



# SFC Thomas Payne

## Special Forces

Sergeant First Class Thomas P. Payne distinguished himself by conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity, above and beyond the call of duty, on October 22, 2015, during a daring nighttime hostage rescue in Kirkuk Province, Iraq, in support of Operation INHERENT RESOLVE. Sergeant Payne led a combined assault team charged with clearing one of two buildings known to house the hostages. With speed, audacity, and courage, he led his team as they quickly cleared the assigned building, liberating 38 hostages.

Upon hearing a request for additional assaulters to assist with clearing the other building, Sergeant Payne, on his own initiative, left his secured position, exposing himself to enemy fire as he bounded across the compound to the other building from which entrenched enemy forces were engaging his comrades. Sergeant Payne climbed a ladder to the building's roof, which was partially engulfed in flames, and engaged enemy fighters below with grenades and small arms fire. He then moved back to ground level to engage the enemy forces through a breach hole in the west side of the building. Knowing time was running out for the hostages trapped inside the burning building, Sergeant Payne moved to the main entrance, where heavy enemy fire had thwarted previous attempts to enter.

He knowingly risked his own life by bravely entering the building under intense enemy fire, enduring smoke, heat, and flames to identify the armored door imprisoning the hostages. Upon exiting, Sergeant Payne exchanged his rifle for bolt cutters, and again entered the building, ignoring the enemy rounds impacting the walls around him as he cut the locks on a complex locking mechanism. His courageous actions motivated the coalition assault team members to enter the breach and assist with cutting the locks. After exiting to catch his breath, he reentered the building to make the final lock cuts, freeing 37 hostages. Sergeant Payne then facilitated the evacuation of the hostages, even though ordered to evacuate the collapsing building himself, which was now structurally unsound due to the fire. Sergeant Payne then reentered the burning building one last time to ensure everyone had been evacuated.

He consciously exposed himself to enemy automatic gunfire each time he entered the building. His extraordinary heroism and selfless actions were key to liberating 75 hostages during a contested rescue mission that resulted in 20 enemies killed in action.

Sergeant First Class Payne's gallantry under fire and uncommon valor are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, the United States Special Operations Command, and the United States Army.





# SSG Leroy Petry

## Rangers

Staff Sergeant Leroy A. Petry, distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty in action with an armed enemy in the vicinity of Paktya Province, Afghanistan, on May 26, 2008. As a Weapons Squad Leader with D Company, 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, Staff Sergeant Petry moved to clear the courtyard of a house that potentially contained high-value combatants.

While crossing the courtyard, Staff Sergeant Petry and another Ranger were engaged and wounded by automatic weapons fire from enemy fighters. Still under enemy fire, and wounded in both legs, Staff Sergeant Petry led the other Ranger to cover. He then reported the situation and engaged the enemy with a hand grenade, providing suppression as another Ranger moved to his position.

The enemy quickly responded by maneuvering closer and throwing grenades. The first grenade explosion knocked his two fellow Rangers to the ground and wounded both with shrapnel. A second grenade then landed only a few feet away from them.

Instantly realizing the danger, Staff Sergeant Petry, unhesitatingly and with complete disregard for his safety, deliberately and selflessly moved forward, picked up the grenade, and in an effort to clear the immediate threat, threw the grenade away from his fellow Rangers. As he was releasing the grenade it detonated, amputating his right hand at the wrist and further injuring him with multiple shrapnel wounds.

Although picking up and throwing the live grenade grievously wounded Staff Sergeant Petry, his gallant act undeniably saved his fellow Rangers from being severely wounded or killed. Despite the severity of his wounds, Staff Sergeant Petry continued to maintain the presence of mind to place a tourniquet on his right wrist before communicating the situation by radio in order to coordinate support for himself and his fellow wounded Rangers.

Staff Sergeant Petry's extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service, and reflect great credit upon himself, 75th Ranger Regiment, and the United States Army.



# SSG Earl Plumlee

## Special Forces

Then-Staff Sgt. Earl D. Plumlee distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while engaging with the enemy in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in Ghazni Province, Afghanistan, on Aug. 28, 2013.

Plumlee served as a weapons sergeant assigned to Charlie Company, 4th Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne), at Forward Operating Base Ghazni, when the complex was attacked. Plumlee instantly responded to a massive explosion that caused a 60-foot breach in the base's perimeter wall. Ten insurgents wearing Afghan National Army uniforms and suicide vests poured through the breach.

