

Sergeant receives Bronze Star for valor

By Sgt. Robert Yde
2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE UNION III, Iraq – During a squadron awards ceremony April 29, Sgt. Marvin Sanjurjo, a member of 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, was awarded the Bronze Star Medal with Valor Device for actions he took last year while his unit was conducting operations in Baghdad.

The Bronze Star Medal, which is the Army's fourth-highest combat medal, is awarded for heroic or meritorious achievement while engaged in action against an enemy of the United States, and the Valor Device identifies the award as resulting from an act of combat heroism.

The incident, for which Sanjurjo, a native of Huntsville, Ala., was awarded the medal, occurred in the fall of 2006 while elements of 5-20 Inf., which was

part of Task Force 1st Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment operating with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, were patrolling the Al-Hadher neighborhood.

"Every platoon in the company had been taking contact throughout the day," explained the company's top noncommissioned officer, 1st Sgt. Christopher Ward, "and it all basically zeroed in on one mosque."

Ward, originally from Woodland, Calif., said that two of his platoons cordoned off the area around the mosque as they waited for elements from the Iraqi National Police to arrive and clear the mosque. The companies TAC (tactical assault center), of which both Ward and Sanjurjo were members, had just returned to Forward Operating Base Falcon, where TF 1-14 Cavalry was based at the time, but once they found out about the mosque entry, they returned to sector to assist in the operation.

As they approached the cordoned area from the west, their Stryker vehicles were ambushed by what Ward estimated to be 10-15 individuals firing from a two-story house about 30 yards away.

"My truck and the XO's (executive officer's) truck, which Sgt. Sanjurjo was on, were basically in the kill zone," Ward said. "The fire was pretty intense, and we immediately pivoted in and started to return fire toward the enemy."

Sanjurjo was manning his vehicle's remote weapons system, a system that allows the Soldier to aim and fire the vehicle's .50-caliber machine gun from inside, without being exposed to enemy fire.

Ward said that he made the decision to dismount from his vehicle, and that's when things started to turn bad.

"I dismounted expecting the snipers to come with me," he explained, "but they were pinned down, and I ended up running across the road, getting shot at

before I realized that I was pretty much by myself."

At about the same time that Ward made the decision to go to the ground, Sanjurjo's RWS malfunctioned, leaving the Soldiers on the ground with no heavy machine gun support.

"One of the cables had shrapnel in it, and I didn't know and I couldn't fire," Sanjurjo said. "'I've got to get this fifty up,' that's all I can remember thinking, and Sergeant Young, one of the snipers, started laying fire, and when I got a good chance, I just hopped up top and free-gunned."

Ward said that he remembers looking back and seeing Sanjurjo on top of the Stryker trying to fix the gun while bullets were ping-pong off the vehicle's armor.

"He got the gun up and started suppressing the enemy and soon after that the enemy quit shooting, and we were able to clear the building."

Ward credits Sanjurjo's actions that

day with saving his life.

"I dismounted expecting people to follow me, and they didn't and I was by myself, which put me in a pretty tight jam," he said. "His actions pretty much saved my life that day."

While Ward credits Sanjurjo with saving his life, Sanjurjo said it was the Soldiers who were firing from the ground that enabled him to climb on top of his vehicle and fire from the uncovered position.

"I was an open target sitting on top of the Stryker," Sanjurjo said. "I was covering them, and they were covering me."

Sanjurjo, who has spent his entire six-year career with 5-20 Inf., said that he wished his entire company could share the award.

"If it wasn't for those guys, I probably would have been shot," he said. "These are the best guys that I've ever worked with, and 'Charlie Rock' did its job that day."

Common goal unites forces in Afghanistan

By 1st Lt. Ashley Dellavalle
Combined Task Force Rugged

FORWARD OPERATION BASE SHARANA, Afghanistan – Soldiers and contractors from across three continents work together to accomplish a mission, working towards a common goal – the success of Afghanistan and the Afghan people.

