



Moorestown, New Jersey
Distinguished Service Cross

Master Sergeant Brendan O'Connor

One medic of the Army's 7th Special Forces Group risked his life to try and save wounded comrades in a hellish two-day firefight in a lawless part of Afghanistan. Master Sergeant Brendan O'Connor earned the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions.

Surrounded on all sides by hardened Taliban fighters, a vastly outnumbered force of Americans and Afghans fought nearly to the last bullet. In June 2006, 47-year-old Master Sergeant Brendan O'Connor of the 7th Special Forces Group – the Army's elite Green Berets – was the team's medic during Operation Kaika. The Taliban believed this isolated group of Americans and Afghans, numbering less than 70, would be an easy target. They were gravely mistaken.

When the terrorists sprang their trap, the sky exploded with the thunder of rifle, machine-gun, and grenade fire from both sides. The main group was separated by more than 100 yards, and the situation at both positions was dire.

O'Connor heard over the radio that several wounded men ahead of a forward position could be overrun at any moment. Leading a team of eight, he quickly traversed the distance between the two positions and took stock of the situation. There he saw two wounded men –

Staff Sergeant Matthew Binney and Staff Sergeant Joseph Fuerst – farther ahead and knew he had to reach them. Disregarding three enemy machine-guns, O'Connor dropped to his stomach and began an arduous crawl to the wounded troops. Restricted in his movements by his protective armor, O'Connor paused and removed the only shield he had from the hostile onslaught, his Interceptor bullet proof vest. He traded his armor for a cloth sign that he pinned to his back to alert the close-air support attack helicopters that he was friendly.

The 200 foot crawl was nearly an hour and a half of constant enemy fire directed at the brave American. Reaching a compound to which he could pull the wounded, he singlehandedly moved the two soldiers there and performed emergency first-aid. As night fell, O'Connor made several trips to move the Binney and Fuerst back to the advanced position. From there, they were able to medevac the injured, and begin their own exfiltration to the security of the patrol base.

While Fuerst did not survive his severe injuries, Binney lived because of the bold decision made by a 47-year-old-medic more concerned with the lives of his friends than his own. For his actions, O'Connor was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the first time a member of the 7th Special Forces Group was awarded this honor since July of 1964.



For an additional account of this harrowing battle, refer to [Captain Sheffield Ford's](#) narrative