



Then-Sgt. Ryan Pitts of “Chosen Company,” 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade, takes a break from building a traffic control point northeast of Combat Outpost Bella, Afghanistan, in the spring of 2008. The traffic control point was on the road from COP Bella to Aranas, Afghanistan. (Photo courtesy of the U.S. Army)

NCO to Receive Medal of Honor in July for Combat Actions in Afghanistan

By Army News Service

The White House announced today that former Staff Sgt. Ryan Pitts will receive the Medal of Honor for his combat actions during an enemy engagement in Wanat in the Waygal Valley of northeastern Afghanistan on July 13, 2008.

President Barack Obama will present the Medal of Honor to Pitts during a ceremony at the White House on July 21, 2014.

Pitts will be the ninth living recipient to be awarded the Medal of Honor for actions in Iraq or Afghanistan. The White House says Pitts and his family will join the president at the White House to commemorate his example of selfless service.

Pitts served with 2nd Platoon, “Chosen” Company, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade.

The White House notes that Pitts’ personal awards include the Bronze Star Medal with “V” device, Purple Heart Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal with three Bronze Oak Leaf Clusters, Army Achievement Medal, Army Good Conduct Medal with Bronze Clasp and two Loops, National Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal with two Campaign Stars, Global War on Terrorism Medal, Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development Ribbon, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon



Staff Sgt. Ryan Pitts

with numeral “4,” NATO Medal, Presidential Unit Citation, Valorous Unit Award, Combat Action Badge, Pathfinder Badge and Parachutist Badge.

In the summer of 2008, Pitts, then a sergeant, and his team were part of Operation “Rock Move,” meant to transfer remaining forces and capability from Combat Outpost Bella to a new location on the outskirts of Wanat village. The new position was Vehicle Patrol Base Kahler; COP Bella was to be closed.

The mission was expected to be the last for the Soldiers before returning home — they’d been in Afghanistan for 14 months.

On the morning of July 13, at about 4 a.m., Pitts was manning Observation Post Topside, which was positioned east of the main base, and east of a bazaar and hotel complex in Wanat.

Shortly after, Soldiers conducting surveillance identified potential insurgents. They put together a request for fire. But before that could happen, at about 4:20 a.m., Soldiers heard machine-gun fire from the north. After that, the valley erupted in enemy fire.

Soldiers at OP Topside were hit with small arms fire, rocket-propelled grenades and hand grenades. Pitts and six other paratroopers at OP Topside were injured in the initial volley of enemy fire, and two paratroopers were killed. Pitts took grenade shrapnel in both legs and his left arm.

For more than an hour after, Pitts continued to fight and defend his position and his teammates, despite his injuries.

Throughout the battle, despite the loss of blood and severity of his wounds, Pitts’ incredible toughness, determination and ability to commu-

nicate with leadership while under fire allowed U.S. forces to hold the observation post and turn the tide of the battle.

Without his ability to stay alert and fight while critically wounded, the enemy would have gained a foothold on high ground and inflicted significantly greater casualties onto the vehicle patrol base, and the enemy could have been in possession of the fallen Soldiers at the observation post.

Nine Soldiers — 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 — were killed in the battle. ■

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