

## What a day!

March 02, 2004

Hello from Baghdad.....Joy.....another mass email from me (sorry for the mass email....internet still fairly limited here:)

What a day today! So I awoke zero-early A.M. in typical Army fashion. In a semi- comatose state managed to down some breakfast (not very tasty).... feeling a little under the weather. Around 10 AM there was a bombing/Rocket propelled grenade (who knows???) at a mosque in the Kadamiya area of Baghdad about 1/2 mile from where I spent the night. Absolute chaos! Our unit (1-5 Cav of 1st Cavalry Division) rolled out to the site. I was in an armored humvee. The streets were packed with thousands and thousands of people.....celebrating the holiday of Ashovara. This is a holiday in honor of Imam Hussein the grandson prophet of Muhammed. The Shiite Muslims feel he died in vain so mark this holiday by slaying themselves (cutting etc...) as a means of sacrifice. From our perspective this means more suicide bombings....

As we rushed to the site of the bombing the crowds began hurling rocks at us. I was in a humvee with M16 pointed out the window. The women in burkas spit at our vehicles. Hoards pounded on the windows. All there was glass (windows halfway rolled down so I could have my machine gun out the window) between myself and thousands of angry mobs.....somehow they were under the impression that the bombing was the Americans' fault??!?! Angry. Angry.

Security was posted (somewhat) and I exited the vehicle to treat patients (hundreds of patients some severely injured and some mildly). I was the sole doctor with a few medics. Rocks bounced off my kevlar (helmet). I don't know where the heck all these rocks came from.....as if they brought a dump truck filled with stones!!!??? I didn't think there were that many rocks in the whole city! AK47 gunfire was heard in the background. Save lives??? I couldn't even save my own if my life counted on it!!!! It was absolutely terrifying....

So several rock bruises and a slight limp later I write this email to all of you.....extremely thankful that these bruises were my only injuries (although it was painful).....Sticks and stones can break your bones!!! (Saliva, Arabic swear words, and gunfire overhead is not too pleasant either!)

We turned around and sought shelter behind the walls of the compound before I really had a chance to treat any patients. 6 ft high flames were set around us and people attempted to climb the walls and we warded them off with our weapons.....Needless to say, I really earned my Combat Medical Badge today for providing care in the direct line of fire (and saliva, and rocks, and cussing)....My life would have been just fine without it but hey..... Absolutely nuts!!!!

I hope this goes down as my most terrifying day in Baghdad and these go down as my only injuries. I will consider myself extremely lucky.

For the most part the Iraqi people are very friendly. There are a small percent who are extremely anti-American. Today the whole mob turned anti-American. It absolutely baffles me how some of the most holy people in the world (praying over 10 times a day) attempt to kill us and injure us out of the same mosques they pray in.....with the same hands they pray with.....

I guess, then again, every group of people has their extremists.....

So not every day has been like this. On the usually calmer (yet still very eventful) days my time is split between shifts at the Combat Support Hospital in Baghdad and providing medical coverage on patrols. Unfortunately still lots of trauma.....every day.

On a brighter note, I was personally able to meet with the Secretary of Health from George Bush's Cabinet (Tommy Thompson) when he made his visit to Baghdad. I was also able to converse with Dr. Sanjay Gupta who provides the medical coverage on CNN television. Just conversation.....no TV coverage.....no thanks.....not for me.....

Hope this email finds you all well. You are all in my thoughts and thank you for reading through my stories. Thank you for your support.

Take care my friends (and family),

Sudip

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