

Webmasters note: I have deleted the name of the author of this email to protect his identity. He is a SEAL operator with knowledge of the event.

Here's the "rest of the story" on Petty Officer First Class Neil Roberts, the SEAL we lost out of the helicopter. Its not what you heard in the media.

"I apologize in advance for the lengthy e-mail, but I have just gotten back from Neil's funeral. There were over 1,000 people in attendance and needless to say, it was moving. I had the opportunity to speak with several individuals, who were in country at the time of Neil's death and who had also viewed the video. The following is merely a sanitized compilation of the conversations I had and tid-bits from the eulogy.

The usual disclaimers apply and there is some stuff I need to leave out. And I know I will not do the story justice, nor could I ever hope to.

Supposedly...as the helo was on final, it came under fire. An air-crewman fell off the back ramp and was dangling by his tether. Neil reached down to pull him back in. An RPG hit the nose of the helo (didn't explode) and the pilot subsequently made an evasive maneuver. Neil tumbled out (the air-crewman may have also mistakenly pulled Neil out while Neil was trying to recover him or that may have not even of happened - doesn't matter - bottom line, Neil fell from about 10ft and was on the ground alone). It is unclear as to whether or not the guys on board the helo knew that they lost a man. Helo peeled away, developed hydraulic problems, and crash-landed about a click away.

Neil turns on his beacon and low crawls to a position under fire. Neil takes the offensive, firing and maneuvering against the enemy and allegedly storms a machine-gun nest. Neil was shot several times, but continued the fight. Apparently, the video shows the mortal wound and Neil falls to the ground (an hour after he fell from the helo). He had expended all of his ammo, both primary and secondary, as well as his grenades. The video has Neil point shooting with his pistol at very close ranges to the enemy. He was dead by the time the enemy arrived and dragged him off. Not sure on whether they intended to use Neil's body as a decoy for an ambush or as a bargaining chip or for another Somalia street dragging episode.

Doesn't really matter. Then the boys came. The force was a mix of operators and arrived about 2 hours later. As they expected, they encountered significant hostile fire, but returned fire immediately. Apparently, a lot of undisclosed heroics occurred that night and there was significant payback (and I mean significant). Several of our brothers were wounded, two of which were flown back to CONUS (one of whom may lose a foot).

People are talking CMH level heroics - we'll see. After fierce fighting and a valiant rescue, Neil's body was recovered, as were the other dead, and all were evacuated. Neil went down fighting and took many of those bastards with him (an unconfirmed number). The ridge upon which he died is now called Roberts Ridge. He was posthumously awarded the Bronze Star with a V and a Purple Heart. Neil is now SpecOps folklore and a legend in the Teams for the rest of eternity.

Neil also left a wife (Patty) and an 18-month old son (Nathan). I believe Patty intends to move to Pennsylvania to be with her family). Guys, I hope this helps - it has been cathartic for me, especially after the press has royally screwed this one up (as expected). In the near future, several of us who knew Neil and his family plan to work on the scholarship fund to ensure that Nathan has anything he needs. More to follow on that-