

a tiny hill about 50 to 75 meters from the base. Of those nine, five died, and at least three others—Spc. Tyler Stafford among them—were wounded.

When the attack began, Stafford grabbed his M-240 machine gun off a north-facing sandbag wall and moved it to an east-facing sandbag wall.

Moments later, RPGs struck the north-facing wall, knocking Stafford out of the fighting position and wounding another soldier.

Stafford thought he was on fire so he rolled around, regaining his senses. Nearby, Cpl. Gunnar Zwilling, who later died in the fight, had a stunned look on his face.

Immediately, a grenade exploded by Stafford, blowing him down to a lower terrace at the observation post and knocking his helmet off. Stafford put his helmet back on and noticed how badly he was bleeding.

Cpl. Matthew Phillips was close by, so Stafford called to him for help.

Phillips was preparing to throw a grenade and shot a look at Stafford that said, "Give me a second. I gotta go kill these guys first."

This was only about 30 to 60 seconds into the attack.

Kneeling behind a sandbag wall, Phillips pulled the grenade pin, but just after he threw it an RPG exploded at his position. The tail of the RPG smacked Stafford's helmet. The dust cleared. Phillips was slumped over, his chest on his knees and his hands by his side. Stafford called out to his buddy three or four times, but Phillips never answered or moved.

"When I saw Phillips die, I looked down and was bleeding pretty good, that's probably the most scared I was at any point," Stafford said.

"Then I kinda had to calm myself down and be like, 'All right, I gotta go try to do my job.'"

The soldier from Parker, Colo., loaded his 9 mm handgun, crawled up to their fighting position, stuck the pistol over the sandbags and fired.

Stafford saw Zwilling's M-4 rifle nearby so he loaded it, put it on top of the sandbag and fired. Another couple RPGs struck the sandbag wall Stafford used as cover. Shrapnel pierced his hands.

Stafford low-crawled to another fighting position where Cpl. Jason Bogar, Sgt. Matthew Gobble and Sgt. Ryan Pitts were located. Stafford told Pitts that the insurgents were within grenade-tossing range. That got Pitts' attention.

With blood running down his face, Pitts threw a grenade and then crawled to the position from where Stafford had just come. Pitts started chucking more grenades.

The firefight intensified. Bullets cut down tree limbs that fell on the soldiers. RPGs constantly exploded.

Back at Stafford's position, so many bullets were coming in that the soldiers could not poke their heads over their sandbag wall. Bogar stuck an M-249 machine gun above the wall and squeezed off rounds to keep fire on the insurgents. In about five minutes, Bogar fired about 600 rounds, causing the M-249 to seize up from heat.

At another spot on the observation post, Cpl. Jonathan Ayers laid down continuous fire from an M-240 machine gun, despite drawing small-arms and RPG fire from the enemy. Ayers kept firing until he was shot and killed.

Cpl. Pruitt Rainey radioed the FOB with a casualty report, calling for help. Of the nine soldiers at the observation post, Ayers and Phillips were dead, Zwilling was unaccounted for, and three were wounded.

Additionally, several of the soldiers' machine guns couldn't fire because of damage. And they needed more ammo.

Rainey, Bogar and another soldier jumped out of their fighting position with the third

soldier of the group launching a shoulder-fired missile.

All this happened within the first 20 minutes of the fight.

Platoon leader 1st Lt. Jonathan Brostrom and Cpl. Jason Hovater arrived at the observation post to reinforce the soldiers. By that time, the insurgents had breached the perimeter of the observation post.

Gunfire rang out, and Rainey shouted, "He's right behind the sandbag."

Brostrom could be heard shouting about the insurgent as well.

More gunfire and grenade explosions ensued. Back in the fighting position, Gobble fired a few quick rounds. Gobble then looked to where the soldiers were fighting and told Stafford the soldiers were dead.

Of the nine soldiers who died in the battle, at least seven fell in fighting at the observation post.

