FROM BLUE, TO GREEN, TO GOD

An Army Space Operations Officer's Service and Ultimate Sacrifice

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The military Space community was deeply saddened by the untimely news that one of their own, an Army Space Professional, paid the ultimate price defending the nation.

MAJ Tad T. Hervas, 48, an Army Space Operations Officer, from Coon Rapids, Minn., died Oct. 6, 2009, of injuries sustained from a non-combat related incident at Contingency Operating Base in Basra, Iraq, while on his third wartime tour of duty. During his most recent combat tour, Hervas was assigned as the Deputy Space Support Element Chief with additional duty in direct support of G2 of the 34th ("Red Bull") Infantry Division (Minnesota Army National Guard). The 34th Infantry Division is currently serving as the United States Division – South which provides command and control of a 16,000 member multinational and Iraqi security force in nine of Iraq's eighteen provinces (an area roughly the size of his home state).

Hervas is the first Army Space Operations Officer killed in theater. He began his Space Operations career when he attended the Space Operations Officer Qualification Course in late 2007. In 2008, Hervas began working as a full time Guardsman with the

MAJ Tad Hervas

Coon Rapids, Minn.
Deputy Space Support Element Chief
34th ("Red Bull") Infantry Division
Minnesota Army National Guard

34th Infantry Division's headquarters in Rosemont, Minn., helping them prepare and train for their upcoming combat deployment. He served as one of two Army Space Operations Officers in the Army's first National Guard Space Support Element.

Hervas is fondly remembered by his Space Operations Officer Qualification Course classmates. "[He was] the weekly football pool 'guru' that made sure everyone who participated on a weekly basis had their picks turned in. A very outgoing, vibrant and energetic person who absolutely loved being a Space Officer," said MAJ Todd Leitschuh, Army Space Operations Officer and classmate.

"I remember Tad. He was quiet and a good man. I cannot believe he's gone. [It's] really sad and a huge loss. He was so nice," recalls MAJ Jennifer Adams-Buckhouse, another Army Space Operations Officer and classmate.

Hervas was born Jan. 16, 1961, in Wisconsin and grew up in a small suburb of Minneapolis in a family of six children. During high school, as a senior and quarterback of the Coon Rapids High School Cardinals football team, he led his team to state finals in 1979. After high school he attended the University of Minnesota in Duluth during which time he earned his commission through the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps program.

He entered the Air Force right after college graduation. As an Air Force officer, then, Lieutenant Hervas served as a navigator for KC-135 air-refueling "tanker" planes. On his thirtieth birthday, Jan. 16, 1991, as Operation Desert Storm started, he was navigating one of his tankers high above the skies near Baghdad refueling Air Force fighters as the first day of the air campaign against Iraqi military forces began. After Desert Storm and after his initial service obligation was completed, he returned to civilian life working for a home renovation business.

After Sept. 11, Hervas returned to the military, this time with the Army. As an Army captain, he deployed to Iraq for the second time as the Battery Commander of Echo Battery, 216th Air Defense Artillery; a unit of the "Red Bull" Division. During this deployment, then CPT Hervas and his Soldiers patrolled a volatile 12-square-mile section south of Baghdad which included a critical oil refinery, earning him a Bronze Star. During this deployment his battery captured a key member of one of Saddam Hussein's secret police. According to Tad's father Ned, "It was an extremely dangerous situation almost daily and yet he returned to Minnesota with all the men in his unit still alive."

He deployed to Basra Iraq in April 2009. In addition to his Space operations duties, Hervas, also a Military Intelligence officer, served as the G2 Current Operations Chief for the Division Operations Center throughout his most recent deployment. This time he saw progress in Iraq, and was proud that the Soldiers of the Red Bull Division were helping rebuild the country. Just days before his death, Hervas returned to Iraq from his two-week mid tour leave, where he spent time in Minnesota visiting family and friends and time in the river, trout fishing with one of his brothers.

Hervas was known for his smile, sense of humor, and the ability to make anyone laugh. According to his dad, Tad would "offer the shirt off his back and expect nothing in return." He was well respected as an officer by his Soldiers for his ability to put his rank aside and relate to all Soldiers at all levels. It was his honor to serve in the Armed Forces to protect his country and secure our freedoms. Tad's passions were family, friends, cooking, making others happy, sports, his dogs and standing in a river fly fishing. He always said "it's never a bad day when you're on the river."

On his final journey home, Hervas arrived in Minneapolis on Oct. 14, to a hero's welcome accompanied by the Patriot Guards. He was laid to rest, in his dress blues, on Oct. 17, at the Fort Snelling National Cemetery, perched above the tranquil banks of the Mississippi River, not far from the home he grew up in, in Minneapolis, Minn.

A well decorated officer, Hervas received the Bronze Star medal, as well as the Air Medal, Air Force Commendation Medal, Air Force Achievement Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Southwest Asia Service Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Armed Forces Reserve Medal with "M" Device, the Combat Action Badge and the Iraq Campaign Medal.

Hervas is survived by his grandmothers Bertha Melby and Clara Hervas, his loving parents Ned and Barb Hervas, five siblings, nieces and nephews and his beloved dog. Hervas will be missed, but never forgotten.