

# HEROES

## In the War on Terror

Each week the Defense Dept. highlights the military men and women who have gone above and beyond in the global war on terror.



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### Navy Senior Chief Petty Officer Jason D. Taggart

There is rarely a break for those chosen to be part of a personnel security detachment (PSD) team – the individuals charged with providing security and transportation for military leaders on the ground. The task requires a state of readiness 24 hours a day, seven days a week – and it requires a keen awareness on the battlefield, since any senior military leader is a high-value target for insurgents.

Chief Taggart, a submariner, was sent to Iraq in the summer of 2003 as a communications specialist. When he arrived, however, Taggart found that his background in law enforcement made him an obvious choice to take over as the Coalition Military Assistance Team's PSD commander – a job that required him to form, train, and deploy the PSD forces. And a job that required versatility in widely diverse settings: patrolling busy streets, scouting dangerous roadways, and securing the sites before and after high-level meetings, whether in a municipal building or a palm grove.

Taggart quickly formed two five-man teams, which completed more than 200 missions stretching from Iraq's border with Turkey and Syria down to Kuwait. Their duties were often dangerous: twice the teams encountered roadside IEDs, which forced them to clear the area, set up security, and wait for the explosive ordnance disposal teams to declare the area safe before they could move on. In one incident, Taggart was injured by an IED but refused to leave the area until the mission was complete. He was also involved in four separate firefights with enemy forces.

While it is quite unusual for a sailor to perform what would normally be considered a soldier's job, Taggart was eager to gain the experience. "Throughout my military career, I volunteered to go many places. . . . I've been trying to do something different than just submarines." For his leadership and work, Taggart received the Bronze Star with Combat "V" on March 4, 2005.

### Former Kentucky Army National Guard Spc. Ashley Pullen

The Kentucky National Guard's 617th Military Police Company has turned out a long list of heroes – among them Sgt. Leigh Ann [Hester](#), Staff Sgt. Timothy [Nein](#), and Sgt. Jason [Mike](#). Spc. Pullen is yet another addition to those ranks.

On March 20, 2005, Pullen was driving one of three Humvees providing security for a 30-vehicle convoy traveling in Iraq. Nothing seemed out of the ordinary – which is often how the prelude to an ambush appears. Suddenly insurgents sprung a complex operation and began pouring heavy fire from multiple directions, stopping the convoy in its tracks. Pullen's unit moved out from behind the convoy to flank the insurgents and prevent them from escaping. Pullen's team began firing back.

Then she heard a call for help over the radio. Pullen backed her Humvee into a better position, jumped out, and ran 90 meters through the line of fire toward the injured soldier. She administered first aid and tried to calm him down. As she was treating him, another soldier launched a shoulder-held rocket toward a nest of insurgents. Although he warned of the impending firing, Pullen couldn't move out of the way fast enough. She threw her small frame over the wounded soldier to protect him from the blast – a blast that threw her off the soldier onto her backside.

About 27 insurgents were killed during the fight, and six were injured. For her efforts, Pullen was awarded the Bronze Star with "V" on June 16, 2005. MNF-Iraq [story](#); USA Today [story](#).



Wellsville, Ohio  
*Bronze Star with "V" recipient*



Edmonton, Ky.  
*Bronze Star with "V" recipient*