



OPERATION  
**TRIBUTE**  
TO  
**FREEDOM**

## OTF SOLDIER STORY Week of 20 October 2008



**Age:**  
24

**Current Position:**  
Squad Leader

**Current Unit:**  
27th Support Battalion,  
4th Brigade, 1st Cavalry  
Division

**Component:**  
Active Duty

**Current Location:**  
Fort Hood, Texas

**Hometown:**  
Glendale, Calif.

### Sgt. Crystal Kepler

On 12 Sept. 2006, Sgt. Crystal Kepler was on a convoy run south of Baghdad when the Humvee she and three teammates were traveling in was struck by explosively formed projectiles. The blast killed one passenger and severely injured the team's interpreter. Sgt. Kepler and the Humvee gunner both leapt to action, pulled the wounded interpreter to safety and began administering medical care. For these efforts, Sgt. Kepler received a Purple Heart and two Army Commendation Medals, one with "V" device.

This trying moment demonstrated to Sgt. Kepler that her strength and medical expertise could help save lives. While still deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom with the 204th Signal Battalion, Sgt. Kepler reenlisted for two more years of service.

After redeploying in November 2006 and until recently, Sgt. Kepler worked as an Emergency Care Sergeant with Darnall Army Medical Center. She now leads Soldiers through training exercises as a member of 1st Cavalry Division. In this role, she applies her experiences from a tour of duty in Iraq to help prepare others for what they will face while in theater. She has maintained her EMT certification and combat medic qualification and will likely return to a medical position if she deploys again to Iraq.

Sgt. Kepler grew up in Glendale, Calif., and now lives in Killeen, Texas with her four-month-old son. She is married to Cpl. Landis Kepler, who is currently serving a tour of duty in Iraq.