

Subject: Nomination for Animals in War and Peace Bravery Award – CAD Remco (AKA Gobbles)

I, Mike Toussaint, U.S. Navy Senior Chief (Retired), respectfully submit this nomination of my Combat Assault Dog (CAD), Remco—also known as “Gobbles”—for the Animals in War and Peace (AWP) Bravery Award. If not for Remco’s actions on July 9, 2009, I, along with several others, would not be alive so I could submit this nomination today.

I served with and retired from the Naval Special Warfare Research and Development Group (NSWDG) as a Combat Assault Dog handler. Remco was assigned to me in September 2008, shortly after being procured from Holland. As his first handler, I was responsible for his training and preparation for deployment. Over the next nine months, we worked relentlessly to reach mission-ready status. Remco was a live wire from day one—challenging, intense, and driven—but through that process we forged an exceptionally strong bond. He excelled in training and was fully embraced by the Squadron prior to our deployment to Afghanistan in June 2009 to conduct special operations in support of the Global War on Terror.

On July 9, 2009, during what would be Remco’s ninth combat mission, our unit conducted a hostage rescue operation in an attempt to recover PVT Bowe Bergdahl from enemy forces. We inserted under suboptimal conditions and immediately came under enemy fire while disembarking. Remco and I maneuvered with an element responding to reports of two military-aged males (MAMs) moving along the perimeter of the objective.

While en route, we were involved in multiple engagements, including one where Remco engaged a possible hostile individual concealed in a field. As the fighting progressed, our element was reduced to two shooters, Remco, and myself. We moved to the nearest available cover as the MAMs continued maneuvering toward our position and paused briefly to assess.

At that moment, I looked down at Remco. Despite the chaos and intensity of the engagement, he was calm staring at me with a solemn expression that was completely out of character. It was as if he sensed what was about to happen before any of us did.

The MAMs then established a fighting position in a recessed area of the poppy field. We advanced, and I deployed Remco to search and engage the enemy. He

moved forward approximately 10–15 feet, briefly looked back at me, and then locked onto their position. As he crested their location, automatic gunfire erupted. Remco was struck in the head and thrown backward by the impact.

Simultaneously, our team leader was shot and incapacitated by an AK-47 round that shattered his femur.

That moment is forever etched into my memory—both the most beautiful and the most horrific thing I have ever witnessed. Remco’s actions exposed the enemy position and allowed our team the opportunity to end the engagement. Had he not done so, the volume of fire and weaponry the enemy possessed would almost certainly have resulted in multiple additional casualties. Remco was posthumously awarded the Silver Star Medal.

Remco gave everything in service to his teammates. His courage, loyalty, and sacrifice saved lives that day. I respectfully submit that his actions exemplify the very highest standards of bravery and selflessness and merit recognition through the Animals in War and Peace Bravery Award.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Very respectfully,

Senior Chief Mike Toussaint, USN (Retired)