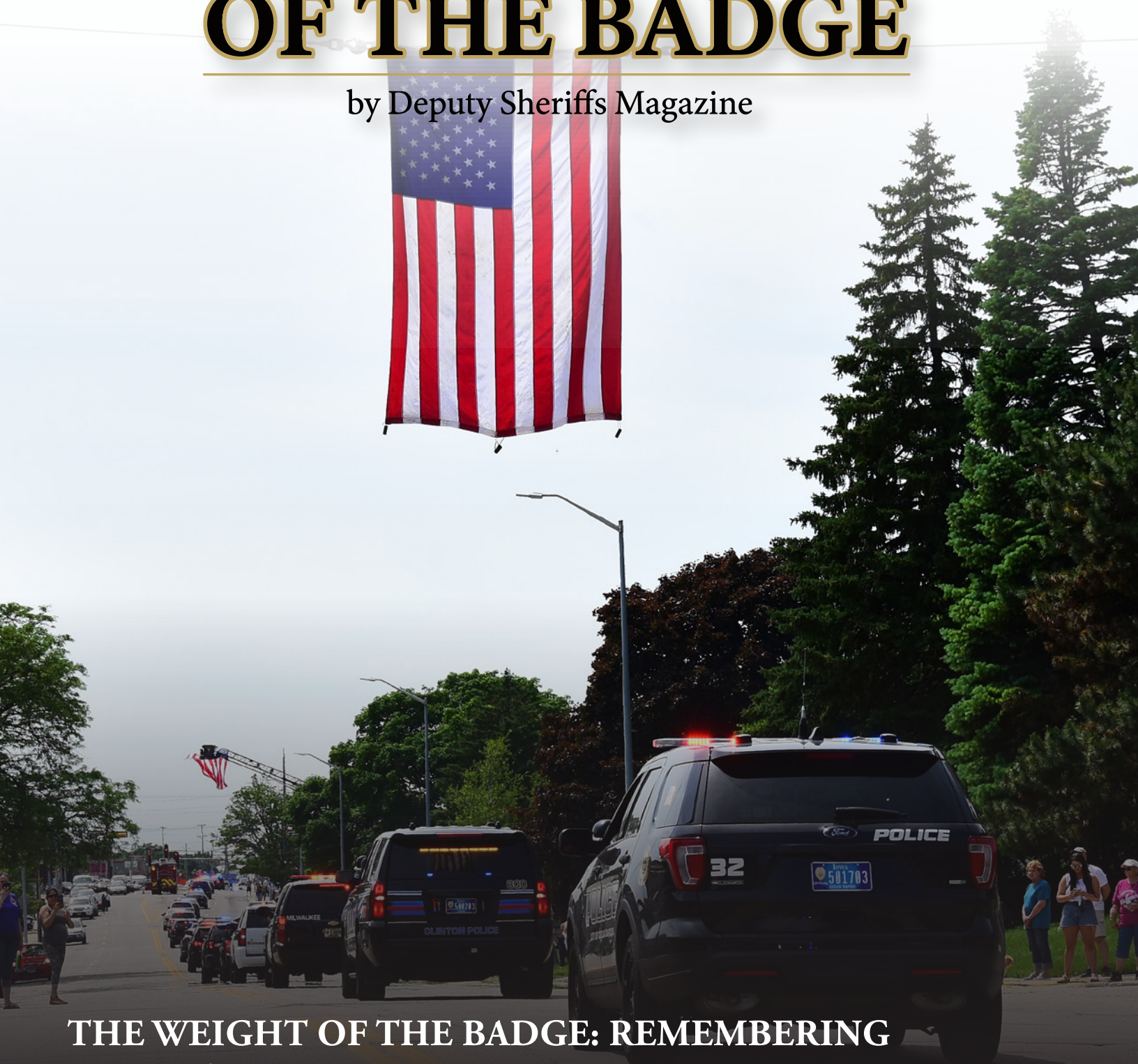


JUNE 2026

LEGACY OF THE BADGE

by Deputy Sheriffs Magazine



**THE WEIGHT OF THE BADGE: REMEMBERING
RACINE'S FALLEN HERO - PAGE 6**

MISSION STATEMENT

The Deputy Sheriffs Magazine is a veteran-owned small business dedicated to memorializing our fallen law enforcement officers by supporting organizations that offers assistance to the families of law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty. Each year many make the ultimate sacrifice and Deputy Sheriffs Magazine is honored to give friends, family, other officers the opportunity to remember them and their sacrifices.

DEPUTY SHERIFFS MAGAZINE

PUBLISHER

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Mesa, AZ 85206
(877) 232-0745
www.FundPhaseLLC.com

MAGAZINE

Deputy Sheriffs Magazine
www.deputysheriffsmagazine.com

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A Hero's Welcome

By Robert Longley

Time to come home dear brother
Your tour of duty through
You've given as much as anyone
Could be expected to do

Just a few steps further
The smoke will start to clear
Others here will guide you
You have no need of fear

You have not failed your brothers
You clearly gave it all
And through your selfless actions
Others will hear the call

So take your place of honor
Among those who have gone before
And know you will be remembered
For now and evermore



THE WEIGHT OF THE BADGE: REMEMBERING RACINE'S FALLEN HERO

The Final Call of Duty For those who have taken an oath to serve in uniform, the instinct to protect doesn't end simply because a shift is over. On the evening of June 17, 2019, this unwavering commitment was demonstrated in the most tragic and heroic way by Racine Police Officer John David Hetland.

A 24-year veteran of the force, Officer Hetland was off-duty and out of uniform at a local establishment in Racine, Wisconsin. When an armed assailant entered to commit a robbery, Hetland did not hesitate. Without the protection of his gear or the immediate backup of his fellow officers, he sprang into action to protect the citizens around him. In the ensuing struggle over the suspect's firearm, Officer Hetland was fatally shot, laying down his life to shield his community.

A Career of Dedication Officer Hetland, 49, was nearing a well-deserved retirement after spending

nearly two and a half decades safeguarding the streets of his city. His career was marked by deep, hands-on involvement in the community. As a Field Training Officer, he mentored the next generation of law enforcement, passing on his knowledge and instincts. Furthermore, his rigorous work with the Greater Racine FBI Gang Task Force showcased a relentless dedication to tackling some of the most challenging and dangerous aspects of police work.

A Community United in Grief The visual of his funeral procession on June 26, 2019, captures a profound moment of collective mourning and immense respect. Suspended high above the street between towering ladder trucks, a massive American flag framed the miles-long line of police cruisers. Departments from across the state and neighboring regions traveled to Wisconsin to escort Officer Hetland to his final resting place.

Civilians lined the streets, standing in quiet reverence alongside the procession route. It was a powerful testament to the bonds shared by the law enforcement community and the deep gratitude of a public that recognizes the ultimate sacrifice.

A Legacy Endures While the assailant was swiftly captured and eventually sentenced to life in prison without parole, the void left by Officer Hetland's absence remains. His story serves as a stark, sobering reminder of the everyday courage required of those who hold the thin blue line.

Officer John Hetland's legacy lives on—not just in the officers he trained or the streets he patrolled, but in the enduring image of a community that stood completely still to honor a man who gave everything for their safety.



THE LAST FULL MEASURE: HONORING THE THIN BLUE LINE ON PEACE OFFICERS MEMORIAL DAY

Every May 15th, the nation pauses to observe Peace Officers Memorial Day. For those outside of law enforcement, it is a date on a calendar. For the men and women wearing the star and the uniform of the Sheriff's Office, it is a day of profound, somber reflection. It is the day we remember our brothers and sisters who answered the call for the last time.

A Legacy of Sacrifice

The history of Peace Officers Memorial Day is rooted in a deep respect for the profession. In 1962, President John F. Kennedy signed a proclamation designating May 15th as a day to honor federal, state, and local officers who have been killed or disabled in the line of duty.

