



# Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE *113<sup>th</sup>* CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

The Honorable Jeff Miller of the First District of Florida

## Honoring the Life and Selfless Service of Sergeant First Class Samuel C. "Sam" Hairston

Mr. Speaker, it is with profound sadness and gratitude that I rise to pay tribute to a fallen decorated American hero. Army Sergeant First Class Samuel C. "Sam" Hairston of Houston, Texas was killed on August 12, 2014, in Ghazni, Afghanistan, from injuries sustained when his unit was engaged while in support of Operation Enduring Freedom by enemy small-arms fire. SFC Hairston was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

Born to Bennett and Josephine Hairston June 22, 1979, at Shaw Air Force Base, South Carolina, SFC Hairston was raised in Shalimar, Florida, and graduated from Choctawhatchee High School in 1997. SFC Hairston wanted to follow in the footsteps of his father and brother by joining our Nation's Armed Forces. After pursuing a Division I Football scholarship as defensive lineman at the University of Houston and earning a bachelor's degree in economics, he joined the U.S. Army in 2003 as an infantryman. Upon completion of the basic airborne course at Fort Benning, Georgia, he was assigned to 1st Brigade Combat Team, Ft. Bragg, North Carolina, in August of 2013. He selflessly served four combat tours throughout his career, which included two tours in support of both Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.

SFC Hairston has been described as someone whose smile could light up a room and to his wife, Tawana, and stepson, Hayden, he was a loving and devoted husband and father. In terms of his military service, whenever he was thanked, he responded that serving our country was his choice and his service was so Americans can enjoy the freedoms that are all too often taken for granted. He took pride in every mission and never expected anything in return. "An exceptional noncommissioned

officer and a valued member of our team," is how he was described by Lieutenant Colonel Chris Hockenberry, Hairston's battalion commander.

SFC Hairston's qualifications included the Ranger Tab, Combat Infantryman Badge, Pathfinder Badge, Military Master Free Fall Parachutist Badge, and the Army Parachutist Badge. Throughout his time in service, he was awarded the Bronze Star, Purple Heart, Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal with three oak leaf clusters, Army Achievement Medal, Meritorious Unit Citation with two oak leaf clusters, Army Good Conduct Medal with two oak leaf clusters, the National Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal with two Campaign Stars, Iraqi Campaign Medal with two Campaign Stars, the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, and the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal.

Through his unwavering dedication to country, SFC Hairston helped ensure that our Constitutional rights were upheld and that our Nation was protected from harm both here and abroad. His ultimate sacrifice will never be forgotten. To SFC Hairston's loving wife, Mrs. Tawana Hairston; his stepson, Hayden; his parents, Bennett and Josephine Hairston; his brothers, Junnee Cardama, Broady Hairston, and TJ Hairston; and his entire family and friends, my wife Vicki joins me in offering our sincerest condolences and prayers.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of a grateful United States Congress and Nation, I stand here to honor Sergeant First Class Sam C. Hairston and all of the heroes we have lost. May God continue to bless them and the men and women of our United States Armed Forces, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.