



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on January 14, 2013

## Soldier to Receive Medal of Honor for Heroism in Afghanistan

A former Army staff sergeant who participated in one of the deadliest battles faced by U.S. forces in Afghanistan is set to become the fourth living soldier, and the 11th in total, to receive the Medal of Honor for actions in Iraq and Afghanistan. The White House announced that 31-year-old Clinton L. Romesha (pictured) will receive the nation's highest award for valor from President Obama during a February 11 White House ceremony.



Romesha was a section leader with Bravo Troop, 3-61 Cavalry, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division at Combat Outpost Keating in eastern Afghanistan when the outpost was attacked on October 3, 2009 by some 300 enemy firing rocket-propelled grenades, anti-aircraft guns, and mortars. His actions were instrumental in pushing back the enemy, who vastly outnumbered the American forces, and in securing the position against further assault.

For the first three hours during the infamous battle, chronicled in the book [The Outpost](#), by Jake Tapper, the enemy rained mortars down on the outpost, defended by 50 Americans, 20 Afghans, and two Latvian soldiers. The Afghan troops quickly abandoned the position they were assigned to guard, allowing the enemy to breach the perimeter and set fire to the outpost, destroying nearly 70 percent of it.

But Romesha and a group of fellow soldiers regrouped, fighting back even as enemy fire rained down on them, and turned back the overwhelming tide.

Romesha's Medal of Honor citation recounts that the staff sergeant moved along the battlefield through intense enemy fire, seeking reinforcements at a barracks before returning to action. With the help of an assistant gunner, identified in *The Outpost* as Corporal Justin Gregory, Romesha "took out an enemy machine gun team," according to the citation. While Romesha was engaging a second enemy group, "the generator he was using for cover was struck by a rocket-propelled grenade, inflicting him with shrapnel wounds."

Ignoring his wounds, Romesha moved on and, with the help of Gregory, "rushed through the exposed avenue to assemble additional soldiers." With a five-man team he had mobilized, Romesha then led the way back into the battle. "With complete disregard for his own safety," according to the citation, "Romesha continually exposed himself to heavy enemy fire as he moved confidently about the battlefield, engaging and destroying multiple enemy targets, including three Taliban fighters who had breached the combat outpost's perimeter."

As the enemy continued its attack on the outpost with "greater ferocity, unleashing a barrage of rocket-propelled grenades and recoilless rifle rounds," Romesha "identified the point of attack and directed air support to destroy over 30 enemy fighters."

Upon learning that a group of soldiers at a remote battle position were in need of help, Romesha led his



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team to the location, where they provided covering fire, allowing three wounded soldiers to reach an aid station. Later, Romesha and his team braved “withering fire” to recover the bodies of the eight soldiers who were killed in the battle.

The Medal of Honor citation declares that “Staff Sergeant Romesha’s heroic actions throughout the day long battle were critical in suppressing an enemy that had far greater numbers. His extraordinary efforts gave Bravo Troop the opportunity to regroup, reorganize and prepare for the counterattack that allowed the troop to account for its personnel and secure Combat Outpost Keating.”

By some accounts, Romesha is an unlikely hero, wrote Tapper in *The Outpost*. “The son of a leader of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Church in Cedarville, California,” Tapper recalled, Romesha had originally planned to follow his father into LDS leadership, and “had in fact gone to seminary for four years during high school — from five till seven every morning — but ultimately it just wasn’t for him. He didn’t even go on a mission, a regular rite for young Mormon men. Romesha was better suited to this kind of mission, with guns and joes under his command.”

Clinton Romesha’s father, Gary, a Vietnam veteran, told [NBC News](#) that all three of his sons have served in the military. “I tried to talk to my children,” he recalled. “I told them, just don’t go into the infantry, do something where you get skilled. But they didn’t listen to me. They all went into the infantry.” The elder Romesha said his son’s valor did not surprise him. “He’s always been a good kid,” he said. “But I think any of my children would have done the same thing.”

Romesha, who is married and has three children, enlisted in the Army in September 1999 as an M1 armor crewman, and served both in Kosovo and Iraq (twice) before deployment to Afghanistan. He left the Army in 2011, and lives in Minot, North Dakota, working as a field safety specialist with an oil field construction firm. In addition to the Medal of Honor, Romesha has received the Bronze Star, the Purple Heart, and the Combat Action Badge.

Gary Romesha said that he is glad his son will be present at the White House to receive the Medal of Honor “on his own, and it’s not given to us after he is dead.”

Staff Sergeant Clinton Romesha is one of four living Medal of Honor recipients from the latest Middle East conflict, joining Army Staff Sergeant Salvatore Giunta (the first), Army Sergeant First Class Leroy Petry, and Marine Sergeant Dakota Meyer, all awarded for valor in Afghanistan.

They join seven posthumous Medal of Honor recipients from the Iraq/Afghanistan conflicts: Army Specialist Ross McGinnis, Army Sergeant First Class Paul Smith, Navy Petty Officer Second Class Michael Monsoor, and Marine Corporal Jason Dunham for their actions in Iraq, and Army Staff Sergeant Robert Miller, Sergeant First Class Jared Monti, and Navy Lieutenant Michael Murphy for their actions in Afghanistan.



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