

Captain Simratpal Singh Biography

Captain Simratpal (“Simmer”) Singh was born in Punjab, India in 1989 and immigrated to the United States when he was nine years old. He shared his childhood years in California and Washington, graduating from Interlake High School in Bellevue, Washington in 2006. Now 27 years old, his parents and brother both live in the suburbs of Seattle, which he still calls home. His mother and father work in the manufacturing industry.

Captain Singh’s great grandfather served in the British Indian Army during World War I and went on to become a freedom fighter in the struggle for Indian independence. As a child, he admired the military and the principles governing it – such as discipline, self-sacrifice, and service to others. These principles were also intrinsic to the Sikh faith. The fact that the United States welcomed his family, provided so many opportunities and became his adopted home made the decision for Captain Singh clear that he owed his service.

Timeline of Military Service & Struggle For Religious Accommodation

2006

Captain Singh enrolled in the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Although he made attempts to obtain a religious accommodation, he ultimately succumbed to the pressure to conform on his first day at the academy by removing his hair and cutting his turban. Immediately regretting his decision, he resolved to one day again keep his articles of faith.

2010

Captain Singh graduated with honors from West Point with a B.S. in electrical engineering. After graduation, Captain Singh attended the Officer’s Basic Course at FT Leonard Wood (MO). He was assigned to MOS 12A for engineering and was posted to FT Lewis (WA) as Assistant Brigade Engineer on the Brigade Combat Team.

2011

Captain Singh successfully passed the Army’s grueling Ranger School, earning his Ranger tab.

2012-2013

Captain Singh was assigned as platoon leader for a 24-soldier Route Clearance Platoon within the Stryker Brigade Combat Team. In that capacity, Captain Singh was deployed to Kandahar Province from April 2012 to January 2013 as part of Operation Enduring Freedom. This highly dangerous mission involved leading a platoon that cleared IED’s in the road and helped earn him a Bronze Star as a result for his service.

Captain Singh's exceptional performance continued after he returned to the United States, where he served as a Brigade Assistant for a rapidly deployable 4,100 Soldier Stryker Brigade Combat Team. In November 2013, he received an Army Achievement Medal for his performance during a joint training exercise with the South Korean Army.

2014

At the end of 2013 and in 2014, Simmer served as a Brigade Assistant S-4 for a rapidly deployable 4,100 Soldier Stryker Brigade Combat Team at Ft. Lewis (WA). In this capacity, he served in a Brigade Comptroller position overseeing a multimillion dollar budget. His superiors deemed his performance in this position "phenomenal" and he was recommended for company command immediately.

2015

Captain Singh attended and completed the Engineer Captain's Career Course at FT Leonard Wood while simultaneously volunteering to obtain and complete a Master's Degree in engineering. In May, Captain Singh attended the Pentagon's Second Annual Vaisakhi Celebration and after meeting the Sikh Coalition's three clients who were granted earlier religious accommodations he decided to recommit to maintaining his Sikh articles of faith and pursue an accommodation for himself. Captain Singh submitted a request for accommodation to maintain his articles of faith to the U.S. Army on October 21, 2015.