

MAJOR JOHN OPALA

When Army Reservist Major John Opala was deployed to Iraq in May 2007, he had no idea the multi-faceted role he would play behind the scenes to help improve safety in the region. One of his primary missions was to constantly improve the Iraqi logistics and sustainment. His leadership also contributed substantially to the mission of developing and sustaining Iraqi Security Forces. Opala worked faithfully with his Iraqi Army and National Police counterparts to help them become more independent.

“Our goal was to increase self-sufficiency as the nation moved towards self-governance,” said Opala who was part of the Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq in Taji.

He successfully increased the tactical and technical proficiency of the Iraqi Army and National Police leadership by coaching, training, and teaching them about the dynamic duties and responsibilities inherent in a professional commissioned and noncommissioned officer corps.

As the executive officer for a Logistics Military Advisory Team, he also supported the Ministries of Defense and Interior by making sure damaged war-fighting vehicles were quickly and efficiently repaired and returned into the fight of the most dangerous streets in and around Baghdad.

“Included in my tasks was transitioning the Iraqi’s largest Wheeled Maintenance Facility, explained Opala. “Basically, I was the U.S. Army liaison between the civilian contractor and



Marshall, WI
The Bronze Star

the Iraqi Army as the facility changed from a U.S. government-funded contractor and transitioned to the Iraqis. I made sure the contractors did their job and provided the Iraqi Army the equipment, parts and training they needed. The training was very important.”

Opala is a soldier who leads from the front. He ensured U.S. and Coalition Forces as well as the Iraqi Army were 100 percent equipped to successfully function and complete their numerous and dynamic war-fighting missions. When necessary, he volunteered to help the Iraqi National Police obtain critically needed spare parts to repair their battle damaged tactical vehicles. He also was actively involved in base operations ensuring a safe environment for all tenants, Coalition Forces and Iraqis.

“My various duties kept me extremely busy, and it was a challenge to devote sufficient time to each responsibility ensuring success,” Opala reflected. “Safety and security were first and foremost in everything we did. We could not take shortcuts but ensured we were ready should any hostile event take place. Regular meetings were held to discuss situations worthy of note and what we could do to keep all of us safe,” said Opala.

When he learned that he would be awarded the Bronze Star for his outstanding leadership, he said “It was a deep-felt honor and appreciation for work that I did. As a major in the Army Reserve, it is a privilege serving my country in this capacity.”

