**82nd Signal Battalion History - Assault CP downrange in Iraq – The Edgerton article**

**Background on The Assault Command Post Platoon**

Alpha Company, 82nd Signal Battalion, Assault Command Post Platoon isn't just an assignment; it's a brotherhood, a unique crucible that forges every paratrooper who passes through its doors. Having had the honor of leading this Platoon in the 90s, I loved every minute of it. Most men pass through the platoon and move on to greater successes in the Army, in their lives, and in the corporate world, yet the indelible imprint of the platoon, and the proud legacy of the 82nd Airborne Division, remains. We understand we're cliquish, and people expect a lot from us. That's okay because we're built to take on whatever you can send our way. We make no apologies and ask no quarter.

We're proud of our assignment, and we especially like closing the platoon doors and talking the shit that we talk amongst ourselves—about each other, the company, the platoon, the mission, and the infantry; hell, nobody escapes our verbal wrath. Nobody. We're especially hard on ourselves and our brothers within the platoon. We don't expect anyone else in the Battalion to understand the crap we put up with, nor do we care if they understand it. Like rocks, we love the hard stuff. We love hard assignments. We cherish our time in the platoon. When we're dealt shitty cards, we suck it up and drive on. If we're put on detail, we pull the duty—pulling CQ, motor pool guard, BN runner, and whatever it takes—and try not to bitch about it too much in front of the other troops. That's just the way it is. If you've never served in the platoon… I can't help you any further and can't explain it better to you. The platoon operates with a clear, unwritten hierarchy, understood by all. It is firmly based on the skills and **proven** competency each member brings to vital roles like HF operator, TACSAT operator, FM radio operator, Shark, and Retrans operator. This absolute reliance on individual strength meant that even the platoon's top operators, like Edge, willingly pulled what seemed like the most basic duties. It was a fundamental part of their commitment to every mission, no matter how small or mundane.

**Sergeant Edgerton's Story**

This unyielding dedication would profoundly define the platoon's time in Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom 2003, especially as seen through the story of Sergeant Edgerton. On that unforgiving battlefield at Combat Outpost Champion Main in Ar Ramadi, alongside their normal mission and daily duties around the perimeter and compound, the Assault CP found themselves on the duty roster for gate guards, adding another layer to their responsibilities.

Select members of the platoon were the go-to guys, often singled out for TACSAT missions with the Brigades. During my interview with one of the NCOs who served with Edge, he commented, "We were the hotshots. We earned it. We all served together in Ramadi and were very close before deployment." He then recalled a mission convoying from Base Camp, potentially to Al-Asad, where they ran into a firefight. Platoon Sergeant Russ C., later noted he had no memory of this specific firefight, despite acknowledging that the platoon frequently sent Manpack Tac-Sat operators on support missions, especially when out of FM (VHF) range. He emphasized that Edge was one of the most proficient tactical communicators he’d served with. Regardless of the specific engagement, the NCO emphasized, "While the convoy was returning fire and getting their response coordinated, Edge was instrumental in helping us all keep a cool head. He was driving that day and his skills were key in getting us through the ambush and out of harm's way. I was proud of him for saving our asses.”

Edge was a good soldier, described by those who knew him as a purpose-driven young man of very high character, energetic, and self-disciplined. He joined the Army in May 2000, completing Basic Combat Training at Fort Knox, KY, and Advanced Individual Training at Fort Gordon in November 2000, before being assigned to Alpha Company, 82nd Signal Battalion at Fort Bragg. A seasoned combat veteran, he had previously deployed to Operation Enduring Freedom from July 2002 to January 2003, and bravely volunteered to deploy with his unit to Operation Iraqi Freedom in August 2003. Though he was grappling with some personal challenges, he was a weightlifter—big, strong, and capable—yet he was upset with himself for being overweight at a weigh-in, which unfortunately prevented him from pinning on E5 rank when eligible. The BN CSM held the line, keeping him on the normal mission cycle. Edge was scheduled to ETS soon. The idea of sending him home before Christmas was explored by the Platoon Sergeant, Commander, and Battalion leadership; however, it wasn't possible. As Platoon Sergeant Russ C., recalls, "If it was possible for him to return to Bragg early, it would have taken place after the 11th of December anyways," a date that would soon carry profound significance. Those who were there knew Edge had plans after ETS, so they were also successful in helping him avoid any stop-loss challenges.

