

Senior Master Sgt. Joseph Riemer



"I'm an explosive ordnance disposal technician, and EOD technicians solve complex problems," said Senior Master Sgt. Joseph Riemer.

For Joseph, this extends far beyond defusing explosives. Whether he's disarming a device or helping someone in peril, he faces every challenge with incredible courage and a determination to make a difference.

His heroic actions on June 26, 2021, off the coast of the Izmir Province in Turkey exemplify this commitment. A group of five Airmen were in trouble after a sudden, violent storm trapped them in treacherous waters. Hearing their cries for help, Joseph didn't hesitate. He dove into the sea, battling fierce swells and rip currents to reach those in danger.

He started by using his lifesaving skills to keep them afloat, but he quickly realized how dire the situation was. Two of the Airmen were on the verge of drowning, with no chance of survival without more help. He fought his way back to the boat and retrieved life preservers. Exhausted but determined, he returned to the Airmen, helped them into the flotation devices and brought them within 25 meters of the boat. Finally, he secured a safety line and pulled them to safety onboard.

Once onboard, though exhausted from the rescues, Joseph ensured all Airmen were accounted for and enabled their safe return to port. His bravery that day earned him the Airman's Medal, a recognition of courage and selflessness authorized by Congress and bestowed by the President of the United States.

Today, Joseph serves as the senior enlisted leader for the Air Force Civil Engineer Center EOD Division at Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida. His dedication to excellence hasn't wavered, earning him recognition as the 2024 AFCEC Senior NCO of the Year and the 2024 Air Force Materiel Command Outstanding EOD Master Blaster of the Year.