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# Military Police Heroism

*By Mr. Andy Watson*

*In this installment, two groups of military police Soldiers are listed along with the featured examples of individual heroism. Although these Soldiers served in different times and conflicts, they all performed as proficient military police. As always, it is challenging to list only a few examples of military police heroism in the space allotted.*

## **Private First Class Paul V. Healey Distinguished Service Cross Vietnam**

Private First Class Healey was serving with B Company, 716th Military Police Battalion, 18th Military Police Brigade, when the Tet Offensive began in January 1968. The battalion was stationed in Saigon and thought to be in an area relatively safe from major fighting until the surprise attack. Viet Cong (VC) and North Vietnamese forces attacked nearly all major cities and many American bases in South Vietnam, as well as the American embassy at Saigon. Private First Class Healey was on patrol with other members of his unit when they received the call that the embassy was under attack.

What follows is best described by his medal citation: "Private First Class Healey distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions on 31 January 1968 while serving with a military police reaction force during a combined VC and North Vietnamese Army offensive against Saigon. The enemy had launched concerted attacks on installations throughout the city, and his unit was called to dislodge a VC suicide squad which had taken control of the American embassy compound. Heedless of enemy fire directed at him, Private First Class Healey rammed the main gate of the embassy with a jeep in an attempt to gain entrance to the compound. When the gate failed to open, he shot the lock off with a pistol and fearlessly led a charge into the bullet-swept grounds. Braving a savage hail of automatic weapons fire and exploding grenades, Private First Class Healey moved from position to position, killing eight insurgents with rifle fire and grenades as he advanced. He then moved to the rear of the compound to rescue an embassy officer trapped on the second floor of a house occupied on the ground floor by VC. Fully exposed to withering hostile fire, he raced across the open lawn and hurled a riot gas grenade into the building. The insurgents continued to resist, and he fearlessly approached the building a second time through intense fire and tossed weapons and ammunition up to the unarmed officer. Assured that the man had a means of defending himself, Private First Class Healey withdrew to cover and placed fierce fire on the VC in the building until they were annihilated. His dauntless and aggressive efforts in close combat saved the life of the fellow American and were instrumental in the successful defense of the United States embassy."<sup>1</sup>



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During Private First Class Healey's assault, one of the VC attackers he shot threw a grenade that bounced off Healey. Private First Class Healey moved behind the VC, with the enemy absorbing the blast.<sup>2</sup> Speaking frankly of his accuracy in taking out the enemy, Private First Class Healey explained, "Every time a VC moved from behind a flower pot, I shot him."<sup>3</sup> In the coming weeks, members of the 716th were constantly on the attack in Saigon, with numerous firefights erupting through the city. From the end of January through the first weeks of February, the 716th Military Police Battalion lost 27 military police Soldiers killed in action with an additional 45 wounded.

**First Lieutenant Ronald Baughman,  
Corporal John Apostol, and  
Corporal Amando Halnais  
Soldier's Medal  
Korea**

First Lieutenant Baughman, Corporal Apostol, and Corporal Halnais were serving with the 622d Military Police Company on 12 August 1950. After receiving reports of artillery fire near Kumhae, Korea, elements of the company went to investigate.<sup>4</sup> They discovered that an ammunition truck was burning on the main supply route between Pusan and Masan, halting traffic and posing an immediate danger to numerous bystanders. Knowing that the bomb disposal team they had requested could not reach the area in time, First Lieutenant Baughman, Corporal Apostol, and Corporal Halnais immediately climbed into the truck and started unloading ammunition.<sup>5</sup> Due to the heat of the fire, the hands of Corporal Apostol and Corporal Halnais were burned. The truck's dangerous cargo was unloaded and the important supply route remained open.



**Private First Class Albert F. Cleary  
Distinguished Service Cross  
World War I**

Private First Class Cleary was serving with the 117th Train Headquarters and Military Police Company of the 42d Division on 21 July 1918 when the town of St. Hilaire-au-Temple, France, came under attack.

Private First Class Cleary's citation reads: "The Distinguished Service Cross is presented to Albert F. Cleary, Private First Class, U.S. Army, for extraordinary heroism in action at St. Hilaire-au-Temple, France, on the night of July 21, 1918. While on duty as a town patrol during an enemy aerial bombardment, Private First Class Cleary, disregarding his own danger, remained at his post and continued to make his rounds to see that all other troops were under cover until he was struck by an enemy aerial bomb and made the supreme sacrifice."

**Specialist 4 Robert L. Scott  
Silver Star  
Vietnam**

Specialist 4 Scott was serving with the 716th Military Police Battalion when the VC launched an offensive in May 1968. On 5 May, Scott was on patrol when his unit was dispatched to assault the VC-controlled Phan Thanh Gian Bridge.<sup>6</sup> Joining the military police Soldiers in the attack against the VC were South Vietnamese soldiers and members of the Vietnamese National Police. Assessing the situation, Specialist 4 Scott described the scene: "The Viet Cong were holed up in a group of houses across the river . . . After helping several of the hundreds of the refugees across the partially blown-up bridge, we moved across to get a better firing position."<sup>7</sup>

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Once the firefight began, the VC poured machine gun fire on the American and South Vietnamese troops. Brigadier General Nguyen Ngoc Loan, chief of the Vietnamese National Police, was at the front of the assault when he was struck by the VC fire. Specialist 4 Scott grabbed the general and pulled him to the safety of a nearby house and then returned to the firefight. “. . . I went back and fired about five clips into the top floor of the house when I saw this VC pulling a pin on a grenade. I am sure I got him,” said Specialist 4 Scott.<sup>8</sup> Cut off from their forces on the other side of a river, Specialist 4 Scott and others made their way to safety by walking through neck-deep water for a block and then pushed their way through the floor of a house on the river.<sup>9</sup> Recognized for his rescue of Brigadier General Loan under fire, Specialist 4 Scott received the Silver Star.



