

# Army Special Agent Receives Soldier's Medal

*By Mr. Jeffrey Castro*

**K**icking in the front door of a house is not usually the best way to make an entrance; but for one lucky family, it was just another example of how Special Agent Thomas Broadbent of the U.S. Army Protective Services Battalion (Criminal Investigation Division [CID]), Fort Hood, Texas, lives by the CID motto of "Do what has to be done."

In the early morning hours of 9 March 2007, as Broadbent was returning to the CID office following an off-post investigation, he noticed flames shooting out from behind a building alongside the highway. As he got closer, Broadbent realized that a house was on fire. There were no emergency vehicles in the area, so he immediately called 911. He got out of his vehicle and noticed that there were several cars in the driveway, so he knew there was a good possibility that someone was inside. He ran to the

front of the house, banged on the door, and tried to rouse the residents. With the fire creeping up the side of the house and still no answer at the front door, he knew it would only be a matter of minutes before the entire house would be engulfed in flames, so he decided to go in.

With two or three good kicks, the door swung open and a thick wall of smoke hit Broadbent in the face. As the air cleared, he could see that the kitchen at the back of the house was already completely engulfed in flames. Undeterred, he continued inside. As he felt his way from room to room, searching for anyone who might be in the house, he yelled for the occupants to get up and get out. Suddenly, a boy of about nine or ten years of age came out of one of the bedrooms. Broadbent instructed him to run outside. He then continued searching and yelling. He found two sleeping adults who were unaware of the disaster around them. He informed them that the house was on fire, led them through the smoke, and got them outside. The fright and confusion of the situation was compounded by the fact that the family did not speak English.

In all, there were eight family members inside the house. It took Broadbent less than three minutes from the time he entered the house to ensure that everyone was safely outside.

Emergency personnel arrived to douse the flames and investigate the incident. Without fanfare, Broadbent explained what happened, slipped back into his car, and drove off.

The fire started in an attached garage. And according to the local fire marshal's report, it was caused by an electrical short in a warming lamp. The estimated damage to the house and property was more than \$170,000. Although the house was equipped with smoke detectors, the family had removed the batteries because the sound of the low-battery indicator had become annoying.

The fire marshal's report states that the family "would have undoubtedly been consumed by



*Photograph by Jeffrey Castro*

**Brigadier General Johnson (left) congratulates Special Agent Broadbent after awarding him the Soldier's Medal.**

fire or smoke inhalation” without Broadbent’s intuition, quick action, and complete disregard for his own safety. Reflecting on his actions during the fire, Broadbent said he only had one thought: “I have to get these people out of this fire; I have to get them out now.”

On 1 February 2008, at the Wood Theater, Fort Belvoir, Virginia, Broadbent was awarded the Soldier’s Medal for his actions. Brigadier General Rodney Johnson, Provost Marshal General of the Army and CID Commanding General, called Broadbent’s feat “heroic” and the presentation of this rarely awarded medal “well-deserved.” “Only forty-one Soldier’s Medals were awarded in 2007,” said Brigadier General Johnson. “So, it’s a rare opportunity. When you read the citation and justification, you can tell why.”

**Reference:**

U.S. Code (USC), *Title 10*, Armed Forces, updated 2000.

**Endnote:**

<sup>1</sup>Army Regulation (AR) 600-8-22, *Military Awards*, 11 December 2006.

“The Soldier’s Medal is awarded to any person of the Armed Forces of the United States or of a friendly foreign nation who, while serving in any capacity with the Army of the United States, including Reserve Component Soldiers not serving in a duty status, as defined in 10 USC 101(d), at the time of the heroic act, who [*sic*] distinguished himself or herself by heroism not involving actual conflict with an enemy. The same degree of heroism is required as that of the award of the Distinguished Flying Cross. The performance must have involved personal hazard or danger and the voluntary risk of life under conditions not involving conflict with an armed enemy. Awards will not be made solely on the basis of having saved a life.”<sup>1</sup>

The approval authority for the Soldier’s Medal is Brigadier General Reuben D. Jones, the U.S. Army Adjutant General. The certificate is signed by the Adjutant General and the Secretary of the Army.

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