

Spc. Hilda I. Clayton

May 21, 1991 to July 2, 2013

Spc. Hilda I. Clayton, a visual information specialist assigned to the 55th Signal Company (Combat Camera), was killed while photographing a live-fire training exercise 2 July 2013 in Laghman Province, Afghanistan. Clayton and four Afghan National Army (ANA) soldiers died when a mortar tube accidentally exploded during an ANA mortar validation exercise being supported by U.S. Army trainers. She was attached to the 4th Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, based at Forward Operating Base Gamberi in eastern Afghanistan.

At the critical juncture of the war, when it was necessary for the ANA to increasingly assume responsibility for military actions, the story was not in the fighting but in the partnership that was necessary between U.S. and Afghan forces to stabilize the Afghan nation. One of the Afghan soldiers killed was a photojournalist that Clayton had partnered with to train in photojournalism. Not only did Clayton help document activities

aimed at shaping and strengthening the partnership but she also shared in the risk by participating in the effort.

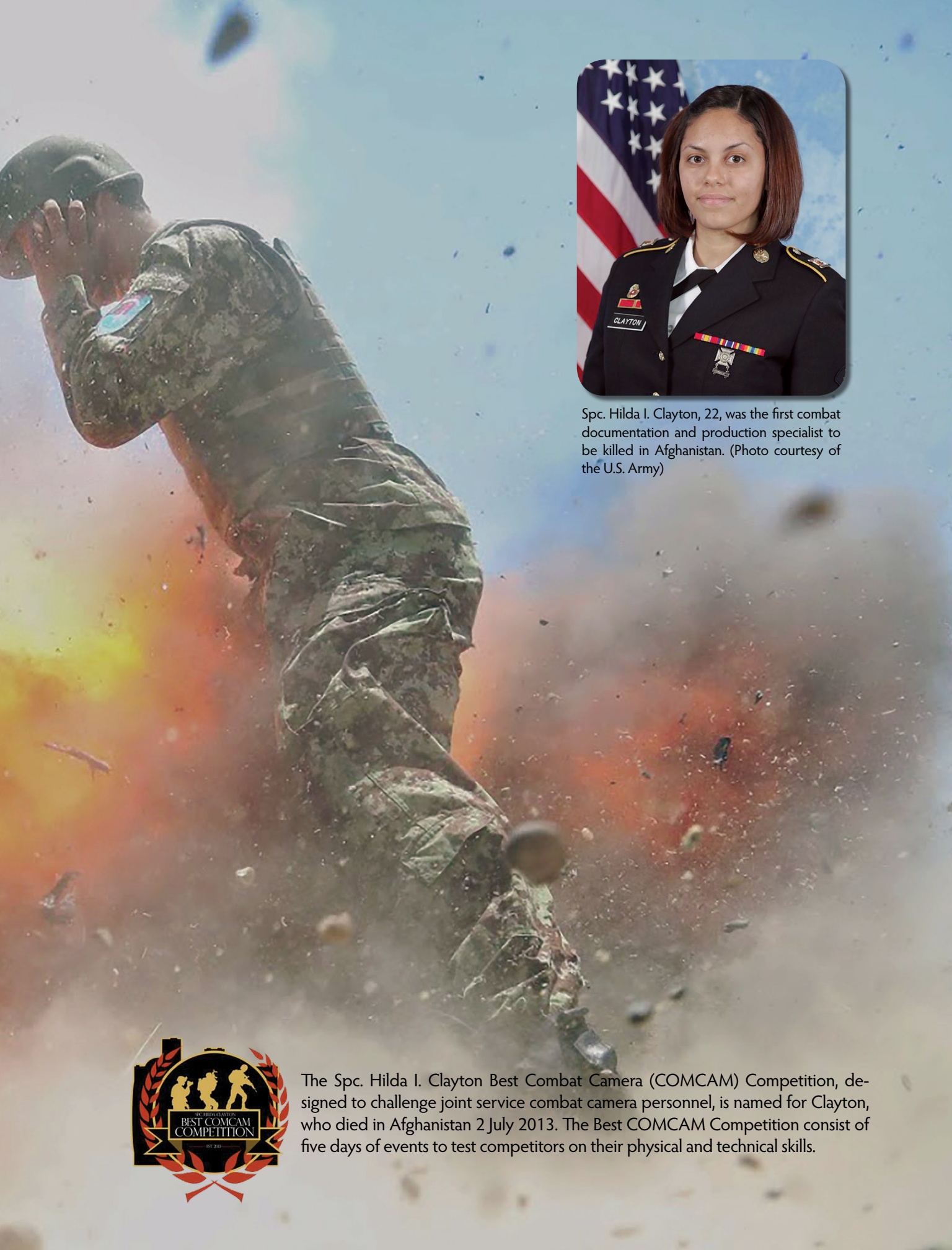
Combat Camera soldiers are trained to take still and video imagery in any environment. Their primary mission is to accompany combat soldiers wherever deployed to document the history of combat operations. Clayton's death symbolizes how female soldiers are increasingly exposed to hazardous situations in training and in combat on par with their male counterparts.

Clayton's service and sacrifice were recognized during memorial ceremonies at Forward Operating Base Gamberi on 8 July 2013 and at the Defense Information School (DINFOS), Fort Meade, Maryland, on 13 December 2013. At Fort Meade, Clayton's name was added to the DINFOS Hall of Heroes.

Combat Camera further honored Clayton by naming the award for the winner of its annual best combat camera competition after her. ■



A mortar tube accidentally explodes 2 July 2013 during an Afghan National Army (ANA) live-fire training exercise in Laghman Province, Afghanistan. The accident killed U.S. Army Spc. Hilda I. Clayton and four ANA soldiers. *Above:* The photo taken by one of the Afghan soldiers at the moment of the explosion. *Background:* The photo was simultaneously taken by Spc. Clayton.



Spc. Hilda I. Clayton, 22, was the first combat documentation and production specialist to be killed in Afghanistan. (Photo courtesy of the U.S. Army)



The Spc. Hilda I. Clayton Best Combat Camera (COMCAM) Competition, designed to challenge joint service combat camera personnel, is named for Clayton, who died in Afghanistan 2 July 2013. The Best COMCAM Competition consist of five days of events to test competitors on their physical and technical skills.