



Commencement from USC plus military commission equals dedication

By Eduardo Tinoco
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Sitting in the comfort of my office in Hoffman Hall at the University of Southern California, I am able to reflect on the bravery of Sgt. 1st Class Paul Ray Smith.

He is the first soldier to be awarded the Medal of Honor in the Iraq war. His award was made posthumously for actions against the enemy April 4, 2003. Smith is only the third soldier to be awarded the Medal of Honor since the end of the Vietnam War. The other two soldiers so honored were Sgt. 1st Class Gary Gordon and Sgt. 1st Class Randall Shughart, who earned their awards while serving as snipers with the U.S. Army Special Operations Command in Mogadishu, Somalia, on Oct. 3, 1993.

To earn a Medal of Honor, a soldier, sailor, Marine or airman must distinguish themselves "by actions above and beyond the call of duty" and, oftentimes, the award for such intrepid actions is given posthumously.

With the continuing war in Iraq, we Americans must pause and take time to think of the sacrifices made, not only by those who earn the highest honors for courage and bravery, but also the new recruit who has chosen to voluntarily serve this country's military or the cadets who will receive their commission into the U.S. military's officer corps today at USC and other college campuses throughout the country.

A recent article stated, "Nationwide enrollment in the Army's Reserve Officer Training Corps has slipped more than 16 percent over the last two school years, leaving the program, which trains and commissions more than six of every 10 new Army officers each year, with its fewest participants in nearly a decade." However, all indications are that the programs at USC are strong and continue to attract many who are willing to serve their country.

While the graduating seniors at USC look forward to beginning their careers, the men and women who receive their military commissions must look forward to their next duty station, wherever it may be. For instance, the Army officers will be headed to military specialties, such as armor, military police, intelligence or infantry, to name a few.

It is the newly commissioned infantry officers I want to salute and thank for their service. These newly minted second lieutenants begin their military career with dedication and devotion to duty. They will travel to Fort Benning, Ga., for additional training, knowing that in their future awaits the possibility of heading to the conflict in Iraq.

Men such as Smith, Shughart and Gordon are exceptional. They sacrificed themselves for the sake of others. As these new USC alumni and U.S. military officers head to their new assignments, all I can say to them is: Thank you and Godspeed.

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