

SERGEANT ARRON HALFORD

The first time U.S. Army Reserve Sergeant Arron Halford deployed to Iraq in 2004 was during one of the peaks in attacks against coalition forces. Because Halford had been tasked with providing convoy security for the deployment, it meant he was out on the road a lot.

"It was really bad back then," Halford said of the security conditions on the roads he travelled. "There were lots of IEDs, that was the main concern. That was actually, I'd say, one of the worse periods over there. If you look at the number of attacks against coalition forces that was one of the worst times."

After a long career in the Navy and then the Navy Reserve, Halford had joined the Army Reserve in 2004 as Military Police. The situation on the ground during the 2004 deployment caused the Army to assign Halford to provide security to convoys as they traveled from base to base.

"We would take off on a mission and escort a convoy from [camp] Anaconda up to Mosul, Camp Cedar, Taji," Halford said, describing the long circuitous journeys throughout the country. When they traveled they would transport "everything from retro tires to tank tread. Pretty much anything," he said.

Spending so much time on the roads, Halford was keenly aware of the danger he faced daily, he said.

Despite the danger around them at that time, it wasn't until his next deployment in 2007 - 2008 that Halford encountered true danger on the roads of Iraq.

Halford served during this deployment providing protective services for a Marine Corps Colonel.

During a routine mission on March 29, 2008, Halford was escorting the Colonel from the Ramadi Government Center to Camp Fallujah. Halford was the Truck Commander of the second Humvee in the three-vehicle convoy.

The convoy has almost reached their destination, when the Humvee in which Halford was traveling struck an IED.

The IED had set the vehicle on fire, Halford said, and as he tried to account for the other three passengers in the vehicle, one did not respond. As the Humvee filled with smoke, Halford ordered everyone to evacuate.

"When I tried to do accountability I realized that [the Major] was still inside," he said.

The explosion had forced the Major's seat forward, pinning his legs inside, Halford said.



U.S. Army Reserve Sergeant Arron Halford earned a Bronze Star with "Valor" while serving in Iraq during a 2007 - 2008 deployment.

Grabbing a fire extinguisher from the other vehicle in the convoy, Halford fought to put out the flames so that the Major could be saved from the burning vehicle.

When the fire ignited all the rounds of ammunition in the vehicle, Halford was forced to take cover momentarily, but was then able to resume fighting back the flames to reach the Major who was unconscious and still trapped inside.

Eventually Halford, with the assistance of two fellow servicemembers, was able to extract the Major fully from the burning vehicle.

Despite their efforts, the Major passed away three days later as a result of the trauma of the explosion itself. The Major had chosen to come on the trip because he had wanted to purchase an anniversary gift for his wife, Halford said.

Halford, who was uninjured in the event, earned a Bronze Star medal with "Valor" for his actions on that day.

"I'd rather not have the medal," Halford said. "Because I'd rather have the [Major] still be alive."

"I don't really know if I did anything super-heroic. I just did my job. I did what I wish someone had done if it was me trapped in that Humvee."