

# Medal of Honor



## Sgt. 1st Class Christopher A. Celiz

Sgt. 1st Class Christopher A. Celiz was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions on 12 July 2018 in Paktia Province, Afghanistan. Celiz was on a mission with a team of partnered forces and members of the 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, to clear an area of enemy forces. When the team was attacked and pinned down by fire from a large Taliban force, Celiz knew he had to act fast. Securing a heavy weapon system, he laid down suppressive fire to allow his team to regain the initiative, maneuver to a more secure location, and treat their casualties.

A medical evacuation helicopter arrived but immediately began taking accurate enemy fire. Ignoring the danger, Celiz used his own body as a shield to protect a wounded team member as well as the aircraft crew. He placed himself directly between the enemy and the cockpit to ensure the aircraft could lift off but was hit by enemy fire as it departed. Although wounded, Celiz waved the aircraft away to safety instead of attempting to board the aircraft and further endanger its occupants. He died of his wounds shortly thereafter.

The aircraft pilot would later reflect on Celiz's actions. "Courage, to me, is putting your life on the line to save the life of another, as demonstrated by Sergeant First Class Chris Celiz, who died protecting my crew."

President Joseph Biden presented the Medal of Honor to Celiz's wife, Katherine, and daughter, Shannon, in a 16 December 2021 White House ceremony. In his remarks, Biden spoke of how Celiz "knowingly and willingly stepped into the enemy's crosshairs." Biden added, "In the face of extreme danger, he placed the safety of his team and his crew above his own."

For more on Celiz's award, see the U.S. Army's Medal of Honor website at <https://www.army.mil/medalofhonor/celiz/>. ■



Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Celiz (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)



President Joseph R. Biden Jr. presents the Medal of Honor to Katherine Celiz, spouse of Sgt. 1st Class Christopher A. Celiz, and their daughter, Shannon, during a 16 December 2021 ceremony at the White House in Washington, D.C. (Photo by Laura Buchta, U.S. Army)