

HEROES

In the Global War on Terror.



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Arkansas Army National Guard Capt. John Vanlandingham

"The Iraqis, to me, were like American soldiers," Capt. Vanlandingham told Army.mil. "We had the duty to help them as much as we would have a fellow American." That is the spirit that has driven much of the training of the Iraqi soldiers who will ultimately be responsible for providing security to their nation. In November of 2004, Vanlandingham and his Arkansas Army National Guard unit found themselves fighting alongside – and risking their lives for – the Iraqi National Guardsmen with whom they were patrolling.

As Vanlandingham's ten vehicle patrol of American and Iraqi forces traveled on a dirt road through the heart of the violent Sunni Triangle, everyone was on watch: The battle of Fallujah had just begun, and tensions were high. Then the convoy made an unscheduled stop, and the ambush was sprung. Insurgents set off two IEDs, one of which disabled two unarmored humvees carrying dozens of Iraqi Guardsmen. Small-arms fire erupted from all directions, and many of the Iraqis were in the line of fire.

Out front, Vanlandingham had managed to escape the attack, but from his vantage point he saw the Iraqis trapped in ditches taking the brunt of the attack – he knew he had to act. Vanlandingham organized those around him, jumped from his vehicle, and ran through heavy fire to personally evacuate the Iraqi Guardsmen. He braved the kill zone – making multiple trips into the center of the ambush to retrieve one final wounded Iraqi and several sensitive weapons. In all, Capt. Vanlandingham moved more than a dozen dead and wounded Iraqis out of the line of fire, before safely leading the Americans and Iraqis back to their base, where they received life-saving medical treatment.

Three Iraqi Guardsmen were killed during the ambush, but many more would have died absent Capt. Vanlandingham's actions. On Aug. 12, 2007, he was awarded the Silver Star for his actions.

Army [story](#);
Arkansas Democrat Gazette [story](#);
Associated Press [story](#)



New Blaine, Ark.
Silver Star recipient

