



Necessary Force

In February 2005 in the Al Dora neighborhood of Baghdad, an insurgent cell ambushed an Iraqi Police patrol from the rooftops and ground level of a narrow street. An American patrol heard the shots being fired and approached from the flank/rear of the insurgent position. Taking the insurgents by surprise, the American patrol opened fire, killing two "lookouts" and two more insurgents as they advanced towards the enemy position.

Alerted to the American presence, the insurgents fled into the nearest house. In the meantime, the squadron was given tactical control of the air QRF, consisting of two Apache helicopters, which were immediately pushed down to the troop commander in contact. Once the insurgents fled into the house, the shooting stopped.

The commander attempted to surround the house, which was very difficult since all the houses on the street were connected by walls. He felt that clearing the house would put his soldiers at risk since he knew that armed insurgents had fled inside. Repeated calls for their surrender over a loudspeaker had gone unanswered. The commander requested release authority for hellfire missiles to be fired into the house. Because of the tightly packed neighborhood, he assessed a "high probability" of civilian casualties.

QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS WITH YOUR SOLDIERS...

What are your courses of action? What factors would you consider when making your decision?

Would you use non-discriminate fires (ie - grenades) to clear the house to decrease the risk to your men even though there are potentially civilians inside?

Are the lives of your soldiers equally worth the lives of the Iraq citizens?

ACTUAL RESPONSE...

Since they were no longer in contact, the squadron HQs would not approve firing the hellfire missiles. The troop commander was ordered to clear the house and take whatever precautions he deemed necessary at his level. The troop commander fired concentrated M240 and SAW fire into the front door and windows which killed a man who later tested positive for explosives and gunpowder residue and slightly wounded his 17 year old daughter. Three successive four-man stacks then entered and cleared the house. The insurgents had fled over the back wall.