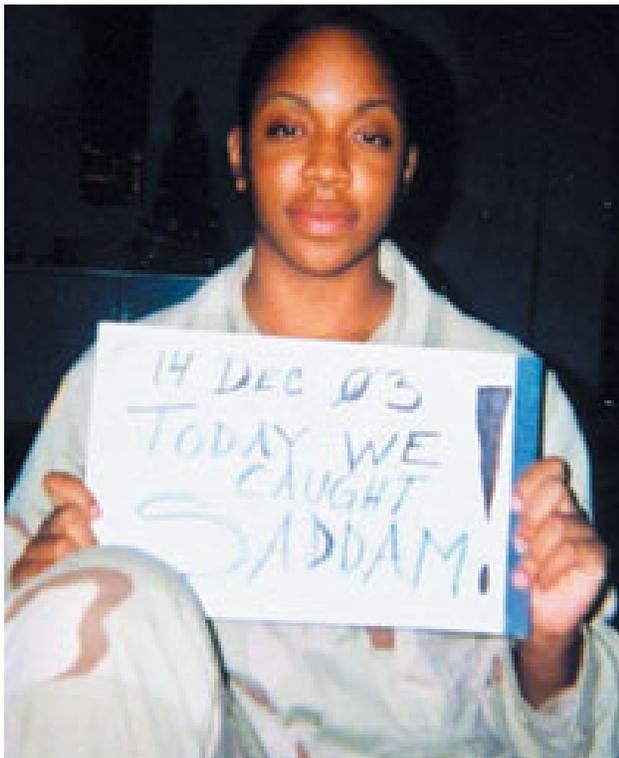


SERGEANT AMBER BENNETT

1st Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division

CSM Doug Russell Award 2005 Recipient



A native of Sacramento, California, SGT Amber Bennett enlisted in the Army in 2001. After Basic Training, she attended Advanced Individual Training at Fort Huachuca, Arizona, for 97E Human Intelligence (HUMINT) Collector. She attended the Defense Language Institute to learn Spanish and then was assigned to the 110th MI Battalion, 10th Mountain Division. SGT Bennett participated in several field training exercises and a Joint Readiness Training Center rotation. She deployed with her company to augment the 173rd Airborne Brigade in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. At the time she was presented the Russell Award, she was preparing for a second deployment, this time to Afghanistan in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM.

SGT Bennett conducted more than 800 interrogations and 500 HUMINT collection missions during her 11-month deployment to Iraq. Her efforts directly contributed to the capture of more than 50 Ba'ath Party officials, insurgents, and terrorists, as well as the discovery of hundreds of weapons. According to her nomination packet, her efforts were both historic and tactically significant.

SGT Bennett was the only female Soldier serving in Iraq with an airborne infantry company. She said that her gender was never an issue with her fellow Soldiers, but it presented a few challenges while interrogating Iraqis, which was frustrating for her. But she faced the obstacles and carried on with the mission. Her experiences with the Iraqi people – children who would hug her and the people dancing in the streets – helped her gain an appreciation for the people and their way of life, and her role in protecting that. She also gained respect for the job of the Infantry Soldiers. She understood that the work she was doing in collecting intelligence was helping the Soldiers that were going into harm's way every day.