Additional Material: Ground Combat in OIF in April 2003

The U.S. military and allied forces launched their invasion of Iraq on March 19, 2003. In the face of the large invasion and its overwhelming firepower, most units from the Iraqi Army crumbled in the face of the overwhelming American firepower. However, heated combat did occur in some sectors. A little more than two weeks later, on April 4, 2003, near Baghdad International Airport, a large Iraqi force attacked Sergeant First Class Paul Ray Smith and other soldiers of Bravo Company, 11th Engineer Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division. The Iraqi enemy threatened to annihilate the Americans. The Iraqis occupied decisive positions from which they could sweep the Americans. SFC Smith stood his ground, fired three boxes of .50-caliber machine gun ammunition at the Iraqis, and endured several wounds from enemy small arms. He was found dead at his machine gun as the engagement ended.

Two years later in 2005 at the White House, Paul Ray Smith’s 11 year-old son received his father’s posthumous Medal of Honor from President George W. Bush. The citation tells what happened:

Sergeant First Class Smith was engaged in the construction of a prisoner of war holding area when his Task Force was violently attacked by a company-sized enemy force. Realizing the vulnerability of over 100 soldiers, Sergeant First Class Smith quickly organized a hasty defense consisting of two platoons of soldiers, one Bradley Fighting Vehicle and three armored personnel carriers. As the fight developed, Sergeant First Class Smith braved hostile enemy fire to personally engage the enemy with hand grenades and anti-tank weapons, and organized the evacuation of three wounded soldiers from an armored personnel carrier struck by a rocket propelled grenade and a 60 mm mortar round. Fearing the enemy would overrun their defenses, Sergeant First Class Smith moved under withering enemy fire to man a .50 caliber machine gun mounted on a damaged armored personnel carrier. In total disregard for his own life, he maintained his exposed position in order to engage the attacking enemy force. During this action, he was mortally wounded. His courageous actions helped defeat the enemy attack, and resulted in as many as 50 enemy soldiers killed, while allowing the safe withdrawal of numerous wounded soldiers. Sergeant First Class Smith’s extraordinary heroism and uncommon valor are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, the Third Infantry Division “Rock of the Marne,” and the United States Army.
Smith was laid to rest in Arlington National Cemetery. Several buildings at Forts Leonard Wood, Stewart, and Benning are memorialized in his name.

**Short Bibliography**


**Army Engineer Divers Help Relief Effort in Haiti, January–March 2010**

On January 12, 2010, a massive earthquake rocked Port-au-Prince in Haiti. It killed at least 250,000 Haitians, injured 250,000, and left another 500,000 homeless. The quake also demolished the main pier in the city’s harbor. Without that pier in operation, the offloading of
humanitarian supplies would be delayed. This catastrophe drew aid from the United States and other nations and organizations.

At that time, the U.S. Army’s 544th Engineer Dive Team was conducting a training exercise in the Caribbean. The U.S. Southern Command diverted the 544th to Port-au-Prince to assess the damage to the pier and begin rehabilitation as part of Operation UNIFIED RESPONSE. Arriving on January 18th, the Americans found that more than half of the 1,000-foot pier was damaged beyond repair, however some 400 feet could be rehabilitated. Once in operation, the pier could receive the desperately needed medical and construction supplies.

Seventeen Army Engineer divers spent the next 10 weeks repairing or completely reconstructing 234 piles (pillars that held up the pier). Each of these needed to be reconnected to the pier by replacing reinforced concrete caps. The divers faced environmental hazards caused by toxic water and harsh conditions in Port-au-Prince’s harbor. Equipment breakdowns and weather changes also slowed progress. Nevertheless, the Engineer divers rehabilitated the 400-foot section of the pier by March 18, 2010. Ships then docked and used it to offload humanitarian supplies for the suffering Haitian people. Each of the divers in the 544th logged about 350 hours of bottom time. The U.S. Navy provided logistical support to enable the Army divers to accomplish their mission. Even in time of war in two distant theaters in Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. military could still project the manpower and material in disaster relief efforts such as this one in Haiti.

**Short Bibliography**