

VENERABLE SPECIAL TACTICS WARRIOR EARNS LEGION OF MERIT by Chief Master Sgt. Ty Foster, Air Force Special Operations Command Public Affairs

January 13, 2010 - Hurlburt Field, FL -- The commander of Air Force Special Operations Command presented the Legion of Merit medal to a retiring combat control veteran during a brief ceremony here Jan. 5, 2010.



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Chief Master Sgt. Mike Ramos, former Air Force Special Operations combat controller functional manager, mans a .50-caliber machine gun during one of his many deployments. Chief Ramos was recently awarded the Legion of Merit medal for his notable contributions to the combat controller career field, exceptional leadership and unyielding commitment to excellence. AFSOC Courtesy photo

The medal Lt. Gen. Donald C. Wurster presented to Chief Master Sgt. Mike Ramos, the AFSOC combat control functional manager, served as a capstone to the chief's career of more than 30 years.

"The Legion of Merit is the award you give to a successful wing commander," the general said. "It is presented to command chiefs extremely rarely." Processing the LOM required requesting an exception to policy, endorsed by the AFSOC commander and approved by the Air Force Decorations Board.

"It is exceptional, but so was Chief Ramos' service," said Chief Mike Gilbert, AFSOC command chief.

A few months ago, Chief Ramos' successor, Chief Tim Hoye, discussed the options of an appropriate decoration for the soon-to-be retired chief.

His directorate leaders all agreed that adding another Meritorious Service Medal to Chief Ramos' revered ribbon rack just wasn't going to do the venerable warrior justice, Chief Hoye said.

"The general criterion is, in addition to exceptional leadership, the nominee must have a broad impact on the force," Chief Gilbert said. "In Mike's case, as one of the very top chiefs in special tactics, that case was easily made.

"Across special tactics, the Air Force and U.S. Special Operations Command, his expertise and leadership are a given - he was also a visionary," the command chief said. "He was one of the main forces behind expanding our Joint Terminal Attack Controller force by selecting and training experienced Tactical Air Control Party Airmen to fill special operations JTAC requirements. This has allowed AFSOC to increase our support to our brothers on the ground."

"As I've served in this command, I've met so many chiefs who do such phenomenal things, it is always difficult to decide who among them deserve that extra level of recognition for their service," Chief Gilbert

NOTE: This online-only information was added to the CCT history after publication of The Eye of the Storm – A history of Combat Control Teams.

said. "Mike's leadership and impact across the force in a community so critical to our success on the battlefield made a clear case for fighting for the higher award."

Chief Ramos' impact on the SOF mission goes well beyond the AFSOC combat control and special tactics mission.

"He devoted himself to meeting, mentoring and influencing every Airman who came into AFSOC by conducting and participating in weekly physical fitness training sessions while these Airmen attended the Commando Pride Airman Center," Chief Hoyer said. "He took time each week to let them know that AFSOC was different and that they needed to commit themselves to an AFSOC way of life that required more of them than just being in the 'Big Blue' Air Force."

Throughout his career, Chief Ramos, a highly decorated veteran of multiple deployments, filled every role or position within special tactics and forged, then filled, the first AFSOC combat control FAM position, Chief Hoyer said. "He was my mentor ... he was consistent, fair, assertive, responsible and held people accountable ... in my eyes, the epitome of what a chief should be."

For Chief Ramos, it essentially boiled down to honoring where he came from.

"I remember, as a young Airman in the field, thinking 'I hope someone at the top knows what it's like to be the only Air Force guy attached to an Army, Navy, Marine, or Coalition team,'" Chief Ramos said. "And they were always there for me. As I increased in rank, I tried to think about the troops on the ground and do whatever I could to support them."

"My drive has always been the mission and therefore the Airmen, because they accomplish the mission," Chief Ramos said. "For a chief, they are the mission."



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Chief Ramos forms a group of active duty Combat Controllers for memorial push-ups at a recent Combat Control Association Reunion memorial service at the Hurlburt Air Park.
Courtesy Photo