

**I Marine Expeditionary Force  
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**\*\*\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\*\***

**DATE: MAY 1, 2013**

**PENDLETON SAILOR TO BE AWARDED SILVER STAR**

**UPDATED ADVISORY # 13-008**

- *Media Invitation*
- *Petty Officer 1st Class Flores Award Citation*
- *Petty Officer 1st Class Flores Story*

MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. - Petty Officer 1st Class Benny Flores will be awarded the Silver Star Medal Friday, for his actions while deployed to southwest Afghanistan last year.

Flores provided lifesaving medical care to Marines and Afghan Uniform Police during an enemy attack, despite his own serious injuries, while serving as a field service medical technician during combat operations in Nimruz province's Zaranj district during a partnered convoy, April 28, 2012.

The ceremony is scheduled to be held at the 1st Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company aboard Camp Pendleton at 2 p.m.

Members of the media who would like to attend the ceremony should contact the I MEF Public Affairs Office via email at: [imefpublicaffairs@usmc.mil](mailto:imefpublicaffairs@usmc.mil) or via phone at (760) 763-7047 no later than 4 p.m., Wednesday, May 1.

**Members of the media should meet at Camp Pendleton MAIN GATE no later than 1 p.m., Friday, May 3. They will be met by a uniformed public affairs representative and escorted to the site.**

**-USMC-**

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### **Petty Officer 1st Class Benny Flores Silver Star Medal Award Citation**

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action with combat operations against the enemy while serving as Field Medical Service Technician, I Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward), on 28 April 2012, in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. During a partnered convoy, Hospital Corpsman First Class Flores was a passenger in a vehicle that was struck by an Improvised Explosive Device attack and received small arms fire from several enemy positions. Without regard for his personal safety, with shrapnel wounds to his arms and neck, Hospital Corpsman First Class Flores treated the nearest wounded Marine while he was engaged by enemy small arms fire. He assisted the wounded Marine in maneuvering to a covered position and without hesitation, ran back into the street, exposed to enemy fire, and quickly provided medical assistance to a severely wounded Afghan Uniform Police Officer still in the damaged vehicle. Hospital Corpsman First Class Flores moved the injured officer to cover and administered First Aid. Under the cover of suppressive fire from members of the convoy, he returned a third time to the damaged vehicle to help another wounded Marine. After Hospital Corpsman First Class Flores applied a tourniquet, the wounded Marine was carried to cover where he continued to treat the casualty. Under the cover of suppressive fires by nearby Marines, he again crossed the street a fourth time to treat the final wounded Marine. Hospital Corpsman First Class Flores steadfastly refused treatment for his own wounds until all of his comrades were treated. By his extraordinary guidance, zealous initiative, and total dedication to duty, Hospital Corpsman First Class Flores reflected great credit upon himself and upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the United States Naval Service.



High resolution version of this image is available here:

<http://www.dvidshub.net/image/581966/guam-corpsman-helps-save-marines-despite-injuries>

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High resolution version of this image is available here:

<http://www.dvidshub.net/image/919346/us-navy-corpsman-receives-purple-heart-heroic-actions-afghanistan>



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**Guam corpsman helps save Marines despite injuries**

Story by Petty Officer 3rd Class Monique LaRouche

May 17, 2012

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan – April 28, 2012, started out like any other day for Petty Officer 1st Class Benny Flores, but by late afternoon it took a turn for the worse.

Flores, a corpsman for Regional Command (Southwest), was providing medical coverage for a three-day, Afghan-led mission to Zaranj near the Iranian border.

This was a routine mission and many have taken the trip. Corpsmen go as medical support in case of incidences, but an interpreter was not necessary.

Zaranj is the capital of Nimruz province and is considered the most progressive city in Afghanistan. There is a major highway that starts in Delaram and ends in India. Women walk the streets, crowded with vendors, unescorted without burkas. At times, the highway is congested with trucks and other vehicles going to and from the border. The city also has a major hospital and Iranians often cross the border for medical treatment.

This was Flores's first time to Zaranj. There were no armored vehicles and nothing was out of the ordinary at first, said Flores.

He followed the lead of those who had been there before, riding in the back of pickups to the border of Iran and Afghanistan where coalition forces are building a crossing checkpoint. Alongside the highway, motorcycles, caravans, markets and food vendors could be seen. Surprised by the means of travel, Flores supported the mission and was happy to be traveling throughout the area instead of doing administrative work.

