Officer describes being shot in chest during raid - Patriot-News, The (Harrisburg, PA) - June 21, 2018 - page 003

Shortly after members of a U.S. marshals task force entered a Harrisburg house to serve a warrant in January, Officer Jeff Cook, who was stationed outside, heard gunfire erupt.

He took a step closer to the front door, not knowing what to expect. That's when **Kevin Sturgis** barged through the doorway with a gun in his hand about 10 feet away from him.

"He looks at me. I look at him," Cook said. "I start moving back. He pulls the trigger. I feel something hit me (in the chest). But I don't know, like, I didn't feel ... I didn't feel any liquid or warmth, so I just continued."

Cook spoke publicly about the deadly raid for the first time Wednesday during an award ceremony where he was inducted into a national club of officers saved by their bullet-resistant vests.

Cook's "save" represented the 2,006th by a Safariland vest, according to company officials who presented Cook with a plaque at police headquarters.

After Cook was shot in the chest, he was able to continue to engage the fleeing gunman, which likely wouldn't have been possible without his vest, which was reinforced with extra steel plates. If Cook had been wearing simply a "soft" bullet-resistant vest without the steel plates, the bullet could have knocked him down, slammed the wind out of him or broken bones.

Instead, Cook followed Sturgis down the street as Sturgis and officers exchanged gunfire. An officer found Sturgis hiding between two parked cars and Sturgis pointed a

pistol at the officer, prosecutors said, prompting the officer to fatally shoot him.

Cook wasn't entirely sure what had happened to him until he returned to police headquarters later that night, removed his vest and saw the bullet hole in his vest.

The steel plates that he tucked into his vest came from a retired trooper who gave him his old plates two years earlier.

"I'm just glad to be here. Glad to be alive," Cook said. "Thankfully, because of their product, I'm here today."

In the wake of the shooting, department officials said they wanted to buy steel plates to reinforce the vests of all officers.

The department won a $145,000 county gaming grant to purchase a number of the vests, which

would be donned for high-risk assignments.

A group of Emergency Department nurses at UPMC Pinnacle Harrisburg also staged a 5K run last week that raised $20,000 to help the department buy even more protective vests.

Cook retired from the police department this month after a 27-year career.

He had originally planned to retire in December but stayed on longer because there weren't enough officers on the force to be able to fill his position on the task force. Cook said he agreed to stay on until the end of January.

Then the shooting that could have ended his life happened that month.

Cook didn't want to retire immediately after the shooting, as if the shooting had ended his career. Instead, he wanted to see if he could still perform the job, even after the traumatic event where his friend and teammate, Deputy U.S. Marshal Christopher Hill was killed inside the home during the raid in the 1800 block of Mulberry Street.

Cook was cleared for duty two months later, and he returned to the marshals' task force. He helped with their assignments until June 1 and "served admirably," police Capt. Gabriel Olivera said.

The shooting in January was the third time Cook had been shot at as a police officer, but the first time he was struck.

Earlier in his career, he said someone opened fire on him and other officers as they were cracking down on drug-dealing in the 1900 block of Brown Street in Allison Hill.

In 1997, someone popped out of a dark alley and fired at a car he was in, Cook said.

In his retirement, Cook said he's looking to stay in the area with his wife and pick up a low-key part-time job to keep busy.