Plumlee and five other special operations Soldiers, intent on defending the base, mounted two vehicles and raced toward the detonation site. Plumlee's driver purposefully maneuvered the vehicle into enemy fire to shield three dismounted teammates, two of whom were injured, placing the vehicle under effective enemy fire from the front and right side.

Using his body to shield the driver from enemy fire, Plumlee exited the vehicle while simultaneously drawing his pistol and engaging an insurgent 15 meters to the vehicle's right. Without cover and with complete disregard for his safety, he advanced toward the enemy force, engaging multiple insurgents with only his pistol. Upon reaching cover, he killed two insurgents.

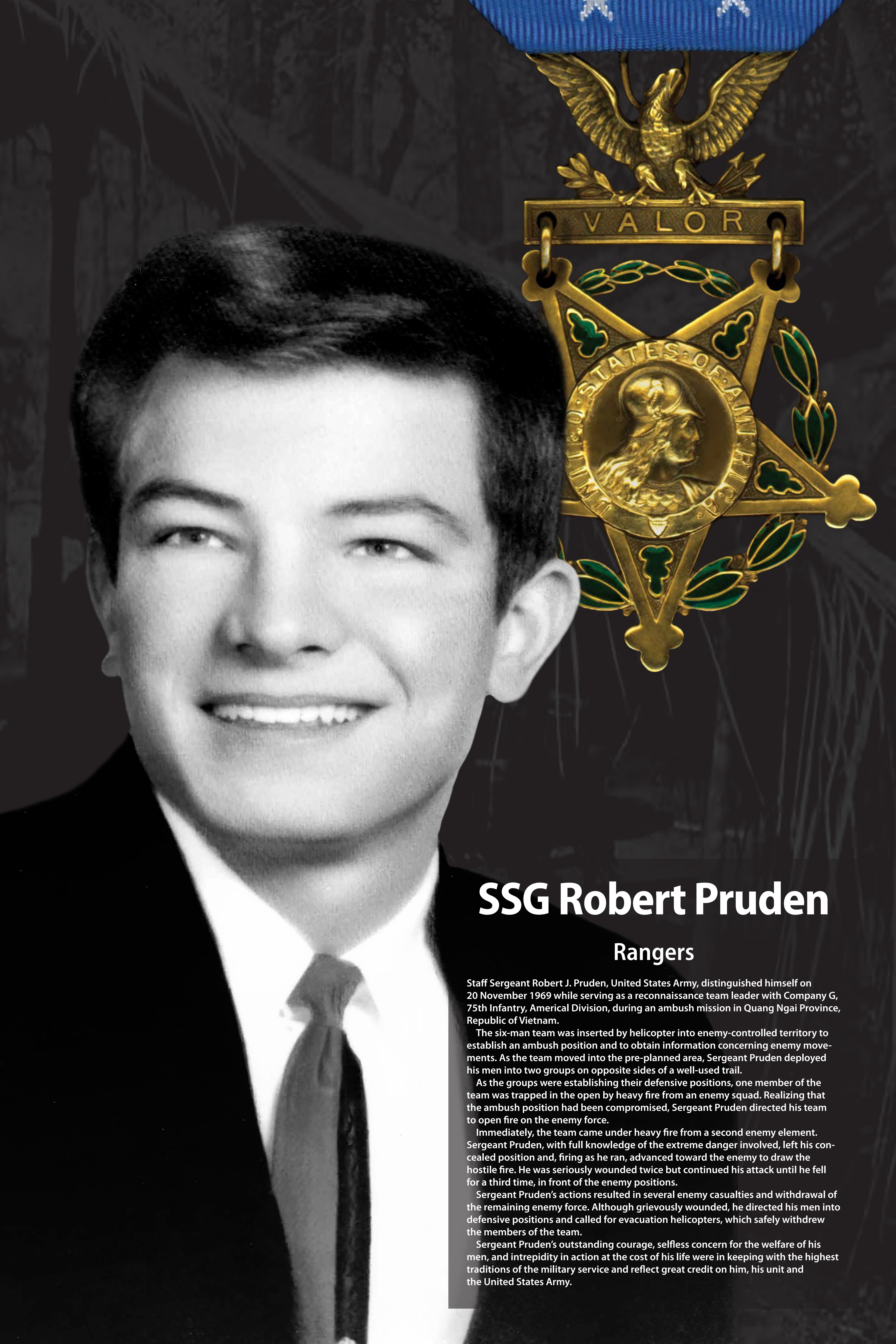
Plumlee left cover and continued to advance alone. Moving forward, he engaged several combatants at close range. Under intense enemy fire, Plumlee temporarily withdrew to cover, where he joined another Soldier.

