



MEDAL OF HONOR:

Sgt. 1st Class Christopher A. Celiz



Biography



Hometown: Summerville, South Carolina
Unit: 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment
Military Occupation (MOS): Combat Engineer (12B)
Enlisted: September 2006
Deployments: Operation Iraqi Freedom (2008), Operation Enduring Freedom (2011, 2013 and 2014), Operation Freedom's Sentinel (2015, 2016 and 2018)



Sgt. 1st Class Christopher A. Celiz, a native of Summerville, South Carolina, enlisted in the United States Army in September 2006. He completed Basic Combat Training and Advanced Individual Training as a combat engineer (12B) at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri.

Celiz's first assignment was with Company E, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, Texas. Following this assignment, Celiz was transferred to Company C, Special Troops Battalion, 4th Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, also at Fort Hood, as a team leader.

Celiz was then assigned to the 530th Engineer Clearance Company, 92nd Engineer Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division, Fort Stewart, Georgia, where he served as a sapper squad leader and platoon sergeant.

In 2013, Celiz was selected to serve with the 75th Ranger Regiment and was assigned to Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, Hunter Army Airfield, Georgia, where he served as the battalion master breacher and engineer. In March 2017, he was assigned to Company D, where he served as the mortar platoon sergeant.

Celiz deployed from 2008 to 2009 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and from 2011 to 2012 in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. He was on his fifth deployment with the 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, when he was killed.

Celiz's military education includes the Infantry Mortar Leader Course; Senior, Advanced and Basic Leader Courses; Jumpmaster Course; Sapper Leader Course; Ranger Assessment and Selection Program 2; Basic Airborne Course; U.S. Army Ranger Course; Route Reconnaissance Clearance Course-Sapper and the Combat Lifesaver Course.

His awards and decorations include the Joint Service Commendation Medal, the Army Commendation Medal (2 bronze oak leaf clusters), the Navy Commendation Medal, the Joint Service Achievement Medal, Army Achievement Medals (4 bronze oak leaf clusters), the Meritorious Unit Citation Medal (2), the Afghanistan Campaign Medal with Campaign Star (3), the Iraq Campaign Medal with Campaign Star (2), the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Army Service Ribbon, the Overseas Service Ribbon, the NATO Medal, the Ranger tab, the Sapper tab, the Combat Action Badge, and the Parachutist Badge.

Celiz is survived by his spouse, Katie Celiz, and their daughter.





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Battle Narrative

Sgt. 1st Class Christopher A. Celiz distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while engaging with the enemy in Paktia Province, Afghanistan, on July 12, 2018.

As the leader of a special operations unit comprised of partnered forces and members of the 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, Celiz led an operation to clear an area of enemy forces and thereby disrupt future attacks against the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

Shortly after his team reached their initial objective, a large enemy force attacked. The enemy placed effective fire on him and his team, preventing them from maneuvering to a counterattack. Realizing the danger to his team and the operation, Celiz voluntarily exposed himself to intense enemy machine-gun and small-arms fire.

Under fire, he retrieved and employed a heavy weapon system, thereby allowing U.S. and partnered forces to regain the initiative, maneuver to a secure location, and begin treating a critically wounded partnered force member.

As the medical evacuation helicopter arrived, it was immediately engaged by accurate and sustained enemy fire. Knowing how critical it was to quickly load the wounded partner, Celiz willingly exposed himself again to heavy enemy fire so he could take charge to direct and lead the evacuation. As the casualty was moved from a position of cover, Celiz made a conscious effort to ensure his body acted as a physical shield to protect his team, the injured partner and the crew of the aircraft from enemy fire. After the wounded partner was loaded, Celiz's team returned to cover, but he remained with the aircraft, returning a high volume of fire and constantly repositioning himself to act as a physical shield to the aircraft and its crew.

With his final reposition, Celiz placed himself directly between the cockpit and the enemy, ensuring the aircraft was able to depart. Upon the helicopter's liftoff, Celiz was hit by enemy fire. Fully aware of his injury, but understanding the peril to the aircraft, Celiz motioned to the pilots to depart rather than remain to load him. His selfless actions saved the life of the evacuated partnered force member and almost certainly prevented further casualties among other members of his team and the aircrew. Celiz died as a result of his injuries. His 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.

Throughout the entire engagement, Celiz significantly changed the course of the battle by repeatedly placing himself in extreme danger to protect his team and defeat the enemy.





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Unit History

The 1st Ranger Battalion was organized and activated by Maj. William O. Darby on June 19, 1942, in Carrickfergus, Northern Ireland. The battalion participated in the North African landing at Arzew, Algeria, the Tunisian Battles, and the critical Battle of El Guettar. The battalion was deactivated at the close of World War II.

In the fall of 1973, the Chief of Staff of the Army, Gen. Creighton Abrams, recognized the need for a highly trained and mobile reaction force and directed the activation of the first battalion-sized Ranger unit.

Headquarters, Forces Command, issued General Order 127, directing the activation of the 1st Battalion (Ranger), 75th Infantry, with an effective date of Jan. 31, 1974.

A selection process continued from March through June 1974, as personnel assembled at Fort Benning, Georgia, where cadre training was conducted. On July 1, 1974, the battalion parachuted into Fort Stewart, Georgia, where it was stationed until moving to Hunter Army Airfield, Georgia, in September 1978.

The modern Ranger battalions were first called upon in 1980, as Company C, 1st Battalion (Ranger), 75th Infantry, participated in the Iranian hostage rescue attempts. The groundwork for the special operations capability of today was laid during training and preparation for this operation.

Rangers and other special operations forces from throughout the Department of Defense developed tactics, techniques and equipment from scratch, as no doctrine existed. The combat effectiveness of the battalion led to its deployment to Grenada on Oct. 25, 1983, along with the 2nd Battalion (Ranger), 75th Infantry, to rescue American students at the True Blue Medical Campus and restore democracy.

The 75th Infantry changed to the 75th Ranger Regiment in March 1986 when the 75th Ranger Regiment received the World War II and Korean War lineage and honors, which caused the battalion to be re-designated as 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment.

On Dec. 20, 1989, the entire 75th Ranger Regiment, including the 1st Battalion, was again committed to combat operations in Operation Just Cause. The battalion's successful seizure of the airfield at Torrijos-Tocumen Airport and its subsequent operations contributed significantly to the U.S. victory in Panama.

From Feb. 12 to April 15, 1991, Company B and 1st platoon, Company A, 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, deployed to Saudi Arabia in support of Operation Desert Storm, where they conducted one critical raid and provided a quick reaction force in cooperation with allied forces. The performance of these Rangers significantly contributed to the overall success of the operation. In September 1994, 1st Battalion deployed to the USS America (CV-66) in support of Operation Uphold Democracy in Haiti.

In December 2001, after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, elements of Headquarters, Headquarters Company and Company A deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. In 2002, the entire battalion returned to Afghanistan, where they participated in Operation Anaconda, seeing action in the Battle of Takur Gar, also known as the Battle of Roberts Ridge.

In 2003, 1st Battalion participated in combat operations in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The battalion conducted missions across the entire country of Iraq, including the successful rescue of prisoner of war Pfc. Jessica Lynch.

At the end of 2003, the battalion deployed again, this time sending elements to both Afghanistan and Iraq. The battalion deployed multiple times in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom until 2010 and continued to deploy in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Resolute Support until the summer of 2021. Today, the 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, continues to deploy in support of overseas contingency operations around the world.