**Brigadier General Albin F. Irzyk, Commanding General U.S. Army Headquarters Area Command, congratulates Sergeant Scott after presenting him the Silver Star medal.**

**Corporal James C. Foster,  
Corporal Robert Harley,  
Corporal William J. St. Pierre,  
Private First Class Donald P. Chaput, Private First Class James O. Eberhard,  
and Private First Class Harold R. Farnsworth  
Bronze Star for Valor  
Korea**



These military police Soldiers served with the X Corps Military Police Company (Provisional), which was formerly C Company of the 720th Military Police Battalion. A detachment of military police Soldiers from the company was directing convoys on the narrow mountain roads between Hagaru and Koto-Ri on 28 November 1950 when Chinese Communist forces blocked the roads and began to surround American forces. The military police Soldiers joined a nearby Marine Corps company in defending the area and would remain separated from the rest of their unit for another month. While assisting in the defense of the perimeter, fighting both the enemy and the bitter cold, the six military police Soldiers volunteered to evacuate wounded personnel from the Chosin Reservoir area.<sup>10</sup> Over the course of two days, using a jeep or sled and sometimes just walking, the military police Soldiers brought wounded personnel to be evacuated from a nearby airstrip.<sup>11</sup> Gathering the wounded, the military police Soldiers were exposed to gunfire and were under constant enemy observation.

**Specialist 6 (Criminal Investigation Division [CID] Special Agent) James T. Abbott  
Soldier's Medal  
Vietnam**

Specialist 6 Abbott was recognized for his selfless service while attempting to apprehend a Soldier who was indiscriminately firing a weapon into a company area.<sup>12</sup> The incident took place on 11 January 1971 at Camp Evans in the Republic of Vietnam. Specialist 6 Abbott was trying to

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convince the shooter, first verbally and then at gunpoint, to surrender his weapon when the shooter mortally wounded the special agent.<sup>13</sup> Awarded a posthumous Soldier's Medal, Specialist 6 Abbott would again be recognized in 1993 as the CID building at Fort Knox, Kentucky, was memorialized in his honor.

**Staff Sergeant John McCaughey**  
**Silver Star and Bronze Star for Valor**  
**World War II**

Staff Sergeant McCaughey served with the Military Police Platoon of the 1st Cavalry Division, later to be designated the 545th Military Police Company. Staff Sergeant McCaughey and his fellow military police Soldiers of the 1st Cavalry Division accompanied forward elements during the division's push into the Philippines, preventing enemy infiltration and establishing traffic points.<sup>14</sup> Keeping the traffic flowing and maintaining order in their areas of control proved to be difficult as lines of support were stretched, and often the military police Soldiers were isolated.

Far from being a mop-up mission, the drive to Manila had numerous transportation and supply complications. During one of these difficult convoy escort missions, Staff Sergeant McCaughey was awarded the Bronze Star for Valor for “. . . guiding a cavalry unit to a river crossing . . . assembling the force once across, and accomplishing the mission without regard to personal safety.”<sup>15</sup> On 3 May 1945, Staff Sergeant McCaughey was on a reconnaissance patrol with his unit when they encountered a sizeable force of Japanese soldiers.<sup>16</sup> As the firefight ensued, Staff Sergeant McCaughey voluntarily exposed himself to draw fire from the concealed enemy forces and was mortally wounded.<sup>17</sup> He posthumously received the Silver Star for his actions during the battle in Laguna Province and is buried at the Manila American Cemetery.

**Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> Department of the Army, General Orders No. 1173, 18 March 1968.

<sup>2</sup> Major Gary A. Sorensen, editor, “Healy Awarded DSC for Heroics,” *Military Police Journal*, Volume XVII, No. 12, July 1968, p. 29.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> First Lieutenant Joe C. Gunn, editor, “Action Awards,” *The Provost Marshal's School Training and Newsletter*, January 1951, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Major Gary A. Sorensen, editor, “One of Many Heroes in VN,” *Military Police Journal*, Volume XVII, No. 12, July 1968, p. 28.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Department of the Army, General Orders No. 73, 13 April 1951.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Department of the Army, Citation “Soldier's Medal” issued posthumously to Specialist 6 James T. Abbott.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Major Harold Rupkey, 1st Cavalry Division Provost Marshal's report, “Unit History,” 11 July 1945.

<sup>15</sup> Major Harold Rupkey, 1st Cavalry Division Provost Marshal's report, “Bronze Star Medal,” 11 July 1945.

<sup>16</sup> Major Harold Rupkey, 1st Cavalry Division Provost Marshal's report, “Unit History,” 11 July 1945.

<sup>17</sup> Major Harold Rupkey, 1st Cavalry Division Provost Marshal's report, “Luzon Campaign/Silver Star Medal,” 11 July 1945.