Capt. Eric Parthemore, 864th Engineer Battalion, Headquarters Support Company commander, and 1st Lt. Robert Green, engineer equipment platoon leader, Task Force Pacemaker, coordinate with U.S. and Polish soldiers and Afghan contractors to expand the living area for the Polish Battle Group on Forward Operation Base Sharana. Green's horizontal construction platoon, along with the Polish engineer platoon led by Polish Lt. Telezynski, and about 15 Afghan contractors, have moved tens of thousands of cubic yards of dirt to clear the land to create suitable ground to place the force provider tents, where more than 500 Polish soldiers will reside.

"Sometimes we have an Afghan contractor operating a bucket loader, filling American dump trucks driven by Polish soldiers with an American Soldier on the ground directing movement," said Parthemore. "It takes a lot of coordination and mental effort, but it is enjoyable."

The Soldiers and contractors working on the Polish Battle Group living area must pay special attention to safety on the site.

"The three nationalities must have a common understanding of safe equipment operation. Our hand and arm signals are an evolving science," said Parthemore. Safety is one thing that cannot be compromised when working with heavy equipment, he added.

The Polish Battle Group, similar to a large infantry battalion in the U.S. Army, will transfer authority with the 4th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry, 82nd Airborne Division, May 28. Upon transfer of authority, the Polish Battle Group will conduct patrolling and counter-insurgency operations within the Paktika Province.

Polish Lt. Col. Adam Streck, commander of the Polish Battle Group, is confident that his professional soldiers are ready for the mission. Streck said most of the Soldiers have already served in Kosovo and Iraq alongside coalition forces and are excited to be working with coalition troops again in Afghanistan.

"The Polish Battle Group will be protecting Paktika and the Afghans against the Taliban, so we will build them a home to project their power, and help provide a safe environment for the Afghan people," said Green.



Sgt. Tierney Nowland

Sgt. Joshua Wettlin pulls security during a cordon and search in Rashid, Iraq, May 3. Wettlin is with B Co., 1-23 Inf.

Joint clearing operations continue

By Major Kirk Luedeke
4th IBCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs Officer

BAGHDAD – Iraqi security forces, along with Soldiers from the 3rd "Arrowhead" Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division and the 4th Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, continued clearing operations in the Rashid District of southwestern Baghdad May 3, detaining three suspected terrorists and confiscating 10 weapons caches.

Working in conjunction with the 3rd Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 1st National Police Division, Stryker Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment "Tomahawks" and 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment "Patriots" continued to methodically clear areas in the western portion of the Rashid district, detaining three individuals suspected of involvement with an extrajudicial killing cell, while also seizing weapons and ammunition from multiple caches.

Numerous AK-47s, SKS carbine rifles, RPK machine guns, RPG launchers as well as 60, 81 and 82mm mortar rounds were discovered during the second day of operations, along with two sniper rifles, blasting caps and body armor.

"The weapons and ammunition are never going to be used against innocent Iraqi citizens, Iraqi security forces and U.S. Soldiers again," said Col. Ricky D. Gibbs, commander of the 4th Bde., 1st Inf. Div., the unit responsible for the operational area within the Rashid District.

"It is a credit to the professionalism and experience of the Arrowhead Brigade's Soldiers and their leadership that they have played such a prominent role in the operation's early success," Gibbs said.

The operation included about 400 Iraqi national policemen and more than 1,000 U.S. Army Soldiers.

They worked together to keep pressure on those conducting activities against the government and coalition in Iraq.

The units continued the operation May 5 and 6, detaining four more suspected terrorists and confiscating several weapons caches, including one found at what was believed to be an explosively formed projectile construction site – sophisticated weapons designed to defeat U.S. armored vehicles.

