Off-duty cop sees armed rob, fires shot

**BY ELLEN MOYNIHAN
AND ELIZABETH KEOGH**

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An off-duty NYPD detective is being hailed as a hero for getting involved in a life-threatening showdown after spotting a man being robbed at gunpoint by two masked thieves on an East Harlem street Monday — firing a shot with his own police-issued gun.

"And once again, like so many of his colleagues, did not hesitate to go straight toward the danger and try to help a fellow New Yorker in need," Chief of Department Kenneth Corey said at a new conference.

The robbery victim was walking near the corner of E. 122nd St. and Park Ave. when the robbers hopped out of a tan GMC Terrain about 11:30 a.m., cops said.

As the thieves pointed a gun at the victim and demanded he turn over his property, a detective assigned to the firearms suppression division happened to be walking by and pulled out his service weapon, identified himself as a police officer and told the men to freeze, Corey said.

One of the armed robbers turned toward the detective — and the 12-year NYPD vet fired a single shot. Police were still investigating if the bullet hit one of the men.

One suspect dropped a loaded semiautomatic Smith & Wesson Bodyguard pistol, and the thieves took off on foot, cops said. They headed to an SUV with Florida plates, where a getaway driver was waiting behind the wheel, police said.

The SUV was last seen heading over the Willis Ave. Bridge into the Bronx.

The men made off with cash and a watch in the robbery. The victim wasn't injured, cops said.

"I just want to take a moment to commend the actions of this detective," Corey said. "He spends his nights going after the worst of the worst, the most violent in our community, those who carry and use illegal handguns against our citizens. And here he was off-duty."

Paul DiGiacomo, president of the Detectives' Endowment Association, said the incident highlights why the city needs a special firearms prosecutor.

"Detectives are making record arrests for gun charges every day in New York City, and there are far too many guns on the street," DiGiacomo said. "This is a prime example of what New York City detectives do every day. They put their life in harm's way, both on- and off-duty."

Police were searching Monday night for the two masked robbers and the driver of the SUV.