

U.S. Department of Defense  
Office of the Secretary of Defense  
Task Force for Business and Stability Operations

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## News Release

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### **CIVILIAN PURPLE HEART AWARDED TO IRAQ ECONOMIC TASK FORCE MEMBERS AFTER BAGHDAD BLAST**

U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates awarded five civilian employees of the Task Force for Business and Stability Operations (TFBSO) with the Medal for the Defense of Freedom, the civilian equivalent of the military's Purple Heart, as a result of injuries sustained in the line of duty while supporting economic reconstruction efforts in Iraq.

Earlier this year, the officials – Deputy Under Secretary of Defense and TFBSO Director Paul Brinkley, a native of Wylie, Tex.; TFBSO Deputy Director Matthew Schoeffling of Philadelphia; Elizabeth LoNigro, TFBSO chief of staff from St. Louis; Tanisha Dozier, defense fellow from Kingstree, S.C.; and Eric Clark, senior advisor to DUSD Brinkley from Black River Falls, Wis. – were meeting with an Iraqi business leader when a powerful bomb detonated 30 meters from their conference room in downtown Baghdad.

The blast destroyed the building's exterior façade and shattered windows, causing numerous casualties. Despite sustaining significant concussive and shrapnel injuries, all five individuals returned to work virtually without interruption under hazardous security conditions.

Secretary Gates presented the awards Sept. 9. The award nomination commends the team members for their "sacrifice, dedication to duty and selfless service under combat-like conditions," highlighting the dangers faced by civilian professionals supporting stability, development and reconstruction efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

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*The Task Force for Business and Stability Operations (TFBSO) was established in June 2006 to restore economic normalcy in Iraq, where unrest and insurgency had created a synchronous downward spiral of unemployment, poverty and violence. Since then, TFBSO has successfully implemented a range of economic growth and job creation projects, including the encouragement of private investment, industrial development, banking and financial system development, agricultural diversification and revitalization, and energy development.*

*In 2010, TFBSO commenced operations to advance economic opportunities for the people of Afghanistan, focusing on agriculture, indigenous industries, mineral resource development, and banking services development.*