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Governor Rick Scott Honors 329 Veterans with the Veterans Service Medal



EUSTIS, Fla. – Today, Governor Rick Scott awarded 329 Florida veterans with the Governor's Veterans Service Medal for their service to the state and the nation.

Governor Scott said, "We can never thank our veterans enough for their courageous service to our state and country. I'm incredibly proud to recognize these American heroes who dedicated their lives to our great nation and present them with the Veterans Service Medal today. We will continue to work to make Florida the most military and veteran friendly state in the nation."

Governor Scott also highlighted investments in Florida's active military, veterans and their families in his Securing Florida's Future budget, including:

- \$200,000 for search and rescue vessels and protective equipment for our National Guardsmen to use during deployment;
- Nearly \$8 million to begin operations at the Lake Baldwin State Veteran Nursing Home, which will allow this facility to serve more than 110 veterans in the coming year;
- Doubling the funding to \$2 million for Building Homes for Heroes to build and modify homes for veterans who were severely injured while serving in Iraq and Afghanistan;
- \$2 million for the Florida Defense Support Task Force, which helps support our military and defense communities and the many families who rely on them; and
- \$2.7 million to support veterans looking to obtain employment, start their own businesses and make Florida their home, including \$1 million for Veterans Florida to continue their mission of helping veterans find great jobs at Florida businesses.

The following Florida veterans were highlighted during today's ceremony:

Second Lieutenant Richard Kappel

Second Lieutenant Richard Kappel enlisted in the United States Army in 1941 and served as a bombardier in Germany during World War II. During his last bombing mission, 2nd Lt. Kappel's aircraft was severely damaged and had to make an emergency landing. His entire crew was captured and held as POWs at Stalag Luft #1. After 15 months of captivity, 2nd Lt. Kappel returned home as an American hero and was honorably discharged in 1945.

Specialist Phillip Lewis

Specialist Phillip Lewis was born and raised in Eustis and enlisted in the Army at the age of 17. He attended Basic Training at Fort Benning Georgia where he earned the opportunity to attend Army Airborne School. He later went on to complete Army Ranger School and earned the Army Ranger Tab. SPC Lewis participated in three deployments to Afghanistan where he served in all areas of an Infantry fire team and eventually as a team leader. In 2014, SPC Lewis left active duty and entered the Florida Army National Guard where he has served as the Delta company supply specialist. Currently, SPC Lewis is assigned to 1st platoon as a vehicle commander.

Sergeant Christopher Adkins

Sergeant Christopher Adkins enlisted in 2007 and served as a combat medic in the 715th Military Police Company. He went on to serve as driver and medic for Bravo Company 1st Battalion 124th Infantry Regiment and in July 2011, was promoted to Sergeant and became a senior line medic in the Delta Company 2-124. In 2012, SGT Adkins earned his Associates in Emergency Medical Services. SGT Adkins also served a deployment to the Horn of Africa in 2015 and has been recognized with the Combat Medic Badge, Air Assault badge, Florida Commendation Medal and Army Service Ribbon for his service. Currently, SGT Adkins serves as the Delta Company Supply NCO.

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