



Staff Sergeant Ryan M. Pitts

MEDAL OF HONOR

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM

Former Staff Sgt. Ryan M. Pitts was awarded the Medal of Honor by President Barack Obama in a 21 July White House ceremony for his actions at Wanat Village, Afghanistan, on 13 July 2008.

Pitts and eight other paratroopers had occupied Observation Post Topside overlooking Vehicle Patrol Base Kahler, adjacent to Wanat. About 200 enemy fighters attacked the base just after 4 a.m., focusing on key weapons systems and positions, including Topside. Two soldiers at the observation post were killed during the initial attack. The remaining seven were wounded.

With shrapnel wounds to his legs and his left arm, Pitts continued to fight for more than an hour, repelling the insurgents first with hand grenades, then with a machine gun, and then with a grenade launcher. Maintaining radio contact, he directed artillery fire on targets around the base and later directed attack helicopters sent to provide close air support.

At one point in the fight Pitts found himself alone in the observation post, but he never gave up. Eventually reinforcements arrived and the critically wounded Pitts was medically evacuated.

Pitts' actions prevented the enemy from gaining control of the high ground and inflicting significantly more casualties on the forces defending Vehicle Patrol Base Kahler.

President Obama said during the award ceremony, "In Ryan Pitts you see the humility and the loyalty that define America's men and women in uniform."

Pitts later told reporters, "The real heroes are the nine men who made the ultimate sacrifice so the rest of us could return home. It is their names, not mine that I want people to know."



Ultimately, nine soldiers died defending Observation Post Topside: Spc. Sergio Abad, Cpl. Jonathan Ayers, Cpl. Jason Bogar, 1st Lt. Jonathan Brostrom, Sgt. Israel Garcia, Cpl. Jason Hovater, Cpl. Matthew Phillips, Cpl. Pruitt Rainey, and Cpl. Gunnar Zwilling.

Pitts, a native of Nashua, N.H., is the ninth living recipient of the nation's highest military honor from the Afghan War. He was inducted into the Pentagon's Hall of Heroes on 22 July. ■