



Bravery under fire

Medal of Valor presented to 10 Galva Guardsmen for saving ambushed convoy

By Star Courier Staff

CAMP VICTORY NORTH, Baghdad, Iraq -- The words "highly decorated" may soon be used to describe F Battery, 202nd Air Defense Artillery of the Illinois National Guard after the Army Commendation Medal for Valor was recently presented to 10 members of the Galva-based unit for coming to the rescue of an ambushed fuel convoy in April.

Between the first of the year and June, only 308 Medals for Valor had been awarded to soldiers serving in Iraq. The Galva unit received 15 of those -- 10 in a recent awards ceremony, three more in the next few weeks, and two in May to Sgt. Bruce Hartman of Prophetstown, and Staff Sgt. David Jensen of Albany. Hartman and Jensen were recognized for their role in detecting and helping detonate a car bomb on April 13.

Eighteen members of the unit also received the Army Commendation Medal for Meritorious Service.

All of the awards were for actions during the Battle of Holy Week, which culminated with the fierce gun battles of Easter Sunday. According to earlier dispatches, 2nd Platoon was caught in an ambush after nearly depleting its supply of ammunition.

"At that point, an emergency resupply was quickly formed by 1st Sgt. Paul Peterson," according to Maj. Michael Kessel, commander of the Galva National Guard unit. "During the resupply, an observant soldier noticed fresh smoke rising above the tree line from where the previous battle had just ended. Without hesitation, 1st Lt. Tracy Doubler and Sgt. 1st Class Kris Hess led their soldiers back into battle and notified the headquarters of the situation as they were already en route. 1st Sgt. Peterson also took his headquarters resupply mission along to assist and continue the resupply while en route.

"Upon arrival they found a military fuel convoy had been ambushed with critically wounded soldiers and burning fuel trucks littering the highway. The soldiers of F/202 fought their way into the ambush and began to suppress the enemy fire, treat and evacuate the wounded, repair vehicles, and prepare to evacuate the scene." The insurgent forces eventually retreated, according to the account.

In order of their rank, the Army Commendation Medal for Valor for actions on April,

11, 2004, west of Baghdad, were presented to:

n 1st Sgt. Paul N. Peterson of Roseville led an emergency resupply mission and subsequently joined 2nd Platoon in responding to a major convoy ambush. Upon arrival at the scene, 1st Sgt. Peterson took command of the 706th Transportation Company, the unit under fire. Disregarding his personal safety, he began running up and down the line to direct fire and changing of multiple flat tires on the convoy vehicles. His actions undoubtedly saved many lives.

n Sgt. 1st Class Kristan L. Hess of Aledo risked his life by moving under hostile fire in order to direct and resupply fire teams as they engaged enemy insurgents. His calm conduct while taking fire strengthened his platoon at critical moments in the fight. Sgt. 1st Class Hess further assisted in the air evacuation of U.S. casualties helping save numerous lives.

n Staff Sgt. Troy D. Wolford of Knoxville, without hesitation, volunteered to assist in the air evacuation of U.S. casualties while taking enemy fire. Staff Sgt. Wolford's disregard for personal safety and presence of mind resulted in a rapid evacuation, helping to prevent U.S. fatalities.

n Sgt. Jason A. Adams of Toulon, as a member of the platoon rescuing an ambushed fuel convoy and a qualified paramedic, voluntarily and without orders moved under fire to treat the many wounded personnel and assist the platoon medic with their evacuation to MEDEVAC helicopters providing expert medical care with disregard for his personal safety.

n Sgt. Derrick E. Glisan of Galva fearlessly led the members of his platoon through enemy ambush sites in order to rescue elements of the 706th under attack by insurgents. Sgt. Glisan's instinctive decisions were essential in allowing the platoon to safely maneuver through multiple ambush sites.

n Sgt. Carlos A. Ortiz of Princeville, after defeating the enemy force, volunteered to place himself in harm's way in order to clear a nearby building suspected of harboring insurgents. His disregard for personal safety and great bravery ensured that the enemy could not counterattack and allowed a fuel convoy to evacuate its casualties and withdraw.

n Spec. Mark D. Bomleny of Atkinson was wounded by enemy fire when his platoon maneuvered through an ambush position en route to provide assistance to a fuel convoy under attack by insurgents. Though injured, Spec. Bomleny fearlessly engaged the enemy in order to secure the area for air MEDEVAC. His actions were instrumental in saving lives as well as military equipment. Spec. Bomleny also received the Purple Heart.

n Spec. Kevin M. Mundy of Alpha as he was driving the lead vehicle of a patrol moving to rescue the 706th from an enemy ambush, skillfully navigated his vehicle through debris, gunfire, thick smoke and burning fuel to bring his fellow soldiers to the critical position in the fight. His courage directly contributed to victory.

n Spec. Benjamin C. Sleaford of Geneseo, after defeating the enemy force, volunteered to place himself in harm's way in order to clear a nearby building suspected of harboring insurgents. His bravery ensured that the enemy could not counterattack and allowed a

fuel convoy to evacuate its casualties and withdraw.

n Spec. Nicholas P. Welgat of Kewanee, a qualified paramedic, voluntarily and without orders moved under fire to treat the many wounded personnel and assist the platoon medic with their evacuation to MEDEVAC helicopters providing expert medical care with disregard for his personal safety.

Sgt. Glisan and Sgt. Adams have, since the incident, been promoted to staff sergeant and Spec. Sleaford has been promoted to sergeant.

The following soldiers (in order of rank) were awarded the Army Commendation Medal for Meritorious Service during the period April 9-11, 2004.

Sgt. Richard T. Anderson

Sgt. Thomas D. Brock

Sgt. Daniel A. Brokaw

Sgt. Michael Finney

Spec. Jason G. Baldwin

Spec. Brian A. Beckman

Spec. Justin E. Boelens

Spec. Patrick J. DeGeorge

Spec. Charles R. Harker

Spec. Dustin Hipkins

Spec. Seth Malcolm

Spec. John C. McKirgan

Spec. Mark D. Rathjen

Spec. Andrew J. Trigg

Spec. Eric Werkheiser

Spec. Ricky G. Williamson

Spec. Larry M. Wolf

Pvt. 1st Class Richard A. Douglas

Their citation reads as follows:

"For meritorious achievement during combat operations outside Baghdad, Iraq, as an integral part of 2nd Platoon's success in identifying and defusing one improvised explosive device, defeating two enemy ambushes, protecting Italian civilians, and

rescuing a fuel convoy under attack. Their constant courage and honorable conduct under enemy fire reflect greatly upon the soldiers, their units, and the United States Army."

Maj. Kessel said he is "very proud of these and all of the soldiers of F/202 ADA who continue to work hard every day to end the insurgency and help in the building of a democratic Iraq."

Kessel said it is not always easy with the temperature now consistently over 120 degrees and still rising. In a couple of weeks the temperature reportedly won't go below 100 degrees, even at night.

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