



The Crucible of Fires: State of the Art Fires Center Named After Legendary Ranger

By SFC Jorden M. Weir, Chief Public Affairs NCO for the 75th Ranger Regiment

After four years of planning, collaboration, design and renovation, the U.S. Army's 75th Ranger Regiment cut the ribbon on the Domeij Fires Center on Nov. 2, 2023, marking its grand opening.

"Today, we stand on hallowed ground," said MSG Ian Pletch, the 75th Ranger Regimental Fires Noncommissioned Officer. "Not just because of the bricks and mortar that shape the structure behind me, but because of the legacy it represents. We are here to honor a man whose journey was truly the stuff of legends."

The center is named after SFC Kristoffer Domeij, who served as the Fires Support Noncommissioned Officer for 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, when he was killed during combat operations, Oct. 22, 2011, in Afghanistan.

It was his 14th combat deployment.

Above: Ranger Fire Supporters with the 75th Ranger Regiment unveil the sign for the Domeij Fires Center. After four years of planning, collaboration, design and renovation, the U.S. Army's 75th Ranger Regiment cut the ribbon on the Domeij Fires Center on Nov. 2, 2023, marking its grand opening. (U.S. Army photo by SGT David Soflin)

THE MAN

Domeij was a fire supporter of legendary proportions within the Ranger Regiment, whose incredible career laid the groundwork for what would become Ranger Fires Support as it exists today.

“[Domeij] walked amongst us during one of the toughest periods in Ranger history,” said COL J.D. Keirse, Commander of the 75th Ranger Regiment. “Back-to-back deployments in the places that others feared to tread. This was an important time in Ranger history.

“The rest of the joint force was on the ropes,” he said, “and needed Rangers to track down the leaders and high-level facilitators of the enemy. Kris did it each and every night.”

SFC Robert Reynolds, a forward observer with the 75th Ranger Regiment, who had never met the man in person, told the story of Domeij with reverence and awe.

“[Domeij] came to Ranger Regiment pre-9/11,” Reynolds said. “In a world where things were changing, capabilities were being delegated down, he oversaw all of it. He led the way. He was a man who could layer effects and layer fires in a way that was kind of next level.”

Domeij earned the distinction of becoming one of the first Joint Terminal Attack Controller (JTAC) qualified members in the U.S. Army at the time.

It is a distinction that has rippled across time and left a permanent mark on the Regiment. Now, Ranger Fire Supporters are required to become JTAC qualified when they become NCO's.

“Not only are we good Rangers,” said SGT Jack Masterson, a forward observer with the 75th Ranger Regiment, “but we're also really good fires guys. It's not one or the other. They go hand in hand. And [Domeij] was really the first to show that we can do that.”

Reynolds hammering the breadth of Domeij's influence on the Ranger Regiment home by bridging the past with the present.

“We look back at our history,” said Reynolds. “We look at WWII and the Rangers who climbed

Point du Hoc on D-Day. I personally didn't climb Point du Hoc. You know what I mean? And so, I ask myself: how do I carry forward and how can I be the guy who climbs Point du Hoc ... when MY Point du Hoc comes around?”

“Kris Domeij showed us how,” he said.

THE DOMEIJ FIRES CENTER

The Center's inception began when retired CW3 Gregory Funk, former Fires Officer for the 75th Ranger Regiment, recognized the need to accelerate its lethal effects capabilities in the special operations forces environment.

“When you look at the training path of fire supporters and special operators that are JTACs, there's a lot that goes into it,” Funk said. “If you look at the special operations task force (SOF) Truths, these skills can't be easily replicated and mass produced. It's a unique skill that requires detailed training. It's not a hobby. It is a very serious skill set that can either make or break a mission.”

Building on a history, dating back to then Secretary of the Army, GEN Creighton Abrams' Charter to the Regiment in 1974, which charged the elite special operations unit to “be better with their hands and weapons than anyone,” the 75th Ranger Regiment set out to bridge the significant gaps that exist in the Army's fires capabilities by building a physical representation of groundbreaking technology coupled with the unmatched fighting spirit of the Rangers.

“The problem was that getting the actual training reps in relied too heavily on factors outside of the unit's control,” said Funk. “Bad weather rolls in, training can't happen. Aircraft malfunctions, training can't happen. Even when things go perfectly, the amount of time between iterations for the lanes to reset means that individual Fire Supporters and JTACs may only get one or two reps in during the exercise.”

There is a cosmic divide that exists between simply having proficiency in a skill set and having mastery of it and it's a divide the Domeij Fires Center aims to close.

Here they will get the reps necessary to gain true mastery of their craft. The center offers

a dynamic space where Ranger and partner forward observers can experience tough battlefield problems and solutions firsthand and envision applications within their own operations.

“It’s designed for the next generation of fires Rangers and Soldiers,” Masterson said. “I think that it’s probably honestly going to revolutionize things, not only for forward observers, but also Army JTACs.”

It is a \$2.2 million fires training facility, unrivaled in all the Army, that exemplifies cutting-edge fires technology in both the special operations realm and beyond.

It is a total immersion simulator, able to not only replicate the most complex combat scenarios that a forward observer could face in the real world, but also to capture real time data that Ranger Forward Observers can use to gain a profound understanding of their equipment, technology, tactics and perhaps most importantly, themselves, in order to meet the ever-evolving challenges facing the Army and the nation.

Spanning more than 1,500 square feet, the Domeij Center combines a joint operations center and individual virtual training simulators to provide the greatest training benefit possible to every fire supporter in Regiment and beyond. The deliberate inclusion of the latest fires technologies and equipment underlines the 75th Ranger Regiment’s commitment to continual, realistic and exhausting training as it strives to build and field the best possible fire supporters in the Army.

THE LEGACY LIVES ON

“The infantry owns the last 100 yards of the battlefield, no question,” Reynolds said. “But they’re not going to get that close without substantial amounts of fire support.”

That, at its core, is what the Domeij Fires Center is all about. Setting the conditions necessary for Rangers to continue to dominate any mission they are called upon to fight. This center embodies a steadfast commitment to actively contribute to advancing solutions in the battle space and setting new Army standards.

“This building is the arena,” Pletch said. “This building is the crucible where Ranger Fires

professionals are built. Forged through fire, led by Ranger NCOs who give you the opportunity to fail forward; to get 1% better every day. This building represents the Ranger spirit of SFC Kristoffer Domeij. His legacy lives on. It is our turn now to do for others ... what he did for us.”

Rangers Lead The Way.

SFC Jorden M. Weir has more than 12 years of Army public affairs experience and has spent the last eight years working within special operations. He is currently the Chief Public Affairs NCO for the U.S. Army’s 75th Ranger Regiment.



Top: SFC Kristoffer Domeij’s mother, Scoti Domeij, cuts the ceremonial ribbon, held by the 75th Ranger Regimental Command team, to officially open the Domeij Fires Center on Nov. 2, 2023. The center is named after SFC Kristoffer Domeij, who served as the Fires Support Noncommissioned Officer for 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, when he was killed during combat operations, Oct. 22, 2011, in Afghanistan. Below: Members of the U.S. Army’s 75th Ranger Regiment look at photos decorating the walls and try out the gym of the newly opened Domeij Fires Center. (U.S. Army photos by SGT David Soflin)