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A Coney Island police officer, trapped under water. Boat passengers sinking off the North Carolina coast. Fires in the Rockaways and babies in distress. These were the greatest moments of peril—but with them came great moments of valor.

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### DUSTOFF 73 and the 'Valley of Death'

The mission was failing; the wounded were dying; the medevac team flew in.

By Tony Dokoupil and John Ryan

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### The Urge to Serve

What makes a mother of a 3-year-old girl feel such a powerful need to sacrifice for her country?

By Gail Sheehy

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### The SEALs' Biggest Threat

What worries America's most celebrated fighting force is the lure of Hollywood's siren song.

By Daniel Klaidman

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### The Renegade Diplomat

Kael Weston risked his life on the front lines in Afghanistan—and reached his own, unusual conclusions.

By Rajiv Chandrasekaran

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**ON THE COVER** FROM LEFT: Kenneth Brodhead, Erik Sabiston, David Capps. NOT PICTURED: Julia Bringle PHOTOGRAPH BY PLATON