
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

News Release #52-15

May 4, 2015

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2015 Memorial Ceremony Honors Fallen EOD technicians

EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE, Fla. - The Naval School of Explosive Ordnance Disposal (NAVSCOLEOD) hosted the 46th annual Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Memorial Ceremony May 2 at the EOD Memorial next to the Kauffman EOD Training Complex on Eglin Air Force Base, Fla.

The EOD community from each of the joint services gathered for the ceremony to honor the memory of 306 EOD heroes and add eight additional EOD technicians to the memorial, bringing the total of fallen warriors honored on the memorial's wall to 314.

Those added to the memorial this year include: Army Spc. Ryan Helton, killed in 2014 while serving in Afghanistan; Army Capt. Frederick Dillon, 1st Lt. Steven Todorovich, Sgt. Ira Wiggins and Pfc. Laurence Paystrup who were killed while serving in North Africa during WWII; Marine Cpl. Clellie Whited Jr. who was killed during landing operations on Okinawa, Japan during WWII; and Sailors Lt. j.g. John Fezler and Lt. j.g. Alvin Vetter who were killed during operations in the south Pacific and on D-Day during WWII respectively.

Deputy Commandant for Installations and Logistics of the Marine Corps, Lt. Gen. William Faulkner, was the featured speaker for the ceremony.

"EOD technicians don't have the luxury to turn down a mission or pass the task to someone else," said Faulkner. "There is no more challenging and courageous occupational field across all of our services than that of the EOD technician."

During the memorial ceremony, NAVSCOLEOD's service detachment commanders and senior enlisted members placed a wreath next to their respective service's plaque on the EOD Memorial while a fellow service member read the names of their fallen EOD heroes aloud, concluding with the phrase "We remember." Vice Chief of Naval Operations, Adm. Michelle Howard, presented a flag (previously flown over the EOD Memorial) to each of the families of the two Sailors, Lt. Gen. Faulkner presented a flag to the family of the fallen Marine, and Army Brig. Gen. Burton presented a flag to each of the families of the Soldiers.

According to Commanding Officer of NAVSCOLEOD, Capt. William Noel, "We remember" signifies the very essence and ethos of EOD technicians to never forget the extraordinary efforts and sacrifices of our EOD brothers and sisters who made the ultimate sacrifice. "The EOD Memorial stands as an amazing monument to the honor, courage, and commitment exemplified by EOD technicians from the joint services as they performed the EOD mission," Noel said.

"EOD technicians of all services make a solemn promise when we enter the EOD community that we will never forget. We will never forget those heroes who have gone before us, their bravery, courage, and their ultimate sacrifice," said Noel. "New EOD technicians who graduate each week at this school in front of this memorial share this promise and vow to carry on this charge throughout their careers and years to come. To the Legacy and honoree families: we will never forget."

The EOD Memorial honors the 314 EOD technicians who have died in the line of duty since 1942; 130 of those since Sept. 11, 2001.

Staff members from all four services at NAVSCOLEOD, as well as members of the EOD Warrior Foundation, coordinated and executed preparations for the ceremony.

The EOD Memorial Foundation, established in 1969, merged with the Wounded EOD Warrior Foundation in March 2013 to serve and support the joint service EOD community.

"The EOD Memorial guarantees our fallen EOD warriors who have made the ultimate sacrifice are never forgotten," said Nicole Motsek, executive director of the EOD Warrior Foundation. "The Soldiers, Sailors, and Marine added today, and the 306 before them, are heroes and it is an honor and privilege to preserve their legacy and continue to provide support to their families."

The EOD badge and its three levels (basic, senior, and master) became the standard for all services in the 1950s. To this day, the EOD badge remains the only badge in the military identical for all branches of Service.

NAVSCOLEOD, located on Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., provides high-risk, specialized, basic and advanced EOD training to U.S. and partner nation military and selected U.S. government personnel each year.

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Story by Billy P. Martin, Naval School of Explosive Ordnance Disposal Public Affairs