



**Staff Sgt. Tommy Rieman is a certified American hero with 14 years of service in the Army, a recipient of the Silver Star and a Purple Heart for valor in Iraq.**

President George W. Bush recognized Tommy Rieman at the State of the Union Address in 2007.  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Xh7O4uZlaM>)



In 2010, Rieman was getting re-deployed to Iraq but one night he spent hours with his gun in his mouth, switching the safety on and off, contemplating pulling the trigger. His roommate took him to the combat stress center. He got some help in the short term, and completed his tour, but when he got home, things didn't improve. He was dealing with post-traumatic stress when his sister died. He had buddies who were killed and injured overseas, and others who took their lives at home. He was wracked with guilt over his failed marriage, was on a lot of medication and was drinking too much. When his girlfriend left him, he snapped. "I wrote a goodbye letter to my kids, letting them know that I loved them more than anything and leaving was not what I wanted to do, but I felt like it was all I could do to make their lives better because they would be better off without me," he remembers. He got into his truck, got up to speed, closed his eyes, and drove into a tree.

"And I opened up my eyes and I'm looking around. I was just pissed off. I couldn't believe I was still here, and then I realized, holy cow, I just tried to kill myself." Rieman could have been charged with a DUI and gone to jail. Instead, he acknowledged his guilt and, with the blessing of the District Attorney, he was assigned to a first-of-its-kind program in the state, a Veterans Treatment Court. There's substance abuse and mental health treatment assistance - as well as regular hearings with a judge.

Tommy stated, "The bravest thing he ever did was fight to get his life back." I have nothing but the utmost respect for him and am honored he offered to come and speak at our breakfast.

## **Here is an explanation of how he earned the Silver Star and Purple Heart:**

On the evening of December 3, 2003, SSG Rieman was on a reconnaissance mission 15 kilometers south of Baghdad Central Confinement Facility (BCCF), or Abu Ghraib. SSG Rieman's mission was to observe and report any suspicious activity occurring near the home of an alleged former regime loyalist. En route to the Team's surveillance site, a dug-in, well-armed, numerically superior force ambushed his three-vehicle convoy. SSG Rieman's HMMWV received heavy small arms fire and shrapnel from propelled grenades.

Exhibiting no concern for his own safety, SSG Rieman used his body to shield his gunner's exposed legs and lower abdomen. As the engagement ensued and while shielding the gunner, he was able to return a high volume of small arms and 40mm grenade fire on the enemy ambush positions. SSG Rieman received two gunshot wounds, one to the chest, one to the bicep and multiple shrapnel wounds to his torso and legs, sustaining 11 wounds total. Although severely wounded, SSG Rieman continued to shield his gunner and return fire until the convoy was safely out of the kill zone. Again exhibiting no concern for his own well-being, SSG Rieman proceeded to check the members of his team for injuries.

Once out of immediate danger, he moved the team to a position where he could establish security. He personally placed himself between his team and the enemy contact. At this point in the engagement, SSG Rieman was offered but refused medical aid twice from his fellow team members. Shortly afterward, SSG Rieman once again came under heavy fire. He continued to deliver a high volume of small arms fire and 40mm grenade fire while directing the rear machine gun.

After the enemy began to break contact he was ordered to go to the Team Casualty Collection Point. While at the CCP, he again refused medical attention and began assisting the Team Leader with coordination for MEDEVAC and link up with an extraction force. SSG Rieman exhibited extreme calm and communicated accurate instructions during his radio communications with his higher headquarters. He continued to refuse medical attention until the extraction force secured the perimeter and his Team Leader ordered him to stand down.

SSG Rieman later became a video game character and action figure for America's Army, the official video game for the United States Army. In 2007, SSG Rieman was recognized by President George Bush at the State of the Union address. He is also featured in Halfway Home, a documentary about the struggles soldiers face when they return from war. SSG Rieman serves as an ambassador for USO of North Carolina, and was named 2013 Veteran of the Year by U.S. Veterans Corps. He also sits on the U.S. Army Community Advisory Board in Charlotte, and is actively engaged in the military community, raising awareness about PTSD and life after injury. SSG Rieman resides out of Charlotte, N.C. and has two children, Landon & Ellie.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i27kpozQUMg>

<https://www.wunc.org/post/silver-star-recipient-first-complete-ncs-veterans-treatment-court>

<https://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/the-veterans-leading-criminal-justice-reform/>