



Army Chief of Staff Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, left, speaks with former Staff Sgt. Clinton L. Romesha on July 18 at the National Infantry Museum in Columbus, Ga. Romesha, who was awarded the Medal of Honor in February, visited Fort Benning to speak to younger Soldiers and was a guest at the museum as a 4th Infantry Division monument was dedicated. (Photo courtesy of Army News Service)

Medal of Honor Recipient, Former NCO Shares His Story with Younger Soldiers

By PABLO VILLA

NCO Journal

Former Staff Sgt. Clinton L. Romesha is gradually learning to live with both the acclaim and burden that comes with being a Medal of Honor recipient.

While the honor is new for Carter, Romesha has had some time to reflect on what the military's highest honor means and how it's changed his life.

"It's changed quite a bit. I'm a little more popular now," Romesha said during a visit to Fort Benning, Ga., in July. "There are a lot of great organizations out there that want a recipient to come out and visit with them."

And Romesha has been happy to oblige. He visited Fort Benning as a special guest of the National 4th Infantry Division Association, which was dedicating its division monument along the Memorial Walk of Honor located on the grounds of the National Infantry Museum in Columbus. While there, Romesha said he couldn't pass up the opportunity to visit with younger Soldiers and share his experiences. He says talking about what happened at COP Keating and during the rest of his Army career gives young Soldiers a chance to learn

from his example and eases the solemn responsibility of wearing the nation's highest military accolade.

"It'll always be the medal of the Soldiers," Romesha said. "I'm just the guy that's wearing it around my neck for the time being. It's a heavy load at times. It comes with a lot of reflection of bad times and a lot of reflection of great times. To get out there and share it more with people and to help disperse the load over more than just me has really helped."



Staff Sgt. Clinton L. Romesha patrols the perimeter outside Forward Operating Base Bostic, Kunar province, Afghanistan. (Photo courtesy of Army News Service)

Romesha was assigned to B Troop, 3rd Squadron, 61st Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division at the time of the battle. According to the Army's official narrative, a force of about 400 enemy fighters launched an attack on COP Keating, which was defended by a force of 85 International Security Assistance Force Soldiers.

Romesha began the fight by engaging the enemy on the high ground to the west while taking cover behind a generator located in an open area in the middle of the outpost. The generator was struck with a rocket-propelled grenade, inflicting wounds Romesha wouldn't be aware of until later in the day.

After his position was reinforced, Romesha moved to the barracks on the east side of the compound where Spc. Thomas Rasmussen noticed and treated his wounds.

Romesha rejoined the battle, eliminating enemies on the north face of the mountains surrounding the outpost before moving back to the open area and eliminating three enemy fighters who had breached the compound. After informing 1st Lt. Andrew L. Bundermann of the breach, Romesha assembled a five-man team consisting of Rasmussen, Spc. Mark Dulaney, Spc. Josh Dannelley, Pfc. Christopher Jones and Sgt. Matthew Miller to secure the ammunition depot. Once the depot was under control, Romesha led his team further west to reinforce the outpost's entry control point, directing air support as he went.

The team received word that three Soldiers were still hemmed in behind a humvee at the western edge of the outpost. That trio included Carter — the new Medal of Honor recipient — Sgt. Bradley Larson and Spc. Stephan Mace, who was wounded. Romesha's team provided heavy cover fire while Carter and Larson moved Mace away from their pinned-down location.

The fighting continued with ISAF reinforcements arriving to help eventually secure the outpost. Eight American Soldiers were killed in the fight, including Mace. In addition to the two Medal of Honor recipients, nine other Soldiers involved in the battle received the Silver Star, a testament to the meticulous team effort that was required to overcome seemingly insurmountable odds.

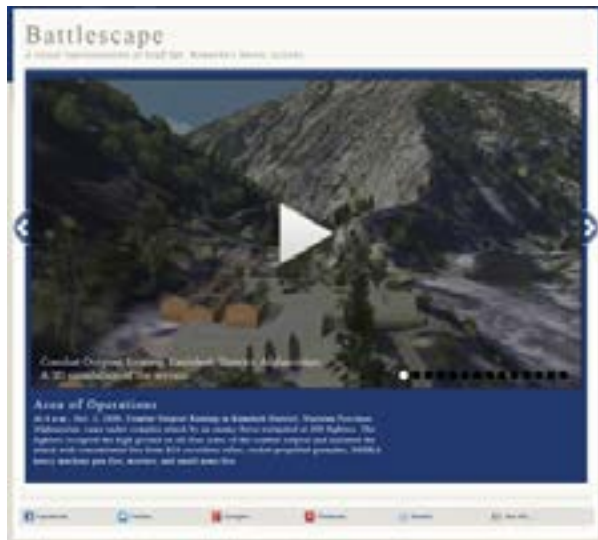
"Not every day do you see nine Silver Stars come out of one firefight," Romesha said. "It was hard work and compassion that put us on top. I get a lot of the attention now, but if it wasn't for them, I couldn't be here. I will never forget the sacrifices of the eight we lost. I will never forget the sacrifices of Soldiers we've lost in the past in the Global War on Terrorism, the Soldiers of wars past and wars future that are willing to put their body in harm's way so the American people can remain free and independent."

