

THE NEW ZEALAND BRAVERY DECORATION (N.Z.B.D.)

Karl Hugh PENNINGTON **Constable, New Zealand Police**

Date of action: 5 June 2005

Date of award: 3 May 2008

Citation

On 5 June 2005 at 9.20 am, a man drove into the St Lukes shopping centre carpark in Auckland after being pursued by Police for driving dangerously through inner-city Auckland. Once in the carpark the offender, who was armed with a cut-down AK47 style assault rifle, tried unsuccessfully to hijack a car occupied by a mother and her six year old daughter. The offender then tried to hijack a second car, but was distracted by the arrival of a Police car driven by Constable Pennington and Constable Gibson.

Seeing the Police officers arrive, the offender approached the Police car and pointed the rifle at Constable Pennington. He pulled the trigger, but the gun failed to fire as it had not been properly cocked. Undeterred, the offender continued to approach the car still aiming the rifle at Constable Pennington. While this was happening, Constable Pennington retained his composure and hastily made a radio call to Police Control. Constable Gibson dived out of the car. The offender continued to struggle with his rifle and when he finally managed to chamber a round, he fired a shot into the roof of the carpark. Not knowing in which direction this shot had been fired, Constable Pennington also dived out of the car. Realising that both Police officers were now lying prone on the opposite side of the vehicle, the offender fired several shots through the rear passenger door of the Police car in an attempt to kill them. One of these shots passed close to Constable Gibson's head.

The offender then ran off and attempted to hijack a further two vehicles at the car park entrance. During this time, both constables moved to a position where they could observe the offender. Believing that several members of the public were in grave danger, Constable Pennington stepped out from behind cover to attract his attention. Realising the Police officers were still alive, the offender ran back into the carpark firing at them. Both constables ran up a ramp and, once they believed they were clear of the offender, they warned other members of the public who were in the vicinity to get clear of the area and then called for back up. During this time, the offender finally managed to hijack a vehicle containing a man and his elderly parents and drove off with them still in the car. During the ensuing pursuit of the hijacked vehicle, the offender fired on Police a further three times and was eventually apprehended by the Armed Offenders Squad.

Throughout this incident both these unarmed Police officers displayed great bravery in confronting an armed offender who was intent on killing them. Working as a team, they made sure members of the public were warned of potential danger and managed to prevent at least two attempts by the offender to hijack vehicles in the car park. They also kept Police controllers informed throughout the incident, which facilitated the subsequent arrest of the offender by the Armed Offenders Squad.