

## Military Hero Returns Home

by Casey J. Bortnick  
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Last month Luann Van Peurseem received one of the military's highest honors for helping to save the lives of two fellow airmen. Sunday, she returned home to Ogden as a hero.

It's a label she's accepted even if she's not that comfortable with it.

"You see an injured person and you're there to help them," said Luann Van Peurseem.



Luann Van Peurseem returns to Ogden.

For the Air force Reservist and certified paramedic it's just that simple. That's just what she did on June 20th at Sather Airbase in Baghdad.

"I heard a loud boom," said Van Peurseem.

She was in her trailer doing paper work when an insurgent missile hit too close to home.

"I ran out and I didn't realize it at first but it was one of my guys. He was face down and seriously hurt."

Van Peurseem performed CPR on Sergeant Tim Juliano. Later, she heard another airman calling for help.

"I had positioned the first guy. I said I'll be right back and ran over to the next guy, physically picked him up and dragged him into the bunker," Van Peurseem said.

The second victim, Steve Paddison, was in shock. Paddison had also been hit with shrapnel. Van Peurseem provided first aid until trauma teams could arrive.

"I'm a firm believer there is god. I was there for a reason."

Both men recovered and Van Peurseem was one of two honored with the Commendation Medal with Valor in July. She returned home, this week, to her husband and her youngest son Kyle who flew in from Utah to surprise her during our interview.

"She's humble," said Kyle Van Peurseem. "And I think it's cool that she was able to be there in a situation like that. She wouldn't want to be anywhere else," he added.

Even with all the attention she says helping others is just her job.

"It had nothing to do with us. It was about them. Those guys are the real heroes," she said.

Van Peurseem is not sure if she'll have to go back to Iraq but if she stays she'll need to renew her certification as a paramedic in New York State to resume her civilian career.

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