

Men in Black

By U.S. Army Specialist Colby Buzzell

Warning: The following text contains language that may be considered offensive.

I was in my room reading a book (Thin Red Line) when the mortars started coming down. Sgt Horrocks ripped open the door and yelled, "Grab your guys! And go to the motor pool! The whole BATTALION is rolling out!" Holy shit! The whole Battalion?! This must be big.

One by one the Strykers were rolling out of the motor pool ready to hunt down whoever was f**king with us. Soldiers in the hatches of the vehicles were hooting and hollering, yelling their war cries and doing the Indian yell thing as they drove off and locked and loaded their weapons.

As we headed north up route Tampa, I was sticking out of my hatch, behind the .50 cal, and I glanced over to the left side of the vehicle, at which time I observed a man, dressed in all black with a terrorist beard, jump out all of the sudden from the side of a building. He pointed his AK47 barrel right at my f**king pupils. I froze and then a split second later, I saw the fire from his muzzle flash leaving the end of his barrel and brass shell casings exiting the side of his AK as he was shooting directly at me. I heard and felt the bullets whiz literally inches from my head, hitting all around my hatch making a "Ping" "Ping" "Ping" sound.

All of the sudden all hell came down around us, all these guys, wearing all black, a couple dozen on each side of the street, on rooftops, alleys, edge of buildings, out of windows, everywhere, and started unloading on us. AK fire and multiple RPG's were flying at us from every single f**king direction. IED's were being ignited on both sides of the street.

I kind of lost it and was yelling and screaming all sorts of things (mostly cuss words).

I fired and fired and fired and fired and fired. At EVERYTHING.

I saw a crowd of people suspiciously peeking around a corner at us, I pointed this out to Sgt Horner. As he was shooting non-stop from his hatch, he told me to just f**king shoot them, and he briefly explained to me that these people have no f**king business out on the street whatsoever. So I pointed the cross hairs right at them, but then I moved it to right above their heads and fired a burst, which got them to disperse in a hurry. I could tell that they were just spectators.

Down in the hatch, I was frantically scanning my sector when suddenly about 300 meters away from us, over by the traffic circle, I saw two guys with those red and white jihad towels wrapped around their heads creeping around a corner. They were hunched down hiding behind a stack of truck tires. I could tell by their body language that something was up. I placed the cross hairs right on them and was about to f**kin waste them, but for some reason I didn't pull the trigger. Something told me that I should wait for just one, maybe two more seconds. Then I saw another guy come creeping around that corner with an RPG in his hands. As soon as I saw that I screamed as loud as I could, "RRRPPPPGGGGGGGG!!!" My cross hairs were bouncing all over,

so I gathered my composure as fast as I could, put the cross hairs on them, and engaged them with a couple of good ten round bursts of some .50-cal, right at them.

Nobody moved from behind those tires after that.

We had to return to FOB Marez, as we were running extremely low on fuel, ammo, and water. So we all mounted up and drove back to the FOB.

I was smoking like a chimney, one right after another. My nerves were completely shot and I was emotionally drained and I noticed that my hands were still kinda shaking. The stars were now out over Mosul, and I decided to go and sit by myself and stare at them for while. I was thinking how I was lucky to be alive. I've never experienced anything like the fear I felt today. I thought about that guy who jumped out from the corner of that building with that angry look on his face when he pointed the AK at my head and pulled the trigger.

Sgt Vance saw me sitting by myself, and he came over and sat next to me. He asked if I was O.K. I thought about that one for a second and I told him, "I don't know." I told him how I wasn't really in the mood to roll back out for another inning with these guys, and I also told him that I was kinda tripping out about how not everybody that I engaged today had a weapon in their hands. And that I wasn't really too sure about what happened to some of those people.

Vance started telling me a little bit about his father, who had been in Vietnam, and who had given him sound advice about situations like this, "Put all the things that bother you, and keep you awake at night, and clog your head up, put all those things in a shoebox, put the lid on it, and deal with it later."

Shortly after that they told us to go back to our rooms. I walked back to my room, thanked God, and passed out on my bed.

I've put the events of that day in a shoebox, put the lid on it, and haven't opened it since.