Plumlee, ignoring his injuries, quickly regained his bearings and reengaged the enemy. Intense enemy fire once again forced the two Soldiers to temporarily withdraw. Undeterred and resolute, Plumlee joined a small group of American and coalition soldiers moving from cover to counterattack the infiltrators. As the coalition forces advanced, Plumlee engaged an insurgent to his front-left.

Plumlee then ran to a wounded Soldier, carried him to safety, and rendered first aid. Afterwards, he organized three coalition members in a defensive stance as he methodically cleared the area, remained in a security posture and continued to scan for any remaining threats.

Throughout the entire engagement, Plumlee repeatedly placed himself in extreme danger to protect his team and the base, and to defeat the enemy. Plumlee's extraordinary heroism and selflessness beyond the call of duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army.





# SSG Robert Pruden

## Rangers

Staff Sergeant Robert J. Pruden, United States Army, distinguished himself on 20 November 1969 while serving as a reconnaissance team leader with Company G, 75th Infantry, Americal Division, during an ambush mission in Quang Ngai Province, Republic of Vietnam.

The six-man team was inserted by helicopter into enemy-controlled territory to establish an ambush position and to obtain information concerning enemy movements. As the team moved into the pre-planned area, Sergeant Pruden deployed his men into two groups on opposite sides of a well-used trail.

As the groups were establishing their defensive positions, one member of the team was trapped in the open by heavy fire from an enemy squad. Realizing that the ambush position had been compromised, Sergeant Pruden directed his team to open fire on the enemy force.

Immediately, the team came under heavy fire from a second enemy element. Sergeant Pruden, with full knowledge of the extreme danger involved, left his concealed position and, firing as he ran, advanced toward the enemy to draw the hostile fire. He was seriously wounded twice but continued his attack until he fell for a third time, in front of the enemy positions.

Sergeant Pruden's actions resulted in several enemy casualties and withdrawal of the remaining enemy force. Although grievously wounded, he directed his men into defensive positions and called for evacuation helicopters, which safely withdrew the members of the team.

Sergeant Pruden's outstanding courage, selfless concern for the welfare of his men, and intrepidity in action at the cost of his life were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit on him, his unit and the United States Army.



## 1LT Ralph Puckett, Jr.

### Rangers

First Lieutenant Ralph Puckett, Jr., distinguished himself by acts of Gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while serving as the commander Eighth U.S. Army Ranger Company during the period of 25 November 1950, through 26 November 1950, in Korea.

As his unit commenced a daylight attack on Hill 205, the enemy directed mortar, machine gun, and small-arms fire against the advancing force. To obtain fire, First Lieutenant Puckett mounted the closest tank, exposing himself to the deadly enemy fire. Leaping from the tank, he shouted words of encouragement to his men and began to lead the Rangers in the attack.

Almost immediately, enemy fire threatened the success of the attack by pinning down one platoon. Leaving the safety of his position, with full knowledge of the danger, First Lieutenant Puckett intentionally ran across an open area three times to draw enemy fire, thereby allowing the Rangers to locate and destroy the enemy positions and to seize Hill 205.

During the night, the enemy launched a counterattack that lasted four hours. Over the course of the counterattack, the Rangers were inspired and motivated by the extraordinary leadership and courageous example exhibited by First Lieutenant Puckett. As a result, five human-wave attacks by a battalion-strength enemy element were repulsed.

During the first attack, First Lieutenant Puckett was wounded by grenade fragments, but refused evacuation and continually directed artillery support that decimated attacking enemy formations. He repeatedly abandoned positions of relative safety to make his way from foxhole to foxhole, to check the company's perimeter and to distribute ammunition amongst the Rangers.

When the enemy launched a sixth attack, it became clear to First Lieutenant Puckett that the position was untenable due to the unavailability of supporting artillery fire. During this attack, two enemy mortar rounds landed in his foxhole, inflicting grievous wounds, which limited his mobility.

Knowing his men were in a precarious situation, First Lieutenant Puckett commanded the Rangers to leave him behind and evacuate the area. Feeling a sense of duty to aid him, the Rangers refused the order and staged an effort to retrieve him from the foxhole while still under fire from the enemy.

Ultimately, the Rangers succeeded in retrieving First Lieutenant Puckett and they moved to the bottom of the hill, where First Lieutenant Puckett called for devastating artillery fire on the top of the enemy-controlled hill.