For Deputy Sheriffs, this day holds a unique significance. The Office of Sheriff is the oldest law enforcement office in the United States, and with that history comes a long and painful "Roll Call of Heroes." From the rugged frontier deputies of the 1800s to the modern-day deputies patrolling our suburbs and cities, the mission has remained the same: to protect the community, often at the risk of everything.

The 2026 Observance: "It's All About the White Chairs"

This year, as thousands of law enforcement professionals and survivors gather at the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial in Washington, D.C., the focus remains on the families left behind.

During the National Police Week events, the imagery of the "White Chairs"—the empty seats reserved for the fallen during the memorial service—serves as a stark reminder of the void left in our agencies and our homes. In 2025 alone, line-of-duty deaths reminded us that the "dangerous nature of the job" is not just a phrase, but a daily reality. This year, new names have been carved into the marble walls of the Memorial, joining the more than 23,000 heroes who preceded them.

More Than a Badge

As Deputy Sheriffs, we know that the person behind the badge is more than just a public servant. They are parents, spouses, children, and friends. Peace Officers Memorial Day is as much about the survivors—the spouses who navigate life alone and the children who grow up hearing stories of their hero parents—as it is about the officers themselves.

Organizations like **Concerns of Police Survivors (C.O.P.S.)** play a vital role during this week, reminding us that while an officer's watch may end, our duty to their family never does.

How We Honor Them

Across the country, Sheriff's Offices will mark this day by flying flags at half-staff and holding local vigils. But the truest way to honor the fallen is through the way we conduct ourselves every other day of the year.

We honor them by:

- **Maintaining the Bond:** Reaching out to the families of fallen deputies in our own jurisdictions.
- **Training with Purpose:** Ensuring we and our partners come home safe by never becoming complacent.
- **Telling Their Stories:** Ensuring that the names of those who gave their "last full measure of devotion" are never forgotten in the hallways of our substations.

A Final Salute

As you look at the star on your chest this May 15th, take a moment of silence. Remember the deputy who stood where you stand, who walked the same beat, and who made the ultimate sacrifice so that others might live in peace.

To our fallen brothers and sisters: Your watch is over, but your legacy remains. We will take it from here.

Quick Facts for the Office:

- **Official Date:** May 15th (annually).
- **National Police Week 2026:** May 10th – May 16th.
- **Flag Protocol:** Per Public Law 103-322, the American flag should be flown at half-staff on May 15th.
- **The Memorial Wall:** The National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial in D.C. now contains over 23,000 names dating back to the first recorded death in 1791.

SUPPORTING THE MISSION: HOW DEPUTY SHERIFFS MAGAZINE CHAMPIONS C.O.P.S. AND HELPS REBUILD SHATTERED LIVES

Every year, between 140 and 160 law enforcement officers in the United States make the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty. While the public eventually moves past the tragic headlines, the spouses, children, parents, siblings, and co-workers left behind face an enduring, life-altering reality. In the wake of such profound grief, Concerns of Police Survivors (C.O.P.S.) steps in to offer a guiding light.

Deputy Sheriffs Magazine stands firmly behind this vital mission, dedicating its platform to continuously support and advocate for C.O.P.S. so that the families of our fallen heroes are never forgotten.

A Mission Born of Necessity and Compassion C.O.P.S. operates on a foundational, albeit heart-breaking, principle: there are zero membership fees, because the price to join has already been paid, and it is far too high. Today, the 501(c)(3) non-profit organization serves over 87,000 survivors through 53 chapters nationwide. Their core mission is straightforward yet monumentally challenging: to provide resources to help rebuild the shattered lives of survivors and co-workers affected by line-of-duty deaths.

Healing Through Ongoing Support and Connection The journey of grief can be incredibly isolating, but C.O.P.S. ensures that no survivor has to walk it alone. The organization provides essential, ongoing resources, including peer support, counseling programs, and scholarships.

Some of the most impactful offerings are the Survivor Weekends

and Camps. From Kids Camps that allow children who have lost a parent to simply be kids again in a safe, understanding environment, to retreats designed specifically for spouses, parents, adult children, siblings, and co-workers, C.O.P.S. creates spaces where true healing begins. At these gatherings, survivors find a rare comfort in being surrounded by people who inherently understand their pain.

As one survivor noted, attending a C.O.P.S. event means “no one looks at you out of pity when you cry, or looks at you like you’re crazy when you laugh. It’s all accepted as normal, and when you are accepted, healing begins.”

Advocating for the Cause: The Magazine’s Role For an organization that relies entirely on grants, donations, and awareness to keep its life-saving programs completely free for grieving families, visibility is crucial. Deputy Sheriffs Magazine recognizes this need and proudly utilizes its reach to support the C.O.P.S. mission.

By consistently highlighting the work of C.O.P.S. within its pages, the magazine helps sustain awareness and action within the broader law enforcement community:

- **Amplifying the Need:** By keeping the C.O.P.S. mission in front of thousands of active and retired deputies, the magazine helps ensure that awareness translates into vital funding, volunteerism, and active support.
- **Sharing Survivor Stories:** Deputy Sheriffs Magazine

gives a voice to the survivors, printing their stories of resilience. This honors the officers who laid down their lives and shows newly grieving families that a robust, loving community is waiting to support them.

- **Promoting Wellness:** By highlighting C.O.P.S. trainings—such as the Traumas of Law Enforcement and the National Conference on Law Enforcement Wellness & Trauma—the magazine encourages agencies to proactively address the mental and emotional toll of the job, ensuring departments are better equipped to support their own if the unthinkable occurs.

The Impact on the Families The continuing support from publications like Deputy Sheriffs Magazine has a direct, tangible impact on survivors. When a deputy reads an article and is moved to donate, or when a sheriff’s office implements better survivor protocols after learning about C.O.P.S. resources, the families benefit directly. It ensures that scholarships remain funded, peer support networks continue to grow, and survivors can attend specialized retreats without bearing the financial burden.

The badge represents a deeply connected family. By continually supporting Concerns of Police Survivors, Deputy Sheriffs Magazine helps send a clear, resounding message to the families of the fallen: We still stand with you. We still remember. And we will always support the mission to help you rebuild.

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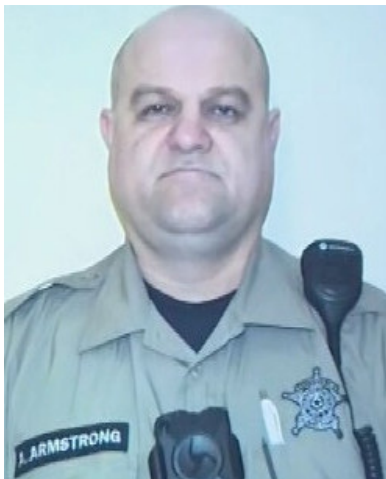


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DEPUTY CONSTABLE AARON ARMSTRONG

CALDWELL COUNTY CONSTABLE'S OFFICE -
PRECINCT 3, TEXAS
END OF WATCH: SUNDAY, JANUARY 4, 2026

Deputy Constable Aaron Armstrong was shot and killed while attempting to arrest a man at Club Rodeo at 9515 North Lamar Boulevard in Austin. At 1:59 a.m., Deputy Constable Armstrong, who was in uniform and identified himself as a peace officer, removed a subject from the club who was causing a disturbance. The subject pushed Deputy Armstrong and fled into the parking lot. The subject remained in the parking lot with a group of people and began shouting at Deputy Armstrong. When Deputy Armstrong attempted to arrest the man, the group prevented him from reaching the subject, who pulled out a gun and fired multiple times at Deputy Armstrong. Deputy Armstrong returned fire before he collapsed. One of the men in the group ran over Deputy Constable in his vehicle when he fled the scene. Deputy Constable Armstrong was transported to the hospital, where he succumbed to his wounds. The shooter, who had an extensive criminal record and was on probation, was apprehended, admitted his involvement, and was charged with capital murder. The driver was charged with assault of a peace officer. Deputy Constable Armstrong had served with the Caldwell County Constable's Office - Precinct 3 for over one year and previously served with the Smithville Police Department. He is survived by his father, mother, and brother.



