

# Remembering Philadelphia Police Sgt. James O'Connor killed in line of duty 1 year ago

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PHILADELPHIA (WPVI) -- March 13 marks one year since the Philadelphia Police Department lost one of their own in the line of duty.

Sgt. James O'Connor was fatally shot shortly before 6 a.m. on Friday, March 13, 2020, while serving a murder warrant on the 1600 block of Bridge Street in the Frankford section of the city.

"We will forever honor his sacrifice," the police department tweeted Saturday morning with an image of O'Connor.

According to authorities, O'Connor and other members of the department's SWAT team arrived to an alleged stash house with warrants.

Officials said as they ascended the staircase to the second floor of the home, announcing their presence multiple times, a suspect fired a semi-automatic assault rifle 16 times, fatally striking O'Connor near the left shoulder blade. The suspect had been wanted for a homicide that occurred in 2019.

His family was set to honor him with a public viewing and a funeral the week following his killing, but that was postponed because of restrictions on gatherings to stop the spread of coronavirus during the early days of the pandemic.

Nearly two months after giving his life in the line of duty, a funeral service was held Friday morning for Philadelphia Police Sgt. James O'Connor IV.

The few officers who were able to attend in-person maintained social distancing. Wearing protective masks, they saluted as O'Connor's flag-draped casket was escorted into Our Lady of Calvary Church in Northeast Philadelphia.

"His life has been nothing shy of heroic. Yet his life was abruptly stolen from him by someone who is the opposite of what Corporal O'Connor exemplified," Police Commissioner Danielle Outlaw said in May.

His son, James O'Connor V, a Philadelphia police officer himself, delivered a eulogy. He remembered his father as a loving man who was dedicated to his family and the community while recognizing the impact of the pandemic.

"This isn't the way we wanted to say goodbye to my father. It's just not fair. When the time is right, we'll give my father a proper send-off," said O'Connor V.

"Everyone knows my father was a Philadelphia police corporal, but he was much more than that. He was a son, a brother, a husband, father, son-in-law, grandfather, and a good friend to many."

Sgt. James O'Connor's son delivers a eulogy for his father, a fallen Philadelphia Police officer, on May 8, 2020.

Sgt. O'Connor, who was also the son of a police officer, was married to his high school sweetheart, Terri. They raised two children: his son James, the 6th district police officer, and daughter Kelsey, who is in the Air Force.

The couple welcomed their first granddaughter five months before he died.

"One unlucky shot hit him where the vest wasn't at, and my whole life was ruined that morning," Terri told Action News days after her husband's death.

SWAT Corporal James O'Connor gave his life doing what he loved for 23 years, protecting and serving the City of Philadelphia. During the March 2020 interview, the O'Connor family asked people to honor the father and husband they lost through acts of kindness.

"If someone needs help, go help them because he would do that for anybody at any time. He was there," his daughter Kelsey said.

Commissioner Outlaw posthumously awarded Sgt. O'Connor three medals: The Medal of Honor, Purple Heart, and the Sgt. Robert Wilson, III Medal of Valor.