

# LETTERS OF APPRECIATION



**U.S. AIR FORCE**

From: Zachary Ruttman <thefuttsstuff@yahoo.com>  
Subject: Your company saved my life...  
Date: July 21, 2005

It was such a pleasure to meet Michael Hanks and Richard Hutson at the Tulsa Air National Guard Conference last month. I had the opportunity to share my story with him and give my appreciation to him and your company in the business of saving lives. I promised him that I would email you to share with you that same story. Here is the jist of it;

I am a Member of the Security Forces Squadron. I left for Iraq in August of 2004. Our tour was in northern Iraq in a city called Kirkuk. It's about an hour north of Bagdad. We were scheduled to be there for six months. I was put on a 'Tactical Forces' unit for the duration of the deployment. I was a 'heavy gunner'. I was the guy on the top of the vehicle. Our job was to patrol about 72 square miles of this city of 800,000 people. Needless to say, every day was an adventure. But, one day stands out a little more than the others.

On November 22nd, 2004, we went out on a normal patrol. There was nothing unusual about this day. But, about one hour into our patrol the unthinkable happened. BOOOOM!!! TEN FEET from my hummer we were hit by two 155mm howitzers. That's just under 100 pounds of explosives. Fortunately, I don't remember much of it other than the pain, smoke, and chaos. But I do remember reaching for my neck. I pulled 8 pieces of shrapnel out of the surface of my neck and only had a few non-life threatening gashes in that area along with hearing loss and a severe concussion.

As soon as we made it to the medical station, everyone surrounded me. They were completely and utterly shocked that I wasn't decapitated. The sole purpose I am here today is from the Grace of God and your vest and collar. THANK YOU FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART FOR SAVING MY LIFE!!!!

Senior Airman Zac Ruttman