

Staff Sergeant Gerald M. Flores



Waipahu, Hawaii
Bronze Star

A key component to success in Iraq is enabling an expertly trained Iraqi Army and police force. Marine Corps Staff Sergeant Gerald M. Flores' role as a combat advisor was instrumental in that task.

During Flores' second Iraq tour, from December 2006 to December 2007, he was placed with various brigades in the Iraqi Army in Ramadi, one of the most dangerous cities in Anbar province. Once considered a lost province because of a fervent insurgency, Anbar needed a well-trained Iraqi force. To achieve improved security and lay the foundation for lasting peace required a cultural diplomat in a Marine uniform – Gerald Flores.

Taking charge of some 100 Iraqi troops, the hardened Marine balanced the Corps' grueling training schedule with local customs, such as repeated daily prayer. His leadership helped the two cultures meet in the middle and he turned a mix of "old army" and green recruits into one combat-effective unit.

In one harrowing operation, Flores was brought in to advise a disorganized and fatigued Iraqi company. The company had come under fire, taking many casualties and becoming combat ineffective. Flores took charge in the face of enemy machine gun, small-arms and sniper fire and rallied the unit. He organized an effective defense, allowing the Iraqis to resist the attack and emerge from the battle with newfound skills and confidence. During later operations in the Malaab district of

Ramadi, Flores reinforced an overwhelmed Iraqi force and provided assistance to the clear and hold mission in this former insurgent enclave.

For accumulating more than 250 combat patrols as an embedded advisor to Iraqi units, directly training more than 300 Iraqi troops and his able command presence under fire, Flores was awarded the Bronze Star.

Flores, now back in the United States and looking at the big picture, considers the contributions made by his team of Marine combat advisors as "awesome." The security gains made by Iraqi and Coalition Forces due to the troop surge and Sunni Awakening were like night and day, he said. Exemplifying the character of a Marine, he reflected: "We were all out there as a team... As a team, we did a whole lot."

