



Worldwide memorial held for fallen TACP

by Senior Airman Jarrod R. Chavana
AFCENT Public Affairs

5/28/2010 - **BAGHDAD** -- A memorial ceremony was held globally May 26, by tactical air control party Airman to honor a fallen comrade.

The ceremony was held precisely at 9:11 a.m. Central Standard Time, in honor of Senior Airman Bradley Smith who is being forever memorialized on the TACP memorial at Hurlburt Field, FL.

"It's most important that when we lose someone in combat, we take the time to honor them and today Brad Smith's name is memorialized on the TACP memorial at Hurlburt Field," said Col. Jeffrey Staha, the 368th Expeditionary Air Support Operations Group commander, deployed from Fort Hood, Texas. "More than anything is remembering the sacrifice, which this young man gave on the battle field that day and for this force to remember, so he's never forgotten."

An Air Force TACP team acts as the battlefield liaison between ground forces and aircraft weapon systems. They're generally a two-man team, working in an Army ground unit and directing close air support firepower toward enemy targets on the ground.

On Jan. 3, Airman Smith and his teammate Senior Airmen Michael Malarsie were on a dismounted patrol when his unit came under indirect fire. While scrambling for cover, someone stepped on a land mine, injuring several unit members including Airman Malarsie. The rest of the platoon regrouped after crossing a bridge.

The Army platoon sergeant assessed the situation, and asked for volunteers to go across the bridge to retrieve the wounded and locate missing Soldiers. The sergeant stated there were likely additional mines and that it was a risky operation. Without hesitation Airman Smith volunteered, and after locating the missing Soldiers and carrying back the wounded, someone triggered another land mine, killing Smith instantly.

"It's very important for us to remember those who've given their lives while protecting our country," said Air Force Chief Master Sgt. O'Neill, 368th EASOG chief enlisted manager, deployed from Fort Hood, Texas. "We've had three TACPs killed in action since the war began and it's very important to remember the guys who've gone on before us."

To honor one of their own the 368th EASOG added a special touch to the memorial, the 52 person formation performed a left face, in the direction of Hurlburt Field. From this position Colonel Staha, led the formation in a moment of silence, then called the participants to a 'position of exercise', where everyone performed 10 four count memorial pushups, one pushup for team work and one for their fallen comrade.



Airmen of the 368th Expeditionary Air Support Operations Group, face west, the direction of Hurlburt Field, FL., May 26, bowing their heads during a moment of silence in remembrance of fallen comrades at a ceremony honoring Senior Airman Bradley Smith at Camp Victory, Iraq. The ceremony was held precisely at 9:11 a.m. Central Standard Time, in honor of Senior Airman Bradley Smith who is being forever memorialized on the TACP memorial at Hurlburt Field, FL. (U.S. Air Force photo/Staff Sgt Morgan Sneed/released)