

Citation

For heroic achievement in connection with combat operations involving conflict with an opposing force while serving as Platoon Commander, Company C, Battalion Landing Team 1/4, 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable), I Marine Expeditionary Force from 5 to 27 August 2004, in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM II. While responding to a Mahdi Militia attack on Iraqi security forces, First Lieutenant Moulton and the platoon came under intense mortar, rocket, sniper, and machinegun fire at the Najaf main Iraqi police station. While defending this critical position for six hours, he ignored the mortars exploding on his position and the constant impact of sniper fire overhead to continually move throughout the Platoon's position and direct the fires of the Marines and supporting tanks in the destruction of numerous enemy. Only hours later, he spearheaded the Battalion's assault into the Najaf cemetery and immediately attacked and destroyed a well positioned enemy defense, while under constant and accurate mortar and machinegun fire. He fearlessly exposed himself to enemy fire throughout this engagement to direct the destruction of an enemy mortar, which had wounded three of the Marines. By his zealous initiative, courageous actions and exceptional dedication to duty, First Lieutenant Moulton reflected great credit upon himself and upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the United States Naval Service.

The Combat Distinguishing Device is authorized.

Summary of Action

First Lieutenant Seth W. Moulton is enthusiastically recommended for the Bronze Star with Combat 'V' for heroic achievement in connection with combat operations while serving as 3d Platoon Commander, Company C, Battalion Landing Team 1/4, 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable), I Marine Expeditionary Force, while fighting in the Battle of Najaf, from 5 August to 27 August 2004.

In response to a Mahdi Militia attack on Iraqi Security Forces, First Lieutenant Moulton's platoon was ordered to secure the Najaf Main Iraqi Police Station in the heart of the city. This piece of terrain, which bordered a politically sensitive maneuver exclusion zone, was vital to the morale of Iraqi Police and controlled two major MSR's that allowed freedom of movement for the battalion's use throughout the battle.

After arriving at this position, 3d Platoon gained control with a small group of Iraqi Police and Iraqi National Guard soldiers. Enemy militia were attacking from three directions with heavy and accurate RPG, machine gun, sniper, and mortar fire. Within 20 minutes of occupying this position, 4 Marines were wounded including his Platoon Sergeant. While his platoon was repelling enemy attackers at ranges of less than 20 meters, First Lieutenant Moulton directed his designated marksman to advantageous positions to perform counter-sniper operations and precision fires against enemy forces trying to slip into friendly lines from the numerous surrounding buildings. Fighting off countless attempts by the enemy to destroy his platoon, First Lieutenant Moulton took the initiative to control the fires of supporting tanks and conducted an attack from his secure position in order to seal off an avenue of approach that the enemy had been using to reinforce elements in contact. Following Lieutenant Moulton's lead, Iraqi National Guard soldiers came out to join the Marines in the attack. Despite the absence of translators, he repeatedly exposed himself to the enemy while leading a squad of his Marines and the ING soldiers and Iraqi Police down the street in a clearing operation. While holding this position for 6 hours, he frequently exposed himself in order to direct the fires of his Marines which killed numerous enemy snipers and machinegunners. His efforts during the initial stages of this battle ensured security of MSR Miami and allowed 2 companies of friendly reinforcements to arrive.

Company C was next tasked with seizing BLT Objective 1 located in the Najaf Cemetery. With less than 10 minutes to prepare for the BLT's first thrust into the this maneuver exclusion zone, First Lieutenant Moulton quickly devised a plan and directed his Marines toward a building complex that housed a farmers market. His platoon was now moving as the lead element of a battalion attack and subsequently cleared two large buildings, capturing five detainees and taking no casualties.

As the Company continued its push into the Najaf cemetery, 3d Platoon was positioned in the center where they controlled the difficult movement into and around the numerous above ground tombs and below ground catacombs that covered the battlefield. Their mission was to clear enemy forces to the west out of the cemetery. After advancing only 50 meters, 3d Platoon found itself against a well-positioned enemy defense and immediately came under a precise combined arms attack of mortar and machine gun fire. While his Marines maneuvered to destroy enemy to their direct front, First Lieutenant Moulton exposed himself by leaving cover and running down a road to a supporting tank that was moving within his boundary. Communicating through the tank phone, he directed the gunner's sights on the identified mortar position, which was subsequently destroyed. This action dismantled a key enemy position that had already wounded three Marines during the first few minutes of fighting in the cemetery.

Given the order to consolidate at the company's limit of advance, First Lieutenant Moulton continually exposed himself to enemy fire, gained accountability of his Marines, and began to

tie-in with adjacent units that had become separated during the chaotic attack. As nightfall approached 3d Platoon was placed into a defensive position and spent the night without sleep while waiting for the expected infiltration of enemy insurgents. The following morning, Company C was tasked to move southwest into the heart of a Mahdi Militia strongpoint. Tasked to clear 500 meters of the cemetery, his platoon methodically advanced forward providing flank security for a section of tanks and ensured that no enemy was bypassed and allowed to slip behind friendly troops. This movement was conducted under accurate mortar fire, in intense heat of 135 degrees, and with limited water and food re-supply available.

