

Summary of Action

Sergeant Matthew T. Abbate

For extraordinary heroism while serving as a Scout Sniper Section Leader, Scout Sniper Platoon, Headquarters and Service Company, 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, Regimental Combat Team 2, 2d Marine Division (Forward), II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) Afghanistan, on 14 October 2010 in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM.

At 1330 on 14 October 2010, Sergeant Abbate, four of his snipers, and two Combat Engineers joined 3d squad, 2d platoon, Company K, 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, and formed a dismounted Quick Reaction Force (QRF) from Patrol Base Fires. The QRF was quickly formed to assist another dismounted element that was in contact with enemy forces in the northern green zone. After moving northwest through several hundred meters of open, muddy terrain, Sergeant Abbate and his sniper team halted near a canal filled with shallow water. As Sergeant Abbate prepared to send a small reconnaissance element across the river, enemy forces attacked from prepared fighting positions. Unbeknownst to Sergeant Abbate, enemy fighters had anticipated the Marines' actions and laid a well prepared ambush for the QRF. The Marines were in an area with multiple improvised explosive devices concealed in the ground, in the courtyard, and doorways of a nearby structure. The enemy likely anticipated that their direct fire weapons would drive the Marines into areas where they had previously laid improvised explosive devices. When the enemy initiated their ambush, the first Marine to assume his sector of fire on the bank of the canal detonated a pressure plate improvised explosive device as he assumed a prone firing position. The Marine's torso took the brunt of the explosion, and his M249 Squad Automatic Weapon burst into pieces scattering shrapnel throughout the length of the canal, some of which embedded in the leg of the patrol's Squad Leader.

Concurrently, heavy and accurate medium machine gun and small arms fire began to impact in and around the canal from multiple enemy firing positions in a tree line approximately 200 meters from the patrol. Sergeant Abbate responded to the initial contact by returning accurate fire and directing the fire of others onto the enemy. For most of the Marines, this was their first combat experience. Some, had difficulty processing the shock and violence they were experiencing. Sergeant Abbate repeatedly ran up and down the canal for several minutes to assign sectors of fire and engage the enemy with his Mk-11 Sniper Rifle with deadly accuracy.

With a base of fire established, Sergeant Abbate played a key role in locating and treating the casualties from the improvised explosive device strike. During his casualty assessment, he came upon the Marine who had detonated the improvised explosive device. The Marine was critically injured and almost fully submerged in the shallow water of the canal. Two Marines who were already in the water with the casualty and they were attempting to treat his wounds. Sergeant Abbate, realizing that the casualty was in danger of drowning, rushed into the water to assist the two Marines. Under Sergeant Abbate's direction, the three of them managed to drag the wounded Marine out of the canal, where Sergeant Abbate further assessed his condition. The Marine was not breathing, his left arm had been amputated, and he was bleeding heavily. Sergeant Abbate instructed a Marine to assist him in providing cardio-pulmonary resuscitation and he directed a tourniquet be applied to the wounded Marines arm. Once the tourniquet was fastened, Sergeant Abbate ordered a Marine to continue providing first aid and directed the aid and litter team to continue the attempt to restore the casualty's breathing.

Sergeant Abbate returned to directing the firefight once he was satisfied with the care provided to the casualty. Sergeant Abbate located his Radio Operator and ordered him to request an urgent medical evacuation while he organized a counterattack, all while continuing to move up and down the canal, firing his weapon with deadly accuracy and directing the fire of the rest of the Marines.

As he moved down the line, Sergeant Abbate found a Marine from his sniper team applying a tourniquet to the wounded Squad Leaders shrapnel-ridden leg. Providing assistance, Sergeant Abbate secured the tourniquet on the Squad Leaders leg before directing a Corpsman to take over for him. Continuing to move amongst the pinned down squad, and yet again exposing himself to enemy fire, Sergeant Abbate located a squad automatic weapon gunner firing at the enemy. Sergeant Abatte realized that the majority of the enemy fire was now coming from the west, Sergeant Abbate ordered the Marine to secure the western flank of the canal. With the enemy to the west suppressed, Sergeant Abbate continued to organize a defense while the casualties were treated.

While moving to cover, a member of the squad suffered an Improvised Explosive Device strike near a walled compound, the second strike sustained by the Marines in the QRF. The improvised explosive device was in the doorway of the nearest compound, and a Marine had detonated the device, amputating both legs. Knowing that there were likely more devices placed

around the area, Sergeant Abbate ordered a combat engineer to clear a route to the most recent casualty. The combat engineer refused the order, so Sergeant Abbate grabbed a mine detector and swept a safe path to the compound. As the Corpsman was moving to the wounded Marines position to provide aid, he struck a third Improvised Explosive Device that amputated both the Corpsman's legs. Once again placing himself at the point of friction, Sergeant Abbate led the effort to save the Corpsman's life by using the mine detector to sweep a path to him. Upon arriving at the Corpsman's side Sergeant Abbate, assisted by another Marine, applied tourniquets to both the Corpsman's severed legs.

With the casualties stabilized, Sergeant Abbate assembled a few nearby Marines and led a counterattack out of the compound in order to secure a hasty medical evacuation landing zone. Locating a Combat Engineer, Sergeant Abbate ordered him to sweep a safe path to the west so that he and other Marines could follow him and establish landing zone security. The engineer hesitated, but Sergeant Abbate provided words of encouragement. The engineer assumed point with Sergeant Abbate and several Marines following close behind him, delivering devastating fires on the enemy as Sgt Abbate continued to direct the fires of the remaining Marines.

As the group of Marines maneuvered toward the site of the hasty landing zone, they were met once again with heavy enemy fire. Sergeant Abbate directed the Marines into strong point security positions around the large open field, focusing the Squad Automatic Weapons fires on the heavy accurate enemy fires from the west. With security and a base of suppressive fire established, Sergeant Abbate returned to the remainder of the squad to help transport the casualties to the landing zone. As the helicopter began to land, Sergeant Abbate again put himself at risk by exposing himself to the enemy using a mine detector to sweep a path to it.

With a safe lane established, he directed the actions of the aid and litter team and assisted them in transporting the four casualties onto the helicopter. While the helicopter was in the landing zone, enemy fire intensified and two enemy Rocket-Propelled Grenade teams appeared in a nearby tree line to engage the helicopter. Sergeant Abbate delivered effective fire and directed the fire of others onto the new threat. With the enemy fires persisting, Sergeant Abbate moved into the open in order to draw the enemy's fire away from the helicopter and onto himself. Fully exposed to enemy fire, Sgt Abbate effectively engaged the enemy with an M4 Carbine. Sgt Abbate's actions had direct effects on the enemy Rocket-Propelled Grenade teams

who were now forced to fire their rockets under heavy Marine suppressive fire, denying their ability to take well-aimed shots. As a direct result of Sgt Abbate's actions, the helicopter safely extracted the casualties.

Once the casualties were safely extracted, Sergeant Abbate planned and led the squads maneuver back to friendly lines. Under constant enemy harassing fire, Sergeant Abbate directed the fire and movement of his unit as they maneuvered several hundred meters over open ground toward friendly lines. Sergeant Abbate was the last Marine to enter friendly lines at Patrol Base Fires.

By his decisive actions, bold initiative, and complete dedication to duty, Sergeant Abbate reflected great credit upon himself and upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the United States Naval Service. Sergeant Abbate was killed in Action during an engagement with enemy forces on 02 December 2010.