



Terre Haute, IN
The Bronze Star with 'Valor'

"I noticed that the .50 cal was unloaded, so I loaded it with an ammunition can that I found in the truck and began to engage the enemy positions while my Marines could rally on my position," explained Cole. "When the .50 cal ran out of ammunition, I crawled out of the vehicle, took a M249 automatic weapon from a wounded soldier, and then crawled back up through the Humvee as rounds were slapping the truck."

Cole leveled the M249 on top of the empty .50 cal and began to place bursts into the left over enemy machine gun emplacement. He also directed another Marine to suppress the enemy with grenade fire. Once the enemy machine gun was eliminated, he immediately rendered first aid to the two wounded soldiers until relieved.

Unfortunately, Cole has no idea how the soldiers are doing. His Marine unit was not assigned with the Army.

"I hope they are well and healed," said Cole.

Due to his immediate actions he was not only able to defuse the situation but also coordinated the secure landing zone for a helicopter to perform a medical evacuation for the U.S. casualties. For his bravery and sound leadership, he was awarded the Bronze Star with Valor.

STAFF SERGEANT BART COLE

SSgt Bart Cole enlisted in the Marine Corps after graduation from high school in 1998 and served overseas several times prior to his two deployments in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

On March 24, 2004, while serving as assistant convoy commander, his convoy approached a U.S. Army convoy near Mushahidah, Iraq.

As the lead vehicle in his convoy came along side of a stopped U.S. Army vehicle, three Iraqi males began firing on the stopped vehicle, wounding the U.S. Army soldiers.

Cole and his turret gunner returned fire.

"All I could think of at the time was I hope my Marines and I get to our Army fellows before they get overrun," recalled Cole.

Exposing himself to enemy fire, Cole exited the vehicle and engaged the enemy.

He ran to the Army vehicle, manned the machine gun, and engaged another insurgent who was charging at the wounded soldiers near him. Simultaneously, the Marines began taking fire from a house parallel to the ambush site.

When Cole began receiving small arms fire and machine gun fire, he crawled up through the Army Humvee.

