

# Soldier shares medal with unit

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STAFF WRITER

Military medals are not just for an individual's accomplishment, often they represent the good work of an entire unit, says CPO2 Darrell Colwell.

That's how he feels about his recent honour by the United States, who awarded him the U.S. Army Commendation Medal.

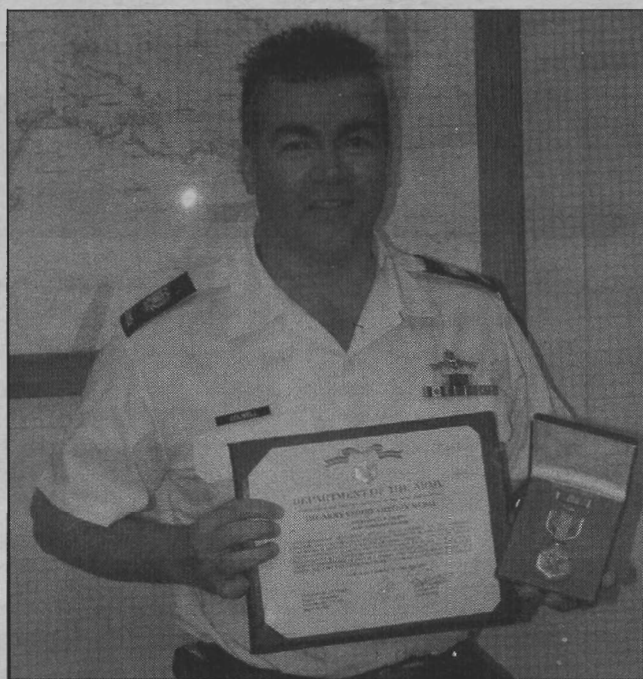
The certificate accompanying the medal acknowledges the 112 pieces of intelligence he collected while posted to an American explosive exploitation cell in Kandahar, Afghanistan. That intelligence led to targeting and capturing of terrorists.

CPO2 Colwell volunteered for the American posting and took with him his extensive training and experience as a bomb squad technician with Fleet Diving Unit (Pacific) (FDU (P)). His Kandahar team – the Combined Explosive Exploitation Cell – consisted mostly of senior bomb squad technicians from the U.S. Navy, U.S. Air Force and the FBI.

"I just wanted to do my part, so when the position came up, I volunteered along with four others from FDU(P) and FDU(A)."

His task was to gather as much information from sites hit by insurgents' improvised explosive devices (IED), and submit reports helping to establish who made the bomb, how it worked and where it originated.

"Ultimately, my goal was to help find out who was planting bombs that were killing our guys. It was a tactical situation, and at times we were fired at, so we had to be quick but efficient. If I didn't do my job properly then the guys on the oodon, who were protecting me inside, are risking their lives unnecessarily," said CPO2 Colwell.



Dickson Kent, Lookout

CPO2 Darrell Colwell recently received a U.S. Army Commendation for intelligence work while in Afghanistan.

A clearance diver by trade, CPO2 Colwell was on tour for 223 days.

His medal arrived four months after his tour ended on Feb. 20.

"I'm really glad to be home," said CPO2 Colwell. "We were busy and it was nasty at times. I have lots of respect for the army."

He doesn't know if any of his American colleagues received the same acknowledgement.

"I don't know if they got medals but the Americans were great. They treated me like one of their own," says CPO2 Colwell.

CPO2 Colwell, now the training chief at FDU(P), has also received medals for his efforts for search and recovery in the Swiss Air tragedy that killed 229 people off Peggy's Cove, N.S. in 1998, and the distinguished Order of Military Merit for his conspicuous career and work in a 2002 Gulf War tour. But he is quick to understate his own contributions and turn the spotlight to the hard

work of others.

"For a long time I wouldn't wear the commendation I got from the Swiss Air crash because not every diver got one, and every diver should have. Someone said to me that it's a military decoration and you wear it not for yourself but for every military person. So I started wearing it to bring attention to all the people who didn't get one," says CPO2 Colwell.

As for his latest medal from the American army, CPO2 Colwell believes he may appreciate it more when he retires, but for now it's something he would prefer to share with the military collective rather than keep to himself.

"Sure it's nice to get recognized when you work hard, but there are lots of other people who deserve a medal more than me. I know I worked hard so this is appreciated. But everyone there works hard, and you don't do the job to get medals."