POLICE OFFICER STEPHEN A. LAPORTA

UXBRIDGE POLICE DEPARTMENT, MASSACHUSETTS
END OF WATCH: WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 7, 2026

Police Officer Stephen LaPorta was struck and killed by the driver of a vehicle on Route 146 around 12:40 a.m. On northbound Route 146 past exit 6, Officer LaPorta was helping a disabled motorist in the freezing rain when a tractor-trailer hit him. Despite emergency responders providing life-saving measures, he died at the scene.

The driver was transported to a local hospital and treated for minor injuries. Officer LaPorta had served with the Uxbridge Police Department for over one year. He is survived by his wife and child.



POLICE OFFICER TERRY L. BENNETT

**METROPOLITAN POLICE DEPARTMENT, DISTRICT OF
COLUMBIA**

END OF WATCH: WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 7, 2026

Police Officer Terry Bennett succumbed to injuries he received when he was struck by the driver of a vehicle while assisting a disabled motorist on Interstate 695 in Washington, D.C., on December 23, 2025.

Around 10:10 p.m., Officer Bennett stopped in the eastbound lanes of I-695 near South Capital Street to help a motorist who had run out of gas. While standing outside his police cruiser, a speeding driver, attempting to change lanes, struck him. The disabled motorist was not injured. Officer Bennett was immediately transported to a local hospital, where he died from his injuries on January 7, 2026. The driver was unconscious after the crash and was taken to a hospital for minor injuries. He had been driving erratically and tested for a blood-alcohol concentration of twice the legal limit. He was charged with second-degree murder and denied bond. Officer Bennett had served almost eight years with the Metropolitan Police Department, D.C., assigned to the First District. He is survived by his wife and children.



POLICE OFFICER ELIJAH GARRETSON

COPPERAS COVE POLICE DEPARTMENT, TEXAS

END OF WATCH: SUNDAY, JANUARY 11, 2026

Police Officer Elijah Garretson was ambushed and killed near the intersection of Lost Trail and Great Hills Drive in Copperas Cove while responding to reports of a suspicious person. After lengthy negotiations with officers, the suspect was discovered dead from a self-inflicted gunshot wound. The suspect was on probation and wanted on a DWI warrant.

Officer Garretson was a United States Army veteran and had served with the Copperas Cove Police Department for seven months. A recent graduate of the Central Texas College Police Academy, he received the Academic Award for the highest grade point average in the class. He is survived by his wife and daughter.



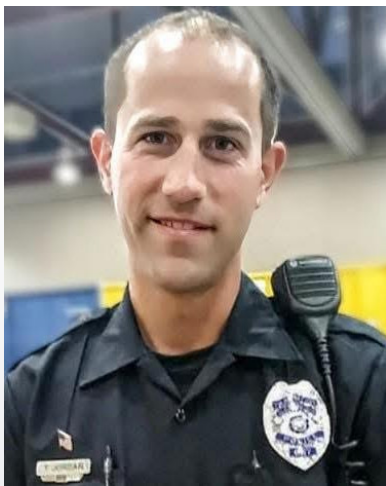
AGENT ANÍBAL MORALES APONTE

PUERTO RICO POLICE DEPARTMENT, PUERTO RICO
END OF WATCH: TUESDAY, JANUARY 13, 2026

Agent Aníbal Morales Aponte succumbed to injuries he received when his patrol motorcycle was struck by a driver who ran a red light at Rafael Cordero Avenue in Caguas.

At 6:20 a.m., Agent Morales Aponte was driving on Rafael Corero Avenue when a driver made an illegal left turn and crashed into Agent Morales Aponte. He was transported to the Rio Piedras Medical Center, where he died of his injuries six days later.

Agent Morales Aponte had served with the Puerto Rico Police Department for 29 years and was assigned to the Caguas Motorized Unit. He is survived by his twin daughters, mother, life partner, and two stepdaughters.



DEPUTY SHERIFF TIM JORDAN

BOSSIER PARISH SHERIFF'S OFFICE, LOUISIANA
END OF WATCH: WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 21, 2026

Deputy Sheriff Tim Jordan was killed in a train collision on Highway 3 at Benton Road and Kingston Road in Benton.

Around 8:00 a.m. Deputy Jordan was conducting a traffic stop when a train traveling south struck his vehicle. He was transported to Ochsner LSU Health in Shreveport, where he succumbed to his injuries.

Deputy Jordan had served with the Bossier Parish Sheriff's Office for four years and previously served with the Alexandria Police Department for three years. Survivors include his wife, two children, parents, and four siblings.



DEPUTY SHERIFF DERRICK BONHAM

WEAKLEY COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE, TENNESSEE

END OF WATCH: FRIDAY, JANUARY 30, 2026

Deputy Sheriff Derrick Bonham was shot and killed responding to a shots fired call.

Deputy Bonham was assisting the Martin Police Department on a call about gunfire at the Days Inn. Around 3:09 a.m., he tracked a driver of one of the vehicles reportedly involved in the shooting to the Pockets

Gas Station at 821 University Street in Martin. When Deputy Bonham approached the driver and asked her to exit the vehicle, she opened her door and fired at Deputy Bonham. While he was on the ground, she walked up to him and shot him again three more times.

Deputy Bonham was transported to Volunteer Community Hospital, where he passed away. The suspect was apprehended and charged with first-degree murder. Deputy Bonham was a United States Army veteran and had served with the Weakley County Sheriff's Department for two years. His wife and three children survive him.

DEPUTY SHERIFF CHRISTOPHER OHLMEYER



JEFFERSON PARISH SHERIFF'S OFFICE, LOUISIANA

END OF WATCH: FRIDAY, JANUARY 30, 2026

Deputy Sheriff Christopher Ohlmeyer was killed while serving in a funeral escort on Airline Highway, near the 9200 block in New Orleans, at 11:40 a.m.

As a member of the motor squad, Deputy Ohlmeyer was stopping traffic to allow for the funeral procession when he was struck by a vehicle from behind. He succumbed to his injuries at the scene. The driver of the vehicle was taken to the hospital. She was charged with vehicular homicide after she tested positive for multiple drugs in her system.

Deputy Ohlmeyer had served with the Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office for 15 years. Survivors include his wife and two children.



POLICE OFFICER SENIOR PRADEEP TAMANG

GWINNETT COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT, GEORGIA
END OF WATCH: SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2026

Police Officer Senior Pradeep Tamang was shot and killed responding to a fraud and forgery call at the Holiday Inn at the 1700 block of East Park Place Boulevard in Stone Mountain. When Officer Tamang and another officer arrived at the hotel around 7:30 a.m., the subject invited them into his hotel room. While inside, the subject pulled out a gun and fired at both officers. One of the officers returned fire, striking the shooter.

Additional officers arrived on scene and rendered aid to the officers and the shooter. One officer remains in critical but stable condition. Officer Tamang was transported to Northside Gwinnett Hospital, where he died from his wounds. The suspect, who has multiple felony convictions and active warrants, was initially taken to the hospital with non-life-threatening wounds and is in custody. He has been charged with malice murder, felony murder, two counts of aggravated assault against law enforcement, and receipt, possession, or transfer of a firearm. Officer Tamang had served with the Gwinnett County Police Department for almost one year and previously served as a Correctional officer with the Dauphin County Prison in Pennsylvania. Survivors include a brother and fiancée.

