

Military Police Corps Hero Receives Silver Star

By First Lieutenant Aaron D. Fairman

It is difficult to define a military police hero. Since military police Soldiers are constantly deployed, they are placed in the line of fire every day. Acts of valor and heroism are common. However, even in times such as these, there always seems to be one Soldier who stands out above his peers—one Soldier who truly embodies the Army values and warrior ethos. Sergeant Michael A. Espejo, a team leader for the 66th Military Police Company, is one such Soldier. During Operation Enduring Freedom, Sergeant Espejo eliminated a suicide bomber and saved numerous lives. He was awarded the Silver Star for his heroism.

On 27 September 2007, Sergeant Espejo and his squad were conducting a combat logistics patrol from Forward Operating Base (FOB) Torkham when they noticed a burning vehicle on the side of the road. Upon conducting a more thorough search of the area, they discovered a man about five feet in front of the vehicle. He was lying on his back with his palms down and was wearing an Afghan National Police uniform. The man appeared to be the victim of an incident and was just starting to sit up. Sergeant Espejo picked up the individual to carry him from the scene for medical care. He then noticed that the “victim” had a bulky chest, a wire running from his sleeve, and a switch in the palm of his hand.



Sergeant Espejo threw the individual aside, raised his weapon, and took cover behind concrete pillars. Sergeant Espejo began yelling in Pashtu and English for the man to stop and raise his hands. The individual was compliant at first, but then dropped his hands down to his lap and attempted to detonate the vest. Other Afghan National Police started to shoot at Sergeant Espejo, so he quickly took cover again, positively identified the individuals in the area, and diffused the situation. The squad then secured the area and waited for an explosive ordnance disposal team to arrive before leaving.

This incident illustrates the caliber of Soldiers we have in the Military Police Corps. Before the threat was identified, Sergeant Espejo tried to help what appeared to be a fallen individual. He wanted to move the individual out of harm’s way and into a safe position for medical attention. The suicide bomber could have caused significant casualties to the entire squad and the local populace. However, Sergeant Espejo’s attention to detail and skillful leadership allowed him to maintain situational awareness and identify the bomb.

Sergeant Espejo said, “As soon as I identified the threat, my training became almost instinctive—eliminate the threat.” Sergeant Espejo is the epitome of an exceptional noncommissioned officer. He superbly illustrates versatility, sound judgment, and tactical proficiency on the battlefield.

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