

## STAFF SERGEANT JAMYN PETERSON

SSG Jamyn Peterson wouldn't describe himself as a hero, he said. But during his last deployment to the remote Oruzgan province in Afghanistan from December 2006 until January 2008, the Army Reservist repeatedly demonstrated his dedication to his comrades and to his duties. Peterson was recognized for his service with a Purple Heart and two Bronze Star Medals, one with 'Valor.'

The second Bronze Star recognized his performance as team leader as "absolutely phenomenal," according to the award citation. But it was the bravery he demonstrated during an ambush that earned him the Bronze Star with 'Valor.'

"I was honored," Peterson said of receiving the medal, "but I was more honored that my guys got them."

SSG Matt Winters and SGT Ben Mogenson were riding with him on June 16, 2007 when their convoy was ambushed on the road home. When a bomb exploded just feet from their truck, the truck leading the convoy sped ahead to avoid the blast. But they took a wrong turn.

Peterson and his team had a choice: stay on the road that led back to camp or follow their comrades the wrong way into enemy territory. They decided to follow their comrades.

It wasn't long before the first truck was hit by a rocket propelled grenade that went right through it, forcing everyone out of the truck. And while there were only six soldiers between their two trucks, "there were over 100 bad guys. They were only 90 feet away. You could see them. They were just lined up," he said.

"It was like hail coming down on the truck. It was like incessant bullets raining," Peterson said. That's when he directed his vehicle right into the middle of the ambush to provide cover and support to the disabled vehicle.



New Richmond, WI  
The Bronze Star with 'Valor'

"The one thing I remember was that I could have stayed in the truck and gotten killed, but if I got out of the truck I was going to get killed. Pretty much we were going to die," he said. "Life flashes before you."

But Peterson did get out of the truck, and was able to set up behind the hood of the disabled vehicle so he could provide cover while the other soldiers tended to the injured. They were able to hold the enemy at bay until Afghan Army soldiers arrived on the scene to help. When the enemy saw the two trucks with 15 Afghan soldiers in it, they started to flee, Peterson said.

"They kind of saved our lives," Peterson said. "We'd built enough of a rapport," he said, "that they came to help us." It was an act which demonstrated not only their loyalty, but also their bravery, he said.

Peterson spoke as highly of Winters and Mogenson.

"They were more aware of what was going on. That's more brave than me," he said. "Those guys were aware what was going on and still kept at it. They did a great job."

Peterson, however, said he is most proud of his work with the people of the Oruzgan province. Working with the local community, he and his team set up the only local health clinic for miles around, a radio station, as well as a primary school for the local children that teaches reading, writing, arithmetic and Islam.

"Any good we wanted to do, we were able to do it," Peterson said. "Being out in the middle of nowhere, I thought I was in a place where I belonged."

# HEROES

Despite the enemy's opposition to the school, the students would get up at five in the morning to walk five miles to school. They would have to skirt Taliban checkpoints to avoid getting beaten, Peterson said.

"They are worried if they're going to get beaten with sticks on the way to school, and they'd still come," Peterson said. The enemy "rocketed us twice while the students were in there, but they kept coming."

"It was a pretty amazing experience. A good learning experience," he said of the deployment. "That's one thing that I take away from this, how the human being can adapt to any situation."

Peterson is still an active reservist training troops heading to Afghanistan.

"That's what I have a passion for now, making sure that these troops are ready to hit the ground when they go down range," he said.

Peterson, who will likely redeploy shortly, said it's important to remember that the army is made up of individual men and women.

"If I don't go someone less experienced will have to go. There's an obligation there," he said. "Somebody's got to do it."