DEPUTY SHERIFF RICHARD A. HAGGARD



LEE COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT, MISSISSIPPI
END OF WATCH: MONDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2026

Deputy Sheriff Rick Haggard was struck and killed while directing traffic in front of Shannon Elementary School at 695 Romie Hille Avenue in Shannon. Around 3:00 p.m., two vehicles were involved in a collision, and Deputy Haggard, who was directing traffic, was struck.

Deputy Haggard had served with the Lee County Sheriff's Department for six years and was the School Resource Officer for Shannon Elementary School. He had previously served with the Clay County Sheriff's Department for 12 years. Survivors include his wife and two daughters.



TROOPER HUNTER R. BENNETT

ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY, ARIZONA
END OF WATCH: WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2026

Trooper Hunter Bennett was killed in a helicopter crash while assisting the Flagstaff Police Department with an active shooter.

Around 8:30 p.m., Flagstaff Police officers were responding to a domestic violence call when a subject began shooting at officers with a long rifle. The subject continued to fire at officers as he ran from rooftop to rooftop in the neighborhood. After 9:00 p.m., Trooper Bennett and Aviation Supervisor Robert Skankey responded with tactical support. At 10:17, the Ranger 56 helicopter crashed, killing Trooper Bennett and the pilot.

An investigation revealed a mechanical problem with the main rotor. Since the helicopter was flying so low, the pilot did not have an opportunity to recover. The suspect was apprehended and is in the hospital with non-life-threatening wounds. Trooper Bennett had served with the Arizona Department of Public Safety for over three years. Survivors include his wife.



POLICE OFFICER BRIAN D. ELLIOTT

BEECH GROVE POLICE DEPARTMENT, INDIANA
END OF WATCH: MONDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2026

Police Officer Brian Elliott was shot and killed while responding to a domestic disturbance call at an apartment on Diplomat Court in Beech Grove.

Around 6:00 p.m., Officer Elliott and another officer approached the subjects. A man from inside the apartment fired shots at both officers before fleeing. Both officers were transported to Sidney and Lois Eskenazi Hospital.

Officer Elliot succumbed to his wounds a few hours later. Responding SWAT team officers took the suspect into custody around 10:17 p.m. Officer Elliott had served with the Beech Grove Police Department for over a year and previously served with the Marion County Sheriff's Office for four years. Survivors include his wife and parents.



TROOPER MICHAEL DIEGO

FLORIDA HIGHWAY PATROL, FLORIDA
END OF WATCH: WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2026

Trooper Michael Diego passed away after suffering a medical emergency at 12:30 p.m. while training for the Patrol Criminal Interdiction Unit at the Florida Highway Patrol Training Academy at 75 College Drive in Havana.

Despite life-saving measures by troopers and EMS first responders, Trooper Diego passed away at the Tallahassee Memorial Hospital.

Trooper Diego had served with the Florida Highway Patrol for over four years, assigned to the Fort Pierce and Fort Myers districts. Survivors include his mother, sister, and fiancée.



POLICE OFFICER CALEB DANIEL ABNEY

HAHIRA POLICE DEPARTMENT, GEORGIA
END OF WATCH: THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2026

Police Officer Caleb Abney was struck and killed during a traffic stop on Interstate 75 at 12:09 a.m.

Officer Abney had pulled over a car on the northbound lanes of Interstate 75 near mile marker 31. While he was sitting in his patrol vehicle with his emergency lights activated, the driver of a car traveling at speeds of 100 mph crashed into the rear of his vehicle, pushing it into the rear of the car he had pulled over. The collision caused all three vehicles to leave the highway.

Officer Abney died of his injuries at the scene. The driver who struck Officer Abney's vehicle was transported to the hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

Officer Abney had served with the Hahira Police Department for five months. He had served with the Lowndes County Fire Rescue before becoming an officer with the Hahira Police Department. Survivors include his parents, fiancée, brother, two sisters, and three nephews.



CORPORAL DAVID M. HATHCOCK

MONTGOMERY POLICE DEPARTMENT, ALABAMA

END OF WATCH: SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2026

Corporal David Hathcock succumbed to injuries he sustained in a vehicle crash on November 9, 2025, near Taylor and Vaughn Roads in Montgomery. Corporal Hathcock had served with the Montgomery Police Department for 20 years. Survivors include his wife and two daughters.

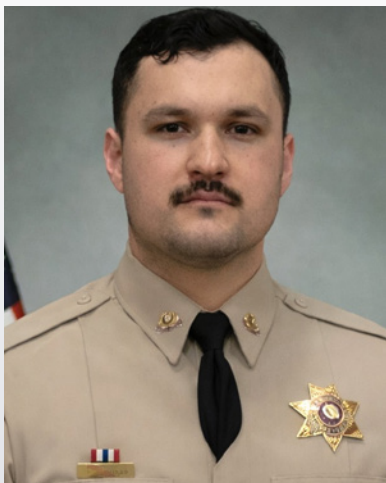


MASTER TROOPER STIEN DAVIS, JR.

NORTH CAROLINA HIGHWAY PATROL, NORTH CAROLINA

END OF WATCH: SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2026

Master Trooper Stien Davis was killed in a single-vehicle crash on North Carolina Highway 130 shortly after midnight. Trooper Davis lost control of his patrol vehicle, swerved off the road, and his vehicle landed upside down on the roadside. Trooper Davis had served with the North Carolina Highway Patrol for over ten years, assigned to Troop B, District 7 in Robeson County. Survivors include his son, mother, siblings, and fiancée.



DEPUTY SHERIFF GABRIEL RAMIREZ

CHRISTIAN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE, MISSOURI

END OF WATCH: MONDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2026

Deputy Sheriff Gabriel Ramirez was shot and killed while conducting a traffic stop on State Highway 160 and Route HH near Highlandville around 4:00 p.m.

The suspect fled, and a manhunt ensued. Responding officers found the suspect's truck abandoned near Reeds Spring on State Highway 160. Using the suspect's heat signature, the Missouri State Highway Patrol tracked the suspect in the woods. When they approached the suspect, he fired at officers, striking and killing Deputy Sheriff Michael Hislope with the Christian County Sheriff's Office and wounding two deputies, one with the Christian County Sheriff's Office and the other with the Webster County Sheriff's Office.

The suspect, a convicted felon who had posted bail on February 20, 2026, for an additional crime, was killed in return gunfire. Deputy Ramirez was a United States Army veteran and had served with the Christian County Sheriff's Office for almost one year.



DEPUTY SHERIFF KENNETH LEWIS

FORT BEND COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE, TEXAS
END OF WATCH: MONDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2026

Deputy Sheriff Kenneth Lewis succumbed to injuries he received when he was struck by a vehicle while helping a stranded motorist on Interstate 10 in Houston on February 21, 2026. Around 3:40 a.m., Deputy Lewis stopped on I-10 near Eldridge Road to help a motorist on the side of the highway. While he was outside his vehicle, a passing vehicle struck him and kept driving.

Deputy Lewis was transported to the hospital, where he passed away on February 23, 2026. Law enforcement arrested the driver, an illegal alien, on March 18, 2026, after receiving an anonymous tip. He was charged with failure to stop and render aid resulting in death and tampering with physical evidence. Deputy Lewis was a United States Army National Guard veteran who had served with the Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office for 11 years and previously served with the Missouri City Police Department. Survivors include two sons, a daughter, a brother, and a sister.



SERGEANT MICHAEL SCHLATTMAN

BERNALILLO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE, NEW MEXICO
END OF WATCH: MONDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2026

Sergeant Michael Schlattman was struck and killed by a tractor-trailer during a traffic stop on Interstate 40 near Carnuel. Around 5:00 p.m., Sergeant Schlattman had pulled over a vehicle near mile marker 170. While he was outside of his patrol vehicle, a semi-truck hit his vehicle, pinning him between the two vehicles. Sergeant Schlattman died at the scene.

