



*Soldiers of Company B, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 10<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group (Airborne) stand in formation following their valor award ceremony in which two received the Bronze Star Medal with “V” device and four the Army Commendation Medal with “V” device. Three other Soldiers also earned the Bronze Star for valor. (Photo by Angelo Jasper)*

## **Two days of hell, nine men of valor**

### *1-10 SFG(A) Soldiers earn gallantry in Afghan firefights*

By Master Sgt. Donald Sparks  
SOCEUR Public Affairs Chief

On two separate days in April, members of Company B, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 10<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group (Airborne) were engaged in hostile enemy action resulting in nine of its members receiving valor awards.

Staff Sergeants Steven Hurt and Jason Lebeau each were pinned the Bronze Star Medal with “V” Device and Staff Sergeants Daniel Devlin, Juanmanuel Mata, John Lewis and Christopher Smith were decorated with Army Commendation Medals with “V” device during a ceremony held July 29 at Panzer Barracks. Devlin also received a Purple Heart.

Three other team members not present at the ceremony who also earned Bronze Star for Valor were Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Jason Dryden, Staff Sgt. Kenneth Powell and Staff Sgt. Keith Waller. Waller also received a Purple Heart.

### **Day one – April 3, 2009**

The team was partnered with Romanian Special Forces detachment and was called to assist two platoons from the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division to capture a senior level insurgent hiding in a compound.

By the time they arrived, the enemy had fortified its position within the compound, emplacing crew served weapons and strategically positioning fighters to defend the assault.

“Within five minutes we were taking pretty effective fire from the insurgent. Waller and four of the Romanian Soldiers were immediately hit,” said the detachment’s team sergeant. “Incredibly, Waller kept up the fight until the medics pulled him away.”

At that point, Hurt, one of the team’s communications sergeants, realized that he needed to reposition to make contact with the air MEDEVAC. After just completing an assault against the enemy position, he again exposed himself to enemy machine gun fire enroute to establishing communications.

“Staff Sergeant Hurt is one of my most aggressive Soldiers – a shooter first,” the team sergeant said. “He was one of the first guys up on that roof and he knew when it was time to pull out of the fight to get satellite communications and relay information on the ground situation.”

As the enemy continued its attack on their position Smith, Dryden and Powell continued to treat the injured Soldiers, also putting themselves at serious personal risk.

### **Day two – April 17, 2009**

The team, partnered with an Afghanistan National Army platoon, a squad of Soldiers from 3-71st Cavalry Regiment and a Romanian Special Forces team were preparing to conduct a deliberate detention operation of an insurgent commander and improvised explosive device facilitator.

The team sergeant described the situation as “worst timing” for the men as they were already physically and emotionally spent after clearing five insurgent compounds during the previous 24 hours.

The enemy had an elevated position and watched as the men entered a narrow alley way before opening fire and inflicting two life threatening wounds on the 3-71 CAV Soldiers. The enemy also launched a rocket propelled grenade in the alleyway with fragmentation of the grenade penetrating the edge of Devlin’s helmet and lacerating his head.

“I knew I was dinked, but it was nothing serious,” Devlin said.

While receiving direct small arms fire the Special Forces Soldiers began giving immediate first aid care to the wounded Soldiers and placed seven tourniquets on one of them, eventually saving both his life and limb.

Both Mata and Lebeau would take turns providing suppressive fire against the enemy; while also taking turns giving critical care by applying direct pressure to stop the bleeding.

The team sergeant, who was separated from his men, attributed the many hours of first aid cross-training his Soldiers conducted prior to their deployment for saving the lives of the two wounded troopers. He added that every man is confident enough to do some part of every other man's job on the team.

Summing up the actions of all the men on those two nights Devlin said, "If any one member of our team had not been there, it could have been so much worse. Everyone played a vital role and everyone made a difference."