



Scranton, PA
The Silver Star

Captain Brian Stann

In his Silver Star citation, Marine 2nd Lt. Brian M. Stann is praised for his "zealous initiative, courageous actions and exceptional presence of mind" during seven days of fighting in Iraq.

But Stann, now a captain, is not into fame or self aggrandizement.

"It's not about awards, especially when you're out there," said Stann, 27. "It's about defeating the enemy and getting your boys out alive."

From May 8 to May 14, 2005, Stann was part of Operation Matador with 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marines.

The action started when Stann's platoon was given about 35 minutes' notice that it needed to head to the Ramana Bridge, north of Karbala, he said.

Another unit was supposed to provide a blocking position at the bridge, but when they couldn't make it on time, Stann's platoon was sent to fill the gap.

As it turned out, a lot of the enemy had settled in that area. Stann said his platoon was engaged in a "constant gunfight" until it was relieved, and then he and his Marines had to fight their way back to base.

The worst fighting was May 10, when his platoon was sent back to the bridge to stay and got ambushed on the way, he said.

The insurgents hit Stann's platoon with roadside bombs, rocket-propelled grenades and suicide car bombs, destroying a Humvee and a tank recovery vehicle that was hauling wounded, he said.

"We had a rough night."

Stann's Silver Star citation briefly summarizes his actions during the ambush.

"Second Lieutenant Stann personally directed two casualty operations, three vehicle recovery operations and multiple close air support missions under enemy small arms, machine gun and mortar fire in his 360-degree fight," the citation reads.

Stann didn't want to get into specifics about what he did during the fighting.

"Everyone has done some courageous things," he said. "It's just part of our calling. It's part of our job."

Instead, Stann preferred to talk about his Marines.

Despite the casualties and carnage, they did not panic, he said. They kept their heads, beat back the enemy and evacuated their wounded.

"Because of that, the casualties that we did take did survive," Stann said. "Guys that lost limbs lived. Guys that took shrapnel and things of that nature to the head lived, and they wouldn't have lived if we hadn't have done that."

Throughout their deployment, Stann's Marines focused on their job, whether it meant sleeping in their Humvees on hot nights or manning a machine gun at 2 a.m., he said.

Stann, who was born at Yokota Air Base in Japan and then moved to Scranton, Pa., said his Silver Star represents what the Marines under his command accomplished.

"They executed flawlessly, and we're talking 19- to 20-year-old kids, and these are tougher situations than 90 percent of Americans will face," he said.

Excerpt from article by Jeff Schogol, Stars and Stripes Heroes, June 14, 2008

