



### **Deputies Nathan Earnshaw, Michael Mawdsley and Wesley Spicer, Culpeper County; Sergeant Donald Dillon, Deputies David Hayden, Troy Shelton and Investigator Frank Herman, Madison County; and Deputy David Meade, Rappahannock County**

This letter is to nominate the following sworn, full-time Virginia Deputy Sheriffs for the Virginia Sheriffs' Association 2022 Deputy Sheriff Valor Award: Deputy Nathan Earnshaw (Culpeper County), Deputy Michael Mawdsley (Culpeper County), Deputy Wesley Spicer (Culpeper County), Sergeant Donald Dillon (Madison County), Deputy David Hayden (Madison County), Investigator Frank Herman (Madison County), Deputy Troy Shelton (Madison County), and Deputy David M. Meade (Rappahannock County). At the time of this incident, all nominees were sworn, full-time Virginia Deputy Sheriffs.

Because these Deputy Sheriffs acted valorously in one multi-jurisdictional incident, they are nominated together. Indeed, it would be next to impossible to assess separately the impact of their collective bravery. Individually and mutually, they demonstrated unquestionable, above and beyond the call-of-duty performance, and extreme life-threatening acts of bravery. They showed unusual initiative, exceptional dedication, and courage in the performance of their duties, including displaying extraordinary judgment, bravery, and lifesaving acts. But for the acts of each of these brave Deputy Sheriffs that day, innocent lives would have been lost. Throughout this incident, they exhibited exemplary fidelity to their sworn duties as Deputy Sheriffs.

On December 17, 2021, Culpeper law enforcement officers were involved in a search for an individual as to whom a Temporary Detention Order had been issued. Evidently, the subject made his way to Madison County, where Madison Deputies made contact with him. During this encounter, the subject failed to comply with the Deputies' orders. The subject fired shots at the Deputies, and a pursuit began. This began the subject's multi-jurisdictional rampage in which he deliberately targeted and tried to kill innocent civilians and the nominated Deputies.

Several Madison units were in pursuit on Route 231 into Rappahannock County. During this pursuit, the subject fired more shots at the Madison Deputies. Some of the subject's rounds struck Madison Deputies' vehicles. Despite the immediate danger to their lives posed by the subject's gunfire, the Deputies continued the pursuit.

During this portion of the pursuit, the subject also fired multiple shots at a propane delivery truck, jeopardizing the truck driver, numerous people in nearby vehicles, and everyone that would have been endangered by the resulting devastation had the propane truck crashed or exploded.

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While being pursued, the subject also drove into the opposite lane of traffic several times and nearly collided with oncoming civilian vehicles. Deputies observing the subject's erratic behavior concluded that he was shooting at the vehicles, and swerving repeatedly into the oncoming lane, in a deliberate attempt to kill the innocent occupants of those vehicles.

After pursuing the subject some miles into Rappahannock County, the subject reversed direction after evading an attempt to stop him, and proceeded southbound until he turned left on Slate Mills Road. Madison Deputies still in pursuit on Slate Mills Road observed the subject fire more shots, including shooting directly at a homeowner on Slate Mills Road. Deputies concluded that the subject was deliberately attempting to kill the Deputies and other innocent people at whom he was shooting.

By the time the pursuit again reached Rappahannock County, a radio patch was in place that allowed all involved jurisdictions to hear the radio traffic in real time.

Culpeper County units responded from the direction of Route 522, and Rappahannock County Deputies responded from the direction of Round Hill Road. The subject went to the right on Green Road and became temporarily stuck in the front yard of a home. While stuck there, the subject fired shots at the person in the yard, deliberately targeting them. The subject also fired shots at Deputy Hayden and Investigator Herman, attempting to kill them. After becoming unstuck, the subject returned to Slate Mills Road, heading toward the Deputies approaching from the opposite direction.

