

Oklahoma Highway Patrol recognizes tactical team - Oklahoman, The (Oklahoma City, OK) - November 30, 2018

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The Oklahoma Highway Patrol on Thursday recognized a team of troopers that took heavy injuries during a gunfight in eastern Oklahoma earlier this year.

Five members of the tactical team were injured during a firefight that ensued when they attempted to serve a no-knock search warrant early in the morning of May 11 in Talihina. A sixth trooper, Sammy Lee, was saved from a bullet by his ballistic vest.

During a news conference Thursday in Oklahoma City, Lee said he didn't notice he'd been hit until a medic spotted the bullet in the vest. Lee described the vest as "outstanding."

During the news conference, Mike Schoenberger, a representative for Armor Express, a body armor manufacturer, presented Lee with a new vest to replace the one he wore during the firefight.

Schoenberger, a former Oklahoma City police officer, said law enforcement officers should always be able to count on their training, their equipment and their fellow officers during incidents like the one last May.

The incident began shortly after 6 a.m., when the tactical team breached a door at a home in Talihina to serve a search warrant, said Capt. Tim Tipton, the highway patrol's tactical team commander. The home was the residence of **Bradley Webster**, 52, whom authorities said had a violent criminal history.

As soon as troopers breached the door, a shootout ensued. Troopers Brett Stevens, Brandon Seward, Chris Bunch, Jason Ross and Tim Wesley all suffered minor injuries in the shootout. Webster was shot and killed.

After the melee, the team fell back. Moments later, Lee noticed fire coming from inside the building, Tipton said. The Talihina Fire Department was on standby, and troopers notified them about the fire. While attending to the injured troopers, medics noticed Lee's ballistic vest had stopped a bullet from striking his lower right torso, Tipton said.

After the fire was extinguished, investigators found Webster's body inside the burned-out home, as well as an AR-15 rifle, an Uzi automatic pistol, a handgun and numerous cartridge cases, Tipton said.

Tipton said the incident was a testament to the team's experience and professionalism. Although the tactical team serves dozens of search warrants per year, the incident last May was unusually chaotic because of the fire and because Webster had automatic weapons, he said.

