

HEROES

In the War on Terror

Each week the Defense Dept. highlights the military men and women who have gone above and beyond in the global war on terror.



Jan. 31, 2007
Vol. 2, Issue 5



Washington, D.C.
Silver Star recipient

Marine Corps 1st Lt. Elliott L. Ackerman

Insurgents had a relatively free run of Fallujah the six months preceding November 2004. With little or no Coalition presence in the city, they had turned the urban landscape into a warren-like maze of fortified positions, booby traps, and sniper positions. The terrain could not have been more demanding for the Marines called in to clear the city. First, however, they had to establish a foothold, a task that fell in part to then-2nd Lt. Ackerman and his platoon. On November 10th, he and his men entered the city in what became a six-day struggle to open operational lines.

Insurgents attacked from numerous directions as Ackerman's Marines pushed into the city. Twice in the early moments of the shooting, Ackerman braved enemy fire to pull injured Marines to safety -- and then organized their evacuation. But in the midst of the battle, the vehicle sent to recover the injured could not find their position. Ackerman charged from his cover into the open, dodged what his citation calls a "gauntlet of deadly enemy fire," and directed the vehicle to the Marines. Later, as Ackerman and his team were clearing a building, he noticed that his Marines were exposed on a rooftop. After ordering them down, he took their place and began marking targets for tanks as insurgents fired at him from all directions. Despite suffering shrapnel wounds, Ackerman continued to direct the attack, and coordinated four medical evacuations. "There is only one alternative," Lt. Ackerman said later. "It is to do it or not do it." For his leadership and actions, Ackerman was awarded the Silver Star on Jan. 12, 2007. Marine Corps [story](#).



Temecula, Calif.

Army Reserve Capt. Brian S. Freeman

For an adrenaline junkie, few sports offer a greater rush than skeleton: on a tiny sled, the competitor whips headfirst down an ice course at a maximum speed of 80 miles per hour. It is by no means for the faint of heart, which is perhaps why Capt. Freeman was attracted to it. Freeman was part of the Army World Class Athlete Program and competed in bobsled and skeleton at some of the highest levels of both sports. In the spring of 2006, he was deployed to Iraq on an even tougher mission: to act as a liaison between the military and local Iraqis to help rebuild civic institutions in the Shiite holy city of Karbala. He quickly established strong relationships with the governor and citizens of the area. Not only did he help obtain more equipment and training for the Iraqi security forces and additional funding for renovation projects, but he developed personal bonds with those he worked with. When his interpreter died in the line of duty, Freeman helped secure death benefits for the family, and condolence payments that had been previously turned down. He also made arrangements for a Karbala police officer's son to travel to the United States for heart surgery.

On Jan. 20, 2007, Freeman was meeting with Iraqi leaders at a provincial headquarters when insurgents attacked and killed five U.S. soldiers, including Freeman. U.S. Skeleton program manager Steve Peters told ABC News that "Brian will always be remembered for his willingness to ride with any driver so that the driver could gain more valuable experience driving the track, even if that meant crashing a few times." Even at the moment of his death, Freeman was helping a very different set of drivers learn to drive a very different track. ABC News [story](#).