**The Day Sergeant Edgerton Died**

On the day Edge died, he was on guard duty at Champion, performing a routine TCN (Third Country National) escort. Demonstrating true camaraderie, he had cheerfully stepped in to cover for a fellow paratrooper so that soldier could finish his meal**.** A truck, deemed a routine drop, approached and entered the compound. Edge was inside, accompanying two local nationals. This vehicle and one of its local occupants had been on base before.

The truck drove towards the chow hall, which was likely its primary target. However, concrete barriers recently placed at the entrance to the chow hall altered the bombers' initial plan, as the main gate hadn't been alerted to their true intent. The truck then turned around and started its return through the compound. Soldiers seeing the action in front of them saw Edge in the small truck, and believe that he noticed the danger, and put his weapon into operation moments before the explosion.

Those on the ground believe that with their primary target blocked, the bombers began searching for an alternative. This change in behavior would have alerted Edge that something was wrong. In previous attacks in the country, bombers were known to shout "Allahu Akbar" shortly before detonation; only a few people close enough might have discerned such shouts amidst the chaos. Edge, recognizing the imminent threat, exited the vehicle, attempting to operate his M4 to engage the vehicle and simultaneously create distance. While I did not witness this event directly, the understanding within the platoon is that he was yelling—possibly alerting others to the danger or giving directions to the vehicle's occupants—as he stood next to it just before the blast. His quick response in those final moments is widely credited with having helped avert mass casualties at a dining facility.

**Aftermath and Legacy**

Members of the platoon heard the blast and grabbed their weapons and gear. One of their platoon assignments during an event like this was to check and clear the backside of the compound. That's what they did. After validating and clearing their area, they went forward to see what the hell happened. They knew Edge was on duty and they knew he was probably involved.

But they didn't see him. They saw the effects of the explosion but did not see Edge. Another platoon responsibility was to immediately account for all personnel. Edge was their concern. They knew in their hearts that he went down in the explosion, but they conducted a personnel check anyway. That's what they do. All accounted for except for Edge.

While the Assault CP did not locate any identifiable remains, the 82nd had an FBI Joint Duty Assignment (JDA) operative on site in Ramadi. This individual, who stated he was FBI, took operational control of the recovery, treating the scene as a crime site. Evidence markers were placed, and a blast analysis was conducted. The largest human remains observed within the compound, perhaps 6” x 4” (a piece of a bare foot), were identified as belonging to the insurgent. No identifiable remains of Edge were found within the compound. His nametape was found by others assisting in the recovery. It was found on a cargo trailer near the north wall inside the compound and was given to one of the NCOs in the platoon at the scene by the Battalion CSM soon after the blast. It was “burned on the edges.”

Identifiable portions of his gear, uniform and remains were located outside the compound by an MP unit attached to the Task Force. They recovered these items and transported them to the aid station. The MPs then escorted platoon leadership to the collection point for confirmation. There, the platoon leadership made the identification. Edge was the only US casualty.

Everyone heard the explosion, and a few were close enough to feel the concussion. Witnesses observed the truck driver acting strangely just before the blast. Later, while combing through the wreckage, what the platoon believed to be the bomb's trigger was found. It was bagged by the FBI, though they never received a definitive answer as to whether it was the actual trigger. The subsequent investigation determined the blast was likely caused by four "100lb" artillery rounds, probably multiple 155mm rounds, placed in the gas tank, though 210mm rounds were also used by insurgents during that period. For context, a 155mm round weighs 92.3 lbs., containing 12.7 lbs. of TNT.

Michael M. vividly recounted: "Right after the explosion we were clearing off the LZ for the medivacs to land and take a couple of guys who were injured in the blast out. One of the injured soldiers told me he was just walking out of his quarters when he saw and heard Edge yelling to 'get back' right before the bomb went off. The injured soldier was peppered with shrapnel and said the only reason he wasn’t killed in the blast is because Edge didn’t run away and but instead warned others of the IED before it went off. Edge was a true hero." Platoon Sergeant Russ C., corroborated this account, stating, "Although I did not witness it, I have heard this exact account shortly after the event and believe it to be accurate," cementing Edge's selfless act.

