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V CORPS SERGEANTS EARN SOLDIERS MEDAL FOR ACTIONS FOLLOWING 2003 BAGHDAD U.N. BUILDING BOMBING

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KIRKUK AIR BASE, Iraq — Two Soldiers assigned to V Corps' 159th Medical

Company (Air Ambulance), 421st Medical Evacuation Battalion, received the Soldier's Medal in a ceremony here Oct. 5.



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Maj. Gen. Walter Wojdakowski, V Corps deputy commander, pins the Soldier Medal on Sgt. Douglas Holm (left photo) and Staff Sgt. Eric Hartman (right photo) during a ceremony at Wiesbaden (Germany) Army Airfield Oct. 5. Assigned to the corps' 159th Medical Company (Air Ambulance), 421st Medical Evacuation Battalion, Hartman earned the medal for helping to evacuate victims of the bombing of the United Nations building in Baghdad August 19, 2003.

Staff Sgt. Eric Hartman and Sgt. Douglas Holm received the medals for their actions Aug. 19, 2003, when they helped evacuate victims of the bombing of the United Nations building in Baghdad.

"If anyone epitomizes what Soldiers are supposed to be like, it's these two NCOs right here," said Maj. General Walter Wojdakowski, V Corps deputy

commanding general, during the ceremony at the Flyers Theater.

The unit deployed to Iraq in early March 2003 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Hartman's crew was just returning from a separate medevac mission that August

afternoon when he received a call that a bomb had exploded at the U.N. building. Holm's crew was not scheduled for duty for another six hours, yet both Soldiers readied their crews and arrived on the scene within minutes. Upon arrival, both began treating casualties and readying victims for transport and then were told of a victim trapped within the rubble inside the building.

"Noise, confusion, fear, terror and the smell of chaos is an environment no normal human being would go into, and we had two who led the way going into that building while it was falling apart," Wojdakowski said during the ceremony.

"Somebody said there was a person trapped in rubble, and I spent the next three-and-a-half hours working on that," said Hartman during an interview last September.

Both Hartman and Holm spent hours inside the collapsing building. With debris and concrete falling on and around them, the two continued digging to reach trapped victims.

"The sad thing is that it didn't matter what we did. We couldn't get to them," said Holm.

The two later found out one of the victims they extracted was Sergio Vieira de Mello, the chief of the U.N. mission in Iraq. Although they were able to pull him out alive, he was later pronounced dead following his arrival to Landstuhl (Germany) Regional Medical Center.

"We would have done the same for anybody," said Holm.

After receiving his medal during the ceremony, Hartman expressed his sincere gratitude to his unit and family.

"I'm honored to receive this, but I didn't do anything another crew member wouldn't have done. I just happened to get recognized," said Holm.

The Soldier's Medal is awarded to any member of the armed forces who, while serving in any capacity with the Army, distinguishes himself by heroism not involving actual conflict with the enemy. The act must have involved personal hazard or danger and the voluntary risk of life.

