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Press Release

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IMMEDIATE

MTA Police Officer Stabbed in the Eye While Attempting to Disarm a Man with a Knife

Suspect shot and killed

An officer with the Metropolitan Transportation Authority Police Department was stabbed today while on patrol at the Jamaica Station of the Long Island Rail Road while attempting to disarm an emotionally disturbed man holding a knife.

Officer John Barnett, 45, an almost 13-year veteran of the MTA PD, was stabbed in the face without warning or provocation.

Barnett suffered a devastating wound to his left eye. And underwent surgery at Jamaica Hospital The suspect was shot and killed.

"The entire MTA family is praying for Officer Barnett to make a full recovery," said MTA Chairman Joseph J. Lhota, who rushed to Jamaica Hospital on hearing of the incident. "He did exactly what we expect of all of our officers: In a split second, confronted with a violent individual who posed a threat to everyone around him, he took action without regard to his personal safety. We are all in awe of his bravery."

Barnett was conscious and was able to speak to his family in the emergency room, said Lhota, who also spoke to Barnett. Governor Cuomo also called Barnett.

"Today we are reminded once again of the bravery and sacrifice of our men and women in law enforcement, and the many dangers that accompany the important job of keeping our state's residents safe," Governor Cuomo said. "We applaud Officer Barnett's bravery and pray for a full recovery."

Officer Barnett was on routine patrol on Sutphin Boulevard under the elevated LIRR Jamaica Station when the perpetrator, identified as Edgar Owens, 46, of the Bronx, walked out of the station at street level. He approached Officer Barnett, who was standing near a taxi booth, while holding the knife at his side.

The ensuing confrontation was captured on video and described by witnesses. Owens stabbed Officer Barnett with no warning. Officer Barnett stepped back, drew his weapon and warned Owens repeatedly to drop his knife. Owens continued approaching Officer Barnett with the knife in his hand.

Officer Barnett fired his weapon four times, striking Owens three times in his jaw, chest and hip. Owens was brought to Jamaica Hospital and pronounced dead a short time later.

Owens has a history of confronting police officers without provocation. In 2006, he walked into the 26th Precinct stationhouse and punched an officer in the face. In 2007, he walked into the 103rd Precinct and said he wanted to get arrested, and would punch someone if necessary. He has a history of additional arrests as well.

Officer Barnett has never fired his weapon on the job before. He served a year with the NYPD before joining the MTA Police Department in 1999. He graduated from SUNY Maritime College and served his country in the Navy Reserves, doing tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. He lives in Suffolk County and has a 12-year-old son.

Train service on the LIRR was not disrupted during the investigation but customers had to use elevators near the ticket offices or in the AirTrain building to access the platforms as staircases and escalators were blocked temporarily.