"Afghan Uniformed Police down there have a strong show of force and I was glad to see that," said Flores. "Everything on the first day was great."

Flores, a seasoned Navy corpsman, has been in the military for more than 10 years. He's currently on his third deployment to the Middle East. He served in Iraq from 2004 to 2005 and a tour in Kuwait.

The roles in Iraq and Kuwait were different, said Flores. They were operational and this is more supportive.

That Saturday, Flores and his partner, Petty Officer 2nd Class Isaiah Bowen, did their routine checks. Bowen went out on a morning mission taking turns on patrol, Flores stayed back. Because they were traveling with such a large group, including DOD civilians, they divided into two groups and Flores did the second half of the mission.

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That afternoon, Flores was in the back of the pickup with his back toward the front and the wind blowing on his face in the hot sun. They were returning to camp after a trip to the border.

Then in a split second, Flores' life would change forever. The convoy was hit by a suicide bomber with an improvised explosive device.

Chaos rang through the streets that day, there was yelling and people were running down the street, he said.

Flores was in the vehicle that was hit and shrapnel from the blast entered his back and arms. He was not thinking of himself, as corpsmen never do. Blood was running down his arms and back, he grabbed his medical bag and seconds later Flores was treating the wounded.

He ran to the truck he was traveling in. He had not seen the other passengers he was with. This was when they came under enemy fire.

The Marines and AUP returned fire. Gun shots fired downrange. Taking on bullets, Flores stayed focused administering combat lifesaving skills.

Master Sgt. Scott Pruitt was the passenger in the cab of Flores's vehicle and directly next to the explosion. The passenger door was blasted shut and Pruitt was unresponsive, not breathing, he did not have a pulse and had massive hemorrhaging, he said thinking back to the moment. Flores noticed two puncture wounds to the neck and he was losing blood quickly. Pruitt was taken out of the vehicle, but it was too late. Flores did not want to believe it.

"We were still receiving enemy fire, but I did not notice it," said Flores.

He called out orders to move the wounded out, he ran across the street to check on another casualty. They were still taking enemy fire, now from the buildings next to them.

That was a gloomy and depressing day for Flores and many others. Although he physically recovered from the shrapnel, the emotional pain will take time to heal. He still has some ringing in his ears and wonders if it will ever return to normal.

At the memorial service, Flores was able to pay his last respects to Pruitt and hopefully find peace that he did all he could do that day.

A proud native of Guam, Flores was able to get the help he needed from the Extended Care Ward and the other medical facilities on Bastion and Camp Leatherneck.

"He is a strong-willed individual," said Senior Chief Petty Officer David Pope, RC (SW) medical plans operations chief and a colleague of Flores for more than two years.



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Pope, who went through a similar situation, is there for him. They talk every day and he is healing well, said Pope.

“I can relate to what he is going through mentally and physically,” said Pope. “He is a valuable member to our team, and the command.”

Flores has been optimistic and responded well to the treatment plan.

“What we do every day, as corpsman, means something,” said Flores, a husband to his high school sweetheart and a father to his 4-year-old daughter. “I did what I had to do to take care of the injured.”

The support from his unit and family was immense. After the incident, people lined up at the hospital to see Flores including the RC (SW) Command Master Chief Michael Smith and Sgt. Maj. Harrison Tanksley. The hospital workers commented how many visitors Flores has had. He called his mother, someone who he as admired since childhood. She supports his decisions and gave him motherly advice, told him to stay safe out here and she will keep praying for him. His brother, a helicopter pilot in the Army, recently deployed to Afghanistan and understands the consequences of events. They have missed each other on deployments and have not seen each other since 2006, he left when Flores arrived to Afghanistan, he said.

Flores never wanted to be anything else but a corpsman. He is continuing his passion for medicine currently studying sports management at American Military University. He knows the medical field is the life for him. Since the medical field has many paths, he just is not sure which way it could take him. Taking classes is challenging admits Flores, but he accepts the challenge and is willing to do what he has to do to get his college degree.

“HM1 Flores is a great guy to work with, very confident in everything he does, always displays a positive attitude toward the job,” said Pope. “He’s the kind of guy who will give you the shirt off his back. He’s always willing to lend a helping hand.”

Flores will continue his deployment to Afghanistan. Eventually he would like to deploy on a ship and have the experience of ship life.

- USMC -

See the full story and photo here: <http://www.dvidshub.net/news/88543/guam-corpsman-helps-save-marines-despite-injuries>