

# Parents of Green Beret Killed In Action Will Attend State of the Union Tonight

By NCO Journal Report

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President Barack Obama works on the State of the Union address Jan. 11 in the Oval Office with Director of Speechwriting Cody Keenan and Ben Rhodes, deputy national security advisor for strategic communications, in the Oval Office Jan. 11, 2016. (Photo courtesy of White House)

When President Barack Obama delivers his final State of the Union address at 9 Eastern tonight, the parents of slain U.S. Army Special Forces 1st Sgt. P. Andrew McKenna Jr. will be in the House chamber to hear it.

Carol and Peter McKenna will be guests of U.S. Rep. David N. Cicilline, D-Rhode Island. Their son was killed Aug. 7 in Afghanistan during a gun battle that followed a suicide bombing, the Providence (Rhode Island) Journal reported. He was credited with saving lives while defending the base, the newspaper reported.

"We are honored to be attending the State of the Union ... as Congressman Cicilline's guests," the McKennas, who live in Bristol, Rhode Island, said in a news release from Cicilline's office. "This is a once-in-a-lifetime experience."

First Sgt. McKenna was killed during an attack by the Taliban on Camp Integrity, a NATO facility in Kabul.

The Green Beret first joined the military one month after graduating Mount Hope High School in Bristol in 1998. Over 17 years of active service, he completed five tours in Afghanistan and one in Iraq and was decorated with numerous awards, including the Bronze Star with V device and the Meritorious Service Medal. McKenna graduated magna cum laude with a bachelor's degree in strategic studies from Norwich University in 2015. He was planning to pursue a master's degree once his deployment ended in October.

One month before his death, 1st Sgt. McKenna returned home to the East Bay, where he was recognized during the Bristol Fourth of July Parade. In the release, Cicilline, who attended the parade and thanked McKenna for his service, said, "Andrew McKenna was a true hero who embodied the very best of Rhode Island values. His patriotism, loyalty, and sense of shared purpose were reflections of his strong character and the values he learned growing up in Bristol. I am deeply honored that his parents, Carol and Peter, will join me [at] the State of the Union."

Members of Congress receive one ticket for a guest to attend the State of the Union. U.S. Rep. Collin Peterson, D-Minnesota, donated his ticket so both of 1st Sgt. McKenna's parents could attend.