

NARRATIVE TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF
ARMY COMMENDATION MEDAL (VALOR)
TO SPC MATTHEW J. SANTONASTASO

SPC Santonastaso distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous conduct in combat operations as a Combat Medic in A Troop, 5th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division on 28 March 2009 in the Rusafa District of Baghdad, Iraq.

At approximately 1500 hours SPC Santonastaso received a WARNORD that Iraqi Security forces had arrested Adel Mashadani, the Al Fadhel Sons of Iraq (SoI) leader and that fighting had erupted between the Fadhel SOI and the Iraqi Army (IA). Specifically, IA Soldiers were cutoff, pinned down and surrounded in Zubaida Square (Grid 38S MB 43703 89700) by enemy fighters positioned in buildings and the narrow streets and alleys all around Fadhel. SPC Santonastaso immediately ensured his weapon, personal equipment and medical equipment were ready and he prepared to move to the fight.

SPC Santonastaso was in the fifth vehicle in the order of march when 3rd Platoon arrived at the fight at the intersection of YUENGLING and WILD (Grid 38S MB 4347 8945) and immediately came under effective small arms, machine-gun and sniper fire from the low and high-rise buildings surrounding the broad intersection. Without regard for his personal safety, SPC Santonastaso dismounted his up-armored HMMWV and remained postured behind his PSG, ready to treat and casualties. While staying protected behind the HMMWV's armor would have been an acceptable course of action, SPC Santonastaso went beyond the call of duty and chose to expose himself to sustained enemy fire to ensure that he could ID casualties anywhere around his platoon. For 60-90 minutes, SPC Santonastaso moved around his position, under constant enemy fire, ensuring his fellow Paratroopers were not wounded and still in the fight. This allowed other IA and CF forces to reinforce the critical position in Fadhel, buying time for his commander and the Iraqi forces to plan and prepare for an action with strategic consequences.

The rescue of IA hostages in Zubaida square was a tactical action with strategic consequences. If the sun had risen on 29 Mar 09 with the Sons of Iraq still holding IA soldiers hostage, it is clear that MG Abdul-Kareem would have followed through on the threat he made to the SoI - that he would "flatten Fadhel." A critical effect of SPC Santonastaso's valor in remaining on the ground and exposed to heavy enemy fire was that his actions not only allowed his command time and space to cajole the IA to re-assault Zubaida Square but his courage also motivated the IA to action against the enemy.

In Zubaida square, surrounded on all sides, SPC Santonastaso dismounted under intense fire and, without any regard for his own personal safety, ran through the barrage of machine gun and small arms fire onto the target building. While under continuous fire for around 30 additional minutes, SPC Santonastaso stood ready to provide medical assistance to any wounded U.S. or IA soldiers. During the battle he provided critical medical care to an IA Soldier who had been trapped inside the burning building and was suffering from smoke inhalation - before escorting him to a safe position. When the rescue was complete and still under fire, SPC Santonastaso ensured his sensitive items were accounted for and prepared to fight back down the YUENGLING gauntlet to the intersection of WILD and YUENGLING.

SPC Santonastaso went on to provide medical care for another 20 hours of combat that included the peaceful handover of additional hostages and allowed the influx of additional IA units to assume security in and around Fadhel.

SPC Santonastaso's valorous actions were critical in securing the population, minimizing collateral damage, motivating the IA to re-assault Zubaida Square, rescuing the IA hostages and turnover of the position to the Iraqi Army. His actions reflect great credit on himself, 5-73 CAV, 3rd Brigade Combat Team of the 82nd Airborne Division, Multi-National Division-Baghdad (1st Cavalry Division) and the United States Army.

NAME (Last, First, Middle Initial)

SANTONASTASO, MATTHEW

SSN

PART IV - RECOMMENDATIONS/APPROVAL/DISAPPROVAL

22. I certify that this individual is eligible for an award in accordance with AR 600-8-22; and that the information contained in Part I is correct.

23. INTERMEDIATE AUTHORITY

a. TO CDR, 5-73RD CAV, 3RD BCT JSS LOYALTY, APO AE 09313

22a. SIGNATURE

b. FROM CDR, A TRP, 5-73RD CAV JSS LOYALTY, APO AE 09313

22b. DATE (YYYYMMDD)

22c. DATE (YYYYMMDD)

d. RECOMMEND:

APPROVAL

DISAPPROVAL

UPGRADE TO:

DOWNGRADE TO:

e. NAME (Last, First, Middle Initial)

FRANK A. RODRIGUEZ

f. RANK

CPT

g. TITLE/POSITION

TROOP COMMANDER

h. SIGNATURE

i. COMMENTS

Treated an Iraqi partner who had been wounded and left for dead. Treated the IA Soldier under an intense fire fight

24. INTERMEDIATE AUTHORITY

a. TO CDR, 3RD BCT, 82ND ABN DIV JSS LOYALTY, APO AE 09313

b. FROM CDR, 5-73RD CAV, 3RD BCT JSS LOYALTY, APO AE 09313

c. DATE (YYYYMMDD)

d. RECOMMEND:

APPROVAL

DISAPPROVAL

UPGRADE TO:

DOWNGRADE TO:

e. NAME (Last, First, Middle Initial)

DAVID W. BUCKINGHAM

f. RANK

LTC

g. TITLE/POSITION

SQUADRON COMMANDER

h. SIGNATURE

i. COMMENTS

SPL SANTONASTASO SAVED LIVES WHILE UNDER INTENSE FIRE. ABSOLUTELY WELL DESERVED

25. INTERMEDIATE AUTHORITY

a. TO

b. FROM

c. DATE (YYYYMMDD)

d. RECOMMEND:

APPROVAL

DISAPPROVAL

UPGRADE TO:

DOWNGRADE TO:

e. NAME (Last, First, Middle Initial)

g. TITLE/POSITION

i. COMMENTS

26. APPROVAL AUTHORITY

a. TO ORDERS ISSUING AUTHORITY

b. FROM CDR, 3RD BCT, 82ND ABN DIV JSS LOYALTY, APO AE 09313

c. DATE (YYYYMMDD)

d. APPROVED

DISAPPROVED

RECOMMEND UPGRADE TO:

DOWNGRADE TO: **AA02**

e. NAME (Last, First, Middle Initial)

TIMOTHY P. MCGUIRE

f. RANK

COL

g. TITLE/POSITION

BRIGADE COMMANDER

h. SIGNATURE

i. COMMENTS

PART V - ORDERS DATA

27a. ORDERS ISSUING HQ
HQ's, 3RD BCT, 82ND ABN DIV

27b. PERMANENT ORDER NO.
127-005

31. DISTRIBUTION
1-File
1-OMPF
1-Unit
3-Individual

28a. NAME OF ORDERS APPROVAL AUTHORITY
SCOTT, KRIS L.

28b. RANK
CW2

28c. TITLE/POSITION
3RD BCT HR TECHNICIAN

29. APPROVED AWARD
ARCOM

28d. SIGNATURE
Kris L. Scott

30. DATE (YYYYMMDD)
20090520