



## Special Forces Soldier awarded Silver Star for heroic actions in Afghan battle

By U.S. Army Sgt. Tim Meyer

U.S. Pacific Command

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CAMP H.M. SMITH, Hawaii -- U.S. Army Master Sgt. Sarun Sar and his wife, Dobromila, receive applause after he was awarded the Silver Star during a ceremony here. Sar, a Special Forces combat veteran assigned to the Special Operations Command - Pacific, received the medal for heroism in a firefight while supporting Operation Enduring Freedom in eastern Afghanistan early last year. (Photo by Sgt. Tim Meyer, U.S. Pacific Command Public Affairs)

CAMP H.M. SMITH, Hawaii (January 3, 2006) -- A U.S. Army Soldier assigned to the Special Operations Command - Pacific was awarded the Silver Star here today for heroism in a firefight while supporting Operation Enduring Freedom in eastern Afghanistan early last year.

Master Sgt. Sarun Sar received the medal from Brig. Gen. David P. Fridovich, Commander, Special Operations Command, in a ceremony at U.S. Pacific Command. The Silver Star is the Department of Defense's fourth highest award for valor in combat. Sar has also been submitted for a Bronze Star for heroism in a previous fight.

During the eight months he spent on this tour, his second in Afghanistan, Sar and his team were in the Paktika Province along the Pakistan border, which is one of the poorest in the country. They provided security, health care, and construction projects for "shuras," meetings held with tribal elders to allow them to voice their concerns. On their days off they taught English to local kids and played soccer with them, said Sar.

The day of the attack they were conducting aerial reconnaissance, not one of their normal missions, according to Sar. In fog and extreme cold 9,000 feet up in the snow-covered mountains, the first Blawkhawk helicopter landed and immediately came under enemy fire. Sar landed in the second helicopter, dismounted, and rushed to prevent the enemy from damaging the aircraft and harming his team members.

He pursued one of the attackers into a building, and was struck in the helmet with a round from an AK-47 assault rifle fired from 7-10 feet away. "It felt like I was hit in the head with a hammer," Sar later recalled. For a moment he was disoriented, screaming "I'm hit! I'm hit!" to the medic, but within a few seconds he established that the wound was not life threatening, and he continued to fight. After the battle, he and his men administered first aid to two injured Afghan civilians, stabilizing them for medical evacuation to a coalition hospital.

Of the twelve personnel, only Sar and another soldier were wounded; no one was killed that day. "This country has given me so much, and this is a small price to pay, said Sar. "The hero is the guy in the cemetery right now, he and his family," referring to his weapons sergeant, who died in a separate battle in June. "He's the one who gave his life for his country. He's also an immigrant, from Mexico."

"Growing up in a war zone teaches you to be immune to a gunfight," said Sar as he described his childhood during the Vietnam War. Sar gained his first combat experience in his homeland of Cambodia, where his father was arrested by the communist insurgency during the war, and his brothers and sisters were separated from their family. At a very young age he joined the anti-Vietnamese guerillas, was wounded in action several times, and was sent to a refugee camp in Thailand to recover. There he was reunited with his older sister and her two children. After the war, they moved to the United States.



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PAKTIKA PROVINCE,  
Afghanistan -- Master Sgt.  
Sarun Sar takes a break while  
conducting combat operations in  
Eastern Afghanistan. Sar and his  
team frequently conducted  
patrols along the snow covered  
mountains in Afghanistan.  
(Photo courtesy of Master Sgt.  
Sarun Sar.)

Years later he learned that his father survived the Khmer Rouge regime, was imprisoned in Vietnam for subversion, and passed away from disease. His older brother was caught smuggling weapons for anti-government guerillas and was executed by the Vietnamese. His mother and his two younger brothers died from starvation. Only he and his two sisters survived.

Sar became a U.S. citizen, and was later selected to join the Special Forces, where he has served 15 of his 20 years in the military. He fought in the first Gulf War, and has deployed to Thailand, Cambodia, Bosnia, Kosovo, Africa, Columbia and Afghanistan during his various assignments. He is currently assigned to Special Forces Command-Pacific at Camp Smith, Hawaii.