



ATF News

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
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ATF AGENTS PRAISED FOR SAVING WOMAN ON SAN DIEGO OVERPASS

SAN DIEGO – Special Agents Harry Penate and Gordon Geerdes of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) are being praised for their “quick thinking” in convincing a distraught woman not to jump off a San Diego bridge.

A citizen flagged down Penate and Geerdes, with ATF’s San Diego field office, as they were driving Feb. 26 and asked them to help a woman who had climbed over the safety fencing and was threatening to jump off the Landis Street Bridge onto the Interstate 805 freeway 50 feet below.

Both agents immediately stepped into action and began talking to the female. Penate took the role of primary negotiator while Geerdes acted as the secondary negotiator. The woman told the agents she hated law enforcement because they had killed her brother.

The San Diego Police Department, realizing that they could not develop rapport with the woman and that she did not realize Penate and Geerdes were federal agents, requested that the agents continue the negotiation process.

“The female was cooperative with the agents and shared her lack of trust of law enforcement officers,” said Sgt. Bernie Colon of the San Diego Police Department’s Emergency Negotiations Team. “The Emergency Negotiations Team was notified and was responding. However, Penate and Geerdes had developed a rapport with the subject and continued to talk with her.

“After 25 minutes of negotiating with the subject, they were able to talk her off of the bridge and take her into custody without any further incident. I would like to take this opportunity to thank both Agent Penate and Agent Geerdes for their quick thinking and their ability to remain calm during this potentially tragic event.”

ATF’s mission is to reduce violent crime, prevent terrorism and protect the nation. More information on ATF and its programs is at www.atf.gov.

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