



**Date of occurrence:** 2020

**Employee Name:** Bobby Gabriel

**Classification:** Police Officer

**Unit/Division:** Traffic Unit

**Award/Commendation type and recommendations:** Officer of the Year 2020

**Narrative:**

The Surfside Police Department FOP Awards Committee has selected Officer Bobby Gabriel as the Surfside Police Department's Officer of the Year for 2020. Officer Gabriel is amiable and always in good spirits. Officer Gabriel began his experiences with the Surfside Police Department since the age of 16 years old as a Police Explorer. He was also a Camp Counselor with the Surfside Parks and Recreation Department. Officer Gabriel officially joined the SPD family in 2011 as a Communications Operator and entered the ranks as a Police Officer in 2013. Officer Gabriel demonstrates the highest standards of conduct and professionalism on a daily basis. He is dedicated to serving and protecting the Town of Surfside residents and its visitors. Officer Gabriel is the ultimate colleague and a true team player for all Town staff.

In August 2020, Detective Gabriel was transferred to uniform patrol from the South Florida Financial Crimes Strike Force. Detective Gabriel began his assignment in the Strike Force in January 2017, receiving high praise for his work. Detective Gabriel's primary responsibility in the Strike Force was the investigation of narco drug organizations involved in money laundering. Countless hours of surveillance, investigations, and processing of evidence led to a seizure of approximately \$3.5 million dollars from 2019 to 2020. In addition, Detective Gabriel also investigated unlawful gold smuggling which led to seizures of gold and illegal funds obtained from criminal activity. As a result, the Town of Surfside was awarded a portion of the seizures from the illicit activity. The knowledge Detective Gabriel gained from the Strike Force is invaluable to his overall career development and a benefit to the agency and the town he serves.

Shortly after Officer Gabriel returned to uniform patrol, it did not take long for him to excel. On Thursday, September 10, 2020, Officer Gabriel was patrolling the business district on Harding Avenue. Officer Gabriel heard a BOLO being broadcasted over the police radio with regards to a stolen vehicle that was traveling south bound on Collins Avenue from 158<sup>th</sup> Street. A few minutes later Officer Gabriel spotted a vehicle that fit the description of the stolen vehicle. Officer Gabriel initiated a traffic stop on the vehicle and confirmed the vehicle to be stolen. Two subjects were taken into custody as a result of the stop. The male who was driving was currently on inmate release status and awaiting trial for charges of aggravated battery on a police officer with a deadly weapon and fleeing and eluding police. The female passenger in the vehicle was in possession of drug paraphernalia. Both subjects were arrested without incident. Officer Gabriel was nominated for the September Officer of the Month for his exceptional work during this incident. Due to Officer Gabriel's astute actions, this incident was rapidly ended, preventing any potential safety issues to the community.

In October 2020, Officer Gabriel was awarded the Officer of the Month for his keen observation skills which lead to an arrest and recovery of another stolen vehicle. On Thursday, October 15, 2020, Officer Gabriel was patrolling the 9200 block of Harding Avenue when he observed a vehicle with illegal tinted windows. While conducting a traffic stop, Officer Gabriel noticed the vehicle was bearing a temporary license plate that did not display the state to which it belonged. Officer Gabriel made contact with the driver who stated he rented the vehicle this way and later changed his story saying a friend lent him the car. As Officer Gabriel continued to investigate, he discovered the vehicle identification number (VIN) on the temporary license plate was not the same as on the vehicle. A record check of the vehicle's VIN revealed the car had been stolen from Fort Lauderdale, FL. The driver was taken into custody, arrested and charged with Grand Theft Auto. During the inquiry, Officer Gabriel discovered the driver had \$7,500.00 in cash held together by plastic rubber bands in a backpack located in the vehicle. The money was impounded and inventoried by Officer Gabriel. Due to Officer Gabriel's investigative skills, he was able to apprehend this individual and recover a stolen vehicle. This was his second Grand Theft Arrest in the past two months and exemplifies the impressive proactive police work conducted by Officer Gabriel.

Officer Bobby Gabriel has a strong work ethic, is highly respected by his peers and is devoted to the community he proudly serves. Officer Gabriel is commended for his professionalism, initiative and commitment to serving the Town of Surfside. Congratulations Officer Bobby Gabriel as the recipient of the 2020 Surfside Police Department Officer of the Year Award...well deserved!