



The Most Dangerous Profession You've Never Heard Of

EOD. That stands for explosive ordnance disposal, which is essentially the disarming and disposing of bombs.

This military profession is undoubtedly one of the most dangerous jobs in the world. Yet every day, thousands of men and women put their lives on the line all over the world as EOD technicians in the Navy, Army, Marines and Air Force.

Why do they do it? Each technician carries his or her own personal reason. For EOD Senior Chief Petty Officer Robert Arrowsmith, it's a selfless reason and one that you just might expect from someone who volunteers to both defend his country and perform the dangerous mission required by this role.

"It's a unique approach to combat," he says, "because you get to serve in the front lines, but you also serve in a role where you can save lives – directly and indirectly, depending on what type of mission you're integrated with. Every day I was at war, I knew my life could go away, but honestly, to me, if that's the way it went, it's an honorable thing. I know that's not the case for everybody, but the ability to serve in a combat setting and save lives, I think was one of the biggest draws."

In the current state of warfare, improvised explosive devices have become all too common. They cause the majority of injuries and fatalities to American troops, making the occupation of an EOD technician more important, and risky, than ever before.

To honor all of the fallen EOD technicians, the EOD Warrior Foundation (EODWF) maintains and cares for the EOD



The EOD Memorial Wall at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida honors fallen EOD technicians. Donations help fund the maintenance of this important memorial.

PHOTO COURTESY OF EOD WARRIOR FOUNDATION

Memorial Wall at Eglin Air Force Base in the Florida panhandle.

"I couldn't be more honored to maintain the [Memorial Wall] grounds and keep the roses looking their best," Melissa Tackitt, retired Navy EOD technician and current memorial and events coordinator at EODWF, says. "Those are *my* brothers and sisters that are on that wall. I feel I owe it to them to keep the EODWF strong so we all keep our promise to 'never forget.'"

Within the same year that an EOD technician is killed, there's a ceremony held at the Memorial Wall, and the Foundation helps pay to bring in the families of the fallen for the occasion.

Arrowsmith describes his experience witnessing the ceremony: "It's hard to put it into words what the Memorial Ceremony is. It's very rough to see your friends' names go on the wall. It's an emotional

ceremony, and I can only imagine how difficult it is for the families."

Caring for the EOD Memorial is one of the four pillars of the EODWF. The Foundation also provides educational scholarships to EOD family members, hope and wellness resources, and financial assistance in the form of grants. The grants can be applied toward a variety of financial burdens, from child care to bringing a wounded veteran's family to his or her bedside for support during recovery.

In working for the Foundation, Tackitt is able to actively support these pillars and help injured technicians, as well as families of the fallen, get back on their feet.

In 2002, Tackitt was an instructor at the EOD school at Eglin Air Force Base, and two of her students – Sara and Jeff* – ended up marrying each other and raising a family together.

"Jeff was what we call a 'Sky God' because he loved parachuting and was one of the first in line when it came time for Jump Operations," she says.

A couple years ago, Jeff was involved in a skydiving accident that left him paralyzed from the waist down. "When I received word, I called Sara immediately asking what she would need and to give her some information on how to request assistance from the Foundation," Tackitt says.

Since the accident, the EODWF has assisted the family during both recovery and adaptation to Jeff's new situation.

It's support like this that makes the Foundation such a powerful force in the EOD community.

"Not everyone comes from money where they can afford the type of assistance that the EOD Warrior Foundation provides," Arrowsmith says. "We take care of our own."

Arrowsmith is referring to the

budgetary constraints of the Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs. Those departments can't offer financial assistance for the small luxuries, like a TV that provides distraction or having your siblings at your bedside, that make recovering from an explosive blast a little more manageable and comforting.

But the EODWF can, and that's where donations play the largest role. Monetary assistance helps these wounded warriors and their families recover. Small donations may not seem like much, but the cumulative effect is large, which is just what EOD technicians need after having given up so much of themselves for their country.

**The names have been changed to help protect this sensitive situation.*

**Story by Tara Shubbuck
EOD Warrior Foundation
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