



Saint Maries, ID
The Bronze Star

"The insurgents had posted flyers warning of what would happen to anyone that participated in the election," explained Hayes.

This caused his troops and him to be targets as they established and secured one of the polling sites. Days leading up to the election, they faced several attacks.

On Election Day, insurgents began to target the individuals attempting to vote. Despite enemy machine gun fire, mortars, Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPGs) and Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) attacks against friendly patrols, the Iraqis were determined to participate in the election process.

"One Iraqi civilian was struck in the abdomen by enemy fire on the way to the polling station, but refused to be taken to the nearby hospital until he had cast his vote," recalled Hayes. Even with unrelenting enemy fire throughout the day, over 2800 Iraqi citizens braved the life threatening conditions to cast their vote.

For his efforts in establishing and securing the polling site under fire, Hayes was recognized with the Bronze Star while serving as C Troop commander in 2nd Squadron, 14th Cavalry in the 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division.

MAJOR JAMES A. HAYES

Army Maj. James A. Hayes was a member of the Multi-National Corps Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom. He is described as a great commander – one who took care of his men and took the fight to the enemy.

On the eve of Iraq's first free elections in January 2005, then a captain, Hayes received the mission to establish one of three polling sites in the northern city of Tal'afar. Along with members of his reconnaissance troop, he received an infantry platoon, anti-tank platoon, and a 45-man Iraqi Commando Company to establish security for not only the polling site, but also the nearby hospital and two traffic control points.

Enemy contact began upon the initial occupation of the area on Jan. 28, and culminated in a 96-hour firefight.

Because of the high demand for troops to secure the various sites, Hayes only had a few men remaining to attack insurgents.

He led mounted and dismounted patrols with members of his troop task force along with one squad from the Iraqi Commando Company.

"I focused the patrols where the most intense enemy fire was originating," said Hayes as he recalled the incidents.

As a result, several insurgents were captured or killed over the four-day period with no serious injuries to his forces or loss of civilian life.