Romesha left the Army in April 2011 for a job in the oil industry in North Dakota, where he currently lives with his wife, Tamara, and their three children — Dessi, Gwen and Colin. He says the spark for his interest in sharing his story with others came after a conversation with another Medal of Honor recipient, Sgt. 1st Class Leroy Petry. Petry received the medal for his actions during a daylight raid on a Taliban compound in eastern Afghanistan's Paktia province in 2008. He remains in the Army. Romesha says they talk at least once a week.

"We were talking one day and he said, 'You ever think you'd meet a recipient, let alone be one.' You never wake up and think you're going to get the Medal of Honor," Romesha said. "As we're sitting there talking, we came to the conclusion that there's not a whole lot of us out there. I know as a young Soldier, it would have been great to pick the brain of a recipient to draw from their experience. So I always try and make myself available to the Soldiers — to the veterans, too, to thank them for their

service — and just talk to people.”

That realization is what spurred Romesha’s visit to Fort Benning, where he spent time with basic trainees.



A screenshot of a U.S. Army website that depicts a visual representation of the actions taken by Staff Sgt. Clinton L. Romesha on Oct. 3, 2009, at Combat Outpost Keating in Afghanistan. [See the battlescape here.](#)

“That’s what’s great — to talk to them to let them know I’m just a regular guy, just a regular Soldier,” Romesha said. “I went to basic training just like they did. I didn’t go Special Forces or Delta. I can’t do a million and ten push-ups. We just did a job — the job that was expected of us — and did it the best we could. And we did it with teamwork. I emphasize the message of teamwork because everything is built on that. Yes, there are individual achievements, and you want to be the best as

an individual. But rely on the strengths and the weaknesses of each other.”

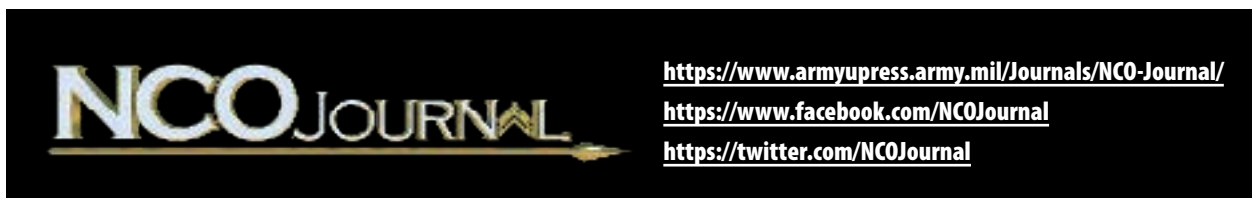
Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. Raymond T. Odierno lauded Romesha during his speech at the 4th Infantry Division monument dedication.

“It is one of the great privileges to honor Soldiers like Clint,” Odierno said. “He is representative of the tens of thousands of young veterans who have shown the American people and the world that a new greatest generation of American Soldiers has emerged during the last 12 years of war.”

Romesha said he hopes he can continue to visit Army installations throughout the country to speak about his experience and offer his guidance. He also hopes he can convey the importance of the influential duty of being a noncommissioned officer.

“Being an NCO coming up through the ranks, you get to be that ‘Joe,’ you get to be that grunt, you get to be the guy that gets all the details and does all the dirt work,” Romesha said. “Then, once you start putting on the hard stripes, you realize your role is more than just lifting heavy things and setting them back down. Your role is not only to train Soldiers, but also to mentor them, to develop, basically, their life skills because some of these guys are really young and this is their first time away from mom and dad.

“As you progress through the ranks of NCOs, you also deal with a lot more officers and senior-ranking officials in the military. So you get to see that side of the house. Being a staff sergeant is probably hands down the best rank in the military. You still get to be right there with the Soldiers, but you get to see enough on the top end to see what the big Army is doing and pick the brains of guys who are more experienced or have been around a lot longer.”



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