

38th RQS Airman receives Silver Star

Published Oct. 29, 2020 By Senior Airman Taryn Butler 23d Wing Public Affairs



U.S. Air Force Maj. Gen. Chad P. Franks, 15th Air Force commander, presented Staff Sgt. Nicholas Brunetto, 38th Rescue Squadron pararescueman, with a Silver Star Medal Oct. 29.

While deployed in February 2020, Brunetto performed a lifesaving procedure on a wounded teammate, and managed the evacuation of nearly a dozen patients while under attack.

"Today is an important day, one that doesn't happen very often in our Air Force," Franks said. "Today, we get to recognize the heroism of Staff Sgt. Nicholas Brunetto for his actions in Afghanistan earlier this year. Nick was trained and well equipped like every Airmen we send into combat ... but today we recognize him for the courage he had to act. That is heroism. That is what today is about."

The origins of the Silver Star date back to 1918 and World War I when it was called the Citation Star. It is the first distinctive medal issued solely for gallantry and valor in combat. Some recipients of the Silver Star include U.S. Army Gen. George S. Patton, Gen. George Marshall and Spc. Pat Tillman.

“The Silver Star is representative of an Airman’s willingness to place their life in danger against the enemies of America for their comrades,” Franks said. “It reflects the American military fighting spirit and selfless service to our nation. Nobody would deny Nick’s selfless service to America and his team that day.”

While on a mission, Brunetto and the U.S. Army Special Forces team he was attached to were ambushed, leaving eight critically-injured U.S. and three partner force soldiers.

During triage, Brunetto determined a blood transfusion was the only hope for one of his teammates, and without regard for his own personal safety, maneuvered back through incoming fire to retrieve vital medical equipment.

“I often emphasize that effective warriors must have two things: discipline and purpose,” Franks said. “Nick is living proof that if you have those two things, the mission gets done. I don’t think Nick would disagree if I said that it was an inherent sense of discipline and purpose that kept him going on the battlefield that fateful day.”

Brunetto exposed himself again to enemy fire to carry several wounded patients to the extraction point for a helicopter evacuation of 11 injured teammates.

“The [people] there, myself and other guys who were able to do treatment did an amazing job and were able to keep everyone [who] was injured alive,” Brunetto said. “The team as a whole reacted really well to what the situation was and were able to get all the guys out of there fairly quickly.”

Franks lauded Brunetto for the heroism, dedication to his teammates, courage shown while under fire, and self-discipline shown to fulfill the duty of keeping personnel safe.

“This Silver Star is a testament to all of the training and superior leadership that led up to Feb. 8, 2020, and for the people who fought next to him that day and lived to tell the tale,” Franks said.

Brunetto credits the advancement of battlefield medicine and the support from those around him to do what was necessary to ensure their worst day wasn’t their last.

“It is a great honor to be put up for this award,” Brunetto said. “I appreciate my leadership for doing so and for my team for supporting me, and especially my wife and family for support in my military career. Battlefield Medicine has advanced in the past 20 years. It’s vital. Every year, there’s been a huge amount of progression, just with capabilities we have on the battlefield.

“I wasn’t expecting to be awarded for something like [this]. A lot of it was just being there and doing the job that I had volunteered for.”

Air Force pararescueman awarded Silver Star for risking his life to save his teammates during Afghanistan firefight by Haley Britzky

“That is heroism. That is what today is about.”

[Haley Britzky](#)



An Air Force pararescueman who repeatedly exposed himself to enemy fire in Afghanistan to aid and evacuate 11 of his wounded teammates was awarded the Silver Star last week.

Staff Sgt. Nicholas Brunetto, a pararescueman assigned to the 38th Rescue Squadron, was attached to a U.S. Army Special Forces team during a mission in Afghanistan in February of this year when they were ambushed, according to [an Air Force press release](#).

The attack left eight U.S. and three partner forces soldiers critically injured. While treating them, Brunetto “determined a blood transfusion was the only hope for one of his teammates,” and proceeded to go back through incoming fire to get more medical equipment, “without regard for his own personal safety.”

Brunetto continued to expose himself to enemy fire while he carried wounded patients to the extraction point, according to the release.

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U.S. Air Force Staff

Sgt. Nicholas Brunetto, 38th Rescue Squadron pararescueman, listens to his citation during a ceremony at Moody Air Force Base, Georgia, Oct. 29, 2020.

The Silver Star is the military's third-highest decoration, awarded to service members who "distinguish themselves through conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty," according to the Defense Department.

Air Force Maj. Gen. Chad Franks, 15th Air Force commander, recognized Brunetto's heroism during the ceremony at Moody Air Force Base on Oct. 29, saying the Silver Star is a "testament to all of the training and superior leadership" that led up to that day in February.

"Nick was trained and well equipped like every [airman] we send into combat ... but today we recognize him for the courage he had to act," Franks said. "That is heroism. That is what today is about."

Brunetto credited "the advancement of battlefield medicine," the press release says, and said he "wasn't expecting to be awarded for something like [this]."

"A lot of it was just being there and doing the job that I had volunteered for," he said.