

SERGEANT JOSEPH LOLLINO

While serving as an Army Medic in Afghanistan, Sergeant Joseph Lollino had one goal for himself: keep his Soldiers alive. On June 20, 2008, he knew that the mission that day would be an important test of his abilities.

"I just wanted to make sure the guys were safe. They were good friends of mine," he said. "I had a goal – I didn't want anybody in my unit to die."

On that day in June, Lollino's unit and its column of 30 armored vehicles had to drive through "ambush alley" in Paktika Province, an infamous road squeezed between two mountain ranges that were full of insurgents. What he and his Soldiers didn't realize was that they were embarking on a 14-hour journey near the Pakistani border that would test Lollino's vow to bring all his men home alive.

"There were two mountainsides on both sides, with a small dip on the left side of the road, so that makes it very difficult to maneuver around. It was very rocky with some trees," he said.

The military vehicles were moving through the area when they were ambushed by armed insurgents using rocket-propelled grenades. During the barrage of enemy fire, the third vehicle in the convoy was disabled by a rocket-propelled grenade and pushed out of the kill zone. Lollino drove his Humvee directly into the firefight to help the wounded and set up a casualty collection point behind the disabled vehicle. Directly under enemy fire, Lollino treated four wounded Soldiers and used his personal weapon to fire back at the insurgents. Three of the wounded soldiers were hit by shrapnel, and a fourth suffered from smoke inhalation.

"As the (casualty collection point) started taking fire, I returned fire," he said. "I used a couple of magazines until the truck got behind us, then the .50 cal (machine gun) and the Mark 19 (grenade launcher) took over."

The enemy fire intensified, and Lollino was hit by shrapnel while trying to cover the wounded with his own body. Despite his own injuries, Lollino loaded the four wounded Soldiers in another vehicle and continued to treat them while the convoy fought through the three kilometer kill zone.



*SGT Joseph Lollino earned the Distinguished Service Cross and Purple Heart while serving as an Army Medic in Afghanistan.*

"They shot RPGs at us, and I got down to cover one of the wounded who had very bad shrapnel wounds," he explained. "I just wanted to do my job, fix the guys, make sure no one died. Everybody has a family we all wanted to go back to."

For his "gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty," Lollino earned the Distinguished Service Cross, the military's second-highest honor to recognize valor, as well as the Purple Heart. He was presented with the honor by Lieutenant General Eric Shoemaker, Surgeon General of the Army, on May 17 during the Army Medical Symposium in San Antonio, Texas.

"It's a good feeling," he said. "But I did what any medic would do."

Lollino, a native of Hoffman Estates, Ill., is currently working in the Post Anesthesia Care Unit at the Tripler Army Medical Center in Hawaii.