



United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School

INSIDE SWCS

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ARMY DIVE INSTRUCTOR MAKES HIS TIME COUNT

By Maj. Dave Butler

Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Talmadge had two jobs when he reported to the U.S. Army Special Forces Underwater Operations School at Naval Air Station Key West in Florida in May 2008. He was charged with teaching special-operations Soldiers combat-dive skills and to recover from wounds received by a rocket-propelled grenade just seven months earlier. He did both.

In September 2007, Talmadge's five-vehicle patrol was ambushed by more than 60 well-prepared insurgents in southern Afghanistan. Talmadge was in the turret, operating the automatic grenade launcher in the second truck. The insurgents fired five RPGs at each truck and littered the patrol with gun fire. An RPG blew through the door of Talmadge's HMMWV hitting the radios, and then his legs.

"We were hit and tried to drive out of the kill zone, when the driver turned around to survey the fire inside the vehicle, he saw it [the unexploded RPG] stuck in my leg and pulled it out," said Talmadge, who was still standing and manning his position in the turret.

Talmadge received tissue wounds through his left thigh and right calf. "A scuba diver; that explains it," quipped his doctor, referring to the way his well developed leg muscles protected his bones and arteries.

Since that time, Talmadge has been training himself and others. "In the hospital I would see guys with bad attitudes; I would be like,

"SWICK" HITS

OPERATION REBOUND

For more information on Operation Rebound, please visit their Web site at www.operationrebound.org.

NEW (OPSEC) FAMILY READINESS WEB SITE

The Army has officially opened the [OPSEC Family Readiness Web site](#) on AKO.

It has outstanding OPSEC information for you and your family as well as a very cool section for kids.

VERA/VISP APPROVED

Voluntary Early Retirement Authority/ Voluntary Separation Incentive Pay has been approved for Civilian Employees for 2010.

Letters announcing the program are located on AKO under [Civilian Personnel Announcements and Upcoming Events](#) and on the USASOC DCS, G-1 Web site under [Items of Interest](#).

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C'mon you can only get better from here!"

In November 2009 he competed in Florida's Half Ironman while raising \$2,000 for Operation Rebound, a program that benefits wounded Soldiers. During his recovery Talmadge used races and other physical challenges as a gauge to see if he was ready to return to his Special Forces teammates.



"Watch me," says Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Talmadge (bottom left) of Portsmouth, Va. as eager students fight to gain control of themselves and their gear during ship bottom search training in Mole Harbor off of Key West, Fla. during the Combat Diver Qualification Course on Tuesday, March 16, 2010.

"My mental drive is good, I'm about 90 percent recovered physically," said Talmadge, "I'm not concerned with what I used to be able to do, it's about what can I do now."

Talmadge attributes his success to his strong family, but others are sure to note his enduring positive attitude. "You can't knock that guy down," said Maj. Pete Russo, the commander of the Special Forces Underwater Operations School, "I have never seen that guy in a bad mood or stressed out."

In addition to recovering from his injuries and training divers in Key West, he passes his time fishing or spending time with his family. "Although he doesn't have the biggest boat, I am sure that guy can out-fish anyone," says Russo.

A few weeks ago Talmadge ran into some local citizens at the marina, "What happened to your legs, did you get bit by a shark?" they asked.

"Yeah, something like that," replied Talmadge.