

SC Highway Patrol Special Awards for 2022

Medal of Valor Award:

Troop 7, Post C

Corporal B.J. Rucker, Lance Corporal E.R. Perez, Trooper A.L. Derrick

Corporal B.J. Rucker, Lance Corporal E.R. Perez, and Trooper A.L. Derrick received the Medal of Valor along with officers from the Aiken County Sherriff's Office and North Augusta Department of Public Safety for their actions on April 20, 2022.

On this date at approximately 8 p.m., there was an incident involving a kidnapping that turned into an armed standoff with a suspect and a hostage. The Aiken County Sheriff's Office received a call for help from a female, who said that a very disturbed male kidnapped her while under the influence of drugs. The subject was live streaming the entire incident on Facebook. The officers could see that he was armed and threatening to kill the victim and officers. This event led to an armed standoff in Aiken County. Law enforcement officers from multiple agencies responded to the situation, all of whom displayed a calm and professional demeanor.

After some time, the suspect fired shots at a law enforcement drone. During this time, the hostage made an escape attempt from her captor. Everyone displayed extraordinary bravery and calm in rescuing this young woman from the line of fire, with numerous officers leaving protective cover and providing cover for her with their very bodies. As this was unfolding, the suspect raised his weapon at officers. The officers engaged the suspect with gunfire, firing numerous shots in the process. This led to the suspect being injured and eventually surrendering to law enforcement.

The actions of these officers directly led to the rescue of a female hostage, unharmed. The actions and calm control of the scene further led to no other individuals being placed in harm's way and the very dangerous suspect being placed into custody.

This incident shows how important it is to have a good strong relationship with fellow agencies. The outcome of this incident could have been worse without the support and assistance from multiple agencies. The actions of all officers represent the best of the profession of law enforcement and serve as the highest example of officers serving their community.

We now present to you, Corporal B.J. Rucker, Lance Corporal E.R. Perez, and Trooper A.L. Derrick.

Purple Heart Award:

Trooper First Class J.L. Baker Troop 5, Post B

On August 9, 2022, at 8:54 p.m., TFC Baker responded to a collision on Pamplico Highway in Florence County involving two motorcyclists striking a car that turned in front of them. Once he arrived on scene, Trooper Baker exited his patrol vehicle and spoke to a Florence City Police Officer in front of his patrol vehicle. As he was speaking with the officer, a black Nissan Versa drove around emergency vehicles at a high rate of speed into the oncoming lanes of traffic into the existing collision scene. The Nissan Versa struck several pedestrians, including an EMS Paramedic and a gurney carrying one of the injured motorcyclists from the original collision. The vehicle then struck the Florence City Police Officer and Trooper Baker. The Paramedic who had been struck was launched into the left front of Trooper Baker's patrol vehicle. The Paramedic and the patient being tended to by EMS from the original collision died as a result. Trooper Baker was transported by EMS to MUSC Health Florence Medical Center for injuries to his head, both arms, a dislocated right shoulder, and right knee.

The driver of the Nissan was charged with two counts of reckless homicide. During the entire event, Trooper Baker demonstrated exemplary poise and situational awareness. Both Trooper Baker and the involved Florence City Police Officer appeared to assist each other in moving out of the way of the suspect vehicle. Had either of the officers failed to move they would most certainly have sustained fatal injuries also. Trooper Baker has demonstrated an excellent attitude as he recovers from his injuries. As of this date, TFC Baker has not been medically cleared to return to work and will have to undergo additional surgery. He has also been attending physical therapy during his recovery.

As a result of the injuries he received in the line of duty, TFC J. L. Baker is being awarded the Purple Heart Award.

Master Trooper M.D. Bevins
Troop 6, Post B

On November 12, 2022, at approximately 3:20 p.m., then-Lance Corporal Michael D. Bevins responded to assist another unit who was working a collision on US-17A in Dorchester County. The collision involved multiple vehicles, including what was originally reported as a mobile home off its axle. Multiple tow trucks responded to the area to help remove vehicles and open the roadway. A tractor-trailer involved in the collision was disabled and blocking one of the two travel lanes. Due to the location and difficulty of getting all vehicles removed, Lance Corporal Bevins was conducting traffic direction from the shoulder of the roadway. A motorist traveling northbound on US-17A at approximately 4:40 p.m. ran off the right side of the roadway and struck Lance Corporal Bevins.

Lance Corporal Bevins suffered multiple injuries and was transported via helicopter to Trident Hospital. After months of therapy, Master Trooper Michael Bevins was cleared for light duty. Master Trooper Bevins diligently continues therapy to eventually return to full duty.

As a result of the injury received in the line of duty, Master Trooper Michael D. Bevins is being awarded the Purple Heart Award.

Lance Corporal D.P. Kugler
Troop 3, Post C

On October 16, 2022, Lance Corporal D.P. Kugler and Trooper B.M. Stuhmer were conducting traffic enforcement on SC-183 in Greenville County. Lance Corporal Kugler was serving as a Field Training Officer for Trooper Stuhmer during this time. At approximately 2:16 a.m., Lance Corporal Kugler and Trooper Stuhmer conducted a traffic stop on a vehicle with a suspected impaired driver. The violator stopped his vehicle in the median of SC-183. After the initial interaction with the driver, they began to conduct standardized field sobriety tests. To prepare the area for the standardized field sobriety test, Trooper Stuhmer backed his patrol vehicle away from the suspect vehicle. Trooper Stuhmer was in the patrol vehicle, while Lance Corporal Kugler and the violator stood near the front left side of the patrol vehicle. During this time, a Chrysler sedan traveling south on SC-183 entered the median and struck Lance Corporal Kugler on his left side. The collision forced Lance Corporal Kugler into the driver's side door of the patrol vehicle, as Trooper Stuhmer was exiting the vehicle. The patrol vehicle door struck the lower portion of Trooper

Stuhmer's left leg. After striking the patrol vehicle door, Lance Corporal Kugler was thrown a substantial distance into the roadway behind the patrol vehicle. Following the collision, the Chrysler fled the scene, leaving Lance Corporal Kugler lying unconscious in the roadway. Trooper Stuhmer quickly called for assistance on the radio and ran to Lance Corporal Kugler's aid.

Lance Corporal Kugler was transported to Greenville Memorial Hospital with serious life-threatening injuries including the following: a broken tibia, shattered humerus, a broken pelvis, a traumatic brain injury, as well as multiple facial lacerations and contusions. Lance Corporal Kugler spent several days on a ventilator in ICU. He was then moved to the CCU floor, where he endured multiple surgeries to his arms and legs, and finally rehabilitation at Roger C. Peace Hospital. As a testament to his strength and determination, he was released to return home to his family on November 11, 2022. Lance Corporal Kugler has continued to fight with determination during his recovery with his ultimate goal of returning to the road and wearing his Trooper uniform again.

Lance Corporal Kugler will forever bear the physical and mental scars of this horrific incident, but his physical and mental sacrifice will not be forgotten. For these reasons, Lance Corporal Devin P. Kugler is being awarded with the Purple Heart Award.