

# Signal Officer awarded Purple Heart Medal, Combat Action Badge

The day Signal Officer 1LT Kelsey Kirby was wounded was just another day down range.

In fact, April 17, 2013 was going better than most of the days 1LT Kirby had endured on the front lines in Afghanistan at FOB Shank, infamously known as shrapnel city because of the routine fire poured down on the base. This day was a balmy spring day, neither buffeted with frigid winds sweeping down from the mountains nor sweltering under heat pulsing from a relentless desert sun.

Near the end of this otherwise calm work day, 1LT Kirby was painfully reminded of her personal mantra, "never become complacent."



1LT Kelsey Kirby performs one of her duties briefing distinguished visitors to the FOB Shank in Afghanistan in the Spring of 2013.

In the final minutes of her shift as she was tidying up her work area and thinking about the quarter-mile trek to the barracks, the IDF alarm sounded. This is one response you don't have to think about. Immediately, everyone dropped down and took cover in place...waiting.

It was a short wait.

Within seconds, a booming explosion kicked dust into the air and echoed an ear-splitting sound wave throughout the area.

The second move also was automatic. Adrenaline pumping, 1LT Kelsey and others in the compound began racing toward their bunkers.

Doppler is a clear and unmistakable harbinger of an incoming round...increasingly high pitch and rate.

The second round dropped dead center into the FOB and exploded.

1LT Kirby was among three moving through the RPAT yard when the round detonated.

After the bombing and the all-clear sounded, the damage was assessed, accountability conducted and the three injured moved to the FOB clinic. 1LT Kirby was sent to the concussion care clinic.

As a result of the injuries she received 1LT Kirby was awarded a Purple Heart Medal in August 2013. BG Duane A. Gamble, deputy commanding general 1st Sustainment Command Theater, said, "It was my honor and privilege to award the Purple Heart Medal and Combat Action Badge to 1LT Kelsey Kirby. I made the presentation today at a remote FOB here in Afghanistan where she is serving as part of the CMRE (CENTCOM Materiel Reduction Team. It was a proud and special moment for her, and her team of Soldiers and NCOs that serve alongside her. She is a humble, quiet professional that is still in the fight with her team."

This action by a dedicated Soldier and Signal Officer is laudable for many reasons. The manner in which 1LT Kirby performed her duties before and after the wounding speaks volumes about the Army Values we cherish—personal courage, duty, loyalty and selfless service. She has consistently demonstrated the kind of service the Signal Corps



**1LT Kirby is shown with COL Todd A Heussner, 43rd Brigade commander after an awards ceremony when she received the Purple Heart Medal and Combat Action Badge at FOB Shank in Afghanistan in August 2013.**

honors with pride since she was commissioned at Middle Tennessee State University on 16 December 2011.

1LT Kelsey Kirby supported 43rd SUST BDE at NTC as the JNN Platoon Leader. She led a team of six to set up the JNN and provide voice and data (phone and internet) for the BDE TOC. Upon deployment to Fort Irwin, Calif., and set-up of the JNN and establishing the BDE TOC 1LT Kirby was selected to return early to Fort Carson, Colo., to deploy 247 QM Company to Afghanistan in support of the CENTCOM Materiel Recovery Element mission. 1LT Kirby was assigned the mission of managing CL VII turn-ins as a signal officer.

1LT Kirby was attached to 3/401st AFSBn and assigned as the FOB Shank RPAT operations OIC. She was in charge of an operation of contractors, DA civilians and TCNs working in a yard supporting the withdrawal of two BCTs and turn-in

of over 200 pieces of rolling and non-rolling stock.

1LT Kirby was exposed to many echelons from all services as the distinguished visitor representative for the RPAT yard. She managed and briefed distinguished visitors ranging from the assistant secretary of defense, to general officers from every branch and brigade commanders.

MG Kurt Stein, commanding general JOCHQ-A 1st TSC, said, "Wow! I just visited [FOB] Shank and came across this LT [Kirby]--she is phenomenal! Absolutely impressive! Warren [MG LaWarren Patterson, Chief of Signal], you have yourself a great officer in LT Kirby."

After the concussion and follow up appointments, 1LT Kirby was reintegrated into full duty in Afghanistan.

She says, despite the wounding it was a great experience. She says she recommends to anyone to not be afraid to step out of their comfort zone and take on challenging jobs even if it's different and out of their field.