Upon arriving at the Company's planned objective, 3d Platoon began taking fire from three directions from multiple story buildings on key terrain to the east of the Imam Ali Shrine. With his platoon completely pinned down by enemy snipers and mortars, First Lieutenant Moulton courageously moved throughout his platoon, positioning his Marines to return fire and hold this key terrain. For 36 hours he kept his platoon's morale high and ensured their survivability through strict enforcement of continuing actions under some of the most arduous conditions imaginable. Up to this point, he had slept less than two hours in two days, and had constantly worked in 130+ degree heat, which had already taken its toll on three of his Marines. On the morning of the third day of this battle, Company C was ordered to displace from their defensive positions back to friendly lines. Still under accurate mortar and sniper fire, First Lieutenant Moulton successfully pulled out his platoon while maintaining full accountability and control, despite still being in heavy contact with the enemy.

On the afternoon of August 12, Charlie Company commenced a coordinated attack with three platoons of Iraqi National Guard and a detachment of U.S. Army Special Forces, aimed at one of the centers of Moqtada al Sadr's leadership in Najaf. First Lieutenant Moulton's platoon dismounted vehicles and began an 800-meter clearing movement through fields of gravel, junk, and several buildings. At the same time, Iraqi National Guard and Army Special Forces soldiers were tasked to clear buildings to the north. After clearing a company size objective with his lone platoon, his Marines were poised in an attack position for an assault on a major hospital, known to be a headquarters for militia operations.

SMAW rockets blew a breach in the hospital wall, and 3d Platoon commenced the assault into the hospital. During this clearing operation First Lieutenant Moulton's platoon was tasked to reinforce the Special Forces and Iraqi National Guard soldiers in contact. 3d platoon quickly moved out of the hospital and commenced another foot movement to the north and west. Upon arriving at this position, they immediately came under machinegun fire. Enemy forces were held up in a school and had killed one Special Forces soldier and an Iraqi National Guardsman. They had also wounded 17 others.

First Lieutenant Moulton directed his platoon to immediately establish a security perimeter and gain contact with the enemy while they carried the wounded soldiers to their HMMWVs for medevac. For the next two hours they traded machine gun fire and grenade volleys with the determined enemy. This engagement, which wounded 3 of his Marines, was fought under some of the most intense conditions imaginable. First Lieutenant Moulton and his Marines repeatedly assaulted into an enemy that was rolling grenades down stairs, and blindly firing machineguns into anything that attempted to ascend. When approval came to engage the building with fixed wing aviation ordnance, he pulled his platoon back to a position 200 meters away from where the enemy was concentrated. Upon completion of a Maverick anti-tank missile nearly destroying the building, he led his Marines back into the building and uncovered a significant weapons and ammunition cache used by the enemy. The skill, determination, and perseverance his Marines displayed throughout this attack, in temperatures of over 115 degrees was exceptional and directly reflected on First Lieutenant Moulton's leadership from the front.

On 24 August, Company C was tasked with seizing battalion objective 1; a Mahdi Militia

strongpoint 300 meters west of the Imam Ali Shrine. A group of hotels constituted Battalion Objective 1 and would serve as a foothold for the main assault. This area was considered the best defended of all Mahdi Militia positions; littered with improvised explosive devices and covered by RPG, sniper and machine gun fire. Moving under artillery fire and supported by a section of tanks and Bradleys, 3d Platoon dismounted its AAVs 30 meters from the objective and began clearing their objective. First Lieutenant Moulton and his platoon cleared two hotels easily considered company sized objectives. The position he held at the completion of this assault was vital for the battalion; it maintained observation of the roads leading to and including the Imam Ali Shrine.

The company would remain in this position for the next 48 hours. First Lieutenant Moulton was at every point of contact the entire time, tirelessly moving from position to position to supervise his defenses. On repeated occasions he personally directed the use of SMAW novel explosive rounds to clear enemy strongpoints in adjacent buildings along the road leading to the Imam Ali Shrine, the final objective for the MEU. Additionally, he directed the fires of supporting tanks and Bradleys to engage militia attempting to move across the company's frontage. He also personally led a security patrol through the Old City, which resulted in the capture of numerous enemy weapons, munitions, and IED construction materials. His efforts during this fight were essential to securing the battalion's single main supply route that led to the Old City.

Throughout this 22-day battle, his courageous battlefield presence under intense enemy fire inspired the Marines under his charge and spearheaded the battalion's assaults against key terrain that dominated the battle. First Lieutenant Moulton's steadfast leadership and unwavering dedication to duty reflected great credit upon himself and were in keeping with the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the United States Naval Service. He is extremely deserving of recognition denoted by the Bronze Star with Combat "V".

The Combat Distinguishing device is authorized.
SNO was in receipt of IDP during this period.