

FBI honors two local officers

Men are cited for bravery during sting operation.

By ANNE LAMOY
Staff Writer

Two local law enforcement officers have been awarded the FBI's Medal of Valor, an honor bestowed just 29 times since the founding of the FBI in 1908.

Kansas City, Kan., Officer Jose Viera and FBI Special Agent Craig Arnold received their medals during a private ceremony Thursday at FBI headquarters in Kansas City. Both are members of the FBI's Violent Crimes/Gangs Task Force.

Viera became just the second person outside the FBI to win the medal, the agency's highest

accolade.

The medals are given to those who put their own lives in danger to save another life, said FBI Special Agent Jeff Lanza, spokesman for the local office.

Viera and Arnold were recognized for heroism and bravery during a sting operation last year in which a man was killed.

On Jan. 30, 1997, the task force had arranged a phony drug deal. Joseph S. Riley shot and wounded an FBI informant during the sting at the Motel 6, 8230 N.W. Prairie View Road in Kansas City, North.

Arnold and Viera were waiting in another room. When they heard the shots, they burst into the room, and Arnold shot and killed Riley.

"They went into a room when they heard shots being fired, and

they didn't know what to expect," Lanza said. "They could have been shot."

Michael Albanese and Nicholas LanFranca waited in a car for Riley during the shooting. Earlier this year, Albanese was sentenced to life in prison for felony murder. LanFranca pleaded guilty to drug charges.

The only other person outside the FBI to win the medal was a Philadelphia police officer, who received a Medal of Valor in 1996, Lanza said.

Viera joined the Kansas City, Kan., Police Department in 1991 and has been a member of the joint task force three years, Swafford said.

Arnold is a 15-year veteran of the FBI and has been with the task force since joining the Kansas City office two years ago.

