



News Release

U.S. ARMY SUSTAINMENT COMMAND

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402nd AFSB civilians earn Defense of Freedom Medal

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JOINT BASE BALAD, Iraq, Ill. – Two civilians assigned to 1st Battalion, 402nd Army Field Support Brigade were presented with Defense of Freedom Medals by Lt. Gen. Mitchell H. Stevenson, deputy chief of staff for logistics (G-4), Headquarters, Department of the Army, in a Feb. 18 ceremony at Joint Base Balad, Iraq.

The medal is the civilian counterpart to the Purple Heart.

Tony M. Hall, a heavy mobile equipment operator, and Christopher Kirby, a master driver and master driver trainer, were awarded the medals as a result of wounds they received when the quarters in which they were sleeping came under an indirect fire (mortar) attack by insurgents on Camp Anaconda, Balad, Iraq on April 20, 2008.

According to the provost marshal's office report, a 107mm rocket-propelled grenade struck the ground near the housing area where Hall and Kirby were sleeping. Shrapnel entered their room and wounded both men.

Hall and Kirby were transported by ambulance to the Air Force Theater Hospital at Camp Anaconda, Balad, Iraq and underwent surgery. Following their discharge from the hospital, both men were placed on convalescent leave.

Hall, a Department of the Army civilian employed by Red River Army Depot, Texarkana, Texas, has been assigned to the battalion since March 2008. He was born in Fort Worth, Texas, and enlisted in the U.S. Army,

serving in Vietnam from 1973-74. Hall is on his second tour in Iraq and is currently assigned to Taji National Maintenance Depot.

Recalling the events of that April 2008 morning, Hall said he did not realize he was wounded at first, "everything was moving so fast."

Hall added that he discovered that he was wounded after he entered a bunker and felt a stinging and burning sensation in his arm. He was hospitalized for three days and then went home to recuperate. When asked why he returned, Hall said simply, "I'm not a quitter."

Kirby has worked for ITT Corporation for approximately four years and was also employed by KBR for approximately one year as a truck driver. He previously served with ITT in Kuwait and in Iraq at Ramadi and Joint Base Balad. As a master driver and master driver trainer, part of his current job is to train and license personnel to drive heavy Army tactical vehicles.

Ironically, Kirby had been at Balad for only two days before the incident.

He praised the staff of the Air Force Theater Hospital and said, "I got the best medical care I've ever had in my entire life [there]." Like Hall, Kirby was hospitalized for three days and then flown home to recuperate.

Asked why he chose to return to his job, he said, "These are the best people in the world."

The Defense of Freedom medal was announced by Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld on Sept. 27, 2001, and was initially presented to 37 people who had been killed or wounded in the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

The Defense of Freedom Medal was established to acknowledge civilian employees of the Department of Defense who are killed or wounded in the line of duty. The medal symbolizes the extraordinary fidelity and essential service of the Department's civilian workforce, who are an integral part of DoD and who contribute to the preservation of national security.

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