

TWO VIETNAM WAR SOLDIERS RECEIVE MoH

CSM (Retired) Bennie G. Adkins and **SPC 4 Donald P. Sloat** were each awarded the Medal of Honor for valor in Vietnam. President Barack Obama presented the medals on 15 September during a ceremony in the East Room of the White House. Adkins was present to receive his medal and Sloat received his posthumously. Dr. Bill Sloat, Donald's brother, accepted it on his behalf.

SPC 4 DON SLOAT

SPC 4 Donald P. Sloat distinguished himself while serving as a machine gunner with 3rd Platoon, Company D, 2nd Battalion, 1st Infantry Regiment, 196th Light Infantry Brigade, Americal Division, during combat operations against an armed enemy in the Republic of Vietnam, 17 January 1970.

D Company operated out of Fire Support Base Hawk Hill in an area of I Corps. They were located south and southwest of Danang providing security for local villages and conducting regular searches for NVA units.

On the morning of 17 January, Sloat's squad was conducting a patrol, serving as a blocking element in support of tanks and armored personnel carriers from F Troop in the Que Son valley. As the squad moved through dense up a small hill in file formation, the lead Soldier tripped a wire attached to a hand grenade booby-trap, set up by enemy forces.

When the grenade rolled down the hill toward Sloat, he had a choice. He could hit the ground and seek cover, or pick up the grenade and throw it away from his fellow Soldiers. After initially attempting to throw the grenade, Sloat realized that detonation was imminent, and that two or three men near him would be killed or seriously injured if he couldn't shield them from the blast. In an instant, Sloat chose to draw the grenade to his body, shielding his squad members from the blast and saving their lives.

CSM BENNIE ADKINS

CSM Bennie G. Adkins distinguished himself during 38 hours of close-combat fighting against enemy forces from 9-12 March 1966. At that time, then-SFC Adkins was serving as an Intelligence Sergeant with Detachment A-102, 5th Special Forces Group, 1st Special Forces at Camp "A Shau," in the Republic of Vietnam.

When Camp A Shau was attacked by a large North Vietnamese force in the early morning hours of 9 March, SFC Adkins rushed through intense enemy fire and manned a mortar position defending the camp. He continued to mount a defense even while incurring wounds from several direct hits from enemy mortars. Upon



learning that several Soldiers were wounded near the center of camp, he temporarily turned the mortar over to another Soldier, ran through exploding mortar rounds, and dragged several comrades to safety. As the hostile fire subsided, Adkins exposed himself to sporadic sniper fire and carried his wounded comrades to a more secure position at the camp dispensary.

SFC Adkins exposed himself to enemy fire transporting a wounded casualty to an airstrip for evacuation. He and his group then came under heavy small arms fire from members of the Civilian Irregular Defense Group that had defected to fight with the North Vietnamese. Despite this overwhelming force, Adkins maneuvered outside the camp to evacuate a seriously wounded American and draw fire away from the aircraft all the while successfully covering the rescue. Later, when a resupply air drop landed outside of the camp perimeter, Adkins again moved outside of the camp walls to retrieve the much needed supplies.

During the early morning hours of 10 March, enemy forces launched their main assault. Within two hours, SFC Adkins was the only defender firing a mortar weapon. When all mortar rounds were expended, Adkins began placing effective rifle fire upon enemy as they infiltrated the camp perimeter and assaulted his position. Despite receiving additional wounds from enemy rounds exploding on his position, Adkins fought off relentless waves of attacking North Vietnamese soldiers.

Adkins then withdrew to regroup with a smaller element of soldiers at the communications bunker. While there, he single-handedly eliminated numerous insurgents with small arms fire, almost completely exhausting his supply of ammunition. Braving intense enemy fire, he returned to the mortar pit, gathered vital ammunition and evaded fire while returning to the bunker. After the order was given to evacuate the camp, SFC Adkins and a small group of soldiers destroyed all signal equipment and classified documents, dug their way out of the rear of the bunker, and fought their way out of the camp.

Because of his efforts to carry a wounded soldier to an extraction point and leave no one behind, SFC Adkins and his group were unable to reach the last evacuation helicopter. Adkins then rallied the remaining survivors and led the group into the jungle — evading the enemy for 48 hours until they were rescued by helicopter on 12 March. During the 38-hour battle

and 48 hours of escape and evasion, Adkins fought with mortars, machine guns, recoilless rifles, small arms, and hand grenades, killing an estimated 135 -175 of the enemy and sustaining 18 different wounds. SFC Adkins' extraordinary heroism and selflessness above and beyond the call of duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, Detachment A-102, 5th Special Forces Group, 1st Special Forces and the U.S. Army.

(This article was adapted from items posted on www.army.mil/medalofhonor)



Photo by SSG Bernardo Fuller