The driver was injured and released. In May 2026, the driver was charged with careless driving and operation of vehicle on approach of emergency vehicle.

On that stretch of the highway, there have been over 100 crashes and multiple fatalities during sundown, as the glare causes low visibility.

Sergeant Schlattman had served with the Bernalillo County Sheriff's Office for over 13 years. Survivors include his father, sister, his fiancée, and her children.



DEPUTY SHERIFF MICHAEL HISLOPE

CHRISTIAN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE, MISSOURI
END OF WATCH: TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2026

Deputy Sheriff Michael Hislope was shot and killed while attempting to apprehend the suspect who had killed Deputy Sheriff Gabriel Ramirez. Around 4:00 p.m., a man shot and killed Deputy Ramirez during a traffic stop before fleeing. Responding officers found the suspect's truck abandoned near Reeds Spring on State Highway 160. Using the suspect's heat signature, the Missouri State Highway Patrol tracked the suspect in the woods. When they approached the suspect, he fired at officers, striking and killing Deputy Hislope and wounding two deputies, one with the Christian County Sheriff's Office and the other with the Webster County Sheriff's Office.

The suspect, a convicted felon who had posted bail for an additional crime on February 20, 2026, was killed in return gunfire. Deputy Hislope was a United States Army veteran and had served with the Christian County Sheriff's Office for over six years. Survivors include his wife, daughter, son, mother, father, two brothers, and three sisters.



CORRECTIONAL OFFICER JUSTIN PEDIGO

TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION, TENNESSEE
END OF WATCH: WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2026

Correctional Officer Justin Pedigo was stabbed and killed by an inmate at the Morgan County Correctional Complex at 541 Wayne Cotton Morgan Drive in Wartburg. The suspect was serving a sentence for aggravated assault and attempted voluntary manslaughter. He has been moved to another facility. Officer Pedigo had served with the Tennessee Department of Correction for 10 months. Survivors include his wife, parents, brother, and sister.



POLICE OFFICER RONALD JOHN BOSELA

NEW YORK STATE ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION
POLICE, NEW YORK

END OF WATCH: FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2026

Police Officer Ron Bosela died as a result of cancer that he developed following his assignment of moving the command post at the World Trade Center site, North Tower, to the piers following the 9/11 Terrorist Attacks. Officer Bosela was a United States Navy veteran and had served with the New York State Environmental Conservation Police for 20 years. Survivors include his wife, son, and two grandchildren.



MASTER TROOPER STEVEN J. PERRY

NORTH CAROLINA HIGHWAY PATROL, NORTH CAROLINA

END OF WATCH: SUNDAY, MARCH 1, 2026

Master Trooper Steven J. Perry was killed when his patrol vehicle was struck head-on by a wrong-way driver on NC-147, near the Swift Avenue exit, at approximately 3:00 a.m. The wrong-way driver was also killed in the crash. Trooper Perry had served with the North Carolina Highway Patrol for nearly 7 years. Survivors include a 9-month old daughter.



DEPUTY SHERIFF KALEB MITCHELL

FORSYTH COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE, NORTH CAROLINA

END OF WATCH: SATURDAY, MARCH 7, 2026

Deputy Sheriff Kaleb Mitchell was killed in a vehicle crash in the 7400 block of Highway 311 at the intersection of Grubbs Road around 6:00 a.m. A driver was traveling south on Highway 311 at over 100 mph in a 55 mph zone when Deputy Mitchell's patrol vehicle crossed into the wrong side of the road. Deputy Mitchell was pronounced deceased after being transported to Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist Hospital.

The driver was cleared of all charges. Deputy Mitchell had served with the Forsyth County Sheriff's Office for about a year and a half and previously served with the King Police Department. Survivors include his expectant wife, 2-year-old child, parents, and four siblings. His brother also serves with the Forsyth County Sheriff's Office.

CORPORAL TIMOTHY J. O'CONNOR, JR.



PENNSYLVANIA STATE POLICE, PENNSYLVANIA
END OF WATCH: SUNDAY, MARCH 8, 2026

Corporal Timothy O'Connor was shot and killed during a traffic stop in West Caln Township, near the intersection of Michael Road and Route 10 in West Caln Township, at approximately 8:24 p.m.

While responding to a complaint about an erratic driver, Corporal O'Connor located and pulled the vehicle over. When Corporal O'Connor approached the vehicle, the driver shot from inside the vehicle, fatally wounding Corporal O'Connor.

The driver was found near the vehicle, deceased from a self-inflicted gunshot wound. Corporal Timothy O'Connor had served with the Pennsylvania State Police for over 15 years. He also served with the West Chester Fire Company. Survivors include his wife, daughter, mother, father, brother, sister, and nephews.

DEPUTY SHERIFF STEVEN BRUNER



CALHOUN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE, FLORIDA
END OF WATCH: SATURDAY, MARCH 21, 2026

Deputy Sheriff Steven Bruner suffered a fatal medical emergency after assisting people in evacuating from the Mossy Pond Fire. The fire has ravaged over 500 acres, evacuating over 100 people, destroying 15 dwellings and 7 outbuildings, and leaving at least 43 displaced people. Survivors include two sons, father, mother, brother, grandfather, and girlfriend.



DEPUTY SHERIFF MICHAEL LEROY JIMERSON

**JACKSON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE, MISSISSIPPI
END OF WATCH: WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1, 2026**

Deputy Sheriff Michael Jimerson was shot and killed while responding to a disturbance call at the Reserve at Gulf Hills Apartments at 6721 Washington Avenue in Ocean Springs. Around 11:00 p.m., Deputy Jimerson and other deputies were dispatched to the apartment complex. When a woman fled, Deputy Jimerson began pursuing the subject, during which she pulled out a firearm and began shooting. Deputy Jimerson returned fire, and in the exchange of gunfire, both were struck. Deputy Jimerson was transported to Ocean Springs Hospital, where he succumbed to his wounds. The suspect died at the scene. Deputy Jimerson had served with the Jackson County Sheriff's Office for 16 years. Survivors include his wife, two children, and grandchildren.



TROOPER VERNON BRAKE

**OKLAHOMA HIGHWAY PATROL, OKLAHOMA
END OF WATCH: WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8, 2026**

Trooper Vernon Brake was killed in a head-on vehicle crash on Interstate 35 in Oklahoma City shortly before noon. A vehicle traveling southbound on Interstate 35 between Britton and Heffner Roads swerved to avoid debris in the road and crossed into the northbound lanes, hitting Trooper Brake's patrol car. Trooper Brake, the driver, and her daughter were killed in the collision. Trooper Brake had served with the Oklahoma Highway Patrol for over 19 years. Survivors include his wife and two children.



DETECTIVE RANDY HOPPERT

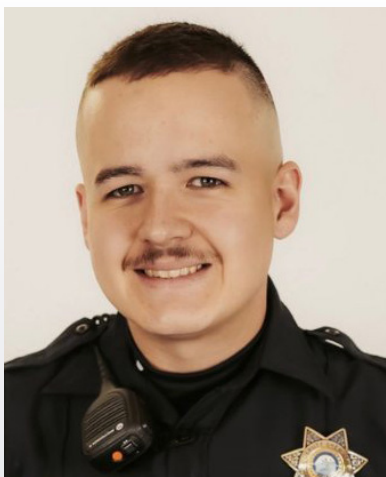
TULARE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE, CALIFORNIA

END OF WATCH: THURSDAY, APRIL 9, 2026

Detective Randy Hoppert was shot and killed while responding to officers who were met with gunfire while serving an eviction notice.

Around 10:20 a.m., deputies were serving an eviction notice at 1713 W Brian Lane in Porterville when the subject shot at them with a high-powered rifle. When Detective Hoppert arrived, he was struck by gunfire while he engaged in the shootout with the suspect. He was transported to a local hospital, where he succumbed to his wounds.

