

NEW MEXICO MILITARY INSTITUTE

HALL OF FAME

MSgt Thomas E. Case, USAF 1995 JC (First Silver Star)

Thomas E. Case attended New Mexico Military Institute from 1993 to 1995 and was active in Bronco athletics as the quarterback of the Bronco football team.

After graduation, he entered the United States Air Force. He is the only airman to receive a Silver Star in both Iraq and Afghanistan. The first citation is from Operation Iraqi Freedom and reads as follows:

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress 9 July 1918 (amended by an act of 25 July 1963), takes pleasure in presenting the Silver Star to Staff Sergeant Thomas E. Case, United States Air Force, for gallantry in connection with military operations against an armed enemy of the United States as a member of the 17th Air Support Operations Squadron, 18th Air Support Operations Group, in action near western Iraq, from 31 March 2003 to 5 April 2003. During this period, while serving as an Enlisted Terminal Attack Controller for Company B, 3d Ranger Battalion, his company began receiving heavy direct and effective small arms fire, ZPU-23s, rocket-propelled grenades, mortar and artillery fire. Though the situation was bleak and the small force was in danger of being overrun, Sergeant Case reacted quickly. While engaging the enemy with his personal weapon, often within 30 meters of his position, he simultaneously directed airstrikes. After three days of a continuous firefight, they began receiving heavy and accurate artillery fire, over 300 rounds within eight hours. With complete disregard for his own safety, Sergeant Case exposed himself to this unrelenting attack to control close air support while fragments of concrete and shrapnel from the blasts punctured his rucksack and often knocked him to the ground. At one point he controlled fourteen aircraft simultaneously. Refusing to be relieved until the objective was secure, Sergeant Case was responsible for more than 300 enemy casualties and the destruction of 29 tanks, three heavy cargo trucks, nine S-60s, fourteen anti-aircraft pieces, nine 155-millimeter artillery, twenty-two 82-millimeter mortar, six 60-millimeter mortars, eight ammunition caches, and ten enemy boats. His situational awareness, skill as a controller, and courage under fire were decisive in the battle and ensured mission success and the safety of 152 Rangers. By his gallantry and devotion to duty, Sergeant Case has reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

Thomas E. Case's performance of duty in combat is in keeping with the New Mexico Military Institute credo of Duty, Honor, and Achievement.

Inducted for Valor this 22nd day of October in the year 2021

LTC Danny L. Armijo, NMMI 1972 JC
NMMI Alumni Relations Director

Jerry W. Grizzle, Ph.D.
Major General, USA (Ret)
NMMI Superintendent/President