



# PRESS RELEASE

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Aug. 11, 2006  
For Immediate Release

Release: G4 06-02

**BAGHDAD, Iraq** – Hospital Corpsman 3<sup>rd</sup> Class John Cowgar became the first Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewman (SWCC) to receive the Purple Heart since the Navy formalized the community in 1994.

“To have one of our newest communities in the Navy receive the oldest award in the military is a historic event. It is not a recognition we necessarily note with pleasure, but one that no doubt will continue to occur as we relentlessly pursue liberty in support of freedom,” said Capt. Evin Thompson, Commodore, Naval Special Warfare Group FOUR.

Cowgar received the medal for an injury sustained while conducting combat boat operations on the Euphrates River in the Al Anbar region June 30.

“I was just doing my job,” Cowgar said.

The combat boats on patrol that night were conducting river reconnaissance in an area known for insurgent activity when an improvised explosive device (IED) exploded. They also received small arms fire from a nearby embankment. Coalition forces returned fire as support aircraft conducted an air strike on the location where the attack was initiated.

Cowgar took shrapnel in his right thigh and another Coalition member received shrapnel wounds to his shoulder. They both received immediate medical attention and Cowgar was returned to duty shortly afterwards.

“To earn the Purple Heart, while treating another warrior that also earned the Purple Heart, demonstrated selfless sacrifice on his part,” Thompson said.

General George Washington created the Purple Heart, Aug. 17, 1782, but it wasn't awarded to Sailors and Marines until President Franklin D. Roosevelt authorized it Dec. 3, 1942.

“It is harder to wear than to earn it. You take a step back and realize how important it is,” Cowgar said.

This operation was part of the ongoing Iraqi and Coalition efforts to eliminate terrorists and disrupt their operations in Ramadi and the Al Anbar region. These operations are particularly helpful in getting a clearer picture of the enemy network in the region, and how best to capture or eliminate them.

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