

MAJOR CRAIG VIETH

U.S. Army Major Craig Vieth served with great distinction as the Headquarters Company Commander from November 10, 2004 to April 17, 2005 while deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan.

Vieth commanded Headquarters Company during the Relief-in-Place, and a series of other operations.

For the majority of the deployment, Vieth was in charge of the rear detachment; he was responsible for all resupply. As the Headquarters Commander for more than 200 infantrymen, medics, and a multitude of combat multipliers, he always kept the mission and needs of soldiers first.

"I pushed supplies to the battalion and also helped take care of the wounded as they'd come through, and helped the battalion from the rear in Kandahar as they moved out," said Vieth.

"His tireless efforts and performance of duty have been exceptional and were instrumental in the performance of the task force," his award citation states.

During numerous combat operations, Vieth spent countless hours acquiring and resourcing numerous supplies and equipment for Soldiers that were forward. Vieth's company always put the needs of the soldiers in the field first, which directly affected the success of Task Force Cacti in stability and support operations in the Zabol Province.

Vieth began the deployment going on patrols and missions.

"That's when I really had a chance to get out into the country and meet the people and really see what the country was like," he said. "The people were a lot like you and I and anyone else in small towns around America. They wanted to live each day and all wished for security and happiness and to be able to raise their families.

Vieth participated in medical missions in which they would bring medical supplies to a location and let the local people come to visit them to get those supplies.

"In the villages outside of Kandahar, there were houses made out of mud. People were really fighting to survive," he said. While out on these missions they'd see fathers out playing with their children, he said, "the kind of stuff you'd see back home."

One of the most challenging parts of the deployment, he said, was in the first few months when they were getting set up and "establishing relationships with the various elders in the town."

Later in the deployment, Vieth served as the leader of the ground Quick Reaction Force (QRF) for over four successful missions. In every instance, Vieth received his mission just prior to infilling into various dangerous areas throughout southern Afghanistan. During one operation, Vieth led a QRF into the town of Solan in the Arghandab Valley. The platoon provided much needed security for the Khaki Afghan police force and two liaison officers that had been ambushed twice in a 24 hour period. The QRF successfully provided security and prevented any further attacks on friendly forces.



U.S. Army Major Craig Vieth earned a Bronze star while serving in Afghanistan during a 2004 - 2005 deployment.

During two operations during voter registration and Afghanistan's Presidential Elections, Vieth played a critical role in tracking and providing minute by minute status reports of the progress being made in the 12 districts of Zabol Province. Vieth provided the command group with the needed situational awareness of where it needed to focus additional efforts in support of the elections. The end result of all his hard work was a successful registration of over 100,000 people in Zabol Province and the first ever freely democratic election to be held in Afghanistan.

"Some of our big challenges as a battalion were the elections and that whole process," he said. "That was a challenge. It spread us real thin. For the most part it went off without a hitch. One company was engaged in serious fighting, but they came out ok." Overall, he said, the elections went very well.

"Vieth is among the very best the Army has to offer. His selfless dedication to mission success and Soldier welfare led to unprecedented success in combat and stability operations during Operation Enduring Freedom," Vieth's award citation states.

Around Christmastime of 2004 it started raining, Vieth said. And it was the first serious rain the region had had in years.

"There were villages being surrounded by water, mud huts being erased," The battalion spend two months on humanitarian efforts, he said, distributing flour and rice to the villages in need. "And that part was challenging because we were sending supplies a lot of different places," he said.

HEROES

Vieth learned the most he said, from working in a counter-insurgency environment

"I wasn't used to the counter insurgency. The learning point I had was how much of the culture you really need to know to operate effectively...The need for cultural understanding was the biggest thing."

"[Vieth's] character, competence, and dynamic leadership contributed to mission success," the citation states.

Vieth earned a Bronze Star for his service during this deployment.

