

An American Hero



Michael Monsoor was a Navy SEAL working as part of a dedicated team fighting the insurgency in Iraq when, because of his selfless and heroic actions, he was killed and his teammates were spared. Here is the Navy's account of what happened:



On 29 September (2006), Monsoor was part of a sniper overwatch security position in eastern Ramadi, Iraq, with three other SEALs and eight Iraqi soldiers. They were providing overwatch security while joint and combined forces were conducting missions in the area.

Ramadi had been a violent and intense area for a very strong and aggressive insurgency for some time. All morning long the overwatch position received harassment fire that had become a typical part of the day for the security team.



A couple of hours later, an insurgency fighter closed on the overwatch position and threw a fragment grenade into the overwatch position which hit Monsoor in the chest before falling in front of him. Monsoor yelled, "Grenade!" and dropped on top of the grenade prior to it exploding. Monsoor's body shielded the others from the brunt of the fragmentation blast and two other SEALs were only wounded by the remaining blast.



One of the key aspects of this incident was the way the overwatch position was structured. There was only one access point for entry or exit and Monsoor was the only one who could have saved himself from harm. Instead, knowing what the outcome would be, he fell on the grenade to save the others from harm. Monsoor and the two injured were evacuated to the combat outpost battalion aid station where Monsoor died approximately 30 minutes after the incident from injuries sustained by the grenade blast.

Also due to Monsoor's selfless actions, the fourth man of the SEAL squad who was 10 to 15 feet from the blast, was unhurt. A 28 year old Lieutenant, who sustained shrapnel wounds to both legs that day, said the following in crediting Monsoor with saving his life, "He never took his eye off the grenade – his only movement was down toward it. He undoubtedly saved mine and the other SEALs' lives, and we owe him."

On March 31, 2008, the United States Department of Defense confirmed that Monsoor would posthumously receive the Medal of Honor from the president of the United States, George W. Bush, for his valiant and selfless actions to save the lives of his SEAL teammates by sacrificing his own, during combat in Ramadi, Iraq on September 29, 2006.

Michael Monsoor also received the Silver Star posthumously for previous heroic actions in Iraq on May 9, 2006 when he pulled a wounded teammate to safety while under hostile enemy fire. Monsoor was engaged in a firefight in Ramadi when, according to the military report, "he and another SEAL pulled a team member shot in the leg to safety while bullets pinged off the ground around them." He had also received a Bronze Star, a Purple Heart and a Combat Action Ribbon.

During Mike Monsoor's funeral in San Diego, as his coffin was being moved from the hearse to the grave site at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery, SEALs were lined up on both sides of the pallbearers route forming a column of two's, with the coffin moving up the center. As Mike's coffin passed, each SEAL, having removed his gold Trident from his uniform, slapped it down embedding the Trident in the wooden coffin. The slaps were audible from across the cemetery; by the time the coffin arrived grave side, it looked as though it had a gold inlay from all the Tridents pinned to it.

