



Staff Sergeant David G. Bellavia

MEDAL OF HONOR

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

In a 25 June 2019 White House ceremony, President Donald J. Trump presented former Army Staff Sgt. David Bellavia with the Medal of Honor for his heroic service as a squad leader in support of Operation Phantom Fury on the night of 10 November 2004 in Fallujah, Iraq. By coincidence, 10 November 2004 also happened to be Bellavia's twenty-ninth birthday.

Bellavia's unit, 3rd Platoon, Company A, 2nd Battalion, 2nd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, was tasked with clearing out twelve buildings occupied by insurgents. The soldiers began kicking in doors, searching and clearing houses, and destroying enemy weapons. The first nine buildings were clear of the enemy and easily secured, but the tenth revealed enemy troops hidden behind concrete barricades who quickly opened fire on Bellavia's unit.

Bellavia assumed control of the situation; he provided suppressive fire while his men evacuated the building, and he only exited the building once all of his men had left. However, enemy fire still rained down from the building's roof, and even when a Bradley Fighting Vehicle arrived to help suppress the enemy fire and drive the insurgents further into the building, Bellavia wanted to ensure that no enemy remained alive.

He reentered the house, followed only by *TIME* magazine reporter Michael Ware, and killed an insurgent poised to fire a rocket-propelled grenade at his unit. Bellavia continued fighting through the building, killing three other assailants and wounding another before becoming badly wounded himself.

In the end, Bellavia's heroic intervention resulted in the deaths of four insurgents and a badly wounded fifth. With blatant disregard for his own safety, Bellavia's unselfish actions saved the lives of his platoon members. Those actions were noted during the ceremony as "in keeping with the finest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon [Bellavia] and the United States Army."

Bellavia bears the unique distinction as the first living Iraq War veteran to receive the Medal of Honor. During the ceremony, Trump commented that Bellavia "exemplifies the same warrior ethos that gave his grandfather and all the heroes of Normandy the strength to defeat evil exactly seventy-five years ago."

On 26 June 2019, senior leaders from the Department of Defense and the Army again recognized Bellavia during a Hall of Heroes induction ceremony at the Pentagon. ■

