

Honorable Judge Edmuds

My name is Ronald V. Coleman. I am the Command Sergeant Major for the 153rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team. In 2005 I was the Battalion CSM for 1/198th Armor Battalion. Our mission was stability and support operations and we also were task with combat missions. Our stability and support operations consisted of working with the newly elected government officials, training the Iraqi police, training the Iraqi army, training the border patrol and maintaining peace. Our combat mission was to kill or capture insurgents or Mithi Militia that were killing civilians or disrupting the new government.

This letter is in reference to Sam Hammam.

I met Sam Hammam on February 2005 in An Najaf Province Iraq. Sam served as an interpreter for my Battalion Commander LTC Jim Oliver. At the time LTC Oliver already had an interpreter but after a week or so LTC Oliver chose Sam to take on the duties. His qualification made him a better choice for the job. As with all Iraqis we had to hold some type of trust with him. Initially I was skeptical of any Iraqi that I did not know even though Sam was a American Iraqi I still had to insure the he was legitimate because the lives of my Soldiers and the life of my Commander depended on it. Within a month Sam was given a cell phone so that he would be able to talk to the Governor of the Najaf province. We had the ability to listen in on his conversation with any person that he spoke with. Sam did not have knowledge of this ability. Not once did he ever give any information to any Iraqi official or any other civilian. Sam was also street smart. He knew the Iraqi culture. He coached us on how we could accomplish all our missions and maintain peace with the local Iraqis. During this mission with the help of the Corps of Engineers, we rebuilt and opened a hospital that was severely damaged during the Battle of Najaf in Aug 2004. Sam played a key role in establishing a relationship with the Iraqi Doctors and by January 2006 this hospital was seeing more than 500 patients a day. Sam spoke with the elected Governor several time everyday and assisted LTC Oliver in building a trusting relationship which allowed An Najaf province to be one of the first Cities in Iraq to take over provincial control. Which basically means they ran the war government without any assistance from the Americans. Sam was involved in everything we did.

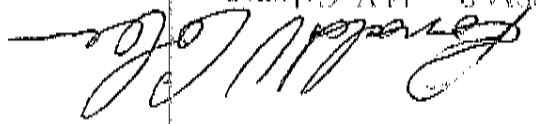
On Many occasions we had to go out of our area of operations and Sam was with us. We were attacked on some occasions and Sam followed instructions and became just another Soldier in the fight. At one point in our rotation LTC Oliver gave Sam a weapon so he could defend himself. I believe that he would have fought with us to the end if necessary. We trusted him that much.

We met and are with many of the local tribes. We became friends with the sheiks which made this a safer environment for our troops. The meetings with the sheiks were arranged by Sam and this assisted us in the peace building process. The Benhassan tribe is affiliated with some of the biggest Shia terrorist organization in the world but with Sam's help we were able to make peace with these Iraqis and there was never any violence from this tribe while we were there. We actually built them a school for their children.

These are just a few of the examples of how Sam Hamama helped us accomplish our mission. In 2005 we went to Iraq with about 500 Soldiers and all of these Soldiers survived. I believe that Sam Hamama was responsible for helping us keep our troops alive. His coaching and mentorship helped us understand the Iraqi people and their culture. Sam became my personal friend and I stayed in contact with him after we returned to the USA. I would trust Sam with my life and more importantly the lives of my Soldiers on any mission any time.

Sam talked to many Iraqis everyday. The part of this mission that most Americans don't understand is that we worked with former Iraqi Army Generals who at one time had worked for Saddam. He said, some of these same officers are now in charge of the Iraqi Army. They also became some of our closest most trusted allies. One Iraqi Army General, General Abass was a general for Saddam but became involved with the new provincial government and still holds a job with the locals there in Najaf. Sam Hamama spoke with him on several occasions as he was part of the new government in Najaf. This was necessary for the peace building process. Sam Hamama is not a traitor or a spy, but is an American citizen that performed with honor during our mission to Iraq. This honorable judge demands I am respectfully asking you to consider what I have written when sentencing Sam Hamama. I spent the entire year of 2005 with Sam Hamama and never once did he do anything that would have caused harm to my Soldiers or Iraqi civilians.

Sam is a Hero and he is my friend.


CSM Ronald V. Coleman
155th HBCT