



Arlington, VA
The Bronze Star

CHAPLAIN (MAJOR) DAVID A. BOTTOMS

Army Chaplain (Maj.) David Bottoms is not only a dedicated soldier but also a man of God. He has been in the line of fire on several occasions in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom during two deployments. Bottoms and his unit, 1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery Regiment, saw their share of the good and the bad in 2004. At that time, Task Force 1-7th unit was part of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division.

"Almost seven months into our deployment in Baiji, Iraq, our Task Force 1-7th made some real headway into rebuilding the community into a safer and more secure environment," wrote Bottoms. "We completed key projects such as school buildings and a water plant that greatly enhanced the quality of life in Baiji and Ash Sharqat."

His unit also ensured that the villagers had shelter while construction was underway and provided much needed medical supplies to the clinics. Additionally, Bottoms noted that the Army non-commissioned officers trained a company of competent Iraqi National Guard soldiers.

Conversely, there were times when he – though a chaplain -- faced danger. "Life there was a mixture of joy and sorrow," said Bottoms. "On June 2, 2004, we suffered a car bomb at the front gate which killed 11 Iraqis and wounded 30 others along with two U.S. soldiers. All that some of us could do was pray and keep the last moments of some men's lives as painless as possible," Bottoms continued.

In another incident, Bottoms was participating in one of several relationship building meetings with a local Islamic leader at the Baiji mayor's office when they were interrupted by rocket fire. Windows were blown out, resulting in several minor injuries to some in the meeting.

Bottoms reflects on other times while in Iraq.

"The weekend after Thanksgiving in 2004, things in town were crazy," he said. "I heard an explosion and went to the roof of the Operations Center (at the Forward Operations Base) ... I saw fireballs rising from the city. Our tank platoon was involved in a firefight downtown in the middle of the day."

Thankfully, no U.S. troops were injured. Nevertheless, Bottoms met with the unit to be a sounding board for the troops to talk about the incident.

Understanding his first mission is to minister to soldiers, Bottoms often joined fellow soldiers on the battlefield where he provided individual counseling to more than 100 weary



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servicemembers for marital issues, personal and family matters, grief, crisis intervention, combat stress, morale and spiritual matters.

As a chaplain, he dedicated himself to many hours of prayer to wounded and dying soldiers. He also performed the last rites for many of the fallen.

When soldiers of the Task Force 1-7th left the combat theater, Bottoms personally planned and held a Single Soldier Spiritual Fitness retreat in Garmisch, Germany for 40 soldiers of Charlie Battery who had been in direct combat. "The idea was to help them transition from a wartime mindset and prepare for their reintegration into their respective communities," said Bottoms. This retreat was designed to be spiritually and emotionally uplifting.

While deployed to Iraq, his mission was to support those soldiers who were in battle with the enemy as well as provide spiritual guidance for the lost. For his service, Bottoms was awarded the Bronze Star. Now out of the line of fire, Bottoms serves as a chaplain for the Clinical Pastorate Educational residency program at Walter Reed Medical Center in D.C.

