



State of Wyoming Military Department Office of the Adjutant General

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Feb. 17, 2010

For immediate release

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WyMD-10-07

Brandon Erdmann awarded the Army Aviation Air/Sea Rescue Award

CHEYENNE, Wyo. – Chief Warrant Officer 4 Brandon Erdmann, an instructor pilot with the Wyoming Army National Guard, was recently awarded the Army Aviation Air/Sea Rescue Award. The award, sponsored by Goodrich Hoist and Winch, is presented to an Army aircrew who distinguished themselves while conducting a personnel hoist rescue.

The award was presented to the crew of Dustoff 24 which included the Wyoming Army National Guard's Erdmann, aircraft commander, and California Army National Guard members Chief Warrant Officer 2 Scott St. Aubin, Staff Sgt. Tom Gifford and Staff Sgt. Emmett Spraktes, assigned to C Company, 1-168 General Support Aviation Battalion, California Army National Guard.

Wyoming and California were deployed together to Afghanistan in 2009. C-Company, 5th Battalion, 159th Aviation Regiment rotation 1 deployed Oct. 17, 2008 from Cheyenne and arrived back in Wyoming Oct. 14, 2009.

According to the award citation, while serving with Task Force Palehorse, on July 17, 2009, Dustoff 24 received a "9-line" request to rescue members of a 16-man patrol in the Watapur Valley, Konar Province, Afghanistan. The patrol team encountered heavy machine gun fire, inflicting serious casualties and pinning the team down in a treacherous draw on the side of the valley.

Responding to the medevac request, the Dustoff 24 crew recognized the urgency of the situation and the slim chance that enemy fires would diminish. Therefore, the crew chose to hoist out the critically wounded without delay. Dustoff 24 conducted five separate hoist insertions and extractions, at the point of injury, all while under heavy enemy fire. Not willing to leave a crew member behind, Dustoff 24 returned for a sixth approach to the engagement

area in order to extract their flight medic who had been returning fire, treating patients and enabling hoists.

"It is an honor to have been nominated for this award," said Erdmann. "We would not have been able to accomplish this mission were it not for the tremendous support of the other aircraft involved, in helping to provide suppressive fires while we hovered above the engagement area to hoist out the patients."

The 7th Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment, which was the headquarters element of Task Force Palehorse, received a Valorous Unit Award for the combat actions in the Watapur Valley that day.