The insurgents then started chucking rocks at Gobble and Stafford's fighting position, hoping that the soldiers might think the rocks were grenades, causing them to jump from the safety of their fighting hole.

One rock hit a tree behind Stafford and landed directly between his legs.

He braced himself for an explosion. He then realized it was a rock.

Stafford didn't have a weapon, and Gobble was low on ammo.

Gobble told Stafford they had to get back to the FOB. They didn't realize that Pitts was still alive in another fighting position at the observation post. Gobble and Stafford crawled out of their fighting hole.

Gobble looked again to where the soldiers had been fighting and reconfirmed to Stafford that Brostrom, Rainey, Bogar and others were dead.

Gobble and Stafford low-crawled and ran back to the FOB. Coming into the FOB, Stafford was asked by a sergeant what was going on at the observation post. Stafford told him all the soldiers there were dead.

Stafford lay against a wall, and his fellow soldiers put a tourniquet on him.

From the OP, Pitts got on the radio and told his comrades he was alone.

Volunteers were asked for to go to the OP. SSG Jesse Queck sums up the reaction to the call: "When you ask for volunteers to run across an open field to a reinforced OP that almost everybody is injured at, and everybody volunteers, it feels good."

There were a lot of guys that made me proud, putting themselves and their lives on the line so their buddies could have a chance."

At least three soldiers went to the OP to rescue Pitts, but they suffered wounds after encountering RPG and small-arms fire, but Pitts survived the battle.

At that time, air support arrived in the form of Apache helicopters, A-10s and F-16s, performing bombing and strafing runs.

The whole FOB was covered in dust and smoke, looking like something out of an old Western movie.

"I've never seen the enemy do anything like that," said Sgt. Jacob Walker, who was medically evacuated off the FOB in one of the first helicopters to arrive. "It's usually three RPGs, some sporadic fire and then they're gone . . . I don't where they got all those RPGs. That was crazy."

Two hours after the first shots were fired, Stafford made his way—with help—to the medevac helicopter that arrived.

"It was some of the bravest stuff I've ever seen in my life, and I will never see it again because those guys," Stafford said, then paused.

"Normal humans wouldn't do that. You're not supposed to do that—getting up and firing back when everything around you is popping and whizzing and trees, branches com-

ing down and sandbags exploding and RPGs coming in over your head . . . It was a fist-fight then, and those guys held 'em off."

Stafford offered a guess as to why his fellow soldiers fought so hard.

"Just hardcoreness I guess," he said. "Just guys kicking ass, basically."

"Just making sure that we look scary enough that you don't want to come in and try to get us."

Jeff Emanuel summed the fight up very well:

"Perhaps the most important takeaway from that encounter, though, is the one that the mainstream media couldn't be bothered to pay attention long enough to learn: that, not for the first time, a contingent of American soldiers that was outnumbered by up to a twenty-to-one ratio soundly and completely repulsed a complex, pre-planned assault by those dedicated enough to their cause to kill themselves in its pursuit."

That kind of heroism and against-all-odds success is and has been a hallmark of America's fighting men and women, and it is one that is worthy of all attention we can possibly give it."

Of the original 45 paratroopers, 15 were wounded and The Sky Soldiers lost 9 killed in action in the attack. They were:

1LT Jonathan Brostrom of Aiea, Hawaii
SGT Israel Garcia of Long Beach, California
SPC Matthew Phillips of Jasper, Georgia
SPC Pruitt Rainey of Haw River, North Carolina
SPC Jonathan Ayers of Snellville, Georgia
SPC Jason Bogar of Seattle, Washington
SPC Sergio Abad of Morganfield, Kentucky
SPC Jason Hovater of Clinton, Tennessee
SPC Gunnar Zwilling of Florissant, Missouri.

Of the 9 that were lost, Sgt. Walker says:

"I just hope these guys' wives and their children understand how courageous their husbands and dads were. They fought like warriors."

They fought like warriors.

