

**NEBRASKA ARMY GUARD SOLDIER  
TO BE HONORED WITH ARMY'S  
HIGHEST HONOR FOR NON-COMBAT  
HEROISM AT STATE CAPITOL ON TUESDAY**

**RELEASED BY  
CAPT KEVIN HYNES**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

LINCOLN, Neb. – A Nebraska Army National Guard Soldier will be honored with the Army's highest military award for non-combat heroism, Tuesday, January 16, at the State Capitol in Lincoln.

Sgt. Steven J. Stienike, Omaha, will be presented the U.S. Army Soldiers Medal by Gov. Dave Heineman Tuesday in the Memorial Chamber of the State Capitol during a ceremony beginning at 1:30 p.m. Stienike's family and civilian employer are expected to attend the ceremony along with a number of other state and military leaders and dignitaries.

Stienike is a member of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 67th Area Support Group, Lincoln, which returned back to Nebraska last fall after serving for a year in Iraq. He is being honored for exceptional bravery when, on Oct. 10, 2005, a fire broke out in the billeting area housing civilian Iraqi poll workers at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq.

As one of the first people to arrive on scene, Stienike immediately helped evacuate the Iraqi civilians and then began to attempt to personally put out the fire with a portable extinguisher. However, the blaze threatened to grow out of control due in no small part to the fact that the Iraqi structures had been previously treated with a flammable chemical designed to help with insect control.

While fighting the fires, Stienike noticed that several Iraqi civilians had reentered the blaze to retrieve personal items. Despite great personal risk, Stienike entered the burning structures and physically evacuated the Iraqis who had become panicked and refused to leave even though the fire was raging around them and the heat was causing the metal support beams to warp and melt.

Along with helping evacuate the Iraqi civilians, Stienike was also credited with helping rescue to other military individuals who became overwhelmed while fighting the fire at the height of the blaze.

Stienike was ultimately credited with directly saving the lives of four individuals.

The U.S. Army Soldiers Medal was established in 1926 and denotes acts of heroism in a non-combat situation. It is awarded for such heroic actions on behalf of fellow Soldiers or civilians. Additional requirements include performance of exceptional bravery involving personal hazard or danger and the voluntary risk of life under conditions not involving conflict with an armed enemy.

According to National Guard records, this is the first award of the Soldiers Medal to a serving Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers since at least the 1960s.

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(NOTE: The media is invited to cover the Soldiers Award Ceremony to be held on Tuesday, January 16, at the Memorial Chamber located on the 14<sup>th</sup> Floor of the State Capitol. The ceremony is scheduled to begin at 1:30 p.m., however, due to the fact that only two small elevators service the 14<sup>th</sup> floor, media members are encouraged to allow extra time to arrive and set up. Public Affairs officials will be on hand to assist the media.)