The compound went on immediate lockdown. One of the platoon NCOs got in contact with Amy. As those who knew Edge and Amy from Bragg, they knew it was out of protocol to tell her, but they felt they had to do it. She asked if he died bravely. They told her he saved lives.

His remains were returned to the US and ultimately to his wife Amy. He was brought back to the States to be buried in his hometown of Dalton, Georgia. The platoon still stays in contact with Amy and his kids. They are an extension of our family. I think most of the platoon that was deployed with Edge feels this way too. The platoon knew Edge so well. They wanted to ensure that Amy knew they were here for her over the years since they lost Edge. That relationship has carried over to modern-day events wherein they have a great relationship with his son, Marshall. He ended up serving in the same signal unit as his father; it may be under a different unit name now, but it's the same roots and same signal unit. After the platoon returned from Iraq, they had a few BBQs and get-togethers to honor Edge. They always did these things and invited Amy and his family. They have also met a few times over the years at his gravesite and hometown to pay homage to Edge. He would be happy knowing that the platoon was still watching over his family. That's the way the platoon is. We take care of each other during the good times and the bad. They had lost a brother, but their commitment remained unbroken. Marshall, now a sergeant himself, reflected on his father's ultimate sacrifice, stating, "He did something that most of us can't even fathom doing for anybody."

In closing, Edge was an Assault CP Soldier to the last minute. He gave his life for his country, company, platoon, Division, and mission. The platoon made a promise to Edge's wife to get him back. Sometimes they feel like they didn't complete that mission. Speaking for the platoon, I can say that he did what we all expect leaders in Assault CP to do and a helluva lot more.

**Enduring Legacy**

On December 11, 2019, a few of us attended a ceremony held on Fort Gordon by the 15th Signal Brigade, memorializing SGT Edgerton on this somber day to honor his legacy as both a Soldier and a son of Georgia. Brigadier General E., then Fort Gordon Chief of Signal, conveyed his hope that soldiers serving there would learn from Edgerton's courage and selflessness. Members of SGT Edgerton’s immediate family attended as guests of honor, including his son, SGT Marshall H. Edgerton (currently serving with the 82nd as his father did), and members of the 82nd Airborne Division, his platoon buddies assigned to other units now, Signal Chapter leaders, and numerous others from the Fort Bragg, North Carolina area.

A monument and Building 33806 at Fort Gordon, Georgia now honor the building’s namesake: Edgerton Barracks. This structure now houses newly assigned US Army signal soldiers in training, with Sergeant Edgerton's name, a symbol of ultimate sacrifice, ever present above them. The enduring question remains: how many of these future leaders will truly comprehend the immense sacrifices of those who blazed the trail before them? For many of them, it may be just a name on a building. But for those of us who served with Edge or in the 82nd Signal Battalion, it signifies so much more than words can ever convey.

RIP Edge!

**Notes**

1. For more on Ramadi, Iraq during Edge’s time there, here is a great article related to Ramadi under U.S. military occupation: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ramadi_under_U.S._military_occupation>
2. Interview with various service members were the basis for this article. Those providing fact and data were,
   1. MSG Russ C., Edgerton’s Platoon Sergean.
   2. COL Andy B., A Co XO during the deployment
   3. SGT Michael M., Platoon Member emails and Facebook messages, a few years ago.
   4. SFC Robert B, Platoon Member

**Author's Note**

The narrative within this article is recounted by former NCOs, Soldiers, and leaders of the Assault CP Platoon, who had the honor of serving side by side with Sergeant Edgerton. Obviously, I was not personally deployed with the platoon during Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003. This historical account of SGT Marshall Lane Edgerton and the platoon's experience is meticulously compiled from direct interviews with those who were there, as well as extensive research into public records and news reports. My aim is to accurately convey the facts and their experiences to honor SGT Edgerton's legacy through the collective memory of his brothers and sisters in arms.

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A person in a military uniform

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