

Command Sgt. Maj. Ioakimo Falaniko retires after 32 years; Last 5 years dedicated to Son, Fallen in Operation Iraqi Freedom

Excerpted from SamoaNews.Com (By Major Laupola)

SamoaNews.com (September 26, 2008) – Thirty-two years of distinguished served in the United States Army was feted and celebrated when Command Sergeant Major (CSM) Ioakimo Falaniko, originally of American Samoa, retired on September 19, 2008. His service was recognized at a retirement/change of responsibility ceremony at Gammon Field, Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri, in a ceremony presided by Major General William McCoy, Commanding General US Army Maneuver Support Center & Fort Leonard Wood.

CSM Falaniko hails from the village of Amanave in American Samoa. He is the son of the late Niko Falaniko of Vaimoso, Samoa and Matalena of Amanave. A 1974 graduate of Marist Brothers High School, Falaniko joined the U.S. Army on Dec. 29, 1976.

He is married to Maliana Ching Falaniko and they have four children, one of whom was U.S. Army Private [Jonathan I. Falaniko](#) who was killed in Operation Iraqi Freedom five years ago.

CSM Falaniko's retirement was marked by a three-day event. The 1st Engineer Brigade hosted a farewell dinner on the night of Sept. 18 to kick-start bidding farewell to the Falaniko family who has touched and influenced so many lives. Dignitaries, families and friends traveled from afar to pay tribute to CSM Falaniko and his contributions to the Army and the Nation.

As part of the dinner program, a slide show of farewell greetings from service members around the world was shown. It was a bittersweet scene as CSM Falaniko reflected about the different memories of his career captured in the video/slide show.

In addition to the slide show, a letter from General Petraeus, David, who previously served as the Commanding General, Multi-National Force-Iraq, commended CSM Falaniko as one of the finest soldiers that he has served with and wished him and Maliana the best in their future endeavors.

Nikolao Pula, Director of the Office of Insular Affairs of the Department of Interior, spoke on behalf of the family and thanked everybody for their support of CSM Falaniko and the family. He thanked CSM Falaniko for his service to the nation and to American Samoa.

Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Evelyn Vaitautolu Langford echoed similar sentiments about CSM Falaniko by thanking him and Maliana for being great ambassadors of Samoa. She proceeded to read the congratulatory message from Gov. Togiola Tulafono, on behalf of the people of American Samoa. In addition, LTC Langford read an American Samoa House of Representative Concurrent Resolution passed by the Fono recognizing CSM Falaniko's 32 years of dedicated service. Other dignitaries attending included CSM Mark L. Farley, Senior Enlisted Leader (SEL) European Command and CSM Michael Balch (SEL) Southern Command and U.S. Congressman for American Samoa, Eni F.H. Faleomavaega.



Maj. Gen. William McCoy, Commanding General US Army Maneuver Support and Ft. Leonard Wood presented one of the many awards that Command Sgt. maj. Ioakimo Falaniko and wife Maliana received during the retirement ceremony at Gammon Field, September 19, 2008. CSM Falaniko retires after 32 years of dedicated services to the US Army. CSM Falaniko is described by his commander as a master of his profession, passion of soldiers and embodied all the values and attributes of a soldiers creed.[Courtesy Photo]

In his farewell remarks, CSM Falaniko acknowledged the dignitaries, the soldiers and civilians of 1st Engineer Brigade, families and friends. He then thanked God, the people of Samoa and everybody for their support throughout the years.

CSM Falaniko paused and then he looked up into the sky and said: "To my parents, I hope that I have lived up to your expectations and my dear son, Jonathan, I've dedicated these last five years of my service to you; Son, you will never be forgotten."

CSM Falaniko has been the senior enlisted soldier for 1st Engineer Brigade, Ft Leonard Wood Missouri, the largest Brigade in the Army for the past two years.

CSM Falaniko's sphere of influence did not limit him to his MOS rather he reached out to help Samoans and Pacific Islanders in every installation he was assigned. As a result of been a great ambassador for the Pacific Islanders, he was awarded the Federal Asian Pacific American Council (FAPAC) award in recognition of his significant contributions to the advancement of Asian Pacific Americans (APA) and the promotion of equal employment opportunity in the Federal work force in May 2001.

CSM Falaniko started his military career as a combat engineer at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri and it's only fitting that he end it at the home of the Engineer. His stateside assignments include: Fort Belvoir, Virginia; two tours at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri; Fort Bragg, North Carolina; Fort Bliss, Texas; and Fort Lewis, Washington. His overseas tours include: Hanau, West Berlin; Giessen, Germany; Camp Indian and Camp Howze, Korea and recently served in Operation Iraqi Freedom, Iraq.

CSM Falaniko has served in all key leadership positions in the field of combat engineers starting from Team Leader up to Command Sergeant Major. He served as the Command Sergeant Major of the 14th Engineer Battalion at Fort Lewis, Washington as well as the 1st Armored Division, Engineer Brigade at Giessen, Germany.

His military education includes: Bridgeman Primary Technical Course; Primary Leadership Course; Primary Noncommissioned Officer Course; Basic Noncommissioned Officer Course; Advanced Noncommissioned Officer Course; Drill Sergeant School; Master Fitness Trainer Course; Sapper Leader Course; Instructor Training Course; Instructor Supervisor Course; Airborne School; Ranger School; Air Assault School; Jumpmaster School; French Commando Course; and First Sergeant Course.

CSM Falaniko is a graduate of Class-49 of the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy and he holds an Associate Degree in General Studies from Central Texas College.

His awards and decorations include: The Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal (with 1 Oak Leaf Cluster); Meritorious Service Medal (with 3 Oak Leaf Clusters); Army Commendation Medal (with 3 Oak Leaf Cluster); Army Achievement Medal (with 5 Oak Leaf Clusters); Good Conduct Medal (9th Award); Army Occupation Medal; National Defense Service Medal; Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal; Global War on Terrorism Service Medal; Korea Defense Service Medal; Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal; NCO Professional Development Ribbon (4); Overseas Service Ribbon (3); Army Service Ribbon; Ranger Tab; Sapper Tab; Master Parachutist Badge; Air Assault Badge; Drill Sergeant Badge; French Commando Badge; Canadian Parachutist Badge; and German Bronze Marksmanship Badge. He was also awarded the DeFleury Bronze Medal of the Army Corps of Engineer.