Specialist Marion D. Pettus III

On combat patrol in Baghdad, Army Specialist Marion D. Pettus III and his team came under attack when an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) exploded. Pettus, who is a medic with the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, noticed that an Iraqi had been hit.

"We were rolling through a route called 'Screaming Lady' and we got hit with an IED. I saw a local (Iraqi) go down and called it out," Pettus said. "My section sergeant decided to turn the patrol around, so we went back and dismounted."

Other coalition forces were already on the scene when Pettus and his team arrived. As he and the medic from the other patrol assisted the Iraqi, another IED went off – secondary explosions are a common tactic of terrorists hoping to kill those responding to the first attack.

Though no one was killed in the second blast, Pettus saw that four soldiers were injured, including one of his sergeants and his fellow medic. He tended to the soldiers and hoisted them into trucks to be evacuated.

Cedar Hill, TN
Bronze Star with "V" recipient

It wasn't until they were heading back that Pettus realized he also had been hit – more than once.

"As we got into the truck on the way to the cache, I felt my leg burning," he said. "I realized that I'd gotten hit in the leg and didn't even know it. We got a bandage put on my leg. We got back to (Forward Operating Base) Liberty, and when I took my Kevlar off and put my hand on top of my helmet, I realized I had a hole in it."

Pettus suffered traumatic brain injury in the second blast, but says he is making great progress with his recovery.

He was awarded the Bronze Star with Valor, Purple Heart and was honored by the USO for the medical expertise, courage, and selflessness he displayed in protecting those around him during combat. Upon receiving his awards, the medic said he was only doing his job.

The recipient's father, Marion D. Pettus Jr., was unable to attend the USO ceremony because, like his son, he too was serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

DoD story