The suspect remained barricaded and exited the home six hours later. He was fully camouflaged and was firing at officers while hiding in the foliage in the backyard, stating that he would not surrender. A tactical vehicle ran him over while he fired at officers. Detective Hoppert was a United States Navy veteran and had served with the Tulare County Sheriff's Office for six years. Survivors include his expectant wife. His father also served with the Tulare County Sheriff's Office, and his grandfather was an Undersheriff.



DEPUTY SHERIFF LANDON FAULKNER

HAMILTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE, TENNESSEE

END OF WATCH: FRIDAY, APRIL 10, 2026

Deputy Sheriff Landon Faulkner succumbed to injuries sustained in a crash two days before, on State Highway 111 near the intersection of Lewis Chapel Road. At approximately 9:30 p.m. on the evening of Wednesday, April 8, Deputy Faulkner's patrol car struck the back of a disabled truck on the left side of the highway. He was airlifted to Erlanger Hospital, where he remained in critical condition until passing on Friday, April 10, after donating his organs. Deputy Faulkner had served with the Hamilton County Sheriff's Office for three years and had previously served as a deputy and a corrections deputy with Grundy County. Survivors include his wife and four children.



AGENT EDDIE SANTIAGO-RENTA

PUERTO RICO POLICE DEPARTMENT, PUERTO RICO
END OF WATCH: FRIDAY, APRIL 10, 2026

Agent Eddie Santiago-Renta was shot and killed during an undercover operation in the Pampanos neighborhood of Ponce at approximately 1:00 p.m. While on assignment observing the vehicle of an undercover operation from an unmarked car in the local Sam's Club parking lot, Agent Santiago-Renta witnessed several people approaching the other vehicle. As he attempted to intercept the individuals, the other officer and Agent Santiago-Renta announced themselves as police officers, and gunfire was exchanged. Agent Santiago-Renta was struck several times in the face. He was taken to Damas Hospital in Ponce where he succumbed to his injuries.

Two of the suspects were apprehended; the third suspect turned himself in to the authorities. Agent Eddie Santiago-Renta had served with the Puerto Rico Police Department for 22 years, assigned to the Ponce Drugs and Narcotics Division. Survivors include his wife and four children.



DEPUTY SHERIFF THOMAS "WALKER" LEMAY

LEFLORE COUNTY SHERIFFS OFFICE, OKLAHOMA
END OF WATCH: SUNDAY, APRIL 19, 2026

Deputy Sheriff Walker LeMay was shot and killed during a welfare check in Wister, at a home off Highway 270, at approximately 11:00 a.m. On April 19, officers from the LeFlore County Sheriff's Office, the Wister Police Department, and the U.S. Forestry Department were called to assist with a welfare check at a residence. Upon arrival, they were met with gunfire; when the officers returned fire, the suspect retreated into the residence and barricaded himself inside. During the exchange of gunfire, Deputy Sheriff LeMay and the Wister Chief of Police were struck.

Deputy Sheriff LeMay was pronounced dead at the scene. The Wister Chief of Police was moved to a local hospital, where he remains in stable condition. After several hours and the response of additional agencies, including the Oklahoma Highway Patrol, the suspect surrendered and was treated for minor injuries, then taken into custody. He has been charged with murder in the first degree, 8 counts of shooting with intent to kill, and use of an incendiary device.

Deputy LeMay previously served with the Heavener Police Department for four years. Survivors include his daughter, mother, stepfather, father, three sisters, and two brothers.

POLICE OFFICER DALLAS HINTON



THOMASVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT, ALABAMA
END OF WATCH: WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22, 2026

Police Officer Dallas Hinton was killed in an automobile crash on U.S. 43 in Clarke County, near mile marker 90, at approximately 4:45 a.m. Officer Hinton was driving his patrol vehicle north when he collided with the rear end of a tractor-trailer, also traveling north; despite life-saving measures, he was pronounced dead at the scene. Officer Hinton was a United States Marine Corps veteran and had served with the Thomasville Police Department for two years. He is survived by his father, two sisters, and his fiancée.

RESERVE DEPUTY CONSTABLE HEATHER AVERY



JEFFERSON COUNTY CONSTABLE'S OFFICE - PRECINCT 1,
TEXAS
END OF WATCH: FRIDAY, APRIL 24, 2026

Reserve Deputy Constable Heather Avery was killed near mile marker 830 on Interstate 10, in Chambers County, while directing traffic in a construction zone at approximately 8:00 a.m. Reserve Deputy Constable Avery was helping direct traffic in the outside lane of the interstate, near her patrol vehicle with the emergency lights activated, when a commercial construction truck traveling east struck the rear of the patrol vehicle. She was pronounced deceased at the scene.

The driver of the commercial vehicle was not injured. Reserve Deputy Constable Avery had served with the Jefferson County Constable Precinct 1 for four years. Survivors include her husband, daughter, and granddaughter.



POLICE OFFICER JOHN G. BARTHOLOMEW

CHICAGO POLICE DEPARTMENT, ILLINOIS
END OF WATCH: SATURDAY, APRIL 25, 2026

Police Officer John Bartholomew was shot and killed by a robbery suspect at Chicago's Endeavor Health Swedish Hospital at approximately 10:50 a.m. Around 9:00 a.m. Saturday morning, Officer Bartholomew and another officer transported a suspect accused of robbing a Family Dollar store in Albany Park to the Swedish Hospital for observation. While the suspect was being prepped for a CT scan just after noon, he produced a gun and fired, striking both officers. The officers were taken to Advocate Illinois Masonic Medical Center, where Officer Bartholomew was pronounced dead later that afternoon; the second officer suffered severe injuries.

The suspect, who was already on parole and escaped an electronic monitoring system, fled the hospital scene but was apprehended shortly afterward. He is charged with murder, attempted murder, aggravated kidnapping, and aggravated battery. Officer Bartholomew had served with the Chicago Police Department for 10 years, assigned to the Albany Park (17th) District. Survivors include his wife and three children.



DEPUTY SHERIFF RICHARD COYLE

CRITTENDEN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE, KENTUCKY
END OF WATCH: THURSDAY, APRIL 30, 2026

Deputy Sheriff Rick Coyle succumbed to gunshot wounds he received while serving papers at a home on the 2800 block of KY 365 in Sturgis.

Deputy Coyle and additional officers were serving emergency guardianship paperwork when they were met with gunfire. Officers returned fire, killing the suspect.

Deputy Coyle was transported to Deaconess Midtown Hospital in Evansville. Four weeks later, he succumbed to his wounds.

Deputy Coyle had served with the Crittenden County Sheriff's Office for two years as a School Resource Officer and previously served with the Chicago Police Department for 28 years. Survivors include his wife, sister, and three nieces.



BORDER PATROL AGENT SEAN M. MCDONOUGH

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
- CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION - UNITED STATES
BORDER PATROL, U.S. GOVERNMENT
END OF WATCH: FRIDAY, MAY 1, 2026

Border Patrol Agent Sean McDonough suffered a medical emergency while performing marine unit water training in Alexandra Bay, NY.

Agent McDonough was a United States Army and National Guard veteran and served with the United States Department of Homeland Security - Customs and Border Protection - United States Border Patrol for over 19 years. Survivors include his wife, two daughters, parents, two sisters, grandmother, two nieces, and a nephew.



TROOPER KEVIN TRAINOR

MASSACHUSETTS STATE POLICE, MASSACHUSETTS
END OF WATCH: WEDNESDAY, MAY 6, 2026

Trooper Kevin Trainor was killed in a vehicle crash on Route 1 in Lynnfield. Around 2:00 a.m., 911 calls reported a wrong-way driver on Route 1. When Trooper Trainor responded, he collided with the driver. Trooper Trainor was transported to Massachusetts General Hospital

in Boston, where he succumbed to his injuries. The driver was pronounced dead at the scene. Trooper Trainor had served with the Massachusetts State Police for three years, assigned to the Danvers Barracks. Survivors include his mother, fiancée, and four siblings.



