

U.S. Army Europe and 7th Army

contact: paoci@eur.army.mil
phone: 49-6221-57-5815 / DSN 370-5815
fax: 49-6221-57-6376 / DSN 370-6376



RELEASE #2008-11-06-01

Nov. 6, 2008

173rd Airborne Brigade Soldier earns Silver Star for actions in combat in Afghanistan

By Sgt. 1st Class Jacob Caldwell

173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs Office

VICENZA, Italy -- A 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat team Soldier was awarded the Silver Star for valor in a ceremony at Caserma Ederle here Oct. 31.

Spc. Dillon Bergstad of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion (Airborne), 503rd Infantry Regiment, received the medal for his actions Aug. 27, 2007, in Paktika Province, Afghanistan, while deployed with the 173rd ABCT in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.



SGT 1ST CLASS JACOB CALDWELL

Bergstad was serving as an M2 .50-caliber machine gunner as part of a mounted patrol providing overwatch security for a route clearance element in Afghanistan's Zerok District when the patrol was attacked by 20 to 25 insurgents.

Brig. Gen. William, B. Garrett, Southern European Task Force commander, presents Spc. Dillon Bergstad of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion (Airborne), 503rd Infantry Regiment, with the Silver Star on Caserma Ederle in Vicenza, Italy, Oct. 30. Bergstad received the medal for his actions in combat while deployed to Afghanistan in August 2007.

During the battle that followed, Bergstad was knocked out of his turret three times by enemy fire. The first time his truck was struck by a rocket-propelled grenade. The second time he was shot through the right biceps by an armor-piercing incendiary round.

Bergstad was thrown from his vehicle a third time when his vehicle was again struck by a rocket-propelled grenade. Each time he fought his way back into the turret to continue engaging the enemy.

Those accounts of the battle came from Bergstad's fellow paratroopers and his Silver Star citation. The specialist says he does not have a clear recollection of the events. But his focus at the time was clear.

"I just had to keep my weapon going," the North Bend, Oregon, native said. "It was all completely reactionary."

"I don't even remember when I got shot. It's kind of like a car wreck. You know what happened, but you can't really remember any of it," said Bergstad.

As a result of Bergstad's actions, the gunner of an enemy rocket-propelled grenade team was killed and fire from several known enemy machine gun positions was suppressed, according to the medal citation.

When the ambush was over, Bergstad refused medical treatment for his arm until all other wounded personnel were treated first. He refused painkillers and morphine and reported for duty five days after the attack.

Brig. Gen. William B. Garrett, commander of the Southern European Task Force, presented the award to Bergstad. The general said he was impressed with the warrior spirit the specialist showed that day.

"On this day we recognize Spc. Bergstad for what he did," said Garrett during the ceremony. "And again, courage is the primary thing that we look for in any Soldier and any warrior, and he displayed it in spades that day, and that is why we are recognizing him."



www.hqusareur.army.mil