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IRAQ: Court-martial is told of bloody Fallouja battle



A pretrial hearing Wednesday at Camp Pendleton got a brief reminder of the bloody nature of the Marines' battle with insurgents in Fallouja in November 2004.

Defense attorneys for Sgt. Ryan Weemer want to be able to call Sgt. Maj. Brad Kasal as a character witness during the court-martial. Weemer is charged with murder for allegedly killing a prisoner Nov. 9 in the first hours of the battle.

Kasal was not with Weemer that day, but the two were among the Marines three days later who fought what has become known as the battle of Hell House.

Kasal was wounded by seven AK-47 rounds and 40 pieces of hot shrapnel and later was awarded the Navy Cross for saving the lives of Marines despite his grievous injuries. Weemer was wounded three times and also lauded for bravery.

When he was asked to describe how vicious the fighting was, Kasal said the battle in and around the house went on for two hours. Finally the U.S. called in an airstrike to reduce the house to rubble.

Still, Kasal said, Marines spotted an insurgent sticking his arm out of the rubble, preparing to hurl a grenade.

"That was the type of enemy and the type of battle it was," Kasal said.

Although his time with Weemer was brief, Kasal is confident that he knows him, he said. "You can tell more about a man in five minutes in combat than you can during two years in peacetime."

For an account of the legal wrangling between prosecutors and defense attorneys at the hearing, read [this](#).

-- Tony Perry at Camp Pendleton

Photo: Then-1st Sgt. Brad Kasal, center, being helped out of Hell House. Credit: Lucian M. Read

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