POLICE OFFICER DON "DJ" KELLER

GREENWOOD POLICE DEPARTMENT, SOUTH CAROLINA

END OF WATCH: MONDAY, MAY 11, 2026

Police Officer DJ Keller was killed in a head-on collision during the pursuit of a driver who sped away from a traffic stop.

Around 4:56 p.m., when an officer attempted to pull over a vehicle suspected to be involved in several shooting-related incidents, the three suspects in the vehicle fled at a high rate of speed. While traveling westbound on East Cambridge Avenue, the driver crashed into Officer Keller, who was traveling eastbound while responding to assist.

Officer Keller died at the scene. His K9 survived the collision.

The driver, age 15, and the two passengers, ages 17 and 18, were transported to the hospital. One suspect was taken into custody after being released from the hospital.

Officer Keller was a United States Army and National Guard veteran who served with the Greenwood Police Department for three years. Survivors include his wife and daughter.



GAME WARDEN PILOT JOSHUA T. TIBBETTS

MAINE DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE

- WARDEN SERVICE, MAINE

END OF WATCH: TUESDAY, MAY 12, 2026

Game Warden Pilot Joshua Tibbetts was killed when his Maine Warden Service Cessna 185F plane crashed near Schooolhouse Pond in Avon shortly before 11:00 a.m. Warden Pilot Tibbetts was en route to assist

the Department of Inland Fish and Wildlife in fish stocking when his plane crashed. He was the only person aboard the plane. Warden Pilot Tibbetts had served with the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife - Warden Service for 18 years and previously served with the Penobscot County Sheriff's Office for almost 12 years. In 2025, he received the Warden Service's Exemplary Service Award. Survivors include his two daughters, partner, stepdaughter, parents, sister, nephew, two nieces, and former spouse. His father also served with the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife - Warden Service.



POLICE OFFICER DYLAN CHASE OWEN

CITRONELLE POLICE DEPARTMENT, ALABAMA
END OF WATCH: THURSDAY, MAY 14, 2026

Police Officer Dylan Owen was killed in a single-vehicle crash on North Mobile Street near Laird Drive in Citronelle.

Around 3:30 p.m., while driving southbound on North Mobile Street, Officer Owen's patrol vehicle left the roadway and crashed into a tree. Despite immediate lifesaving measures, Officer Owen died at the scene.

Officer Owen had served with the Citronelle Police Department for two years. In 2025, he received the department's Rookie of the Year Award.



SERGEANT JOSEPH APODACA

TAOS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE, NEW MEXICO
END OF WATCH: FRIDAY, MAY 22, 2026

Sergeant Joseph Apodaca was killed pursuing a reckless driver at approximately 11:44 pm on NM-518 near a driveway at the 7200 block, between Ranchos de Taos and Talpa. Around 10:25 pm that evening, Taos County

Sheriff's deputies were searching for a suspected reckless driver and were alerted that the suspect had used a driveway near the 7200 block. As Sergeant Apodaca was turning into the drive, his motorcycle collided with a sheriff's deputy pickup truck turning left into the drive. Sergeant Apodaca suffered fatal injuries and was pronounced at the scene. The suspected reckless driver is still at large. Sergeant Apodaca had served with the Taos County Sheriff's Office for 8 years, had previously served with the county jail, and was a member of the Swift Water Rescue Team.



CORPORAL BARRY JAMES FOUST

ARLINGTON COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT, VIRGINIA

END OF WATCH: FRIDAY, MAY 22, 2026

Corporal Barry Foust died as a result of cancer that he developed following his response to the Pentagon on the morning of September 11, 2001, and during his subsequent assignment to the search and recovery efforts after the 9/11 Terrorist Attacks. When American Airlines Flight 77 struck the Pentagon, Corporal Foust was at the intersection of Walter Reed Drive and Columbia Pike. He worked that day to clear the roadway for first responders. Throughout the week, he returned to the Pentagon crash site to collect evidence.

Corporal Foust had served with the Arlington County Police Department for over 35 years. He had previously served with the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority Police Department for almost 2 years. Survivors include his wife, daughter, sisters, and granddaughter.



POLICE OFFICER SANDRA BLAIR

DESOTO POLICE DEPARTMENT, TEXAS

END OF WATCH: TUESDAY, MAY 26, 2026

Police Officer Sandra Blair succumbed to injuries she received when she was struck by an intoxicated driver while investigating a crash on Texas Highway 35 in DeSoto on June 17, 1999. Officer Blair was transported to the hospital with head and internal injuries, fractured legs, and a fractured pelvis. She developed a seizure disorder and other medical complications, rendering her medically disabled. She passed away from complications of her seizures on May 26, 2026.

The driver was arrested and convicted of intoxication assault and leaving the scene of an accident, causing serious bodily injury.

Officer Blair had served with the DeSoto Police Department for two years. After being medically discharged from law enforcement, she served as an administrative assistant with the DeSoto Police Department. Survivors include her daughter, mother, brother, sister, companion, and two grandchildren.



POLICE OFFICER KRISTEN YEAGER

**CENTRAL BERKS REGIONAL POLICE DEPARTMENT,
PENNSYLVANIA**

END OF WATCH: FRIDAY, MAY 29, 2026

Police Officer Kristen Yeager was killed in an automobile crash near the intersection of W Philadelphia Avenue and Manatawny Road in Earl Township, while responding to assist a neighboring agency.

Officer Yeager was ejected from her patrol car after it left the roadway and struck a tree while she was responding to the emergency call shortly before 8:00 pm. She was transported to a local hospital, where she succumbed to her injuries. Officer Yeager had served with the Central Berks Regional Police Department for two and a half years. Survivors include her husband and three children.



DEPUTY SHERIFF LOGAN REECE UTT

CARROLL COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE, VIRGINIA

END OF WATCH: FRIDAY, MAY 29, 2026

Deputy Sheriff Logan Utt was shot and killed while performing a welfare check at 13658 Fancy Gap Highway in Cana.

Around 9:26 p.m., the Carroll County Sheriff's Office received a call for a welfare check. When Deputy Utt and another deputy arrived at the scene, the subject fired at both deputies before fleeing.

Deputy Utt was killed. The other deputy was struck in his ballistic vest and received medical treatment.

The suspect was arrested two days later in North Carolina. He has been charged with murder. The suspect, a convicted felon, was convicted of eight felony charges in 2015, but only served eight months of the 40-year sentence. Deputy Utt was a United States Air Force veteran and had served with the Carroll County Sheriff's Office for over two years. He had previously served with the Cana Volunteer Fire Department and Mount Airy Fire Department. Survivors include his wife, two children, grandmother, two brothers, and two sisters.



POLICE OFFICER DUSTIN KRISH

CARROLLTON POLICE DEPARTMENT, GEORGIA

END OF WATCH: TUESDAY, JUNE 9, 2026

Police Officer Dustin Krish succumbed to injuries he received when he was struck by the driver of a car while directing traffic on June 11, 2025.

Officer Krish was directing traffic on Highway 27 in Carrollton due to construction lane closures. A car traveling southbound passed through the light, struck Officer Krish, and then crashed into another vehicle.

Officer Krish was thrown several feet into the air. He was airlifted to Marietta's Wellstar Kennestone Regional Medical Center, where he underwent multiple surgeries for severe brain injuries.

On June 2, 2026, his condition deteriorated, and he passed away on June 9, 2026. Officer Krish had served with the Carrollton Police Department for over three years. Survivors include his wife and brother, who also serves with the agency.



