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2009: Year of the NCO

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SETAF NCO honored for bravery

By Rick Scavetta

Southern European Task Force Public Affairs Office

VICENZA, Italy -- Driving with his family along Highway 59 in East Texas, Sgt. 1st Class Keith Cade watched as a pickup truck ahead swerved into the median, flipped on its side and kicked up a cloud of dust.



Barbara Romano

Lt. Gen. R. Steven Whitcomb, the U.S. Army Inspector General (left), pins the Soldier's Medal on Sgt. 1st Class Keith Cade during a ceremony at U.S. Army Africa (SETAF) in Vicenza, Italy, Feb. 3. Cade earned the medal for helping save a woman and her child from a burning truck while on leave from duty in Afghanistan in 2005.

It was late afternoon, Nov. 25, 2005, just outside of Marshall, Texas -- Cade's hometown. The Southern European Task Force NCO, home on emergency leave from Afghanistan, pulled over and raced across traffic to help just as the overturned pickup burst into flames.

"It happened so fast," Cade said. "I never saw the danger. That never crossed my mind."

Three other men -- a retired Soldier, a Marine Corps recruiter and an off-duty firefighter -- also ran up. Without hesitation, the men worked together as a team to rescue the driver and her child from the burning vehicle.

"We saw the fire. One guy said, 'We don't have much time,'" Cade said. "The lady was trying to get her baby. That's when I leaned into the truck and lifted him out."

For his efforts, Cade earned the Soldier's Medal, the highest medal awarded to Soldiers for heroic acts not involving enemy combat.

Lt. Gen. R. Steven Whitcomb, the U.S. Army Inspector General, pinned the medal on Cade's uniform during a Feb. 3 ceremony in the office of Maj. Gen. William B. Garrett III, commander of U.S. Army Africa. Cade's wife and children were among roomful of officers and enlisted Soldiers who attended.

"Without regard to his own safety, Sgt. 1st Class Cade braved the fire and worked in unison with other rescuers to save two civilians," the award citation read. "His personal courage and selfless service are in keeping with the finest traditions of military service."

Cade now serves as the NCO-in-charge of the personnel section at the 509th Signal Battalion at Caserma Ederle.

His commander, Lt. Col. Joe Angyal, said Cade is a great leader who relied on attributes inherent in outstanding NCOs.

"His training and instincts kicked in," Angyal said. "You go with what you know."

Cade said he knows Soldiers who fought and died in combat, and he considers their acts more heroic than his, he said. He simply did what he had to when faced with tough situation.

"I guess it's about staying calm under pressure," Cade said "When people are in need, you don't think a lot about your own safety."



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