

### Sergeant Charles Claude Jr.

During a firefight in Mosul, Iraq, Sergeant Charles Claude Jr., United States Army, helped courageously defend his unit against an insurgent ambush, becoming wounded during the fight; for his actions, he was awarded a Bronze Star with Valor.

Sergeant Charles Claude of the United States Army went out on a patrol like any other in Mosul, Iraq, but soon found himself in a life or death struggle that would pin him and his unit against an ambush perpetrated by fanatical terrorists.

On that September morning in 2007, Claude went "outside the wire" as the turret gunner mounted in a M1117 Armored Security Vehicle. Before long, danger was spotted ahead of them as their unit's alert eyes noticed an improvised explosive device (IED), a lethal killer of coalition forces. With Claude's men well aware that every minute they remained stationary they became more vulnerable in this still volatile part of Iraq, they called forward troops to neutralize the hidden explosive as fast as possible.



New York City, NY  
Bronze Star Medal

The moment the IED was disabled, all hell broke loose around the young soldiers. Insurgent fire came pouring in from all directions, with rifle rounds striking the vehicles and rocket-propelled grenades whizzing into their position. Under the hail of fire, Claude did the only thing he could do to survive the day: fire back. And with that, he unleashed the full fury of his machine gun on the attacking terrorists. Two insurgent vehicles – commonly referred to as "technicals" – came under the crosshairs of Claude's weapon and were quickly disabled.

Under the leadership of their First Sergeant, the armored vehicle moved forward through the winding streets of Mosul to drive off the ambush. In hot pursuit of the now scattered attackers, Claude's vehicle came around a corner, only to be hit by a barrage of automatic weapons fire, wounding him and his vehicle commander. The sights of Claude's machine gun was also destroyed by this vicious barrage.

Ignoring his wound, Claude doggedly continued to engage the enemy fighters from his exposed turret, instead of withdrawing into the relative protection of the armored vehicle. In the close-quarters fighting, another insurgent leaped onto Claude's vehicle, threatening the lives of every man in it. With no regard for personal safety, Claude spun his turret towards the enemy, while the driver tried to jostle the enemy off the M1117. Eye to eye with the belligerent, Claude reached for his M-4 battle rifle and fought off the savage attack at point blank range, wounding the insurgent. Minutes after the ambush was launched, all the hostiles now lied dead, wounded, or withdrawn.

When his vehicle commander dismounted and began providing medical care to the wounded enemy, Claude continued to provide defensive cover for his unit while the area was secured, ignoring medical care for his own wound until much later. Reinforcements discovered that the two "technicals" disabled earlier, were mobile weapons caches – weapons that would no longer be in terrorist hands.

Sergeant Claude's courageous actions on that day broke the back of the insurgent's ambush, pushing the initiative back to the Americans' side and saving the lives of many of his fellow troops. Because of his outstanding bravery and disregard for his own safety under such harrowing fire, he was awarded the Bronze Star Medal with Valor.