First Lieutenant Puckett's extraordinary heroism and selflessness above and beyond the call of duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.



# SSG Laszlo Rabel

## Rangers

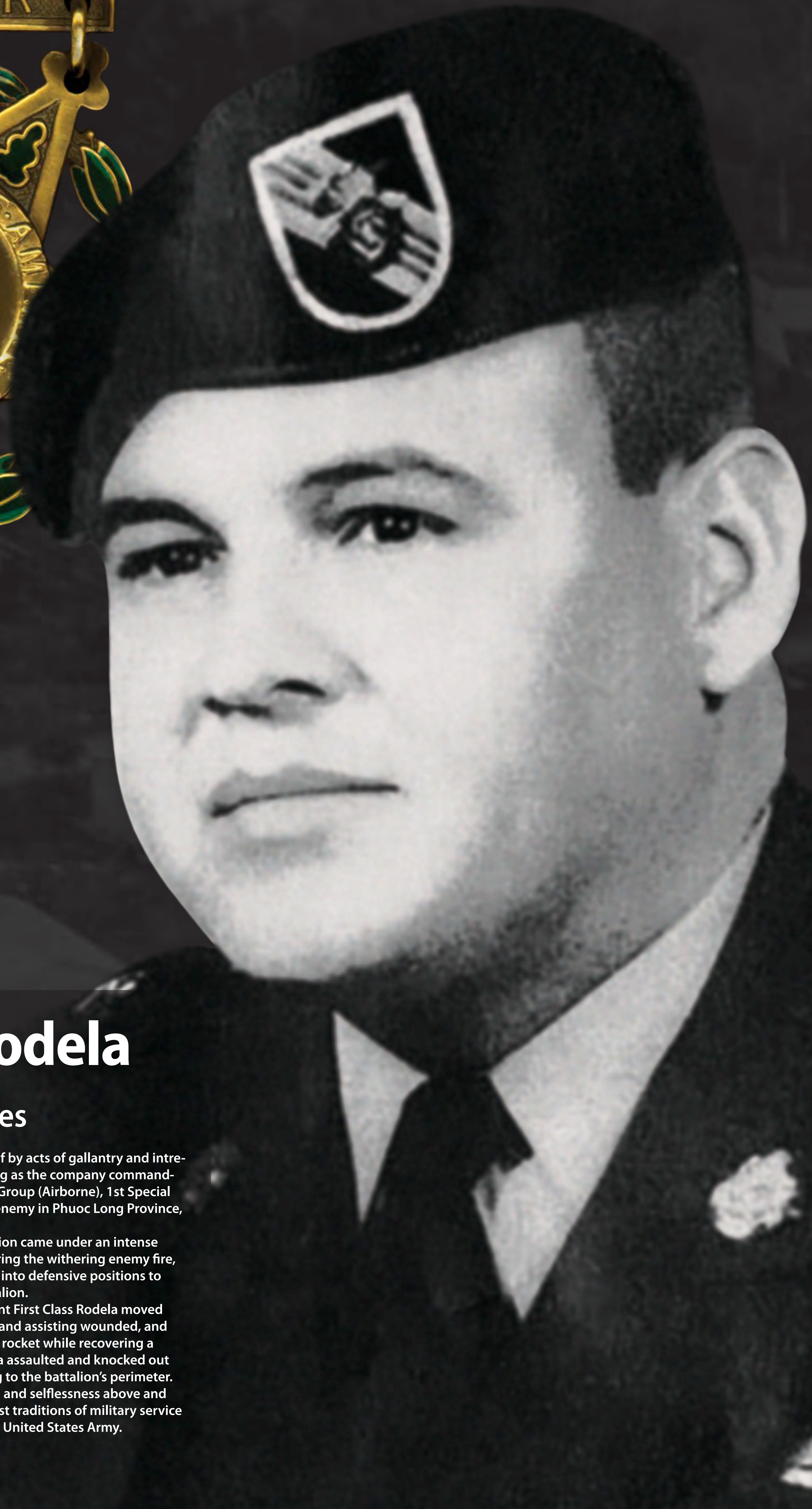
Staff Sergeant Laszlo Rabel, United States Army, distinguished himself by conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity while serving as leader of Team Delta, 74th Infantry Detachment (Long Range Patrol), 173d Airborne Brigade, in Binh Dinh Province, Republic of Vietnam on 13 November 1968.

