

Role models are typically sports stars, teachers or family members, but for Marines of Kilo Company, 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, the qualities of a role model can be found in one of their own.

If you ask **Sgt. Ryan M. Krochmolny**, machine gun section leader with Kilo Company, he'd tell you that those qualities are a part of his job.

Krochmolny was deployed to Sangin, Afghanistan, when he exemplified great leadership and bravery. On three separate occasions, Krochmolny's leadership and unselfishness helped him save lives.

In one instance, he carried a wounded Marine for more than 500 yards through enemy machine-gun fire to get him to safety. When the combat became too heavy to move, he put the Marine down and laid his body over him to protect him while he fought back against the insurgents.

On two additional occasions, he led his squad into heavy fighting to recover Marines who were pinned down by machine-gun fire.

Krochmolny was awarded the Bronze Star with Combat "V" during a ceremony Sept. 1. The "V" distinguishes the valor of his actions in Afghanistan. "Sergeant Krochmolny has not only met my expectations, but has exceeded them on numerous occasions," said 1st Lt. Victor M. Garcia, Kilo Company executive officer.

Krochmolny stepped into action when an improvised explosive device detonated and severely wounded Marines in his platoon. He took charge of the platoon and oversaw the medical evacuation of the casualties. He also led his Marines through an IED-laced field to support a squad under enemy fire. He brought his men through multiple small arms fire engagements, demonstrating an ability to act quickly and decisively under pressure.

"I was very happy to see that a deserving Marine is being recognized for actions in combat, not only for him, but for the junior Marines that help make the award possible," said Garcia. Krochmolny said backing up his fellow Marines was all part of a days work in Afghanistan.

"Every Marine did absolutely tremendous and amazing things out there," said Krochmolny, quick to defer the attention to his friends. "I think everyone is a hero, quite honestly. If it was up to me, I think every Marine should receive a valor award. Everyone performed heroic acts over the deployment." Sgt. Joel Baily, machine gun section leader with the company, is a friend and peer of Krochmolny, and he agrees with Krochmolny that this is expected of leaders. Baily said the job of a squad leader is to lead their Marines through combat, get the mission accomplished, all while taking care of the Marines.

"I love serving my country, I love leading Marines," said Krochmolny. "It's a responsibility beyond words – you can't explain it. I'm honored to do that, every deployment I go on."



Bronze Star

Sgt. Ryan M. Krochmolny, machine gun section leader, Kilo Company, 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, is awarded the Bronze Star with Combat 'V' Sept. 1, 2011, for heroic actions while deployed to Sangin, Afghanistan. Krochmolny was a machine gun section leader and exhibited great leadership, courage and unselfishness during the seven-month deployment. In one instance, he carried a wounded Marine several hundred yards and shielded the Marine from enemy machine-gun fire.