



Syracuse, NY
The Silver Star

"We fired the main gun at the house and there was just this big giant blob of a hole in the house," he said. "They were everywhere, running up to within 30 meters of the tank shooting RPGs at us." As the lead vehicle, Prakash and his gunner and driver were the main target in the ambush of IEDs and rocket-propelled grenades.

His tank took several hits without much damage, but eventually one RPG took out the tank's navigation system while another hit the turret, making it impossible to rotate. The tank was hit by seven RPGs as well as multiple IED blasts. Prakash maneuvered the entire vehicle in order to engage the enemy with the main weapon system and .50-caliber machinegun.

"Someone told me right afterward that we were fighting for an hour," Prakash said. "I thought it was more like 15 minutes. Everything happened so fast." Prakash's tank returned to FOB Scunion for more ammo and to have the damaged turret repaired. He volunteered to go back into battle to secure and hold the two bridges. The insurgents had fled.

"He was incredible," said Spc. John Langford, Prakash's loader in the battle. "He kept us in line and kept us calm. I couldn't have chosen a better tank commander or platoon leader for what we experienced that day."

Prakash, who was born in India and raised in Syracuse, N.Y., earned a Silver Star for his actions. He was personally credited with the destruction of eight enemy strong-points, one enemy resupply vehicle, and multiple dismounted enemy fighters.

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by Rick Emert, June 14, 2005*

1LT Neil Prakash

After leading his platoon through a fierce onslaught with enemy fire pounding them from every direction, 1st Lt. Neil Prakash went back in for more.

For Prakash, June 24, 2004, began with he and two of his soldiers manning an observation point on Blue Babe Highway in two shifts from midnight to 7 a.m. "When we came in (to Forward Operating Base Scunion) at 7, we thought we were done," Prakash said. "We were smoked after being out there all night."

Instead, Prakash's crew was sent back out to Blue Babe Highway after there were reports of 25 to 30 insurgents on the roadway, which was a trouble spot for improvised explosive devices.

Three hours later, Prakash returned to FOB Scunion and learned that his entire company, Company A, was going to Baqouba, where the city was under siege.

With Prakash's 1st Platoon in the lead, the company headed into Baqouba with the mission of securing two bridges in the city. If successful, his platoon would set up a blocking position to prevent the enemy from reinforcing.

"When we learned we were going in, we were really pumped up," Prakash said. At about 11 a.m., the company was driving south in Baqouba with Prakash's tank taking the point. "It was very quiet, like a ghost town," Prakash said. "There was just nobody there."

Suddenly a call from the operations center warned that, based on intelligence from unmanned aerial flights, insurgents were in groups of four; they were well-trained and they were going to stand and fight, Prakash said.

It wasn't long thereafter that Prakash heard an explosion behind his tank. A rocket-propelled grenade fired from a house on the left hit his tank.

