



# NCO to Posthumously Receive Silver Star, Polish Medal for Heroism

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**S**taff Sgt. Michael H. Ollis will be awarded the Silver Star posthumously at a ceremony later this month for his heroism earlier this year during an insurgent attack in Afghanistan.

His parents, Robert and Linda Ollis, will receive the award Oct. 24 at Fort Drum. Ollis, a 10th Mountain Division Soldier, will receive the honor for his actions while defending Forward Operating Base Ghanzi in eastern Afghanistan on Aug. 28.

According to Combined Joint Task Force-101, Ollis charged toward attackers that had breached the base in a “three-pronged attack.” He stepped between a Polish officer and a suicide bomber who was part of a “three-pronged attack” that breached the base. When the insurgent detonated his vest, the officer was shielded from harm. Ollis, however, was killed. He was 24.

Poland is scheduled to honor Ollis with the Polish Armed Forces Gold Medal on Nov. 8 in New York.

Ollis’ parents recently spoke to the Army News Service from their home in Staten Island, N.Y., to discuss their son’s life and accomplishments during a seven-year military career.

“We were overwhelmed, I think, first off. We just didn’t expect everything that has happened so far,” said Linda Ollis, who said the amount of love and support the family has received since Ollis’ death has been tremendous.

His parents remembered the “scrawny but tough boy” nicknamed “Mikey Muscles” by his friends, who climbed over everything, zoomed around the neighborhood on his Big Wheel, and had a calling to join his father and grandfathers in military service.

“I had some old Army fatigues that he used to wear running around the yard with them on,” said Robert Ollis, an Army Vietnam War veteran and, like his son, a Bronze Star recipient.

“From when he was a little boy, we knew what Mikey wanted to do. Michael wanted the armed service; he wanted to go into the Army,” he said.

And so, at age 17, his parents said, they signed for him and he enlisted. He was on his second deployment to Afghanistan at the time of his death. He had also served a tour in Iraq.

He loved the people of Iraq and Afghanistan, his parents said. He would tell his parents that the violence in those

countries was due to a small group of people, not the innocent men, women and children the Army is protecting.

Linda and Robert Ollis said they couldn't have been prouder of their son, a caring and generous person, they said, who looked out for others and loved the Army and serving the nation.

He was a great noncommissioned officer who was just accepted into the prestigious Sgt. Audie Murphy Club, they said.

That day in Afghanistan, Ollis charged toward danger to defend the base after it was infiltrated by attackers, the Combined Joint Task Force report said. The attack also claimed the life of a Polish Soldier and wounded several coalition Soldiers.

During the attack, a vehicle-borne explosive device detonated and 10 insurgents wearing suicide vests breached the perimeter. Additionally, mortars, rock-

et-propelled grenades, grenades and small arms fire from the enemy rained down from the east, west and north, according to the CJTF.

Ollis, with the 2nd Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, checked on his men, and then headed "directly to the sound of gunfire," joining up with a Polish officer and a Special Forces team.

By then, 8 of the 10 insurgents had already been killed. Then the 9th was killed.

The 10th insurgent emerged from behind a group of containers; Ollis was the closest Soldier to the attacker. As Ollis moved toward the insurgent, the narrative said, he "stepped in front of the Polish officer, thereby blocking him from the insurgent." When the insurgent's suicide vest detonated, the Polish officer was shielded, but Ollis was killed.

That heroic act, the Army said, saved the life of the Polish officer.



Staff Sgt. Michael H. Ollis previously deployed to Iraq, from April 2008 to May 2009, and to Afghanistan, from June 2010 to May 2011. Ollis deployed with his unit to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in January 2013, and was killed Aug. 28, 2013, defending Forward Operating Base Ghazni. (Photo courtesy of Fort Drum Public Affairs)



Staff Sgt. Michael H. Ollis, the godfather to the baby in this photo, poses with family members, including his sister and her baby, and his parents, Linda and Robert Ollis. (Photo courtesy of Ollis family)

“In emotional interviews with investigators, the Polish officer repeatedly praised Ollis and credited him with saving his life,” CJTF said.

Lt. Gen. Mark A. Milley, commander, International Security Assistance Force, Joint Forces Command, praised Ollis as a great Soldier and said the battle was a

“tough fight,” but the defenders of the base did “extraordinarily well.”

“Unfortunately, we lost a great American there from 10th Mountain Division in that attack,” he said. ■

Army News Service contributed to this report.

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