

Four NCOs honored for bravery

By Tiffany Nabors
The Bayonet

Four former 503rd Infantry Regiment Soldiers were honored for their bravery in combat at the Benning Conference Center in Fort Benning, Ga., Dec. 18, 2009.

Staff Sgt. Justin Grimm received the Silver Star for gallantry, Staff Sgt. Clifton Anderson and Sgt. Michael Lawrence received the Bronze Star with V device, and Staff Sgt. Zachari Rushing received the Army Commendation Medal with V device.

Before pinning the medals, Maj. Gen. Michael Ferriter, Fort Benning commander, talked about how these Soldiers never wavered during their 15-month deployment in Afghanistan's Hindu Kush Mountains near the Pakistan border.

"You find the fight and you don't give up an inch, that kind of endurance and courage only comes through training and discipline that starts long before the fight. That's the kind of dedication to duty that we see in our great NCOs," Ferriter said.

Col. William Ostlund, the 75th Ranger Regiment's deputy commander, led the 2nd Battalion (Airborne), 503rd Infantry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team during the deployment. He said Grimm, Anderson and Lawrence, all part of the 503rd's 2nd Battalion, performed with valor through one hostile engagement after another, including what has become known as the Battle of Wanat, in during which nine American Soldiers were killed and 27 were wounded.

"(They) had a simple task — to deploy with honor and redeploy with honor. They did so like no others," Ostlund said of the 2nd Battalion, which earned three Medal of Honor nominations, one Distinguished Service Cross, 27 Silver Stars, 93 Bronze Stars and more than 300 Commendation Medals.

While deployed with the 2nd Battalion's C Company, Grimm's team was attacked by approximately 200 insurgents at Vehicle Patrol Base Wanat on July 13, 2008.

According to the Silver Star citation, Grimm ran forward to prevent the enemy from overrunning the outpost. He manned a squad automatic weapon to suppress the enemy and bring relief to the beleaguered defenders. Many times, he left his covered position to render first aid to wounded Soldiers and help move them to safety. Despite heavy enemy fire around his position, he refused to abandon his post, detonating a mine and lobbing grenades into the enemy ranks, thwarting their advance and forcing them to retreat. Grimm acted with complete disregard for his own personal safety, leaving his defensive position to emplace a claymore mine and deny the enemy a critical avenue of approach.

He said the biggest honor was being in the company of those who fought the Battle of Wanat.

"I would say the greater honor was being able to be out there with chosen company," said Grimm, who is currently with the



Photo by Tiffany Nabors

Four Soldiers who served with the 503rd Infantry Regiment in Afghanistan are honored for their bravery.

198th Infantry Brigade.

Anderson and Lawrence led the defense of Seray Vehicle Patrol Base in Chowkay Valley June 23, 2008, during multiple enemy attacks.

According to Anderson's citation, his tactical acumen enabled his team to lay effective suppressive fire on concealed enemy positions, causing the enemy to break contact and preventing friendly casualties. Disregarding his own safety, he sprinted across open terrain through enemy fire on multiple occasions to coordinate his element's return fires.

Anderson, now an instructor with 6th Ranger Training Battalion, said the award is significant because the team didn't allow the shortage of manpower to prevent a proficient reaction.

"We handled that situation pretty well," Anderson said. "I'm glad that our events there got acknowledged."

According to Lawrence's citation, he sprinted across open terrain through enemy fire to coordinate the indirect fires, which ultimately stymied the final and most concerted attack on the vehicle patrol base.

Lawrence, now with Headquarters Company, 197th Infantry Brigade, said recognized the cumulative effort.

"It's due to the platoon that was out there fighting alongside one another that we had little to no casualties. They deserve it just as much as I do," he said.

Rushing earned his commendation while serving with the 503rd's 1st Battalion. According to his citation, following a catastrophic improvised explosive device strike in Charbaran District, the senior line medic's leadership and decision-making were instrumental in saving the lives of three of his fellow Soldiers.

"I'm thankful we saved some lives," said Rushing, now with 6th Ranger Training Battalion.

The Soldiers are now serving in training units at Fort Benning, where their knowledge will inspire the Army's newest combatants, Ferriter said.