

## **THE NEW ZEALAND BRAVERY STAR (N.Z.B.S.)**

### **Paul Anthony SYMONDS** **Senior Constable, New Zealand Police**

Date of action: 7 May 2009

Date of award: 2 April 2011

#### *Citation*

Senior Constable Symonds was the senior member of a team of three Armed Offenders Squad (AOS) members who were the first AOS officers to arrive in the vicinity of Chaucer Road, Napier, on 7 May 2009. Symonds kept in contact with Police Communications throughout the time he attended the incident, helping to build a picture of the scene in Chaucer Road. He made a crucial decision to convey activities over the main Police radio channel, rather than the encrypted AOS channel. This meant that information was disseminated quickly to Police in Napier, enabling them to make swift tactical decisions. It also placed Symonds at risk as his communications could have been audible to the offender, Molenaar.

Senior Constable Symonds led Senior Constable Hurworth and Constable Burne down Chaucer Road from the intersection with Guys Hill Road. They were intent on finding and evacuating Senior Constable Snee, and Senior Constable Diver who they knew had been shot, as well as any civilians who might have been in the area. The offender, Jan Molenaar, could not be accurately located. He continually fired volleys of shots from high calibre semi-automatic firearms.

As they moved down Chaucer Road they came across the injured Senior Constable Miller who had been shot and was lying in the driveway at 47 Chaucer Road and was being attended to by others. Ascertaining that he was stable, they found Senior Constable Len Snee lying on the road outside 41 Chaucer Road (Molenaar's house). Bending to check Snee's condition while cover was provided by Hurworth and Burne, Symonds found that Snee was deceased. Leonard Holmwood, a civilian who had been shot, was also located nearby. By now Symonds and his team were fully aware that the offender, Molenaar, possessed high calibre semi-automatic firearms, was able to accurately discharge them, was volatile, and had shot three police officers and a civilian. His location unknown, they knew they were in a very dangerous situation.

Even with this knowledge, he decided to press on, fully exposed to fire, looking for Senior Constable Diver. The three AOS officers thought Diver was possibly in the section at the rear of Molenaar's house. Senior Constable Symonds called out to Diver, the calls alerting Molenaar to their position. Without any warning, Molenaar fired a volley of at least 13 shots at them. The officers took cover behind a wooden fence close to Molenaar's house. The shots went through the fence above their heads.

Some time later Symonds received advice that Diver was at 45 Chaucer Road and went there with Hurworth. Symonds covered Chaucer Road so that medical assistance could come to Diver's aid. Once Diver had been evacuated, Symonds and other AOS officers deployed into 43 Chaucer Road to keep Molenaar cordoned in his property. Symonds remained there until he was relieved late on the evening of 7 May 2009.

Through his radio communication, Senior Constable Symonds made a significant contribution to disseminating information on the situation to Police, enabling tactical decisions to be made, and placed himself at significant risk due to his location and these communications.

Senior Constable Symonds showed outstanding bravery, not only in making the decision to enter the immediate area outside 41 Chaucer Road on 7 May 2009 at a very early stage in the incident, knowing at least one police officer had been shot and that shots were continuing to be fired by the offender, but also in remaining there after finding a colleague shot dead and a civilian wounded. He operated in an area of challenging terrain on a search and rescue mission for those shot by the offender knowing that Molenaar was volatile and not knowing his exact location. He knew that his life was in significant danger, despite being equipped with ballistic armour, as Molenaar was using high calibre semi-automatic firearms at close range.