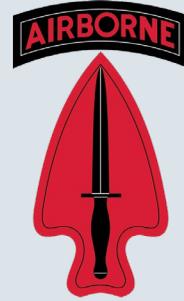




Master Sgt. Joshua L. Wheeler, 39, assigned to Headquarters, U.S. Army Special Operations Command, Fort Bragg, North Carolina, was killed in action 22 October 2015 while deployed in support of Operation Inherent Resolve.

(Department of the Army photo)

Sine Pari (Without Equal)



The return of U.S. forces to Iraq to fight against the Islamic State (IS) was highlighted by the death of Master Sgt. Joshua L. Wheeler on 22 October 2015 in Kirkuk Province, Iraq. Wheeler was killed while participating in a rescue of seventy hostages from an IS prison north of the town of Hawija where, according to Department of Defense officials, they faced “imminent mass execution.”

About forty Kurdish and two dozen U.S. special operations troops participated in the raid. The immediacy of the mission was due to intelligence that included the observation

of mass graves being dug at the prison site, according to Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter.

Wheeler, a native of Roland, Oklahoma, was wounded by small arms fire during the raid, but later died while receiving medical care. Wheeler’s numerous awards include eleven Bronze Star medals, four with Valor Device. He deployed twelve times in support of combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Wheeler was the first U.S. soldier killed in Iraq since 2011. He is survived by his wife, four sons, and his grandmother and grandfather.



Defense Secretary Ash Carter and Army Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A. Milley honor fallen U.S. Army Master Sgt. Joshua L. Wheeler during a Dignified Transfer ceremony 24 October 2015 at Dover Air Force Base, Delaware.

(Department of Defense photo by Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Adrian Cadiz)