

## EOD Airman receives Purple Heart

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56th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

LUKE AIR FORCE BASE, Ariz.—On Oct. 28, 2011, during a routine route clearance patrol in Afghanistan, an explosive ordnance disposal unit was hit by a series of improvised explosive devices. The unit was there in support of Marine and Army RCPs along with rapid IED response.

“We were doing route clearance which clears roads for other convoys coming through, because we find a lot of bombs,” Dauck said. “We’re driving on a route called Route Red, which is a really hot route; we were hitting IEDs left and right. The lead vehicle got hit and radioed us saying, ‘We’re alright.’ The second vehicle responded by pulling up to evacuate the first vehicle where it hit another IED.”

Dauck explained, they were in the third vehicle in the convoy and attempted to recover the first two vehicles in the convoy but ended up being hit by an additional IED.

“I was in the back of the vehicle when the blast hit us,” said Tech. Sgt. Steven Dauck, 56th Civil Engineer Squadron explosive ordnance disposal team lead. “It wasn’t directly underneath, but I was there to catch a lot of it. In our vehicle, we were all dazed and had a little headache, but none of us had any severe noticeable injuries.”

Dauck and his RCP were casualty evacuated back to Camp Leatherneck and seen by Navy corpsmen who set up bunks for them for the night.

“The next morning when I went to get out of my bed my legs didn’t work,” Dauck said. “I actually fell to my knees.”

He knew something was actually wrong so he went back to the doctor. He explained the pain came from his back and sciatic nerve. After three weeks things were not getting better so Dauck was taken off regular operator duties for the remainder of his deployment. He was one of the most experienced

members of his team. Dauck continues to stay active despite his injuries through modified workouts including running in particular to relieve pressure in his back.

“So many guys I work with have had some sort of injury from a deployment,” Dauck said. “The reason I continue doing this job is for the man next to me; we do it for each other.”

For his actions, he was awarded a Purple Heart from Brig. Gen. Brooke Leonard, 56th Fighter Wing commander. According to Dauck’s coworkers, this award was well deserved.

“He brings deployment experience to our young guys,” said Senior Master Sgt. Stephen Hunter, 944th CES explosive ordnance disposal program manager. “He’s a highly respected role model to our Airmen.”

In the near future, Dauck hopes to have the opportunity to go overseas and continue serving.