

Off-duty police officer aids neighbors during home invasion

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TURNER – On April 17, Turner Reserve Sgt. Aaron Bales, while off duty and at home, received information of a home invasion near his residence.

His foster son, while walking home from a city bus stop in South Salem, witnessed four men with guns allegedly trying to kick down the door of a home.

Upon hearing the observation, and without hesitation, Bales gathered his police badge and weapon and left his home to investigate the scene and confirm the location, before contacting the Salem Police.

“[My foster son] was so excited when he got home, he couldn’t tell me which house it was,” Bales said. “I wanted to go verify what house it was before I called 9-1-1. I didn’t get two blocks before I saw them. As we rounded one of the corners, we saw two people on foot.”

Bales’ foster son identified the two people on foot as two of the people attempting to kick the house’s door down.

Bales confronted the two suspects on foot, and then realized that the other two were fast approaching Bales and his foster son in a car. Bales showed them his badge and stopped the vehicle to deal with the uncooperative suspects.

Bales protected the witnesses — his friend and foster son — who were still present, while simultaneously maintaining control over the two stopped suspects, even as one fled on foot, attempting to get behind and possibly ambush Bales.

“Later, after the Salem Police showed up and took the two I had in custody, two or three canine handlers came out with their dogs,” Bales said. “There were about 17 cop cars in the area, and we came to find out that these people really had kicked in the door of the house, and there were 10 shots fired between the four people and the home’s resident.”

As a result, Bales received a Medal of Honor for his swift action without regard for his own personal safety while protecting the witness and capturing the two suspects, who were arrested on charges of attempted murder, first-degree burglary and unlawful use of a weapon.

“On Monday of last week, I received an e-mail from the Chief of Police [Gary D. Will Jr.] telling me to be in uniform at the city council meeting for a presentation,” Bales said. “I kind of figured that they’d give me a plaque or letter of achievement, but this is a really huge award, and it really shocked me.”

“I was speechless,” he said. “[Will] read a synopsis of the incident, and when I heard ‘Medal of Honor,’ I just thought, ‘Wow.’ I didn’t know what to say. I was in awe.”

According to a press release from Will, Bales “brings great credit not only to himself and to the Turner Police Department, but to the entire law-enforcement profession.”

“[Will] said that this is the highest award he’s given in his career,” Bales said. “He’s been in law enforcement lots of years, the Chief of Police in several departments. For him to feel that this incident rose to that honor ... it’s pretty huge.”