STAFF SERGEANT AUSTIN McCALL

During six deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq, there was always one guiding force leading U.S. Army Staff Sergeant Austin McCall: abiding by the Ranger Creed no matter how dangerous the mission.

"Readily will I display the intestinal fortitude required to fight on to the Ranger objective and complete the mission though I be the lone survivor," reads the last stanza of the Creed. As a Soldier in the elite 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, McCall has relied on the Ranger Creed during many dangerous and often life-threatening missions.

On January 5, 2010, McCall's commitment to the Creed was tested more than ever before. McCall was leading his Ranger squad on a mission in eastern Afghanistan when he received intelligence that a suicide bomber and a group of insurgents were in close range. McCall led his squad to a compound where the insurgents were hiding and located a guest house thought to be sheltering the suicide bomber.

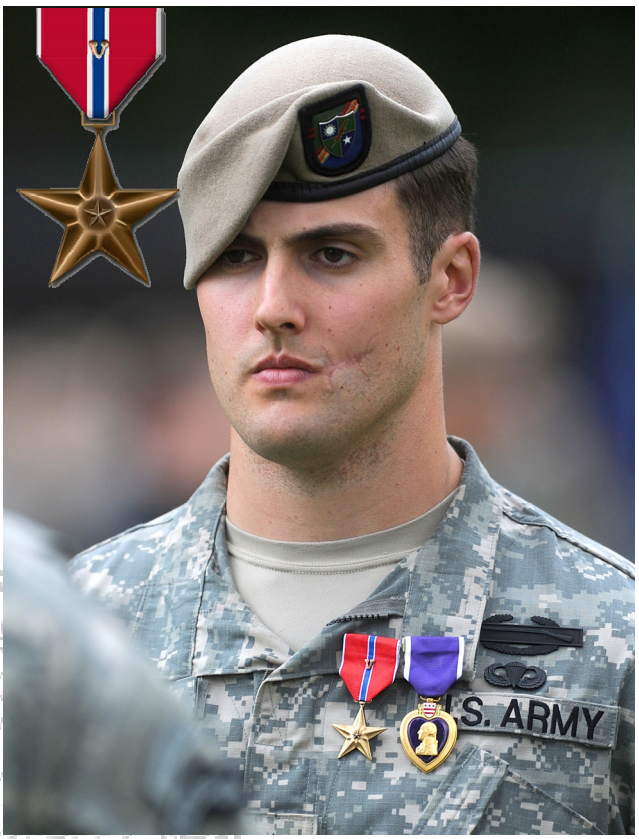
McCall was the first man inside the compound and went directly to the guest house to seek out the enemy. Upon entering the guest house's small courtyard, he was confronted with the suspected suicide bomber who was holding two live grenades. McCall personally engaged the enemy upon seeing the live grenades, but the insurgent managed to throw one of them before falling. The grenade bounced off McCall's neck and shoulder before hitting the ground, but luckily, the pin stayed in the grenade and the pin's ring was still on the insurgent's finger.

As a natural reaction, McCall yelled, "Grenade!" to warn his fellow Rangers, and right as he yelled, the second grenade, which was lying on top of the insurgent, exploded. Shrapnel from the second grenade caused serious injuries to McCall's face and mouth, and McCall began taking fire from enemy positions within the guest house. McCall stumbled to the ground and continued to return fire, securing the courtyard area as his squad made its way inside.

"By turning my head and yelling 'grenade' to my Rangers, the shrapnel was able to go right through my face," explained McCall. "It may have saved my life."

McCall and his entire squad engaged the enemy until the compound was secure and their mission was complete. With no pain medication and minimal medical care available, McCall waited nearly 30 minutes before the helicopters picked him up. He was able to breathe through his nose, but his entire front-side of his uniform was soaked in blood.

"(As Rangers) that's just what we do. We go to where the fight is. We are there to engage and take care of the bad guys," said McCall.



SSG McCall earned the Bronze Star with Valorand Purple Heart while serving as an Army Ranger in Afghanistan.

McCall was flown to his Forward Operating Base and immediately given medical care. Twelve hours later, he was treated at Bagram and then transported to Germany. McCall was sent back to the U.S. for further treatment and rehabilitation, but as a true Ranger, he returned to Afghanistan less than a month after the incident.

"Any one of the Rangers would have done the same thing I did," said McCall. "Within hours after the incident when I was injured, my squad was right back out there doing it all over again. When I returned to Afghanistan, they had their arms open, welcoming me back. They didn't miss a beat."

For his "extraordinary personal courage, tactical expertise and outstanding leadership," McCall earned the Bronze Star with Valor as well as the Purple Heart. McCall is currently stationed at Fort Lewis, Washington and will be re-deploying to Afghanistan in a couple of months.

"I would have done it all over again and I look forward to doing it all over again," said McCall. "That's the way we are. We are all Rangers – the best gun fighters in the world."