

Michael Maltz

Date of death: March 23, 2003

Rank: Master Sergeant

Unit: 38th Rescue Squadron

Branch: U.S. Air Force

Years in Service: 1978-2003

Master Sergeant Michael Maltz, of the 38th Rescue Squadron, died on March 23, 2003, in Operation Enduring Freedom, when his F1H-60 Pave Hawk helicopter crashed in southeast Afghanistan. Maltz, along with the five others on board, was on a humanitarian mission to provide medical evacuation for two seriously injured Afghan children. Master Sergeant Maltz was memorialized with a Mass of Christian Burial at St. Matthew Roman Catholic Church in Dix Hills, New York. He was buried with full military honors, including a gun salute and a flyover by two military helicopters, at Pinelawn National Cemetery on Long Island. Maltz's family was presented with the flag that had been draped over the fallen hero's coffin.

According to his sister, Terri Strippoli, Maltz was "a career military man." He enlisted in the Air Force on August 8, 1978, and traveled the world on various missions during a decorated military career that spanned almost a quarter of a century. His first position in the military was as an apprentice cable splicer stationed at Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska. From 1980 to 1985, he was assigned to the 1827th Electronics Installation Squadron at Kelly Air Force Base, Texas. He cross-trained into pararescue in December 1985. After completing varied training that included an Advanced Combat Tactics Course, in which he was selected as class honor graduate, he was assigned to the 55th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron and 1730th Pararescue Squadron at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida, from 1986 through 1989.

His next assignments included Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska; Pararescue Instructor at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas; Patrick Air Force Base, Florida; and Moody Air Force Base, Georgia. His final assignment was to, the 38th Rescue Squadron at Moody Air Force Base, Georgia, from which he deployed to Afghanistan in support of the 347th Rescue Wing and Air Force Mission. Scott Gearen, a retired pararescueman and friend of Maltz, said, "Maltz was scheduled to retire, but four days before retirement, he called to have his retirement papers taken back because he wanted to volunteer to stay on and do this mission."

Michael Maltz was born September 19, 1960, on Long Island, New York. He graduated from Half Hollow Hills High School, Dix Hills, New York, in 1978, and enlisted in the Air Force soon after graduation. According to his family, he always had an adventurous spirit and loved a challenge, and he liked to skydive, ski, and climb mountains. He was a "poster boy for the Air Force" according to his sister, who recalls that he was even pictured on the cover of a recruitment pamphlet for the pararescue group. A childhood friend, Jedd Matus, knew that Maltz had found the right career and remembers that "he was proud of all his accomplishments. He would tell me how he would save guys on the side of mountains."

In a ceremony honoring the fallen hero. Senior Master Sergeant William Sine of the 38th Rescue Squadron described Maltz, who led many rescue missions over the years, as "an awesome pararescueman who lived and breathed the job." He went on to say that "as an instructor, Maltz shaped and molded numerous Pjs." Maltz was well-respected as a very fair but hard-line instructor who was dedicated and closely bound to his students. He earned the nickname "Iron Mike," but was known to have a heart despite his tough exterior. Air Force Master Sergeant Arthur Boyd told mourners at the church that Maltz, whom he considered "a good friend and has made the ultimate sacrifice." In a moving tribute to Maltz and his fellow fallen comrades. Brigadier General John H. Folkerts said that "we will not forget the valuable contributions they made to this country and the impact they made on the Air Force."

Michael's family and friends remember the impact he made on them as well. His mother, Patricia Iverson, knew of his great love and dedication to the Air Force and said, "He had no fear of anything. The only fear he had was getting out of the Air Force." His brother, Derek, stated quite simply, "Obviously, he was a hero. He died defending the country and we're very proud of him."

Master Sergeant Maltz's military career was extensive and highly decorated. His awards include the Meritorious Service Medal, Aerial Achievement Medal with oak leaf cluster. Air Force Commendation Medal with two oak leaf clusters. Air Force Achievement Medal, Air Force Outstanding Unit Award, Combat Readiness Medal, Air Force Good Conduct Medal (seven awards). National Defense Service Medal, Humanitarian Service Medal, Air Force Overseas Long Tour Ribbon, Air Force Longevity Service Award Ribbon (five awards), NCO Professional Military Education Graduation Ribbon, Small Arms Expert Marksmanship Ribbon, and Air Force Training Ribbon.

Michael is survived by his sons, Kyle and Kody; his mother, Patricia Iverson; his father, John Maltz; his grandmother, Alice Maltz; his sister, Terri Strappoli; and his brothers, Derek and Richard Maltz.