



Gun-toting criminal threatened to kill

The Police Federation's Police Bravery Awards, in association with *The Sun* newspaper, recognise the courageous acts of police officers. Syreeta Lund tells the story behind the 2009 overall winners

A dangerous balaclava-clad man repeatedly shot at police officers and later threatened in court that he should have shot one of their faces 'clean off'.

It was a sunny day in March 2008 and the police officers were on routine patrol when they spotted two men acting suspiciously – little did they know at this point that one of them was armed.

Met officers Sgt Stephen Hayter, PC Richard Cousins and PC Michael Carroll, from the territorial support group saw two men who were acting suspiciously.

"It was a quiet residential street," says Sgt Stephen Hayter. "The driver of our police van asked the men if he could have a quick word, then one of the men pulled a balaclava over his head, pulled out a gun and began firing at the officers and pointed it at the van."

PC Carroll had been round the front of the police van and PC Cousins went around the back when they had shots fired directly at them.

PC Cousins told *Police* magazine: "He shot at Micky (Carroll) once and turned and shot straight at me, he then pointed the gun at the van before running off into the local estate.

"This was déjà vous for me as I've been shot at before but I had only had six months as a police officer then. I turned my body away from the gun and just kind of ducked before going after one of the suspects. I just thought, 'you're not getting away with it'."

The offender was Carlton Sam, 24, of Holloway, north London, who later admitted firearms offences but denied three counts of attempted murder. He made off from the scene with Sgt Hayter and PC Carroll chasing him; meanwhile PC Cousins had a vicious struggle with the other suspect before the man ran off.

While the terrifying situation was unfurling, another police van was carrying out a burglary patrol around the corner and Sam fired at those officers too. PC Barry Leban got out of the vehicle and was himself then shot at and another pursuit ensued.

Sgt Hayter, who has worked as a sergeant in the Met for six years, said: "It was adrenaline charged stuff and during his court hearing Sam threatened to kill one of the officers involved in the case."

The officers eventually managed to detain Sam, who struggled violently during his arrest, and was found to have a Smith and Wesson firearm in his possession with three spent cartridges. It is believed the revolver jammed as he tried to shoot off rounds too quickly.

This was an emotionally charged situation where teamwork and courage prevented loss of life or harm to members of the public. Peter Smyth, chairman of the Met Police Federation, said: "These are just more examples of the brave acts of men and women in the service that are not seen by many but go on every day."

A jury at the Old Bailey found Sam guilty of firearms offences and two counts of attempted murder. He was found not guilty of one count of attempted murder.

