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'CAJUN MOUSETRAP' SENDS V CORPS SOLDIERS ON NIGHT MISSION AGAINST ANTI-IRAQI FORCES IN SAMARRA

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PATROL BASE RAZOR, SAMARRA, Iraq —In an operation dubbed "Cajun Mousetrap III," Soldiers of V Corps' Task Force Danger conducted an overnight raid here August 13.



SGT 1ST CLASS CHUCK JOSEPH
1st Lt. Warren Wessling,
platoon leader with V Corps'
Bravo Company, 1st Battalion,
26th Infantry Regiment, 2nd
Brigade Combat Team, checks
his equipment before putting on
his combat gear in preparation
for a night mission as part of
operation Cajun Mousetrap III in
Samarra, Iraq.

The mission was designed to assess the capabilities of anti-Iraqi forces in the city and clear roads, said Capt. William Rockefeller, commander of Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment.

He stressed that the operation was a "limited attack mission." His Soldiers were to clear roads blocked by anti-Iraqi forces and fire at enemy positions if fired upon.

Pfc. Ryan Howell, a Bravo Company Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle gunner from Toledo, Ohio, said he was literally pumped up for the mission. He emerged from the

unit's weight room here sweating from a workout.

"I like to lift before a mission," Howell said. "It's been too long since we've been in the city. I'm ready to go."

"We're always ready to go," added 1st Lt. Warren Wessling, platoon leader for Bravo Company's 2nd platoon.

Sgt. Nicholas J. Roha, an M1A1 Abrams tank gunner assigned to the 1st Battalion, 77th Armor and attached to Bravo Company, spent his down time before the mission relaxing.

"I feel pretty good," Roha said. "All of us have already been through a lot of combat, so we know how we react."



SALEH TURKI SALEH

Tracer rounds light up the night sky over Samarra, Iraq as Soldiers of V Corps' Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team engage anti-Iraqi forces August 13.

He and his counterparts double-checked their weapons, night vision equipment and other gear, and filed out into the dark.

Patrol Base Razor sits on the banks of the Tigris River directly across from Samarra. On the roof of the command post, radio traffic gave a play-by-play of the mission.

Rockefeller's company maneuvered across a bridge from the west side of the Tigris using heavy machine gun fire and several vehicle-launched wire-guided missiles to clear roadways of obstacles, according to reports.

Once in the city, the company responded to fire from enemy positions with overwhelming force. Explosions lit the city as tracer rounds converged on each other, reflecting on the Tigris. Gunfights were in progress. As fire from one location ceased, radio traffic indicated that an Alpha or Bravo Company unit had passed an objective and was moving on to the next.

AH-64 Apache helicopter gunships from V Corps' 1st Battalion, 1st Aviation aided the counterattacks with 30mm cannon fire, Rockefeller later said.

The peak of the resistance came from a building that once served as headquarters for elements of Saddam Hussein's regime.

An hour into the battle, Samarra went dark. The only light came from sporadic firefights on the city's streets.

A voice over the radio told listeners to take cover. A white flash and orange fireball preceded an explosion that jarred buildings more than a kilometer and a half away.

"A 500-pound bomb from an Air Force jet just finished off that enemy position," announced another voice from the radio.

Alpha Company completed the sweep from the north and left the city by the route cleared by Bravo Company, said 1st Lt. Scott Gilman, A Company executive officer.

Fighting its way through as its sister company pulled out, Alpha Soldiers met an equal amount of resistance, and destroyed two rocket-propelled grenade teams, said Capt. Michael Jurick, Task Force 1-26 liaison officer.

Neither company suffered any casualties in the operation, the captain said.

"We met our objectives and everybody came back," Rockefeller said. "That's excellent."

