

Division receives Medal of Valor

by Michelle Gordon
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The 101st Airborne Division received the Navajo Nation Medal of Valor at the February Eagle Remembrance Ceremony reception held Feb. 8 at Cole Park Commons in Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

The medal was presented to the division by the Navajo Nation Council on behalf of Sgt. Clifton Yazzie, a fallen Screaming Eagle of Navajo descent who was killed in Iraq when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle in late January.

Presenting the award were Young Jeff Tom (Mariano Lake/Smith Lake) and Elbert R. Wheeler (Many Farms/Round Rock), both of whom are members of the Council's Human Services Committee which has legislative oversight of veterans affairs.

Upon hearing the news of Yazzie's death, the Navajo Nation Council of Window Rock, issued a statement.

"The Navajo Nation is once again in a state of mourning with the loss of a fallen hero," said Lawrence T. Morgan, speaker of the Navajo Nation Council. "We have much to learn from the daily sacrifices of all our Soldiers as they perform their duties in defense of our great country, as well as our own Navajo Nation. Let us remain vigilant in our prayers for our men and women in uniform and their families."

To honor his service, the Council awarded both Yazzie and the 101st Airborne Division the Navajo Nation Medal of Valor. The award is usually presented to

returning military personnel and veterans who are Navajo. The 101st is the first division to receive the medal.

“In our culture and tradition that the Medal of Valor is given to those that go on living and it is truly Indian in every respect, said Angela Nez, a staff assistant with the Office of the Speaker. It represents the sacredness of life and it is dedicated to service and valor -- that is why we are giving it to the 101st Airborne Division.”

Lieutenant Col. Jackie Russell, 101st rear detachment commander, accepted the award on behalf of Maj. Gen. Tomas Turner, commanding general of the division, and promised it would be displayed in a place of honor inside the installation headquarters.

“The medal honors service in defense of our land and its people,” Nez said.

“The Council expresses its heartfelt appreciation for the valiant service given by all of the soldiers of the 101st Airborne Division. To them we are forever grateful.”

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