Stryker troops from the 1-23 Inf. along with Iraqi national police and Iraqi Army troops, continued the fourth and fifth days of Operation Dragon Fire/Arrowhead Strike 10 to rid the Rashid District of terrorists and criminals and to protect the population.

One of the caches discovered consisted of components used to build EFPs.

"This is a significant find because of the threat EFPs pose," said Col. Ricky

D. Gibbs, commander of the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, whose unit is responsible for the operational area within the Rashid District. "These components will never be assembled into something that can harm others. It also shows how effective the (clearing) operation is at getting after those who aren't acting in the best interests of a safe and secure Iraq."

Also discovered in two days of clearing operations were caches consisting of AK-47 assault rifles, an RPK machine gun, large amounts of 7.62mm ammunition and mortar rounds of varying calibers (81mm, 82mm and 120mm).

The operation included about 200 Iraqi Army troops and national policemen and 1,100 U.S. Army Soldiers working together to keep pressure on those conducting activities against the government and coalition in Iraq.

Patch commemorates unit's transformation as 593rd Corps Sustainment Brigade

By Don Kramer
Northwest Guardian

The ripping sounds of hundreds of Soldiers' patches from their Velcro arm strips Monday, the sounds of Army transformation, marked another change of a major unit designation. Members of the 593rd Corps Support Group rear detachment formed up with all subordinate unit guidons flying to commemorate the organization's reflagging to the 593rd Corps Sustainment Brigade.

The ceremony on North Fort Lewis behind the brigade headquarters mirrored one held May 1 by the main body in Iraq. At the key moment, Soldiers ripped off their old patches and replaced them with sustainment brigade patches with local significance. The backgrounds are dominated by

Mount Saint Helens, recognizing the more than 30 years the brigade has been headquartered at Fort Lewis.

The nonsubdued version of the new patch uses the national colors of red, white and blue to represent valor, purity and loyalty, said 80th Ordnance adjutant, 1st Lt. Mark Haynes. Three spears overlap to form the Roman numeral "9." Five stars commemorate the unit's five major campaigns. Together with the numeral and spears, the symbols form an elaborate "593" on every Soldier's arm.

The commander of the 80th Ordnance Battalion, Lt. Col. Scott J. Lofreddo, officiated as commander of the brigade rear.

"The new patch you wear today," Lofreddo told his Soldiers, "is a reminder of the sacrifices of Soldiers and families of the 593rd from World War II through Vietnam, Somalia, and of course, in Southwest Asia. They also represent the humanitarian relief that we have provided here in the United States...It is you and others just like you who are defending freedom and our way of life here in the United States."

The 593rd participated in 14 campaigns in Vietnam alone from 1966



Jason Kaye

Soldiers from the 593rd Sustainment Brigade change patches during a ceremony at the unit headquarters May 7.

until 1972.

After the ceremony, Lofreddo gathered the brigade around him for informal remarks.

"Everything you do, whether you know it or not, is seen by the folks

downrange and the folks here at Fort Lewis as being something good," he said. "You do things for this nation that everybody else may not know, CNN, everyone in your heart that you are doing good for the

nation...The nation is grateful for your service."

Spc. Kathaleena Shepherd, a human resources specialist in the 80th Ordnance, said the redesignation will be a mixed blessing.

"(It means) more work," said Shepherd. "The unit's going to be PSDR (Personnel Services Delivery Redesign) soon, so we'll pick up a little bit more of that load. Pretty much everything the PSB (personnel services battalion) used to do will fall on the group."

Under coordination among Human Resources Command, the Army G1 and Soldier Support Institute, the core of personnel support migrates lower. Brigade and battalion S1s will inherit 20 new tasks to perform in theater, including casualty reporting, postal operations, reception and replacement operations. Similar methods of "powering down" responsibility will take place throughout the new sustainment brigade, requiring even more teamwork.

"Essentially, it pulls the battalions and the brigade a little closer together," Shepherd said. "It's always good to have a closer unit, because when you deploy, you need it."