

# HERNANDO TODAY

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## A new police vest for Kilo



Deputy Stephen Miller says he is proud of K-9 Kilo, who has been his handler for four years.

By **MICHAEL D. BATES** | Hernando Today

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BROOKSVILLE - Last August, K-9 Kilo with the sheriff's office survived a gun battle when his police vest stopped a bullet. Without the Kevlar vest, Kilo would have likely died, deputies said.

On Monday, representatives with Point Blank Vest Co. presented a plaque and new vest to Kilo. By his side was Deputy Steve Miller who was with Kilo during that fateful Aug. 4 evening. Hoyt Schmidt, Florida sales representative with Point Blank, said this is the first time his company has honored a police dog. "Their lives are on the line just as the officers are," Schmidt said. Miller said Kilo and the dog is fully deserving of the accolades. Kilo, he said, is fully healed from his wounds. "He does his job (well)," Miller said. "I'm proud of him."

K-9 Kilo was shot multiple times the night of Aug. 4 during a gun battle. Miller and Kilo were searching for Keith Ritchie, 39, who was hiding in a shed at 617 W. Fort Dade Ave. during a manhunt. Earlier that night, he had fired a gun at a Brooksville police officer, according to sheriff's deputies. When Kilo reached Ritchie and clamped down on him with his teeth, the gunman pointed and fired at the dog, injuring him in the face and body. A bullet might have grazed him on the leg, but Miller said he was unsure.

Ritchie was later shot and killed after firing on Brooksville police officers and Hernando County deputies. Mike Maurer, Hernando County Sheriff's Office chief of operations, said Point Blank will take the old vest and analyze it to see how well it stood up to bullets. It may also be used for education purposes, he said.