

## Slain Deputy marshal CALLED 'cream of crop' - Patriot-News, The (Harrisburg, PA) - January 19, 2018 - page M1

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### HARRISBURG

Christopher Hill served in Afghanistan, worked in Washington, D.C., and rose to the top of the U.S. Marshal's Service, according to the leader of the agency.

But Hill, 45, was felled by a gunman's bullets Thursday as he helped to serve an arrest warrant in the city of Harrisburg.

He is survived by a wife and two young children.

Hill had been working out of the Harrisburg office since 2009 after a stint in Washington, D.C. The following year, he was assigned to the prestigious "special operations group," with a focus on fugitive apprehension, according to U.S. Marshal Martin Pane. The group members represent the top one percent of deputy marshals, he said.

The group is highly trained, and its members would have been prepared for any assignment or situation, Pane said.

"You don't get into that unit unless you have special skill sets," Pane said at a news conference Thursday, eight hours after Hill was mortally wounded. "Tactically...you probably would not find a better tactical operator in the state of Pennsylvania."

Pane called Hill: "the cream of the crop."

Hill was inside a house in the 1800 block of Mulberry Street about 6:10 a.m. Thursday with two other officers and they had arrested a woman on an outstanding arrest warrant. The woman, Shayla Lynette Towles Pierce, was in handcuffs.

That's when bullets suddenly rained down from the second-floor, from the top of the stairs, hitting Hill and another member of the task force, Kyle Pitts, officials said.

Pitts is also an officer of the York City Police Department. Pitts was shot in the right elbow. He underwent surgery on Thursday, and is expected to survive.

Additional officers opened the back door and pulled out their wounded comrades.

The gunman, identified by police as **Kevin Sturgis**, 31, of Philadelphia, then ran downstairs and fired at officers as he barged out the front door, according to officials. A Harrisburg officer struck by a projectile that hit his bullet-resistant vest fired back at Sturgis, killing him.

Pierce, 30, was wanted by the Harrisburg Bureau of Police on charges of illegal possession of a firearm, a third degree felony, simple assault and terroristic threats.

U.S. Attorney David Freed said the gunman, Sturgis, was wanted on one warrant for failure to appear for sentencing on a charge of persons not to possess firearms, a second-degree felony.

He also was wanted on a second warrant for failure to appear for a violation of probation hearing on original charges of receiving stolen property, unlawful possession of a controlled substance and unauthorized use of a motor vehicle.

Sturgis also had a juvenile adjudication (analogous to a criminal conviction in adult court) on a charge of rape, according to the U.S. attorney's office.

The nature of Sturgis' relationship with Pierce was unknown Thursday. She was committed to Dauphin County Prison in lieu of \$200,000 bail.

As part of Hill's career, Hill commanded a group of marshals involved in the drawn-out manhunt through dense forests for Eric Frein in 2014 after Frein killed a state trooper and wounded a second trooper in an ambush.

Hill also was a firearms instructor and trained in explosives used to help distract suspects as officers enter buildings, which is known as "breaching."

Pane said Hill won the U.S. Marshals Service Distinguished Group award for "significant contributions" in an effort to establish a judicial system in Afghanistan.

"This is a man who served his country over there with the U.S. Marshals Service, helping to stand up justice," Pane said. "But this morning, Deputy Hill made the ultimate sacrifice."

Hill previously served in the Army from 1993 to 1996, including an overseas assignment to Afghanistan.

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