TROOPER SERGIO ROMERO

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY - TEXAS HIGHWAY
PATROL, TEXAS

END OF WATCH: WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17, 2026

Trooper Sergio Romero was killed in a vehicle crash on U.S. Highway 287 near Childress, Texas. Around 4:00 p.m., Trooper Romero was attempting to pull over a vehicle when a tractor-trailer pulled out in front of his patrol vehicle. He died at the scene.

Trooper Romero had served with the Texas Department of Public Safety - Texas Highway Patrol for nine months and previously served with the Hall County Sheriff's Office. Survivors include his wife and two sons.



DEPUTY SHERIFF DAMIEN DRAPER BOST

COLUMBUS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE, NORTH CAROLINA
END OF WATCH: THURSDAY, JUNE 25, 2026

Deputy Sheriff Damien Bost was struck and killed by the driver of a tractor-trailer on U.S. Highway 74/76 near the Hallsboro Road exit.

At 10:40 a.m., Deputy Bost was parked in the median with his cruiser lights activated. He was at the construction scene to warn drivers about the repaving project when a tractor-trailer in the westbound lane hit his cruiser. A construction worker was also injured.

The driver was charged with misdemeanor death by vehicle, reckless driving, and failure to reduce speed. Deputy Bost had served with the Columbus County Sheriff's Office for eight years and was a School Resource Officer. Survivors include his wife, two children, mother, two brothers, four sisters, and parents.

BEYOND THE SHIFT: PRIORITIZING MENTAL HEALTH & RESILIENCE FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT

The Unseen Burden

Every time a deputy sheriff or police officer pins on the badge, they accept an unwritten contract: to run toward danger when others flee. Over the course of a career, an officer will witness critical incidents, severe trauma, and human tragedy at rates exponentially higher than the general public. While physical training and tactical gear protect officers on the outside, the cumulative emotional toll—often referred to as cumulative stress trauma—remains an invisible burden that follows them home.

For decades, the law enforcement culture encouraged a “suck it up and move on” mindset. Today, that stigma is breaking down, replaced by a growing movement across sheriff’s offices nationwide to prioritize officer mental health, peer support, and long-term wellness.

Building a Culture of Peer Support

One of the most effective tools in modern law enforcement wellness is the implementation of structured Peer Support Teams. Composed of active-duty officers who have received specialized training in crisis intervention and active listening, peer support programs bridge the gap between tactical operations and professional mental health services.

Because officers are often hesitant to speak with outside clinicians who may not understand the daily reality of the job, peer team mem-

bers provide a confidential, safe environment to talk through critical incidents—from officer-involved shootings to difficult calls involving children.

Proactive Wellness Programs

Leading law enforcement agencies are no longer waiting for a crisis to occur before offering support. Modern wellness strategies include:

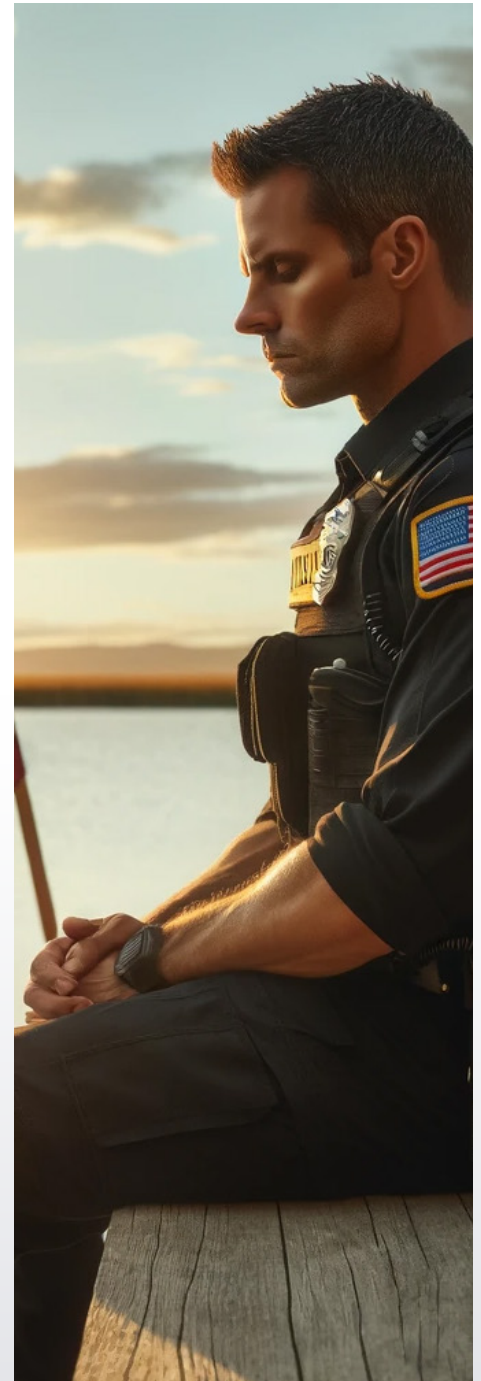
Routine Mental Health Check-ins: Annual, confidential wellness visits with licensed mental health professionals specializing in law enforcement trauma.

Family Readiness Initiatives: Workshops and support networks designed for spouses and children to help families recognize signs of burnout, PTSD, and secondary traumatic stress.

Physical & Mindful Recovery: Integrating sleep hygiene, physical conditioning, and stress-reduction techniques into agency training curricula.

Protecting Those Who Protect Us

Ensuring that our men and women in uniform return home safely at the end of their shift requires more than just high-quality ballistic vests and tactical training. It requires a commitment to their mental and emotional well-being. By fostering a culture where seeking help is viewed as a sign of strength rather than weakness, we honor the service of our officers and protect the families who stand behind them.



GUARDIANS ON FOUR PAWS: THE UNWAVERING DEVOTION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT K-9S

A Bond Beyond Words

Across county jurisdictions and municipal police departments, a specialized group of officers works side by side with partners who speak no words, yet

children, and shares every moment of the shift.

The Ultimate Sacrifice

Just like their human partners, K-9 officers routinely put themselves in harm's way to protect their commu-

Supporting K-9 Safety and Post-Retirement Care

As technology and veterinary medicine advance, agencies and non-profit organizations are taking major steps to ensure K-9 safety and health:

- **K-9 Ballistic Vests:** Non-profit initiatives and community fundraisers have helped outfit thousands of working dogs with custom-fitted, bullet- and stab-protective vests.
- **Advanced Field First Aid:** Handlers are increasingly trained in K-9 tactical emergency casualty care (TECC), learning how to treat heatstroke, gunshot wounds, and narcotic exposure directly in the field.
- **Honoring Retirement:** After 7 to 10 years of service, retired K-9s transition to living out their golden years as full-time family pets with their handlers. Non-profits across the nation help cover the medical expenses for retired law enforcement dogs, ensuring they receive the care they deserve after a lifetime of service.



communicate complete loyalty. Law enforcement K-9 units represent one of the most vital, versatile, and trusted assets in modern policing.

From tracking missing children and endangered seniors in dense wilderness to detecting narcotics, searching for explosives, and apprehending dangerous suspects, K-9 teams perform high-risk duties every day. For the handler, the K-9 is not just a partner on the beat; they are a family member who lives in their home, bonds with their

nities and fellow deputies. When a K-9 handler steps into a high-risk situation, the dog's sharp senses and fearless instincts frequently prevent ambushes or defuse lethal confrontations before human life is lost.

Tragically, K-9s also pay the ultimate price. Across the country, line-of-duty deaths of police working dogs are met with the full honors of a law enforcement funeral—a testament to the respect and gratitude held by the entire agency and community.

An Unbroken Line of Service

Whether patrolling rural county roads or searching suburban neighborhoods, the dual-purpose K-9 team embodies vigilance, dedication, and courage. To the handlers who ride with a four-legged partner in the back of the cruiser, and to the communities protected by their presence, these dogs are far more than working animals—they are true guardians of the thin blue line.

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