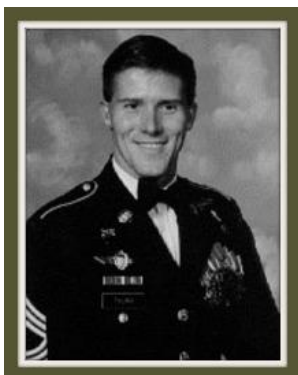




David K. Thuma

Master Sergeant, US Army



Dave Thuma was born April 23, 1962, in Troy, Ohio. He graduated from Tecumseh High School and began his career in the United States Army on May 30, 1980. Following completion of Basic Infantry Training and Airborne School he was assigned to the Company A, 2nd Battalion, 325th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division from October 1980 through October 1984. He served as a 4.2" mortar gunner and infantry squad leader and earned the Bronze Star Medal for his actions during Operation Urgent Fury in Granada.

In 1984, Master Sergeant Thuma graduated from the Special Forces Qualification Course as a Heavy Weapons Sergeant and was assigned to the 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) with further assignment to Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha 563. He also served as the Weapons Sergeant and Assistant Operations Sergeant with ODA 565 and participated in Operation Safe Passage in Pakistan (where he met his wife Josee). Operation Safe Passage provided valuable assistance to the Afghan populace by teaching them how to recognize and remove the 15 million landmines left behind by the Soviet Union during the war. Led by US Army Special Forces, an international group of volunteers taught the fundamentals of demining operations to soldiers, also instructing civilians how to recognize and react to minefields and record and report the mines to the proper authorities. In addition to the training given by the Special Forces, Master Sergeant Thuma and his teammates, also gave a pint of blood each month to the International Red Cross war-wounded hospital.

Master Sergeant Thuma also participated in Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm, his second combat tour. After returning from Desert Storm, Master Sergeant Thuma was assigned as the NCO In Charge of the new 5th SFG(A) SCUBA locker facility. Operating on a very limited budget and, without an officer in charge, Master Sergeant Thuma personally sought additional resources from other units on post and organized the entire facility by consolidating the Group's multi-million dollar amphibious inventory after the wartime deployment. His standard operating procedures established the facility as the model for all Special Forces units. Upon completion of his tour of duty in the 5th SFG(A), he volunteered and was assigned to the US Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center's Noncommissioned Officer Academy which was eventually renamed and dedicated as the Master Sergeant David K. Thuma Noncommissioned Officer Academy. Before he could complete his tour of duty at the NCO Academy, Master Sergeant Thuma was hand-picked for an assignment as the Operations Sergeant of a Special Forces SCUBA Detachment (ODA 335), in the 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne). In his new capacity, he was instrumental to the successful restoration of a democratic government in Haiti during Operation Restore Democracy and the follow-on Operation Uphold Democracy. In January 1995, his detachment was given the mission of providing

security of the southern Haitian city of Camp Perrin. Under Master Sergeant Thuma's leadership, the detachment conducted numerous projects in the city, including establishment of a Community Surveillance Program based on the America's Community Watch Program. It allowed the citizens of Camp Perrin to patrol their neighborhoods, reducing crime and building much needed pride in their communities after years of abuse and neglect. Master Sergeant Thuma also established a weekly radio broadcast where he spoke with the city's Mayor and community leaders about problems facing the city, solutions for these problems, and the accomplishments from the past week made through the joint efforts of the detachment and the Camp Perrin citizens.

Because of the outstanding performance of his detachment and the success of the operations in Camp Perrin, the city was selected as the model city to present to Richard A. Clark, Special Assistant to the President, who was sent to assess the situation in Haiti by the President. After returning to the United States, Master Sergeant Thuma served as the acting Detachment Commander for six months and the detachment was redeployed to Haiti to provide security for the Joint Special Operations Task Force Headquarters. Master Sergeant Thuma was chosen to brief the President of the United States, the Secretary of Defense, and the Secretary of the Army, and was praised by the President for his detailed explanation of the role of Special Forces in Haiti. The detachment returned to the United States for training in preparation of a Joint Combined Training Exercise in Benin, Africa. The detachment supervised and provided instructor training in light infantry skills and waterborne infiltration techniques for the Benin Army and Navy.

After this successful mission, the detachment returned home and began training for a Rapid Support Unit rotation with Joint Task Force Six, where they provided border surveillance for the U.S. Border Patrol in the southwest border region of the United States. They were responsible for alerting the Border Patrol of illegal drug smuggling, which resulted in a 100-pound seizure by Border Patrol agents.

After returning to Fort Bragg, Master Sergeant Thuma was selected over 90 other Master Sergeants in the 3rd SFG(A) by the Group Command Sergeant Major to become the Headquarters Company First Sergeant. During his tenure as the First Sergeant, David Thuma set a standard of excellence with his dynamic leadership, physical fitness program, and his innovative methods of solving problems. His team building exercises contributed greatly to the staff's overall performance and included an annual "Mud Run" which required the entire staff to complete a four-mile run/crawl through every mud hole along the trail. This single event, established his reputation for "training hard, to be hard" and accomplished more to develop a cohesive and efficient team than any other exercise conducted by the staff. His outstanding performance led to an additional one-year extension of his tour as First Sergeant.

After a highly successful tour as the First Sergeant, Master Sergeant Thuma was again selected to lead a Special Forces SCUBA Detachment (ODA 385), and during another training mission, this time attached to the 5th Special Forces Group in Kenya, Africa. The 5th SFG(A) Commander and the U.S. Ambassador to Kenya credited him for establishing the working relationship required to make the mission a success. On June 18, 1998, Master Sergeant Thuma, whose physical prowess was legendary, died unexpectedly from a massive heart attack during the detachment's morning physical fitness training.

Master Sergeant Thuma's awards and decorations clearly demonstrate his unlive potential. They are the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal (4th Award), Army Commendation Medal (8th Award), Army Achievement Medal (6th Award), Good Conduct Medal (6th Award), National Defense Medal, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (2nd Award), Southwest Asia Service Medal (2 bronze service stars), Armed Forces Service Medal, Humanitarian Service Medal (2nd Award), Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development Ribbon (numeral 4), Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon, United Nations Medal (Haiti), Kuwait Liberation Medal (Saudi Arabia), Kuwait Liberation Medal (Kuwait), Combat Infantryman Badge, Expert Infantryman Badge, Master Parachutist Badge, Combat Diver Badge, Driver Badge, Special Forces Tab, Military Freefall Parachutist Badge, Valorous and Army Superior Unit Awards, and the Canadian, Sudanese, Peruvian, German, and Kenyan Parachutist Badges.

In 1995, Master Sergeant Thuma was selected as the Outstanding Member of the United States Special Operations Command, which oversees all Special Operations Forces for the United States Army (Special Forces, Rangers, Aviation), United States Air Force Special Operations Wing, and the United States Navy SEALs. His selection earned him the coveted Veterans of the Office of Strategic Services Award for Excellence. At the time of his death, Master Sergeant Thuma was working on his Bachelor's Degree. He is survived by his wife, Josee, and son, Bradley, now a soldier who has served as an infantryman with tours in Iraq.