



# Vanguard of Valor - Small Unit Actions in Afghanistan

*United States Government US Army*

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Since 2001, the US Army in Afghanistan has been conducting complex operations in a difficult, often dangerous environment. Living in isolated outposts and working under austere conditions, US Soldiers have carried out missions that require in equal parts a warrior's courage and a diplomat's restraint. In the larger discussions of the Afghanistan campaign, the experiences of these Soldiers – especially the young sergeants and lieutenants that lead small units-often go undocumented. But, as we all know, success in Afghanistan ultimately depends on these small units and their leaders, making their stories all the more important. In 2010, as the scale and tempo of Coalition operations in Afghanistan increased, so did the need for historical accounts of small-unit actions. The eight actions described in these pages take the reader through a wide range of platoon-level operations, from an intense firefight near Kandahar to an intricate civic action project in Kunar Province. Drawing from dozens of Soldier interviews, these accounts vividly depict the actions themselves and offer critical insights of greatest benefit to the small-unit leaders of today and tomorrow.

Chapter 1. Firefight above Gowardesh by Lieutenant Colonel John C. Mountcastle  
Chapter 2. Ambushing the Taliban A US Platoon in the Korengal Valley by Scott J. Gaitley  
Chapter 3. Flipping the Switch Weapons Platoon Movement to Contact in Zhari District by Michael J. Doidge  
Chapter 4. Forging Alliances at Yargul Village A Lieutenant's Struggle to Improve Security in Kunar Province by Anthony E. Carlson, Ph. D  
Chapter 5. Operation STRONG EAGLE Combat Action in the Ghakhi Valley by John J. McGrath  
Chapter 6. Disrupt and Destroy Platoon Patrol in Zhari District by Matt M. Matthews  
Chapter 7. Trapping the Taliban at OP Dusty A Scout Platoon in the Zhari District by Kevin M. Hymel  
Chapter 8. Objective Lexington Cougar Company under Fire in the Ganjgal Valley by Ryan D. Wadle, Ph.D.

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