

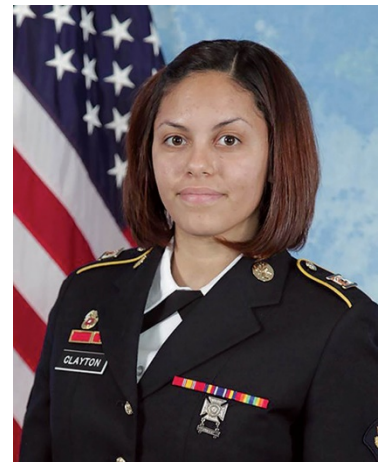


KELLY BRUNER IS RUNNING FOR ARMY SPC. HILDA I. CLAYTON

Army releases images of combat photographer's final moments before fatal blast
By MARCUS FICHTL | STARS AND STRIPES
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OSAN AIR BASE, South Korea — The Army has released the final images taken by combat photographer Spc. Hilda Clayton moments before she died during a live-fire training accident in Afghanistan nearly four years ago.

The photos, which have been published in the May-June edition of the Army's Military Review journal, show the moment a mortar tube exploded, killing Clayton and four Afghan soldiers on July 2, 2013, in the eastern Afghan area of Qaraghahi.



Clayton, a visual information specialist attached to the 4th Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division based at Forward Operating Base Gamberi, was part of a training mission certifying Afghan forces on mortar operations.

The 22-year-old from Augusta, Ga., was tasked with documenting the event as well as training an Afghan Army photojournalist who also died in the accident. His photos of the blast were also released.

“Not only did Clayton help document activities aimed at shaping and strengthening the partnership but she also shared in the risk by participating in the effort,” the journal said in an article accompanying the photos.

Clayton was a member of the Army's storied combat camera unit, the Fort Meade, Md.-based 55th Signal Company, which has deployed soldiers to front lines across the globe.

She was the first Army combat documentation and production specialist to be killed in Afghanistan.

The unit has named its annual competition the SPC Hilda I. Clayton Best Combat Camera (COMCAM) Competition in her memory.

Her name is also etched into the Hall of Heroes at the Defense Information School in Fort Meade, where she graduated in 2012.

Clayton's family and unit approved of the release of the photos, an official from the Army University Press said.



A mortar tube accidentally explodes during an Afghan National Army live-fire training exercise in Laghman province, Afghanistan, July 2, 2013. This photo was taken by U.S. Army Spc. Hilda Clayton, who died in the blast.

