



Columbia Heights, Minn.
The Bronze Star

"Petty Officer First Class Chandler's personal courage and commitment to mission accomplishment in a combat zone, under the most extreme of circumstances, greatly contributed to the success of Operation Enduring Freedom," read the citation from U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Jeffrey J. Schloesser.

But, Chandler is quick to downplay his role. "I was just doing my job," he said. "My team earned this. I just get the privilege of wearing it," Chandler insisted. Recognizing others and their courage, he also noted that he was one of 11 Naval recipients of a Bronze Star Medal for PRT Kunar.

The Bronze Star was awarded to Chandler, a member of Maritime Expeditionary Boat Detachment 922, in a ceremony aboard Naval Air Station North Island, Calif., Feb 13. The medal was presented to Chandler by his stepson, Aviation Boatswain's Mate Airman William Zorich, who was on temporary duty to NAS North Island from the San Antonio-Class amphibious ship USS New Orleans (LPD-18).

"It was such an honor to have the award presented by my son," Chandler said. "He, too, knows all too well the hard work and sacrifices that are required by Sailors and their families."

Excerpts from article by Mass Communication specialist 2nd Class Ron Kuzlik, Maritime Expeditionary Security Squadron 3 Public Affairs, Feb. 24, 2009 and special article to American Forces Press Service by Navy Lt Neil Myers, Aug. 4, 2008.

Petty Officer 1st Class Lee M. Chandler

What may surprise some who are not fully aware of various military missions is that Sailors are serving in harm's way in Iraq and Afghanistan. In fact, thousands are making a difference every day be it from the sea, air or even landlocked in the middle of a desert.

Hull Technician 1st Class Lee M. Chandler, a reservist from Naval Reserve Center Minneapolis, is one such landlocked Sailor who was part of the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan's Kunar province keeping the wheels of coalition forces' vehicles rolling to accomplish the mission of security, reconstruction and development.

Kunar province is located in the northeast corner of Afghanistan, bordering Pakistan. It has rugged mountains to sweltering desert valleys with extreme summertime heat. For a mechanic, this harsh terrain and climate pose a major challenge and can take its toll on vehicles. Additionally, Kunar is the most militarily active province.

Chandler didn't let the weather, land, or being a Sailor in an Army environment deter him. He was involved in several vehicle recovery Quick Response Team (QRT) missions during his assignment as the non-commissioned officer in charge of the motor pool for Provincial Reconstruction Team Kunar.

During one vehicle recovery QRT mission in particular, Chandler's team came under rocket attack from insurgent forces. Under enemy fire, Chandler ensured the safe evacuation of coalition forces and equipment without injury to personnel or damage to equipment.

