



Detective Dominick Libretti with family and friends after release from Staten Island hospital (below) where he got surgery for a serious leg wound. After being shot in the leg he shielded other cops from a hail of bullets.

COP HAS A LEG UP

Big greeting for hero after surgery on S.I.

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An NYPD detective shot in the leg while executing a search warrant met thunderous applause and bagpipe music as he left a Staten Island hospital Monday to continue along the road to recovery.

Detective Dominick Libretti was surrounded by family and his fellow officers, including NYPD Commissioner Keechant Sewell, as he was wheeled out of Staten Island University Hospital, almost two weeks after he used his ballistic shield to protect fellow officers from an ex-convict's bullets.

"A lot of surgeries, a lot of pain, but he was a very strong individual. Great family, and that got him through it," said Dr. Michael Cooper, the director of Staten Island University Hospital's burn unit.

"There were other doctors that initially saw him, and did a very good job. Once he was stable, he came to our service. I'm a plastic surgeon, and we did reconstructive surgery. And he did very well, and he's hopefully just going to get better and better."

Cooper said he personally performed one of the surgery procedures.

"It's a very difficult surgery. And he's very lucky. The trauma surgeons who initially evaluated him did a great job with the surgery, and then my team did the reconstruction," he said.

"He's going to have physical therapy for quite a while to get him to the best he can be."



The 33-year-old detective was part of a narcotics team performing a pre-dawn raid at a home on Rockne St. near Elwood Ave. on Staten Island on Jan. 20 as part of a long-term investigation into a crack and cocaine dealer.

The alleged shooter, Nelson Pizarro, wasn't a target of the warrant, but when he saw the officers enter the building, he emerged from a bedroom with a gun and started shooting, pumping at least a dozen bullets down a long hallway.

As blood poured from a gunshot to his leg, Libretti held his ballistic shield in place as his fellow officers returned fire, shooting Pizarro in the leg as well. Pizarro faces aggravated attempted murder and other charges, and was hit with a 49-count indictment after the

shooting.

Libretti, a 10-year NYPD veteran who was married four months ago, suffered what NYPD surgeon Eli Kleinman described as a "possibly career-ending injury and certainly a life-threatening injury."

Cooper said Libretti can't walk on his own, but wouldn't comment on the long-term effects of his wound.

"It's a little too early to say, but he's healing well, and physical therapy will be very important. So far so good," he said. "Something like this is a total hospital multidisciplinary effort, so there's physicians assistants, the nurse practitioners, the nurses, the nurses aides, dietary and administration. So it's been a team effort to get him to this level."