At 1000 hours on this date, Team Delta was in a defensive perimeter conducting reconnaissance of enemy trail networks when a member of the team detected enemy movement to the front.

As Sergeant Rabel and a comrade prepared to clear the area, he heard an incoming grenade as it landed in the midst of the team's perimeter. With complete disregard for his own life, Sergeant Rabel threw himself on the grenade and, covering it with his body, received the complete impact of the immediate explosion.

Through his indomitable courage, complete disregard for his own safety and profound concern for his fellow soldiers, Sergeant Rabel averted the loss of life and injury to the other members of Team Delta.

By his conspicuous gallantry at the cost of his own life in the highest traditions of the military service, Staff Sergeant Rabel has reflected great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.



# SFC Jose Rodela

## Special Forces

Sergeant First Class Jose Rodela distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while serving as the company commander, Detachment B-36, Company A, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 1st Special Forces, during combat operations against an armed enemy in Phuoc Long Province, Republic of Vietnam on September 1, 1969.

That afternoon, Sergeant First Class Rodela's battalion came under an intense barrage of mortar, rocket and machine gun fire. Ignoring the withering enemy fire, Sergeant Rodela immediately began placing his men into defensive positions to prevent the enemy from overrunning the entire battalion.

Repeatedly exposing himself to enemy fire, Sergeant First Class Rodela moved from position to position, providing suppressing fire and assisting wounded, and was himself wounded in the back and head by a B-40 rocket while recovering a wounded comrade. Alone, Sergeant First Class Rodela assaulted and knocked out the B-40 rocket position before successfully returning to the battalion's perimeter.

Sergeant First Class Rodela's extraordinary heroism and selflessness above and beyond the call of duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army.



# SGT Gary Rose

## Special Forces

Sergeant Gary M. Rose distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity while serving as a Special Forces Medic with a company-sized exploitation force, Special Operations Augmentation, Command and Control Central, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 1st Special Forces, Republic of Vietnam. Between 11 and 14 September 1970, Sergeant Rose's company was continuously engaged by a well-armed and numerically superior hostile force deep in enemy-controlled territory.

Enemy B-40 rockets and mortar rounds rained down while the adversary sprayed the area with small arms and machine gun fire, wounding many and forcing everyone to seek cover. Sergeant Rose, braving the hail of bullets, sprinted fifty meters to a wounded soldier's side. He then used his own body to protect the casualty from further injury while treating his wounds.

After stabilizing the casualty, Sergeant Rose carried him through the bullet-ridden combat zone to protective cover. As the enemy accelerated the attack, Sergeant Rose continuously exposed himself to intense fire as he fearlessly moved from casualty to casualty, administering life-saving aid. A B-40 rocket impacted just meters from Sergeant Rose, knocking him from his feet and injuring his head, hand, and foot.

Ignoring his wounds, Sergeant Rose struggled to his feet and continued to render aid to the other injured soldiers. During an attempted medevac, Sergeant Rose again exposed himself to enemy fire as he attempted to hoist wounded personnel up to the hovering helicopter, which was unable to land due to unsuitable terrain.

The medevac mission was aborted due to intense enemy fire and the helicopter crashed a few miles away due to the enemy fire sustained during the attempted

extraction. Over the next two days, Sergeant Rose continued to expose himself to enemy fire in order to treat the wounded, estimated to be half of the company's personnel. On September 14, during the company's eventual helicopter extraction, the enemy launched a full-scale offensive.

Sergeant Rose, after loading wounded personnel on the first set of extraction helicopters, returned to the outer perimeter under enemy fire, carrying friendly casualties and moving wounded personnel to more secure positions until they could be evacuated. He then returned to the perimeter to help repel the enemy until the final extraction helicopter arrived.

As the final helicopter was loaded, the enemy began to overrun the company's position, and the helicopter's Marine door gunner was shot in the neck. Sergeant Rose instantly administered critical medical treatment onboard the helicopter, saving the Marine's life. The helicopter carrying Sergeant Rose crashed several hundred meters from the evacuation point, further injuring Sergeant Rose and the personnel on board.

Despite his numerous wounds from the past three days, Sergeant Rose continued to pull and carry unconscious and wounded personnel out of the burning wreckage and continued to administer aid to the wounded until another extraction helicopter arrived.

Sergeant Rose's extraordinary heroism and selflessness above and beyond the call of duty were critical to saving numerous lives over that four day time period. His actions are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, the 1st Special Forces, and the United States Army.