



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Amputee back in the fight

**West Point, New York** — “I was the first amputee to return to combat” said retired Sgt. 1st Class Andy McCaffrey from Arlington, Virginia, the first amputee from Afghanistan to return and continue the fight.

“A Chinese hand grenade detonated in my hand,” said McCaffrey. During the last few weeks of his tour to Afghanistan in 2002, McCaffrey was involved in a training accident with a grenade. The accident resulted in a below-the-elbow amputation.

“I set record time; within 4 days of me arriving at Walter Reed, they had a prosthetic on me,” said McCaffrey. He says that he was not going to let his injury stop him from continuing his Army career. Within a month of his accident, he was tying barbells to his prosthetic, teaching himself to do a push up and trying to make sure he was incorporating his prosthetic hand in everyday life.

McCaffrey said, “Exactly two years to the date, after losing my hand I was back in Afghanistan.” During the two years he went back through the Q course, the initial formal training program for entry into the United States Special Forces, to re-certify so he could stay a part of the team.

Later in McCaffrey’s career he started to fall into a depressive state. During this time, a fellow Soldier introduced him to cycling. McCaffrey immediately fell in love with the sport.

“It turned out a cheap piece of bent plastic was the best fit for my riding,” McCaffrey said. He went through many different prosthetics until he found the perfect one for cycling.

McCaffrey competed in the time trial race for the 2014 U.S. Army Warrior Trials, June 15, 2014, on the streets of the U.S. Military Academy, West Point, New York. More than 100 wounded, ill and injured service members and Veterans from across the United States are at West Point competing in the Warrior Trials where athletes from the Army, Marines and Air Force face off in archery, basketball, cycling, track and field, swimming, shooting, sitting volleyball and wheelchair basketball. Participants in the trials include athletes with spinal cord injuries, traumatic brain injuries, visual impairment, serious illnesses and amputations.

“I started the race at 8:20 a.m. and set a goal to be in my room by 10 a.m. I was back in my room before 9:45,” said McCaffrey. McCaffrey took second place in the Permanently Disabled Uprights group, having competed on an upright bicycle that was required to complete about 30 kilometers.

This particular race covers the longest distance in the cycling events. Female riding upright bike riders and male recumbent riders are required to ride three laps, female recumbent riders do two laps, and hand-pedaled recumbent riders complete one lap.

McCaffrey has been on several different cycle teams during his career in the Army and continued after his retirement in October 2013. He credits cycling with helping in his healing process and hopes that Soldiers will not sit around and focus on their injuries, and instead find a sport or activity to focus on.



The Adaptive Reconditioning Program is a program that includes activities and sports that wounded, ill and injured Soldiers can participate in to optimize their physical, cognitive and emotional well-being.

As a cyclist, McCaffrey is no stranger to the fact that good nutrition, activity and sleep is important in training. These are the same three principle involved in the Army's Performance Triad. He wants to let Soldiers know the importance of training for a bike race, saying that "You wouldn't just jump in a car, and start racing in NASCAR."

McCaffrey never gave up and became the first Soldier to return to Afghanistan with a prosthetic arm. He wants to see other wounded, ill and injured Soldiers fight on and find that one activity that keeps their focus on a better future. He is looking forward to competing in the 2014 Warrior Games in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

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**CUTLINE: Familiarization of route:** Sgt. 1st Class Andy McCaffrey from Arlington, VA , gets familiar with the 2014 U.S. Army Warrior Trials cycling route at the U. S. Military Academy, West Point, NY. More than 100 wounded, ill and injured service members and Veterans from across the United States are at West Point competing in the Warrior Trials, June 15-19, where athletes from the Army, Marines and Air Force face off in archery, basketball, cycling, track and field, swimming, shooting, sitting volleyball and wheelchair basketball. Participants in the trials include athletes with spinal cord injuries, traumatic brain injuries, visual impairment, serious illnesses and amputations. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Eric Lieber)



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Warrior Transition Command (WTC) is a major subordinate command under the U.S. Army Medical Command (MEDCOM). WTC's mission is to develop, coordinate and integrate the Army's Warrior Care and Transition Program (WCTP) for wounded, ill and injured soldiers, veterans and their families. For more information on WTC, visit the new WTC website, [www.WTC.army.mil](http://www.WTC.army.mil), follow on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/armyWTC> or join Facebook at <http://facebook.com/armyWTC>.

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