



Staff Sgt. Matthew Prout, the NCO in charge of the 88th Military Police Detachment, demonstrates modern Army combatives to Japanese police officers on Jan. 22, 2013, at Camp Zama, Japan. (Photo by Tetsuo Nakahara, U.S. Army Garrison Japan Public Affairs)

By Example: Bank Security Escort Turns Dangerous, Training Helps Survival

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This story is part of a periodic NCO Journal feature that takes a closer look at an Army award in an NCO's career. This month, we focus on the career of an NCO who was awarded the Bronze Star with "V" device. The Bronze Star may be awarded for bravery, acts of merit or meritorious service. The "V" device denotes individuals who were awarded a decoration in recognition of valorous acts performed during direct combat with an enemy force.

Staff Sgt. Matthew Prout, the NCO in charge of the 88th Military Police Detachment at Camp Zama, Japan, was a private first class serving in Baqubah, Iraq, in June 2007 when his valorous actions under fire earned him the Bronze Star with "V" device.

Prout had spent most of the day working with Iraqi police, teaching them the skills they would need to

be Iraqi police liaison officers. On the way back to base, they were asked to do a money escort to allow paychecks to be picked up for the Iraqi police. Prout's unit had already had two people injured within a three-block radius of the bank, so they knew it was a dangerous area.

"Once we got there, we sat around for 15 or 20 minutes waiting for the Iraqi police to go inside and get their money and get out, so we could leave," Prout said. "My vehicle was the rear vehicle of the convoy, pulling security."

The attack on the convoy began with a rocket-propelled grenade shot at Prout's vehicle.

"On initial impact, our team leader hopped out of the vehicle because it blew through his Kevlar, but it didn't kill him," Prout said. "It put shrapnel all through his back and along the top side of his head. We had an Iraqi police liaison officer in the back right seat. She

was also injured from shrapnel. For me, I took shrapnel in both legs, up to the thigh, and both knees, with burns along my wrist.

“After initial impact, I started returning fire,” Prout said. “I was on the (.50-caliber machine gun), and I returned fire. Another vehicle pulled up on our right-hand side and started engaging the enemy from there. Our team leader who had hopped out yanked off his Kevlar, and the other team leaders from the vehicle on our right side hopped out and started to attend to him. Our driver was uninjured. From there, for the next 30 seconds, we returned fire while other vehicles pulled back and started doing a block embracing so they could get medics to the vehicle and get everyone loaded.”

The Soldiers in Prout’s vehicle moved up to the next vehicle, but there wasn’t enough room for everybody. Prout continued to engage enemies to the front until a third vehicle pulled up, allowing him and an interpreter to get in. The door to that vehicle was broken and could only be closed from the outside, leaving them stuck until another team came up to get the door closed.

From there, they made their way to the nearest forward operating base, doing first aid where they could.

“While in the back of the vehicle, I did first aid on myself because between the driver, gunner and vehicle commander, there wasn’t enough space for anyone to get back and help me,” Prout said. ■

Tell me how your actions that day represent the best of the U.S. Army.

The actions show the willingness to engage the enemy no matter what, to never give up. We try to fulfill the Soldier’s Creed. At the same time, “never leave a fallen comrade.” Because even though people were injured along the way, everyone came back to their initial training of doing the steps necessary to get everyone home safe. The bottom line is that it was the training we did prior to deployment and during the deployment that allowed us to get everyone home safe.

Now that you are an NCO, what do you hope your Soldiers can learn from the actions you took that day?

The biggest lesson is that the fight is never over. No matter how bad you’re hurt, no matter how bleak things may seem at the time, no matter how much chaos there is, by relying on your training and what you’ve learned, and ensuring that you train properly with realistic trainings that show different situations, you can be prepared. By falling back on your training, it allows you to ensure that everyone comes home; everyone will remain safe. It also shows them that by facing your fears, you are able to overcome.

Why did you decide to join the Army?

I initially joined the Army because I had been in college for about two years, and it just wasn’t for me. I wanted to do more in life. I wanted to do something because, I felt like at school, I wasn’t motivated. I had no desire to go to class, do homework and things like that. So, I thought by joining the Army it would allow me to see the world, do more, have a more productive life and be a citizen that gives something instead of just takes and takes.

Why have you continued to serve?

I continue to serve mainly for the life experience. I know few other people will see what I’ve seen or do

what I’ve done. From the people I meet, to the lessons I learn, my development has taken me from a young adult to realizing the seriousness of life. The way it has developed me as a person, I look forward to seeing how it will develop me in the future. I know too many of my friends who are back in the States, stuck in the same type of lifestyle, doing the same type of thing day in and day out, and they’ve never left the States. Whereas, I’ve gone through countless countries and seen countless things, things that I know I would have never done and never seen if I hadn’t joined the Army.

What role have NCOs played in your development?

They have been the main motivating force because the leadership I had as a private coming into the military showed me what correct leadership should look like. It allows me to have an example to strive to be like. I know that all the NCOs I had in the beginning knew everything from A to Z. They were squared-away, and they made sure, by any means necessary, we would learn what we needed to learn, no matter how long it took. They had the patience and the different types of teaching styles that helped everyone in the squad to grow, develop and learn. That pushed us to want to do more, instead of being satisfied with being mediocre.

What advice do you have for junior NCOs?

Never stop learning. Whatever rank you may come up to, you can always learn something new, so don’t be closed-minded. Don’t be afraid to ask someone for advice or for what their opinion is, no matter what their rank. Those people who you least expect will sometimes surprise you the most and inspire you to change your leadership style.

What is your MOS and why did you choose it?

31B military police. Initially I wanted to work for the U.S. Capitol Police in Washington, D.C. I felt

doing military police would be a good start for me to get some experience. But, as of now, I've stayed a lot longer and keep staying in because of the sights and things I've seen. The Army allows you to learn so

much more about the world. The military is a much more satisfying job than most civilian jobs. The impact you have on people is far greater and far longer lasting than at some small company, working 9-to-5.



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