



United States Air Force News

Heroes recognized for lives saved Published Nov. 9, 2011 – 129th Rescue Wing Public Affairs

The below article is a synopsis of a much longer article

MOFFETT FEDERAL AIRFIELD, Calif. -- Eleven California Air National Guardsmen from the 129th Rescue Wing (RQW) were awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross at Moffett Federal Airfield on Nov. 5 for multiple combat search and rescue missions conducted in Afghanistan during 2009 and 2010.

The Distinguished Flying Cross is one of the Air Force's highest honors, awarded to servicemembers who distinguish themselves in support of operations by heroism or extraordinary achievement while participating in an aerial mission. The cross signifies an Airman's unselfish dedication on duty and recognizes their gallant actions.

Master Sgt. Luigge Romanillo, a pararescueman assigned to the 131st Rescue Squadron, distinguished himself by heroism while participating in aerial mission near Bagram Airfield on May 4, 2010.

On that date, Romanillo flew a high-risk medical evacuation mission to extract wounded coalition forces engaged by more than 100 insurgents in an ambush site. En route, Romanillo expertly prepared his team to evacuate the patients in minimal time under enemy fire. His actions led to the successful evacuation of two wounded coalition Soldiers and repatriation of two killed in action.

Senior Master Sgt. Larry Hiyakumoto and Staff Sgt. Joshua Webster, pararescuemen assigned to the 131st RQS, distinguished themselves by heroism while participating in an aerial mission near Bagram Airfield on June 27, 2010.

The pararescuemen participated in eight non-stop casualty evacuation missions in support of coalition operations. For nearly seven hours Webster aided Hiyakumoto by prioritizing patients and treating wounded personnel, many of whom would not have survived without immediate medical treatment.

Ultimately, Hiyakumoto and Webster's heroic actions helped save 13 U.S. Soldiers and coalition forces under extreme conditions and enemy fire.

"As we meet in Washington, sometimes in fractious manner, it's important for us to remember the courage, bravery and generosity of people who volunteer to serve in our Armed Services," said Rep. Zoe Lofgren, California's 16th Congressional District.

The country is appreciative of what you have done, proud of the bravery you have shown and grateful to you and to your families," she said.

Rep. Anna Eshoo has shown a vested interest and continued encouragement to the 129th RQW throughout her time in office in California's 14th Congressional District. Although unable to attend Saturday's ceremony, she passed along her congratulations to the medal recipients by sending each Airman a congratulatory letter and a certificate of special congressional recognition.

Eshoo's letter reads, "This award speaks volumes about you and your embodiment of the Air Force core values of

integrity, service and excellence, and we salute you for it."

Providing 24-hour alert in the Helmand province of Afghanistan, performing up to eight rescue missions each day in active combat zones, 129th RQW Airmen were credited with saving 345 injured people, including joint forces, coalition personnel and Afghan nationals, from 2009 to 2010.

"Today's ceremony builds on the incredible reputation of the 129th Rescue Wing, a reputation forged through 10 years of persistent conflict," Beevers said. "The 129th has come to be recognized as one of the most highly decorated units to have fought in Operation Enduring Freedom."

Members of the 129th Rescue Wing have served in every major conflict since World War II and have saved a total of 947 lives. For their actions in the line of duty, several members have been recipients of some of the highest military decorations: nearly 600 combat medals, including 45 Combat Action Medals 36 Distinguished Flying Crosses, 26 Air Medals, four Bronze Stars and two Purple Hearts.