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V CORPS AVIATION SAFETY OFFICER RETIRES WITH SPECIAL AWARD PRESENTED BY SERGEANT MAJOR OF THE ARMY

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HEIDELBERG, Germany — As his small and emotional retirement ceremony here was about to begin, V Corps aviation safety officer Chief Warrant Officer 4 Darrel "D" Smith earned high honors and praise from Sergeant Major of the Army Kenneth O. Preston for his corps- and Army-wide efforts to improve Soldier safety.



TECH SGT MICHAEL PHILLIPS
V Corps aviation safety officer Chief Warrant Officer 4 Darrel "D" Smith poses with his son, Senior Airman Cas Smith, a firefighter with the U.S. Air Force's 386th Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron, at Ali El Salem Air Base, Kuwait April 20. Warrant Officer Smith re-enlisted his son in a ceremony on the air base earlier that day. At his retirement ceremony in Heidelberg, Germany September 28, Sergeant Major of the Army Kenneth O. Preston presented the elder Smith with a special award the contributions he made to Army safety during his 28-year career.

Smith accepted those honors and gave a tearful good-bye after 28 years of military service.

Minutes prior to Smith's farewell, Preston presented Smith with the Sergeant Major of the Army Safety Award. The award is a relatively new one, developed by Preston soon after he became the 13th Sergeant Major of the Army in January. The award is "designed to showcase unit leaders who have established a program and made a difference in curbing the number of

deaths and accidents that occur Army-wide," said Preston at the first presentation of the honor in Korea in April.

Preston, who served as V Corps' command sergeant major before becoming Sergeant Major of the Army, was quick to say no one is more deserving of the award, and lauded Smith's relentless and tireless efforts to improve safety throughout his career and throughout the Army.

The official retirement ceremony included corps Deputy Commanding General Maj. Gen. Walter Wojdakowski presenting Smith with the Legion of Merit and official letters of thanks from U.S. President George W. Bush and Army Chief of Staff Gen. Peter Schoomaker. Smith's wife Michelle was also presented with an award for her dedication to her husband's career and family during nearly three decades as a military family member.

Smith conceived and spearheaded the "Operation Guardian Angel" safety program that encourages anyone who comes in contact with Soldiers to help to keep them safe during off-duty times when they are away from their military peers and supervisors. At its inception the program was quickly adopted by the U.S. Army Safety Center for Army-wide implementation.

Not one to slow down on safety efforts, Smith also created the V Corps Accident Reduction Emphasis program, or CARE, just weeks before his retirement. That program brings Soldiers together in a roundtable setting to allow them to talk openly and honestly about how their units implement accident reduction programs and solicits their opinions on improving those programs.

Smith will continue to be a champion for safety even beyond the Army. His next career begins with a transition to a safety position with the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration in Oklahoma City, Okla.