Last week, there were 9 funerals in the United States. 9 warriors were laid to rest. 9 warriors who had given their all for their country.

All proud members of a brotherhood that will carry on in their name. They fought and died in what most would consider impossible circumstances, and yet they succeeded. A nameless fight in a distant war which, until you understand the facts, could be spun as a defeat. It wasn't. And it is because of the pride, courage and fighting spirit of this small unit that it was, in fact, a victory against overwhelming odds. And there's little doubt, given that pride and given that fighting spirit, that they'll be back to reestablish the base, this time with quite a few more soldiers just like the ones who "kicked ass" the last time there.

HONORING THE SERVICE OF JUDY GILBERT-GOULD AND HER WORK WITH THE GREATER MIAMI JEWISH FEDERATION

HON. ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 9, 2008

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to honor one of south Florida's great citizens, Judy Gilbert-Gould. She has spent most of her life working on behalf of the Greater Miami Jewish Federation. She has spent a lifetime of service to the community. For the past 25 years, Judy has been advocating for equality and respect for Jews across the globe.

Judy's desire to serve and lifelong commitment to helping those in need was spurred by her father, the late Stanley C. Myers, who founded the Greater Miami Jewish Federation in his backyard in 1939. Before joining the federation full-time, Judy worked as director of Victim-Witness Services at the Florida State attorney's office, community services director for the Miami Beach Redevelopment Agency, and as executive director of the American Jewish Congress.

Judy's dedication not only led her to help those in her community, but she also became a voice for many around the world. She worked on behalf of Soviet Jews who were trying to escape the horrors of communism by fleeing to Israel. She worked closely with the Florida delegations in the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate to encourage our Nation's strong partnership with Israel, as well as to denounce the genocide in Sudan and to care for Holocaust survivors.

Judy has received awards from the national Council of Jewish Women, the city of Miami Beach, and from Jewish Community Services of South Florida, to name a few. I am proud to be her representative in Congress. Judy serves as an example for countless individuals throughout south Florida. I am sure she will continue on with her mission to empower those most vulnerable among us.

LINCOLN'S JOURNEY OF REMEMBRANCE

HON. BARON P. HILL

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 9, 2008

Mr. HILL. Madam Speaker, this year marks the 200th anniversary of the birth of President Abraham Lincoln, one of our Nation's greatest Presidents. Our Nation began a three-year celebration this year honoring Lincoln's life. This bicentennial celebration includes a number of events throughout the Nation—including events in my southern Indiana congressional district, where Lincoln grew from a young boy to a man between 1816 and 1830. Throughout Lincoln's formative years in southern Indiana, he experienced a number of life-changing events including the tragic loss of his mother, Nancy Hanks Lincoln, and his sister, Sarah Lincoln Grigsby.

One of the events commemorating President Lincoln's time in Indiana is the recreation of his 1828 flatboat trip to New Orleans, Louisiana, where he delivered a load of produce for a local merchant. Popular lore indicates that it was on this trip that Lincoln witnessed a slave auction, helping to shape his views on the practice of slavery. The voyage also illustrates Lincoln's enterprising nature at a relatively young age.

The recreation of this journey will include 22 stops over 27 days down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers in eight States: Indiana, Kentucky, Illinois, Missouri, Arkansas, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Louisiana. At each stop, the flatboat crew will educate citizens about the importance of Abraham Lincoln's legacy, as well as increasing awareness of the Abraham Lincoln historical sites in southern Indiana, including the Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial in Lincoln City, Indiana.

The flatboat journey, dubbed Lincoln's Journey of Remembrance, will begin today, September 9, 2008, with a ceremony in Rockport, Indiana. The ceremony will include remarks by State and local officials, as well as patriotic musical performances. Hundreds of residents and school children will witness the event, and dignitaries will join crew members for the first leg of the voyage to Owensboro, Kentucky. The Rockport Post Office will also issue a commemorative postmark cancellation stamp to commemorate the occasion.

