

First Lieutenant Timothy C. Peterson

Spokane, Washington  
Bronze Star

When Lt. Timothy C. Peterson entered Iraq, ethno-sectarian violence and insurgent attacks had spread across the country and were concentrated on coalition forces in the Sunni area of Anbar Province. As part of the 321<sup>st</sup> Engineer Battalion, Peterson led his platoon on the high-risk assignment of route clearance from September 2006 through September 2007.

He recalled that in his first missions in Ramadi and Fallujah, "We'd only go at night because it was too dangerous during the day," adding that they would be shot at and would find IEDs, almost every night. His soldiers needed to dismantle the IED networks covering the roads around Ramadi, a task that depended on local information. Peterson added that Iraqi citizens "were scared to even come near us" because of the possibility insurgents would kill them as collaborators.

This all changed before Peterson's eyes with the troop surge, which increased U.S. force levels and focused on a counterinsurgency strategy. In the pivotal early phases of the surge, the 321<sup>st</sup> was on an arduous schedule of 24-hour patrols for days on end. North of Ramadi, another platoon was engaged in route clearance, when a powerful IED disabled the lead vehicle. Without hesitation, Peterson and three other members of his unit, mounted-up in their Buffalo MRAP truck and assumed command of the patrol. Pushing the platoon ever deeper into uncharted insurgent territory, Peterson's Buffalo was hit by a series of IED attacks disabling

their vehicle and injuring the four occupants. For this bold decision to edge ever closer to the insurgent capital, despite dire risks, Peterson was awarded the Army Commendation Medal with Valor and his third Purple Heart.

Once recovered from his injuries, Peterson resumed the grueling patrol schedule, which continued after April through the end of his deployment, always in the lead position in the six to seven-vehicle convoys. Peterson considered himself fortunate to witness the huge transformation throughout Ramadi. Dangerous patrols through the streets of Ramadi under the cover of darkness, harassed by gunfire and explosions, were replaced with daytime walks inside the city, where he would be greeted by citizens of all ages. Peterson and his unit would hand the local children soccer balls, candy, and food. Citizens would see the troops coming down the road and run out of their houses to warn Peterson that an IED lay ahead.

As Peterson prepared to leave in October 2007, he left a very different place. He said "things were changing, what we were doing was working ... for the people that lived there, there was a transition." Because of his unit's remarkable success and courage, Peterson was awarded the Bronze Star.

