

TOP PATROL CASE OF THE YEAR  
2007

OFFICER ROBERT EDWARDS AND K9 RICO  
ST PAUL, MN POLICE DEPARTMENT

While this deployment is worthy of recognition on its own, the history of the suspect bears explanation.

Officer Edwards assisted in an undercover operation aimed at apprehending a dangerous fugitive. This suspect was deeply involved as an upper level narcotic trafficker who was dealing in multiple pound transactions of methamphetamine. His history involved a search warrant executed at his home, resulting in the recovery of a large amount of cocaine, methamphetamine and a handgun. This occurred while the suspect was out on bail awaiting a multi-year sentence on two previous narcotic charges.

Based on a promise to cooperate with narcotic agents, he was booked and released. The suspect failed to cooperate or appear and a warrant was issued for his arrest. Narcotic agents were told by an informant that the suspect was threatening to flee, fight or “shoot it out” with the police rather than go back to prison.

Subsequent to these warrants being issued, a suburban police officer attempted to stop the suspect, who was unknown to him, for a traffic infraction. The suspect led the officer on a high speed pursuit, crashed, and was apprehended by a Minneapolis Police K9. Recovered from the vehicle were two pistols, a shotgun and narcotics.

While the suspect was being treated at the hospital for the K9 apprehension, he lied about his identity. He complained of pain from his restraints, talking the escort officer into removing his handcuffs, as he was being taken to the transport. Once outside, he was able to escape by knocking down an officer, fleeing dressed only in a hospital gown.

Due to the extreme danger of this suspect, an operation to capture him was undertaken. It involved over twenty-five officers from various jurisdictions. Advanced technical, investigative tools were utilized, but, because the suspect was so nervous, he failed to show up for a meet with an informant.

On October 10, 2007 at 4:48 PM, the informant notified agents that the suspect wanted to quickly meet with him to get money and leave town. Agents weighed their options and came to the conclusion if he was not captured, further delaying his arrest would pose an extreme danger should the fugitive be encountered by an unsuspecting officer.

A plan was devised to apprehend the suspect as he met with the informant. The suspect arrived in a truck, picked up the informant, and a traffic stop was attempted by Officer Edwards and another squad. Prior to attempting the stop, the suspect saw the marked squads and evaded the officers by speeding through a strip mall. As he did so, the informant tried to jump out of the passenger

door as the truck was traveling at 40 mph. Unmarked cars attempted to block the exit, but the fugitive nearly crashed into them and was able to escape.

Officer Edwards and the second squad pursued the suspect on a lengthy chase, crossing into Minneapolis. At Elliot and Minnehaha Parkway, the suspect slammed his truck into another vehicle and fled northbound on foot. Due to the suspect's reckless driving, Officer Edwards distance behind the vehicle did not allow him to immediately send K9 Rico to apprehend the suspect. Officer Edwards pursued the suspect with Rico on lead until he could safely release the dog.

As the suspect fled east down an alley, Officer Edwards issued a warning, which the suspect failed to heed. He then released K9 Rico to apprehend the suspect. As Rico was in pursuit, Officer Edwards saw the suspect turn toward him with a black handgun, pointing the gun at K9 Rico. Officer Edwards drew his gun and ordered the suspect to drop his weapon. The suspect failed to comply and continued running. As he did so, he raised his gun (later identified as a loaded Hi-Point, semi-automatic 9mm pistol with laser sights) and pointed it at Officer Edwards. Officer Edwards pursued and fired his handgun at the suspect. Despite the gunfire, K9 Rico was able to maintain focus and continued chasing down the suspect. The suspect continued running and again turned with his weapon in his hand, engaging Officer Edwards. Officer Edwards gain fired at the suspect. As Edwards fired, K9 Rico apprehended the suspect by his right arm, disarming him, and took him to the ground. Lacking any cover, Officer Edwards had sought concealment behind a hedgerow as he continued his pursuit. When he moved from behind the hedge to assess the situation, he saw that K9 Rico had the suspect on the ground and that the suspect's pistol had been knocked from his grasp. K9 Rico had the struggling suspect firmly held on the ground, giving Officer Edwards the tactical edge. At gunpoint, Officer Edwards approached and was able to evaluate if the suspect was still posing a risk of deadly force to either he or his partner. When he did so, he saw the suspect was no longer armed, and had been struck by two of Officer Edwards rounds. He then coordinated backup Officers to his location, and, when they arrived, handcuffed and tactically removed K9 Rico from the apprehension.

When Rico was removed, a second loaded handgun was found in the suspect's jacket pocket (Kel-Tec .380 caliber semi-automatic) as well as methamphetamine in the suspect's truck.

After removing K9 Rico from the scene, Officer Edwards saw that Rico had suffered a gunshot wound to his right paw. Officer Edwards rushed Rico to the emergency clinic for treatment. It was found that Rico had a round go through his paw, almost completely severing his upper pad.

Officer Edwards and Rico were called to assist on a hastily planned operation to apprehend a dangerous fugitive, whose past had proven him to be an armed, ruthless and desperate criminal. Allowing this suspect to remain at large, clearly presented a danger to any officer that may unwittingly encounter him.

Officer Edwards and Rico were called upon to be the contacting officer, placing them in harms way should the encounter go awry. Officer Edwards pursued the suspect in a vehicle chase through multiple jurisdictions until the suspect crashed into another vehicle. He utilized sound

tactics in deploying his K9, ensuring target identification and safeguarding citizens at the hectic crash scene.

Officer Edwards further put himself at risk, engaging the armed suspect in a running gunfight, as his dog was caught in the line of fire. K9 Rico drew the suspect's attention, distracting the suspect from firing on Officer Edwards. Rico remained on-task, apprehending and disarming the suspect while under fire, enduring a gunshot wound during the apprehension, and still maintained control of the fugitive. Despite having been shot, Rico continued to hold the struggling suspect for the several minutes it took for back-up officers to arrive. The courage, focus and drive displayed by K9 Rico during this encounter was extraordinary. Not only did this deployment save Officer Edwards' life, it enable officers to ratchet down their level of force, likely saving the suspect's life as well.

After a full recovery, K9 Rico is back on the street with Officer Edwards, continuing to catch criminals and protect the citizens of St. Paul.