Rappahannock Deputy Meade took up a stationary position at the intersection of Slate Mills Road and Round Hill Road, taking cover behind his patrol vehicle with his M4 service rifle. Deputy Meade, hearing the radio traffic, knew that the subject was armed and had been firing at other Deputies and civilians. As the subject's silver Chevrolet truck came down the hill towards his position, Deputy Meade could see muzzle flashes from the subject's vehicle as it approached. As the subject passed Deputy Meade's position, the subject fired into the RCSO patrol vehicle, impacting the driver's door multiple times. Deputy Meade fired his M4 rifle, aiming at the muzzle flashes coming from the subject's truck. The subject continued, however, apparently not fatally wounded. Once the subject passed, Deputy Meade pursued in the direction of Route 522.

While the pursuit was ongoing, Culpeper units, having tracked the pursuit through radio traffic, proceeded to a position just inside Rappahannock County where they could intercept and stop the subject. While traveling at high speeds to that position, Deputy Mawdsley's vehicle crashed while navigating a turn, completely destroying his vehicle and rendering it inoperable. Despite having just been in a major crash, Deputy Mawdsley put the public's safety above his own immediate well-being because of the imminent danger posed by the subject and the urgency of stopping him. Rather than allowing the crash to interfere with his sworn duty, Deputy Mawdsley willingly got into another unit's vehicle, and they both continued to the position to intercept the subject.

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Culpeper Deputy Mawdsley and Deputy Earnshaw, and Deputy Spicer, set up separate stationary positions approximately a quarter mile from where Deputy Meade had pursued the subject heading toward Route 522. As the subject approached the Culpeper units, he fired rifle rounds from an AK-47 style pistol at the Culpeper units, particularly targeting Deputy Spicer's position. The subject's rounds struck multiple patrol vehicles. The targeted Culpeper units, in the face of rapid-fire AK-47 pistol rounds coming at them from the subject's truck, returned fire, aiming at the muzzle flashes.

The subject's vehicle immediately crashed and remained stationary. Upon approaching the subject's crashed vehicle, Deputy Spicer, Deputy Mawdsley, and Deputy Earnshaw observed that the subject was obviously incapacitated. Taking proper precautions, they immediately secured the subject, began performing life-saving measures, and called for EMT services.

It was discovered that the subject had an AK-style pistol and a handgun in his vehicle.

The bravery of these Deputy Sheriffs in responding to, and ultimately stopping, the threat posed by the subject's actions cannot be overstated. They were involved in what was essentially a three-county running gun battle with a subject that repeatedly and persistently targeted innocent civilians and the responding units. The subject deliberately shot at a propane truck, tried to crash head-on into oncoming civilian vehicles, and shot at homeowners in their yards.

The subject repeatedly fired at pursuing units, and rounds actually struck multiple patrol vehicles. Despite the subject's persistent efforts to kill responding Deputies and innocent bystanders, these brave Deputies, after eliminating the threat, quickly transitioned to performing life-saving measures.

Acting in the face of the deadly threat posed by the subject's continuing choices, these Deputies continually prioritized innocent lives, and public safety, above their own well-being. They acted bravely, unflinchingly, and decisively in circumstances that would have tested the best of us. They did so in a way that effectively stopped the threat, saved lives, and secured public safety. Then, in accordance with their training, they performed life-saving measures on the subject that they knew had repeatedly tried to kill their fellow Deputies and innocent civilians. In the face of a clear and present threat of being killed or seriously wounded by the subject, the Deputies displayed extraordinary bravery and valor. Their actions saved lives.

Sheriff Scott H. Jenkins  
Culpeper County

Sheriff Erik J. Weaver  
Madison County

Sheriff Connie S. Compton  
Rappahannock County

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Culpeper County**



**Sergeant Donald Dillon,  
Madison County**



**Deputy David Hayden,  
Madison County**



**Investigator Frank Herman,  
Madison County**



**Deputy Troy Shelton,  
Madison County**



**Deputy David Meade,  
Rappahannock County**