THEY SERVED IN SILENCE

The Story of a Cryptologic Hero
Spc. Christopher A. Landis

It is not the critic who counts…The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly…if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.

Theodore Roosevelt

Spc. Christopher A. Landis was a true American hero, but his story began far from America's shores. Christopher, or Drew, as he was known to his friends and family, was born October 28, 1986, in Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia. Drew's mother and father were involved in missionary work and had spent much of their lives helping people around the world. In time the family moved to the city of Independence in Northern Kentucky.

Growing up, Drew participated in a wide range of sports and activities. After high school, like his parents, he dedicated himself to missionary and relief work in such far flung corners of the world as India and Sumatra, where he participated in the 2004 tsunami relief effort. In 2006, he entered Grove City College, where he graduated with a history degree in 2009. After college Drew initially considered pursuing a legal career but after a year of law school he decided to enlist in the United States Army. In 2011, he reported to Ft. Jackson, South Carolina, for his initial Army training. After basic training he took additional instruction in his military operational specialty at the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California, and Goodfellow Air Force Base in San Angelo, Texas.

After much preparation and training Drew eventually developed the skills he needed to become an accomplished cryptologic linguist. His efforts resulted in his being assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 3rd Special Forces Group (SFG), based out of Fort Bragg, North Carolina. The 3rd SFG had its beginnings during the Cold War and throughout its history had been deployed to a wide range of difficult trouble spots around the world. Since 9/11 it had seen heavy fighting in Afghanistan.

In Fall 2013, he was deployed with his group to Afghanistan to once again defend freedom. Drew's job was difficult but vital, and during his time on the battlefield he consistently worked to collect and analyze enemy communications. Ultimately, his efforts allowed his fellow soldiers to not only survive the battle's fray, but to prevail in battle.

On February 10, 2014, Spc. Landis found himself once again operating on the harsh battlefields of Kapisa Province. While on patrol his unit came under heavy fire. During the attack Drew was hit and severely injured by a rocket propelled grenade. He survived the assault but ultimately succumbed to his wounds later that day at Bagram Airbase.

It is difficult to describe anyone's life in simple terms, but during his brief, but accomplished, time on this earth it can be said that Spc. Christopher Landis was devoted to making the world a better place by helping others on and off the battlefield. He left behind countless precious family members and friends, but his legacy of service and sacrifice serve as an everlasting tribute to the idea that oftentimes those who accomplish great things do so by becoming a critical part of something bigger than themselves. As his sister noted, Drew "always challenged himself to do more — physically and mentally. He spent himself on a worthy cause. In doing so, he lives on, encouraging each of us to be more."

Spc. Christopher A. Landis
28 Oct 1986 - 10 Feb 2014

Photographs courtesy of the Landis family

Visit our web site, www.nsa.gov
MEMORIAL DAY 2015