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Advisory

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U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Anthony
Viggiani

By U.S. Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt.
Keith A. Milks, 22nd Marine
Expeditionary Unit

FORWARD OPERATING BASE
RIPLEY, Afghanistan ? To many of
his fellow Marines in Company C,
Battalion Landing Team, 1st
Battalion, 6th Marines, Sgt. Anthony
Viggiani is the ideal Marine.

With bloodstains visible on the lower portion of his left trouser leg, Marine Sgt. Anthony Viggiani pauses to look at the camera moments after a fierce firefight with anti-coalition militia in central Afghanistan. Viggiani, a squad leader in Company C, Battalion Landing Team, 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, ignored the bullet wound to remain in the fight against the enemy.

Photo credit: Gunnery Sgt. Keith A. Milks, USMC

In the eyes of subordinates and seniors alike, the Strongsville, Ohio, native embodies those qualities that make Marines special: dedication, professionalism, strength, commitment, strong morals, and bravery. Now they have an additional quality to add to that list -- tough as nails.

During a recent firefight with anti-coalition militia in south-central Afghanistan, Viggiani's actions further elevated him in the eyes of the rest of the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable).

When a pair of Army AH-64 Apache attack helicopters spotted approximately 20 heavily-armed militia fighters fleeing into the hills during a cordon-and-knock operation in a nearby village, Co. C immediately pursued on foot. Leading his squad over a steep, rock-strewn mountain, Viggiani was at the head of the advance when they came under heavy enemy rifle fire.

"The rounds just started pouring in," he said later that day, "and we weren't really sure where they were coming from."

On the slope opposite the valley below him, approximately 100 meters away, Viggiani and his Marines watched as two other Marines, Cpl. Randy Wood and Lance Cpl. James Gould, were wounded by enemy rifle fire.

Aware that the fire was coming from the slope in front of him, Viggiani pressed forward cautiously when he and 1st Sgt. Ernest Hoopii came under concentrated fire themselves.

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The 24-year-old Viggiani then found he was mere feet from the cave housing the enemy sniper still firing at Wood and Gould, who had since taken cover behind a too-small rock.

"I was able to look down a break in the rocks and saw a bit of cloth move, so I got off three or four shots and then dropped the [fragmentation grenade]," said Viggiani.

Combined with rifle and machine-gun fire from Wood and Gould's squad, the grenade explosion silenced the enemy position, which was later found to have housed three militia fighters.

To read full story click here:

<http://www.defendamerica.mil/profiles/jun2004/pr061404b.html>