



Officers who tackled terrorist moments after he fatally stabbed Sir David Amess speak about their actions

13:06 11/04/2022

Two heroic unarmed Essex Police officers, who tackled a terrorist just moments after he had fatally stabbed Sir David Amess MP, have spoken about their actions that day.

PC Ryan Curtis and PC Scott James have since been awarded the Merit Star - Essex Police's highest accolade - in recognition of their selfless bravery.

Reports of a stabbing at Belfairs Methodist Church

The two Police Constables, who are both on the South LPA Disruptor team, were on their way back from arresting a wanted man on Friday 15 October 2021 when they heard reports on their radio of a stabbing at the Belfairs Methodist Church at around 12pm. They immediately headed to the scene to help.

PC James recalled "I remember it all happening very quickly, one minute we were conducting a routine arrest and the next minute we were on blue lights to the church where we knew the suspect was still inside with a knife.

PC Curtis added "Our main thought was to get there as quickly as possible - we did not really have time to think, we just wanted to stop anyone else from being seriously injured."

The pair arrived on scene at the church in Eastwood Road North, within minutes where distressed members of the public told them Sir David was lying injured inside along with a still armed Ali. Both officers, who were in plain clothes due to the nature of their role, were unarmed and had only their police batons and incapacitant spray for protection. Although colleagues were on their way, the nearest armed unit was still five-minutes away, leading the pair to take the brave decision to enter the church in a bid to help Sir David and contain the suspect.

Recalling the moment the officers decided to go in alone, PC James said:

"No-one knew if there were any other members of the public inside with the attacker. At this point we knew there was no option other than for Ryan and I to go inside without taser or firearms support.

"We couldn't stand outside if there was a chance other people were getting attacked and we also wanted to get paramedics inside the building as soon as possible to save Sir David.

"Our biggest fear that day was that there were other defenceless people inside with Sir David waiting for the police to come through the door - so any fears we had were put to one side.

PC Curtis added:

"Once we got inside, we shouted at the suspect to drop the weapon and he refused and then he started walking towards us with the knife.

"We didn't know what he was going to do, we knew he might attempt to attack us, but we had to stop him getting past us as there were other members of the public outside. We carried on shouting at him and trying to persuade him to stop and eventually he dropped the weapon allowing us to arrest him."

Following the arrest of Ali, the brave actions of PCs James and Curtis cleared the way for paramedics and four other Essex Police officers - Inspector Andy Jopson, PC Lily Wellington, PC L'wren Bremmer and PC Daniel Smy - to get safely into the church and administer first aid to a dying Sir David.

The Merit Star

In the aftermath of the events that day PC Curtis and PC James were awarded the Essex Police Merit Star by Chief Constable BJ Harrington in a private ceremony. The accolade is the highest that can be bestowed by the Chief Constable and is given for extraordinary acts of bravery.

This week an Old Bailey jury found 26-year-old Ali of Kentish Town, London guilty of Sir David's murder and preparing acts of terrorism.

Reflecting on their actions that day, both constables remain characteristically modest about their heroism.

PC Curtis said "We are not heroes - we did what any other officer would have that day. We only wish we could have done more and we continue to think of both Sir David and his family."

PC James added "When I look back, I know that we did all we could to detain the suspect and I'm really proud of the other officers and paramedics who did all they could to try and save Sir David.

"Ryan and I just did what any other police officer would have done - and that's doing your best and having each other's backs in whatever situation you walk into."

Essex Police's Chief Constable BJ Harrington said "Ryan and Scott represent everything that is remarkable about the officers of our great force.

"They ran into the face of danger that day, not knowing what they would face and with their only thoughts being to apprehend the suspect, get help to Sir David and to protect other members of the public.

"They are the embodiment of what it means to protect and serve the people of our great county and it is testament to their courage that I awarded them the very rare Merit Star accolade.

"They are a credit to themselves, Essex Police, their friends and family and indeed to British policing.

"Today I would like to pay tribute to the bravery of Ryan and Scott and all of the Essex Police officers who attended that day and supported the investigation and the community in the days, weeks and months afterwards. I would also like to give special thanks to our 999 call handler, Beth Fennell. I would also like to thank our colleagues at the Metropolitan Police's Counter Terror Command who led the subsequent investigation and ensured Ali faced justice.

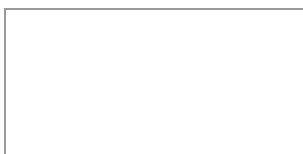
"But most of all I would like to pay tribute to Sir David - a thoroughly committed servant of the public who worked tirelessly. Our thoughts remain with Sir David's family at this difficult time."

Unwavering bravery and professionalism

South LPA Commander Chief Supt Simon Anslow added "I'm extremely proud of Scott, Ryan and all of the officers who turned out that day.

"Despite the unimaginable situation they were all confronted with their bravery and professionalism was unwavering.

"Today, following the verdict, we remember Sir David and all he did for Southend. His legacy will live on in our proud city, which we will continue to protect and serve in the very best tradition of Essex Police."



A vicious attack on a dedicated MP

Roger Hirst, Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex added "The murder of Sir David was a vicious attack on a dedicated Member of Parliament who had served his community tirelessly. It was also an attack on our democracy and our way of life. There is no place in our society for such terrible acts of brutality.

"The outpouring of grief and support from the residents of Southend following Sir David's murder shows the high regard he was held in personally but also the value that we all place on our open and democratic way of life. Sir David was a strong MP and represented a strong city that showed it will not be intimidated by such brutal acts of terror.

"The Police are often asked to do difficult things and the officers who responded to this incident were faced with an incredibly challenging situation and responded with bravery and professionalism. They did an important job in terrible circumstances and deserve to be recognised for their contribution."

Ali was remanded in custody and will return to the Old Bailey at a later date for sentence.

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