



NEWS RELEASE

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

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Fickett receives Purple Heart

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan, Oct. 1, 2011 – Army Spc. Robert A. Fickett was presented with the Purple Heart medal today by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Afghanistan Engineer District-South Commander Air Force Col. Benjamin Wham at Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan.

Fickett, an MRAP (mine-resistant, ambush protected vehicle) team member, was awarded the Purple Heart medal for wounds received in action July 6 in Zabul province, Afghanistan.

“Most of the time, you like giving Soldiers medals. But the Purple Heart is one of those medals you don’t want to give because it means a Soldier was hurt, and close to the line between serious and really serious risk to his life,” said USACE South District Command Sgt. Maj. Lorne R. Quebodeaux. “Fickett was in the worst position possible – the turret gunner in an MRAP that rolled over – but when he got in that position he was able to react correctly and survive because he had been well trained by his leadership and he reacted according to that training.”

Before being assigned to an MRAP team, Soldiers receive extensive training which includes battle drills. It was during one of those drills, that Fickett learned how to respond in a MRAP vehicle rollover, according to Master Sgt. Angel A. Espinoza.

“His ability to react in that split second minimized his own injuries,” said Espinoza.

While on a new project assessment mission, Fickett was injured when his vehicle was hit by an IED blast. Despite his injuries, he stayed on the scene for three days, helping his team provide security for two unarmed USACE civilians.

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“We have a great team in Qalat,” said Staff Sgt. Alberto Garcia, the MRAP team leader. “SPC Fickett did an outstanding job.”

Established by Gen. George Washington at Newburgh, New York, Aug. 7, 1782, the Purple Heart medal, originally the Badge of Military Merit, is the oldest known U.S. military decoration still in use, according to the Military Order of the Purple Heart.

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Army Spc. Robert A. Fickett, center, was presented with the Purple Heart medal today by the USACE Afghanistan Engineer District-South Commander Air Force Col. Benjamin Wham, left, at Kandahar Airfield. The USACE South District Command Sgt. Maj. Lorne R. Quebodeaux, stands to the right. (USACE Photo/Brenda Beasley)

USACE’s Afghanistan Engineer District-South provides design and construction services throughout southern Afghanistan to support the International Security Assistance Force and U.S. Forces-Afghanistan. The work is carried out in Regional Commands South, Southwest and West with the goal of achieving counterinsurgency effects and bolstering the Afghan Government’s services to its people.

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