

Brian Sandoval
Governor



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Media Release

Department of Public Safety, Medal of Honor Recipients

On February 24, 2011, Trooper Jenkins and Trooper Howell responded to assist the Elko County Sheriff's Department in a domestic disturbance call in Wells, Nevada. When the Troopers and Deputies simultaneously arrived on scene, they were confronted by the suspect, Peter Coca, who was on top of the roof armed with an assault rifle. Coca immediately fired upon the Troopers and Deputies. During the confrontation, Coca climbed down from the roof and fired at Elko County Deputy Lenwood Van Natter striking him 5 times. Trooper Jenkins and a second Deputy, Mark Hawkins, ran into the line of fire and pulled Deputy Van Natter to safety behind a parked truck. Trooper Howell was pinned behind his patrol car as Coca continued to fire at him and the other officers. Trooper Howell provided cover for the rescue and kept the suspect at bay. Once Deputy Van Natter was removed from the scene, Trooper Jenkins joined Trooper Howell, taking cover behind their patrol cars, and established surveillance while waiting for additional assistance.

Sgt. Kelly Stuehling, with the Nevada Division of Investigations, responded to the area to assist in establishing a perimeter to locate Coca. Shortly after arriving, Coca fired his assault rifle at Sgt Stuehling and another responding officer. They found cover and kept the suspect from leaving the controlled area. Coca surrendered 1 ½ days later.

The heroic efforts of Troopers Jenkins, Trooper Howell and Sgt Kelly Stuehling while under gun fire most certainly assisted in the life saving efforts of Deputy Van Natter and the containment of the suspect. Their efforts limited further injury to other officers and the public, at great risk to their own safety. A Medal of Valor was awarded to all three officers.

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