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LETTER TO COMMISSION

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TO: Mayor David Dermer and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Jorge M. Gonzalez, City Manager

DATE: July 12, 2007

SUBJECT: MDCACP's June 2007 Officer(s) of the Month

This Letter to the City Commission is to provide information on the selection of Sergeant Joe Duque, Detectives Martin Garcia, Jorge Mercado, Mishart Torres, Hector Fernandez, and Officer Mario Pena by the Miami-Dade County Association of Chiefs of Police (MDCACP) as their June 2007 Officer(s) of the Month.

The individuals were working as the GRIP (Getting Robberies In Progress) detail when Detective Martin Garcia observed a Toyota Camry occupied by three black males and a black female. The subject's behavior and driving pattern drew his attention, so he summoned additional GRIP detail officers to join his surveillance. They followed the subjects for approximately thirty minutes without being noticed. The female subject eventually exited the vehicle in the area of 14th Street and Collins Ave. She approached two white males and engaged them in conversation. As she distracted the two white males, the subjects in the vehicle prepared to rob them.

The female returned to the vehicle as the victims walked to the front of the Betsy Ross Hotel, located at 1440 Ocean Drive. The vehicle followed them and parked in the 1400 block of Ocean Court. GRIP Officers observed two of the black males exit the rear of the vehicle and run between the buildings towards the victims. Upon seeing this, GRIP officers quickly formulated an arrest plan and created a surrounding perimeter. The two subjects approached the victims, produced firearms, and robbed them at gunpoint. They then fled back to the awaiting getaway vehicle parked in the alley. The subject entered the vehicle and the driver sped southbound through the alley.

GRIP Officers quickly closed in and sealed the alleyway, covering all possible escape routes. Upon seeing the approaching officers, the driver quickly threw the vehicle in reverse attempting to escape. Upon realizing they were about to be arrested, the subjects began exiting the vehicle. One of the subjects exited the vehicle armed with a loaded 9mm Glock semi-auto pistol and attempted to flee. The subject threw the firearm into nearby bushes and was swiftly apprehended by GRIP Officers. The firearm was located and the remaining subjects were also apprehended. The subject later confessed to committing two more Armed Robberies earlier that evening in Broward County. It is believed these subjects committed 10-12 Armed Robberies in both Miami-Dade and Broward Counties.

From the initial observation to the mobile vehicle surveillance, the foresight, planning and communication during the arrest, to the sworn confessions obtained, everything fell into place seamlessly. No one was injured, the property was recovered, and additional cases were closed. This group of officers used their wide range of experiences to put together an incredible investigative effort.

Please join me in congratulating these fine officers for their remarkable accomplishments in this case. We are extremely proud of these employees and are honored to have individuals of their extraordinary caliber working for our Police Department.

JMG\CN\tr