



## **A Summary of The Events That occurred June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2005 in support of OPERATION RED WING**

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On June 28 2005, deep behind enemy lines East of Asadabad in the Hindu Kush of Afghanistan, a very committed four-man NAVY SEAL team was conducting a reconnaissance mission at the unforgiving altitude of approximately 10,000 feet of elevation. These SEALs, LT Michael Murphy, Petty Officer Danny Dietz, Petty Officer Matthew Axelson and a fourth SEAL operator had a vital task. Their mission objective was to capture or kill a key militia leader, Ahmad Shah, aka, Mullah Ismail. The mission was compromised when these SEALs were spotted by anti-coalition sympathizers, who immediately reported their presence and location to the Taliban.

A fierce fire-fight erupted between the four SEALs and a much larger enemy force of 30 to 40 anti-coalition militia. The enemy had the SEALs outnumbered. They also had terrain advantage. They launched a well-organized, three-sided attack on the SEALs. Three of the four SEALs were wounded. The fight relentlessly continued as the overwhelming militia forced them deeper into a ravine.

Approximately 45 minutes into the fight, the officer in charge of the element, LT Murphy, made contact with the SOF Quick Reaction Force in Bagram Air Base for fire support and assistance. An MH-47 Chinook helicopter, with eight additional SEALs and eight Army NightStalkers aboard, was sent in as part of an extraction mission to pull out the four embattled SEALs. The MH-47 was escorted by heavily-armored, Army attack helicopters. Entering a hot combat zone, attack helicopters are used initially to neutralize the enemy and make it safer for the lightly-armored, personnel-transport helicopter to insert.

The heavy weight of the attack helicopters slowed the formation's advance prompting the MH-47 to outrun their armored escort. They knew the tremendous risk going into an active enemy area in daylight, without their attack support, and without the cover of night. Risk would of course be minimized if they put the helicopter down in a safe zone. But knowing that their warrior brothers were shot, surrounded and severely wounded, an unconventional decision needed to be made. The rescue team opted to directly enter the oncoming battle in hopes of landing on brutally hazardous terrain.

As the Chinook raced to the battle, a rocket-propelled grenade struck the helicopter, killing all 16 men aboard.

Three of the four SEALs, LT Murphy, Petty Officer Dietz, and Petty Officer Axelson were killed. The fourth and sole surviving SEAL evaded the enemy for days and was eventually rescued. He has since returned to full operational status within the Naval Special Warfare/SEAL community. His name is withheld to protect his identity.

This was the worst single-day U.S Forces death toll since Operation Enduring Freedom began nearly five years ago. It was the single largest loss of life for Naval Special Warfare since the World War II Normandy Invasion.

The Naval Special Warfare Community will eternally remember June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2005 and the heroic efforts and sacrifice of our special operators. We hold with reverence the ultimate sacrifice that they made while engaged in that fierce fire fight on the front lines of the Global War on Terror.

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