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Press Release

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IMMEDIATE

MTA Salutes Police Officers for Their Heroic Efforts in the Line of Duty

Contributions Recognized at 11th Annual MTA Police Department Awards Ceremony

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) Police Department today recognized 129 MTA Police Officers for bravery and outstanding performance in the line of duty. Award recipients were honored at the 11th annual MTA Police Department Awards Ceremony, held earlier today at Grand Central Terminal's Vanderbilt Hall.

MTA Chairman H. Dale Hemmerdinger said: "Our police officers put their lives on the line everyday to insure the safety of our riding public. Arresting armed felons and assisting passengers in need is all in a day's work for these brave men and women, and today, we honor their work."

"I cannot thank our MTA police officers enough for the work they do to keep our railroad customers and the general public safe," said Helena E. Williams, MTA Interim Executive Director and CEO. "I commend each individual's commitment to helping others and these awards are a small token of our appreciation."

MTA Police Chief Michael Coan said: "Bravery and outstanding service are modicum for what makes an exemplary police officer. I salute each of today's award recipients noting that personal courage and integrity are traits demonstrated by each member of our department."

Today's ceremony included the following:

- A Unit Citation was awarded to 22 members of a unit that responded to a train collision at Jamaica Station between two LIRR trains on March 27, 2008. The prompt response, coordination and assistance of all officers during this critical incident led to the safe evacuation of approximately 300 passengers while facilitating train movement with minimal delays.
- A Medal of Merit was presented to Lieutenant John Kerwick, who with his K-9 partner "Hero," apprehended an armed home invasion suspect. Dispatched to assist White Plains police, Kerwick acted heroically in arresting one of three suspects in limited light and recovering a loaded .40 caliber handgun.
- A Medal of Merit was presented to Officer Thomas Finneran, who on patrol of the Poughkeepsie Station parking lot, encountered a physical dispute involving a group of people. While restoring order, Officer Finneran encountered a male carrying a handgun in his waist band. With the assistance of two Poughkeepsie officers, Officer Finneran safely disarmed the suspect and removed a loaded .38 caliber revolver.
- Agency President Awards were given to Lieutenant Robert Howell (LIRR), Sergeant John Lane (SIR), and Police Officer Louis Garguilo (MNR) for their leadership and years of outstanding service to the MTA and its customers.

The MTA police force patrols the Long Island Rail Road, Metro-North Railroad, Long Island Bus, Staten Island Railway, Grand Central Terminal and Penn Station. Its jurisdiction extends across fourteen counties in two states, covers approximately 5,000 square miles, including New York City, Long Island, southeastern New York State and southern Connecticut, and serves a population of 14.4 million people.

The department was formed in 1998 with the consolidation of the Long Island Rail Road and the Metro-North Railroad Police Departments, later adding the MTA Staten Island Railway Police Department in 2005. Since 9/11, the department has increased the total workforce of the department to 716, including civilians, and has dramatically ramped up its counter-terrorism capabilities, adding canine teams and emergency services officers.