



## Why We Serve: Air Force Sergeant Recalls Intense Afghanistan Firefight

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 15, 2008 – An Air Force mechanic-turned-lawman cited leadership and teamwork as key reasons why his small band of airmen and Afghan police defeated a much-larger enemy force during a historic battle fought in Afghanistan nearly a year and a half ago.

Air Force Staff Sgt. Jason A. Kimberling recalled blasting away with his M-4 carbine and tossing grenades at the enemy during the intense two-and-a-half-hour firefight in Zabul province, where Afghan national police he'd helped train fought alongside their American military counterparts.

"We just outfought them, basically," explained Kimberling, who graduated from high school in Salinas, Calif., in 1988. "Nobody panicked. The Afghan police followed our leadership."

Fought on Aug. 8, 2006, the battle pitted more than 150 terrorists against a force made up of three American airmen, an interpreter and 35 Afghan National Police, Kimberling said. The fight, he noted, was the largest action involving Air Force security force members since the 1968 Tet offensive in Vietnam.

"We inflicted roughly about 40-percent casualties on the enemy, and we lost no one," Kimberling recalled, noting the battle began when insurgent fighters ambushed his convoy security group.

Kimberling earned the Bronze Star Medal with valor device for his part in the battle that was fought during his 14-month tour of duty with a provincial reconstruction team in Qalat, Afghanistan. He returned stateside in April 2007.



*Air Force Staff Sgt. Jason A. Kimberling is among 12 service members participating in the sixth quarterly iteration of the Defense Department's "Why We Serve" public-outreach program. Kimberling and other program participants are addressing community, business and veterans-group audiences at venues across the nation. Defense Department photo*

Today, the Air Force noncommissioned officer is among 12 servicemembers participating in the sixth quarterly iteration of the Defense Department's "Why We Serve" public-outreach program. Kimberling and other program participants will address community, business and veterans-group audiences at venues across the nation.

Kimberling said it is important for Americans to understand that U.S. military members are risking their lives in Afghanistan and Iraq to protect the nation and also to assist citizens of those faraway countries in the fight against global terrorism.

The Why We Serve program is a good way for U.S. servicemembers to correct possible public misconceptions or misunderstandings about the war, he explained.

"From my perspective, if I have to tell anything to the American people, it is that the Afghans are not an evil people," Kimberling said. "Not every Afghan is a terrorist."

Afghans are hard-working and have the same aspirations and concerns as any other people, Kimberling said.

The Afghan national police he trained and teamed up with during battles against the Taliban and al Qaeda insurgents appreciated the fact that the noncommissioned officer and his comrades were ready to lead by example.

"I felt that the Afghan national police have a lot of respect for us, because we were willing to go out with them and do missions," Kimberling said. "Any good NCO knows you've got to be willing to do what you're telling your troops to do."

In Afghanistan, such leadership "paid dividends in a culture that is steeped in warrior traditions," Kimberling observed.

After high school, Kimberling recalled, he attended junior college in Salinas, Calif., and enjoyed time with his friends when his father was posted at nearby Fort Ord as an Army NCO. However, "I wasn't going anywhere," he said.

Kimberling enlisted in the Air Force in 1991. He first served as an aircraft mechanic and later transferred to military police duty. Today, he's been married for 13 years and is the father of a 7-year-old son. The Air Force NCO said he feels good about staying in the military and being a part of history.

"I wanted to live it. I didn't want to read about it," Kimberling said.