



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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“THE MIAMI BEACH POLICE DEPARTMENT OFFICERS LEAD #1 FOR MIAMI DADE COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF CHIEF’S OF POLICE AWARDS”

“And The Award Goes To” Detective Mario Pena and Detective Luis Estopinan.

In the month of August 2011, the officer of the Month Award was presented to MBPD Detectives Mario Pena and Luis Estopinan. Detectives Pena and Luis Estopinan received this prestigious award for their recent investigation into the attempted robbery and shooting of NYPD Detective Harold Thomas.

During the early morning hours of July 23, 2011, vacationing NYPD Detective Harold Thomas was returning to his courtyard hotel at 1233 Collins Ave. As Detective Thomas entered the courtyard of the hotel, he was attacked by two men who attempted to rob him at gunpoint. Detective Thomas was able to take cover behind a tree and draw his service firearm. He exchanged gun shots with the two criminals before they fled wounded and empty handed.

Detective Thomas, seriously wounded as a result, was left for dead. He laid bleeding and unconscious.

For the next five days following the botched robbery, Detectives Pena and Estopinan worked tirelessly to solve this crime. With the assistants of our law enforcement partners, (U.S. Secret Service, BSO’s Homicide Squad, Miami-Dade Corrections, NYPD), the investigation led to the arrest of Mustafa Lee and Francisco Hernandez. Both were charged with [attempted] felony murder.

It is significant to note that Officers from the Miami Beach Police Department have won the prestigious MDCACP Officer of the Month Award for four out of the eight months this year. This is an unprecedented honor and recognition for the MBPD. It speaks volumes about the organization in spite of recent attempts from multiple sources to negatively influence perceptions. The outstanding efforts of the MBPD in this case drew widespread accolades including several made through personal phone calls between Chief Noriega and NYPD Police Commissioner, Raymond W. Kelly. The previous winners include:

March 2011 – Sergeant Howard Bennett and Sergeant Ibrahim Garcia
Sergeant Steve Feldman, Officers Robert Chenoweth and Grant Reid
(two separate incidents)

April 2011 – Officer Antonio Ferbeyre

May 2011 – Detective Luis King