

BATTLE OF TAKUR GHAR

Part of OPERATION ANACONDA, the Battle of Takur Ghar in 2002 became one of the most famous engagements in contemporary Air Force history. ANACONDA had been designed to encircle and destroy remnants of the Taliban and Al Qaeda retreating to mountain redoubts in south eastern Afghanistan.

During an insertion for a reconnaissance and close-air support mission, Air Force TSgt John A. Chapman's helicopter came under heavy machine gun fire and received a direct hit from a rocket-propelled grenade which caused a Navy Seal team member to fall from the aircraft. Though heavily damaged, the aircraft made an emergency landing several kilometers away.

TSgt Chapman, a Forward Air Controller, requested and directed the helicopter that extracted the stranded team and aircrew members. Without regard for his own life TSgt Chapman volunteered to rescue his missing team member from an enemy stronghold. Shortly after insertion, the team made contact with the enemy. TSgt Chapman engaged and killed two enemy personnel. He continued to advance, engaging a second enemy position at a dug-in machine gun nest. At this time the rescue team came under enemy fire from three directions. From close range and minimal cover, TSgt Chapman exchanged fire with the enemy, but succumbed to multiple wounds.

NOTE

The Air Force Core Value of SERVICE BEFORE SELF tells us that professional duties take precedence over personal desires. Duty is the obligation to perform what is required for the mission.

TSgt Chapman's actions enabled the other members of his rescue team to break enemy contact and move down the mountain to cover, saving their lives. For his dedication to the service of his country, TSgt Chapman was posthumously awarded the Air Force Cross.