

'Keeping Tabs'

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27th Brigade Combat Team --- Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix VII

Forward Operating Base Phoenix, Kabul, Afghanistan



CAMP PHOENIX, KABUL – Two 27th BCT Soldiers assigned to Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix received Bronze Star Medals with Valor during a Veterans Day ceremony at Camp Phoenix on Tuesday 11 November.

CPT Joseph Merrill from Binghamton, commander of the Ithaca-based Company D, 2nd Battalion 108th Infantry and 1SG James Meltz from Croseyville also assigned to Company D were honored for combat actions on 25 and 26 May. The unit was providing security for a long

range convoy from Kabul to Kandahar when it was ambushed. Both men were credited for “actions that lead to the repulsion of enemy forces without the injury or death to US forces.” “Veterans are people who know the true meaning of courage and what it really takes to keep a nation free and strong,” said Col. Brian K. Balfe, commander of CJTF-Phoenix VII and NY’s 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team during his remarks. “And yet compassion is also a part of their legacy,” he added.

Both CPT Merrill and 1SG Meltz previously served in Iraq with other NY units. They often provide security and support for CJTF-Phoenix humanitarian outreach efforts and civil medical assistance operations.

“This is an honor,” said Merrill who was surprised to receive the award. “That first night was a three hour fight,” he said, adding that his men soundly defeated if not completely destroyed the enemy. “The enemy showed up and stuck around,” said Meltz. “They wanted to play,” he added.

When one of their vehicles was struck by a rocket propelled grenade, both men helped the crew escape while also directing fire towards the enemy. 1SG Meltz dismounted a machinegun and put down accurate fire that drove the enemy to cover and then destroyed a stone wall the insurgents had hidden behind with an antitank weapon.

“As a company we will complete over 1100 missions before we finish,” said Merrill. “We figured that after those incidents the enemy took note and for the most part then left us alone,” he said. According to him, the enemy deliberately avoided engaging up-armored humvees from his unit that carried the “phoenix” logo.



International Partners



SGT James Haynes from Queens is congratulated by the commander of the French Epidote or training detachment during a French Armistice Day commemoration at Camp Phoenix on 11 November. He was presented a certificate in acknowledgment of his many contributions to the joint effort to help train senior Afghan officers. SGT Haynes is a mentor supporting the Afghan National Army Senior Command and Staff Course. Trained as a an information systems operator and analyst he helps provide computer training to senior Afghan Army officers and created an Afghan communications network. The French Epidote resides at Camp Phoenix. SGT Haynes is part of CJTFP team that advises the Afghan Command and General Staff Course.

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