Press Release  
Release Nr: 2109-01  
September 1, 2021  
Fort Drum Public Affairs

Fort Drum officials conduct rededication ceremony at Atkins Functional Fitness Facility

FORT DRUM, N.Y.  – Fort Drum community members celebrated the heroism and sacrifice of Staff Sgt. Travis Atkins during a rededication ceremony Aug. 31 at Atkins Functional Fitness Facility.

The fitness facility was originally dedicated in 2013 to Atkins, a noncommissioned officer assigned to D Company, 2nd Battalion, 14th Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, who was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

The rededication ceremony recognizes Atkins’ award upgrade to the Medal of Honor, which his son Trevor accepted during a White House ceremony in March 2019.

A new bronze plaque outside the facility and a Medal of Honor display inside pays tribute to the fallen Soldier.

Maj. Gen. Milford H. Beagle Jr., 10th Mountain Division (LI) and Fort Drum commander, acknowledged the Atkins family members in attendance, as well as the many friends and colleagues who knew Atkins.

“Just given the fact that you are here with us today means so much to every single one of us,” he said. “And the fact that we can rededicate this functional fitness facility in Travis’ name means the world to all of us. The Soldiers represented here today, including myself, have spent many a morning in here.”

Beagle said that Atkins’ name on the facility and his photos inside are a constant reminder of the bravery and selfless service of a true hero.

“The rededication of this functional fitness facility is a testament to not only his life but to his service and sacrifice,” he said. “Like many who have made the ultimate sacrifice in defense of our nation, Staff Sgt. Atkins is a true reflection of the great things about our nation, about our Army and the families and service men and women of our Army.”

Beagle said that Atkins is a reminder to all about being “Mountain Tough.”

“To be ‘Mountain Tough’ you must be fit, just like Travis,” he said. “Travis is the epitome of ‘Mountain Tough’ in word and in deed.”

Command Sgt. Maj. Roberto Guadarrama, who served as Atkins’ platoon sergeant, spoke at the ceremony about the impression Atkins made on him.

“Travis was incredibly intelligent, fiercely competitive, tough, compassionate, resilient and extremely skilled,” he said. “When you combine these attributes with a weapon, this makes for a well-trained, lethal Soldier. But Atkins was much more than that.”

Guadarrama said that their 15-month mission in Iraq left them exhausted from countless patrols and endless attacks, but Atkins demonstrated incredible resilience and strength that inspired others around him.

“I knew that our platoon was well-cared for, regardless of what section or squad Atkins was at, knowing that Travis always contributed to the confidence levels for everybody,” he said. “Travis was such an integral part of the team, and his presence instantly impacted individuals.”

Retired Command Sgt. Maj. Rick Merritt, former 10th Mountain Division (LI) senior enlisted adviser, attended the ceremony and recalled the origin of the fitness facility.

He said that the command team had visited Fort Benning, Georgia, and saw the 75th Ranger Regiment’s functional fitness facility. Army Chief of Staff Gen. Mark Milley, then 10th Mountain Division (LI) commander, saw the photos Merritt took and immediately wanted one constructed at Fort Drum.

Merritt said that the facility looks even better today.

“Anything that you do at this level has got to survive two commanders,” he said. “And I’m glad to say it has survived multiple commanders. And just like Staff Sgt. Atkins’ award was upgraded to the Medal of Honor that he deserves, we have to keep upgrading this facility as well.”

Merritt said he knows Atkins would be proud to see how many Soldiers are living up to his standards of physical and mental toughness.

“I came in last night, and sure enough, Soldiers were working out hard in here,” he said.

Merritt also attended the Annual Remembrance Ceremony earlier in the day, which honored fallen Soldiers and Gold Star families.

“I spoke at the ceremony two years ago, one of the last things I did on active duty, and probably the most honorable thing I could do on active duty,” he said. “I told the families that I could not replace your son or daughter, but I owe it to you and guarantee you that you have a family for life. To say that we will never forget, that has to be more than words. Events like today keep their memories alive.”

To learn more about Staff Sgt. Travis Atkins, visit [www.army.mil/medalofhonor/atkins/](http://www.army.mil/medalofhonor/atkins/).

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