Lincoln's Journey of Remembrance will reach out to citizens that otherwise would not have known or experienced an Abraham Lincoln bicentennial event. The chance to educate individuals outside Kentucky, Indiana, Illinois, and Washington, DC, cannot be undervalued and is one of the primary responsibilities for the bicentennial celebration. I am proud that this recreation, which also recreates a similar 1958 trip, was developed by my fellow Hoosiers.

This project would have not been possible without the assistance of Mr. Ron Drake, the flatboat owner and project underwriter, as well as several local and regional business and civic contributors. On behalf of my constituents, I wish to thank and commend these individuals and organizations. Special tribute must also be paid to the Lincoln's Journey of Remembrance Organizing Committee for their dedication and hard work, which ranged from raising funds to support the voyage to physically refitting the flatboat for this adventure. It has been a pleasure to work with them to facilitate this voyage.

It is an honor and privilege to represent Rockport and the Abraham Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial in Congress. It is my sincere hope that other Members of Congress and citizens from across the Nation will participate in the many planned public events commemorating President Lincoln. I congratulate the community on organizing this celebration and wish the crew Godspeed.

HONORING THE SAGINAW FIRE DEPARTMENT

HON. DALE E. KILDEE

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 9, 2008

Mr. KILDEE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the Saginaw Michigan Fire Department. The Department celebrated 150 years of protecting the public at a celebration on September 6th in Saginaw.

The idea for a fire department in Saginaw was born in 1854 as the result of a tragic fire that year. Business leaders in the South and East Villages of Saginaw held initial organization meetings in 1857 and the fire department became operational in 1858. Originally a volunteer department with one Engine House, the first career fire fighters were employed full-time in the 1880s.

As the City of Saginaw grew so did the fire department. There are now four fire stations and the department is a member of the Regional Response Team Network created to respond to hazardous materials incidents. The

Saginaw Fire Department employs technology in fighting fires through the use of ISI Breathing Air System, thermal imaging equipment, and onboard computerization in command vehicles. They also utilize a six-story fire-training tower.

The Saginaw Fire Department is active in fire prevention. They conduct fire safety education, maintain an Insurance Services Office insurance classification 3, enforce Fire Codes, and operate a Fire Safety House. The Saginaw Fire Department is committed to providing the highest level of service to the citizens of Saginaw.

Madam Speaker, I ask the House of Representatives to join me in congratulating Chief E. Dean Holland and the men and women of the Saginaw Fire Department for 150 years of protecting and safeguarding the public. Their courage and dedication are an inspiration to the community and may they continue their diligent service in safety for many, many years to come.

HONORING THE 130TH ANNIVERSARY OF SECOND MORNING STAR MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

HON. SANFORD D. BISHOP, JR.

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 9, 2008

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Second Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church in Attapulgus, Georgia, which for the past 130 years, has been a beacon of hope and a sacred place of worship for many in the Second Congressional District.

According to a warranty deed dated February 11, 1878, Second Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church has existed at approximately the same location since its founding. In addition to providing a place of worship, the site also served as a school house for African-American children in the community at the beginning of the 20th century—an invaluable resource at a time in our Nation's history when education for African-Americans was a rare thing.

Building of the current structure was completed in 1956, under the Reverend J.L. Wingfield, a faithful servant of God and one of the church's thirteen pastors during its long and venerable history. The longest-serving pastor, Reverend C.D. Hammonds, served Christ, his community and the church for thirty wonderful years. The church's current pastor, Reverend Randall Hines, is in his seventh year and has overseen a large amount of growth, as well as an expansion of the sanctuary.

Second Morning Star now has worship services every Sunday, and is able to spread the word with the glorious sound of four choirs, Christian education classes for new members, and different ministries which serve every sector of the congregation.

Madam Speaker, it indeed is an honor and a privilege to know this church is in my district. I am proud to be able to serve Second Morning Star Church, and wish its members many more years of blessed service to their Lord and community.