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## HONOR

Becoming a public affairs officer does not necessarily shield you from the bullets and bombs.

This reality hit home for the family, friends and colleagues of Marine Maj. Megan M. McClung, when they learned she was killed in Iraq while escorting civilian media.

The incident earned McClung a spot in the Hall of Heroes at the Defense Information School here. Her name joins two other DINFOS-trained Marines killed in Iraq during the Global War on Terror. The wall also contains just over 100 names of other military communications specialists who were killed during the Gulf War, and the Korea and Vietnam Wars.

The Hall of Heroes at DINFOS honors military communicators who made the ultimate sacrifice while working in public affairs or the visual information career fields.

McClung, 34, was the first female Marine officer to die in Iraq. She was killed Dec. 6, 2006, when her convoy was hit by an improvised explosive device, while traveling through the Al Anbar province. She was serving the last month of a year-long deployment there. Her name is the most recent to be added to the Hall of Heroes.

“This hall is dedicated to the brave young men and women who gave their lives freely and valiantly, capturing wartime stories, and communicating them to America and the rest of the world,” said Marine Capt. James D. Jarvis, the commander of Marine Detachment Fort Meade.

A frosted glass plate is engraved with McClung’s name. The glass plate, and others like it, is attached to a dark granite-patterned wall. The columns of nameplates, some yet to be inscribed with names, stretch from the floor to the ceiling in the north lobby of the DINFOS building. The columns of names are accented by darkened, vertical mirrors, which contrast the dark background of the wall.

Embedded in the floor in front of the memorial is the DINFOS seal, while up above, flags of the five military branches stand as silent sentinels over the memorial. Poster-sized prints of military journalists

and photographers working in their respective fields adorn the far wall from floor to ceiling, next to the memorial.

The memorial was unveiled at an informal ceremony in March. There are plans to hold a formal dedication for the Hall of Heroes in the near future.

Staff Sgt. Kyran V. Adams, a student in the Digital Multimedia Course, and instructor for the Basic Still Photography course at DINFOS, arranged the layout and photo images in the memorial. The memorial concept was conceived by former DINFOS staff member, Staff Sgt. Dixie Kapayou, who recently retired. Adams worked on the multimedia portion of the display after the memorial portion of the display was finished.

“The memorial has a solemn feel,” Adams said. “It is dedicated to the memory of those who went before us.”

The Hall of Heroes should remind instructors and students alike just how rewarding and dangerous the military communications career field can be, said Michael R. Gannon, the assistant commandant for DINFOS. But he emphasized the memorial should also stand as a testament to the sacrifices made by personnel who go through the training at DINFOS.

“They could be considered the heroes of our business,” said Gannon about the names on the memorial. “The dedication and service

that these people provided should certainly be an inspiration to everyone that comes to this school students and faculty alike.”

McClung’s position as a public affairs officer probably doesn’t conjure up the traditional image of someone in battle. In fact, most of the deaths in Iraq and Afghanistan reported by the media tend to be those in combat career fields and infantry positions. But according to Jarvis, military members trained by DINFOS could be called upon to make the same sacrifice as McClung and others before her.

“The memorial brings it home for a lot of our servicemembers,” Jarvis said. “Those sacrifices were made by people who have the same profession as you and I do.”

Gannon agreed. He said military communications professions are critical and important to the overall military mission, but they can also be dangerous.

“They’re a part of a career field that can go into harm’s way, and they’re not always safe behind the scenes,” Gannon said.

“Major McClung was a great American, a fabulous officer and a role model for a lot of us who knew her,” Jarvis said. “I think the same thing can be said for everyone on that wall.”

Jarvis said the Hall of Heroes is as essential to the instructors as it is to the students at DINFOS.

“I think it’s important for us to not only have them memorialized on that wall,” Jarvis said, “but also for the instructors to

take the students down there so they can see it, breathe it in, and experience it.”

“Otherwise it’s just a list of names,” he added.