

Navy Cross to be awarded posthumously to El Dorado County marine

Two Marines, one from El Dorado County, who are from 1st Marine Special Operations Battalion will be posthumously awarded the Navy Cross for actions while deployed to Afghanistan last year.

The awards will be received by the families of Staff Sgt. Sky R. Mote and Capt. Matthew P. Manoukian, respectively, during a ceremony at 1st MSOB Headquarters on Jan. 18 at 3pm.

Mote, of El Dorado, and Manoukian, from Los Altos Hills, were assigned to Marine Special Operations Team 8133, Marine Special Operations Company C, 1st Marines Special Operations Battalion, Marine Special Operations Regiment, U.S Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command in support of Operation Enduring Freedom when they came under intense enemy fire from an Afghan uniformed police officer attacking from inside the perimeter of their tactical operations center.

Mote, an explosive ordnance disposal technician was gravely wounded during the initial attack, not knowing the actual enemy threat or the status of his Marines, he exposed himself to a hail of gunfire drawing attention away from others and halting the shooter's pursuit of his comrades. In his final act, he remained in the open and engaged the shooter, now less than 5 meters in front of him. He pressed the assault on the enemy until he received mortal wounds.

Manoukian, the team commander, was working in the operations center when the initial attack commenced with AK-47 fire ripping through walls and partitions of the operations room. He immediately exposed himself to further enemy fire and commanded his Marines to maneuver to safety as he engaged the

enemy.

The Navy Cross is the second highest valor award, second to the Medal of Honor and must be approved by the secretary of the Navy before being awarded. Mote and Manoukian will become the third and fourth Marines in MARSOC's seven-year history to be awarded the Navy Cross, and are the 15th and 16th Marines in the Marine Corps history to receive this award.