

Paratroopers save lives in the midst of tragedy

Written by Army Sgt. Timothy Dinneen CJTF-82 PAO

Monday, 03 March 2008

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – When a suicide bomber detonated his explosives killing himself and at least eight others here the morning of Feb. 27, 2007, what was left in the aftermath was chaos and bloodshed; however, among the many heroes that tragic day, were two 82nd Airborne Division Paratroopers.



Army Sgts. Rodney Scott and Kathleen Torkildson, Headquarters Company, Division Special Troops Battalion, 82nd Abn. Div., displayed courage and poise when they responded to the suicide bombing administering first-aid and comfort to the wounded saving countless lives.

"I was at my post cleaning my weapon when I heard an explosion thinking, 'What the hell is going on?', I ran outside with my [binoculars] and I saw smoke 75 yards in the distance and then the radio began screaming," Scott, a Racine, Wis., native said. "I didn't know what to expect or what was in store for me but I ran towards the smoke avoiding the body parts laying in the road on my way."

Torkildson remembered running sick call at the aid station when she heard the explosion. "I thought a mine went off when we got a call for an emergency at the [Entry Control Point]. My NCO said to prepare myself mentally for the worst," Torkildson, from San Ramon, Calif., said. "It was pretty much chaos, there were people everywhere screaming and blown to pieces; I just started treating people."

Scott, a mechanic tasked to provide security at the ECP, recalled being hit all at once with the reality of the situation when he arrived at the blast site. "It was a tremendous blow seeing all the dead and wounded, people from the [Movement Control Team] were just trying to get people out," Scott said. "Everyone was screaming and crying, I noticed a body on the ground wearing an [Army Combat Uniform] and checked his pulse, but there wasn't one. I felt anger, fear and sadness all mixed together."

Amidst the confusion, Scott carried on finding four wounded Afghan children. He treated them with the medical gear he had while one of their father's stood by beating his head with his hands and screaming. Scott tried to reassure the concerned parent he was doing what he could for his son.

"I knew I needed to take care of these [children] and that's what I was concentrating on," Scott said. "I told him, 'I'm helping your son, please stand back so I can work.'"

As an 82nd Abn. Div. medic, Torkildson relied on her training to treat and move as many wounded as she could so they could be transported to the hospital here. She said it was surreal because cell phones were ringing from the dead bodies as she attempted to get to the wounded she could save.



"It was the first time I ever saw anything like that; it's what we were trained for though," Torkildson said. "All of us working together is what made a difference allowing us to get people out quickly to medical attention."

Scott stayed with the Afghan children he treated until they were loaded onto an ambulance and taken to a hospital telling himself to be strong to give them hope. He said three of the four children he treated survived.

"People that were out there did what they were trained to do, knew what had to be done, and did it without hesitation," Scott said. "The event that day amplified the job we had ahead of us as it happened within our first month here."

Torkildson left the scene with the wounded and Scott conducted security sweeps with his comrades the rest of the day thinking, "What a way to start a long deployment."