



Pararescueman pins Bronze Star with valor AETC Public Affairs

JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-RANDOLPH, Texas – While engaged in operations against enemy forces near Arghandab Province, Afghanistan, July 12, 2010, an Airman risked his life to medevac three U.S. Soldiers injured by improvised explosive devices, saving their lives.

Tech. Sgt. Luis Garcia, a pararescueman assigned to the 342nd Training Squadron, Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, distinguished himself as a Guardian Angel team member with the 46th Expeditionary Rescue Squadron while deployed to Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan. For his bravery, he received the Bronze Star Medal with Valor Dec. 2.

Garcia was awarded the Bronze Star Medal in front of a crowd of family, friends, fellow battlefield Airmen and wounded warriors who were in attendance to honor his accomplishment.

Brig. Gen. Timothy Zadalis, Air Education and Training Command Intelligence, Operations and Nuclear Integration director from JBSA-Randolph, presented the award.

"Sergeant Garcia's actions typify what every Airman aspires to and what every Airman is capable of," Zadalis said. "Those of us who look at his deed, appreciated what he did because we could face the same thing. He's not only a hero for all of us but he's also a mentor in his own respects for his ability to do it. For that, all of us owe him tremendous thanks."

Since Nov. 1, 2001, the Air Force has awarded 10,469 Bronze Star Medals, but only 414 were awarded with valor for combat heroism. Regardless of that fact, Garcia remains modest.

"I don't look at it as heroic or anything like that," the Los Angeles native said about his lifesaving efforts. "I just think of it as this guy needs to get out and my team and I are the only ones who can do that for him at this time."

Garcia's desire to save lives goes back to his childhood when he wanted to be a fireman, but after watching an Air Force recruiting video for pararescue, he thought it was "cool" thing to do.

"I'll go do some diving and jumping out of helos. That's what I thought it was, and then I got to Indoc, the selection school, and it was a complete 180 (degrees) from what I expected," he said.

"It wasn't until I got to the medical portion of my (training) that I felt this was what I wanted to do. I want to save lives; actually making a difference; seeing a patient's vitals go up from what you're doing medical-wise or medications. It ingrained something in me to see that. It's satisfying and something I really like. I found the job that I wanted.

"I go to sleep at night knowing I've made a difference," Garcia said. "I make a difference in someone's life and they're going to go home and see their family. That, to me, means the world. That's why I became a pararescueman, to save others."

Garcia said the motivating factor that allows him to be at his full potential is the love and support of his family.

He said it's what gives him the strength to do his job.

"To me, family is very important so I really value (my wife's) opinion and what she tells me," he said. "And she pretty much just tells me everything up front. She doesn't beat around the bush or anything."

Garcia has seven deployments under his belt and has been on countless missions to retrieve fellow service members. And he will continue to be a Guardian Angel for those who will need his help to make it home.

"For me to be able to be here to pin a Bronze Star with Valor on a battlefield Airman who has given so much to his country, who has given so much to his sister service warriors, is a tremendous honor," said Zadalis. "I'm absolutely convinced that there's not an officer in the U.S. Air Force who would not give anything to be able to stand here and to pay tribute to a young man who is a no-kidding hero."