

2011 Chief's Citation Award

EXPLOSIVE DISPOSAL UNIT (EDU)

The Chief's Citation Award is intended to recognize members of a Team or Unit for participating in an incident, event, or series of events, or project which has a substantial positive impact on the community or the police department. The incident, event, or project must be superior in nature and further the Department's mission and overall effectiveness.

SPD Members: Ofc. Aaron Douglas (posthumously), Ofc. Devin Eriksen, Ofc. Erin Raleigh, Ofc. Shawn Pegram, Det. Bill Marshall, Ofc. Frank Erhart, Sgt. Robbie Dashiell, Sgt. Justin Lundgren, Lt. Brad Arleth

SCSO Members: Dep. George Yingst, Dep. Mark Fox, Dep. Bret Pierson, Sgt. Mike Kittilstved, Lt. Matt Lyons

The Explosive Disposal Unit was nominated to receive the Chief's Citation Award. When the Special Awards Committee reviewed this nomination, it was clear that that EDU is most deserving of this award.

On January 17, 2011, EDU members **Matt Lyons (SCSO), Mark Fox (SCSO), Shawn Pegram (SPD) and George Yingst (SCSO)**, responded to downtown Spokane reference a report of a suspicious backpack discovered along the route of the Martin Luther King Day Parade. The team immediately recognized the significance of this and chose to examine the device remotely. Through the skilled operation of the robot by Officer Pegram, EDU quickly determined that the device was either a viable IED or an elaborate hoax device.

With this information EDU ordered expanding and securing the perimeter before further render safe operations continued. EDU continued to remotely disassemble the device. During this process it was determined the device was a viable and sophisticated IED capable of inflicting death and/or great bodily harm to anyone in its vicinity. Officer Pegram remotely separated the IED into individual components. However, the explosive portion of the device did not lend itself to robotic disassembly in order to render it safe. This left two options. One was to remotely apply a counter charge which would destroy evidence and the other was to expose a bomb technician to the risk of disassembling the component by hand to preserve evidence.

Recognizing the importance of evidence preservation to the task of locating the builder of the IED and preventing the builder from building and planting another device, it was mutually decided to complete the final disassembly by hand. Cpl. Mark Fox, without hesitation, donned the bomb suit, went down range, and while exposing himself to possible injury was able to complete the final disassembly of the device, thus preserving the evidentiary value of the components. Through the skillful and courageous efforts of EDU, the Martin Luther King IED was preserved in its entirety. Following the forensic examination of the evidence collected, the builder of the IED was identified and subsequently arrested. As a result, he was prevented from placing the community at risk with another IED.

Continued on next page...

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This incident exemplifies the routine performance of the Spokane Explosives Disposal Unit. It is little known in the community that the unit responds to nearly 100 explosives related incidents in the region each year and that a third of these incidents involve viable IEDs. An additional 26% present an explosive threat to unit bomb technicians. Despite these facts, EDU maintains a perfect safety record during render safe operations. Members train in excess of 300 hours per year. The technical nature of the material requires members to do extensive reading and refresher training on key topics on their own time to maintain skill in areas such as digital x-ray imaging, hook and line rigging, CBRNE detection, HazMat, robotics, demolition procedures and disposal techniques, and explosive breaching calculations.

The reason that these technicians were able to respond effectively to this incident is due to the diligence of training effort put forth on a continuing basis by all the team members. While most team members have similar training, each has a slightly different background and skill set that contribute toward the overall success of the unit. It is due to the constant focus on extremely high performance that the unit was ready for an incident of this nature. Each EDU team member's constant contribution, diligence, effort and focus makes the team so effective.

The Explosive Disposal Unit's efforts epitomize the criteria set forth for the Chief's Citation Award. The EDU was recognized and will receive a plaque at our annual awards ceremony in February 2012. Chief Kirkpatrick was very proud of the EDU team and was honored to present them with the Chief's Citation Award.

