



# Excelebrate

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## Vernice Armour

It was hot inside the cockpit. We were flying three hundred feet above the desert floor in the middle of a combat zone, and the sweat was rolling down my face. Reaching under my visor, I tried to use the back of my glove to wipe off the neverending stream. It was starting to roll into my right eye, and I swiped as quickly as I could, but I didn't have time to focus on it. I didn't even want to blink because I needed to stay focused on the land below. We were in hostile territory and quickly approaching a city. I sensed danger everywhere.

My attack helicopter section was escorting a convoy of about fifteen military vehicles as they drove cautiously down the road. They suddenly came to a stop when they should have kept a steady pace pushing forward. The clouds of sand and dust hung in the air as the convoy commander called us on the radio, telling us that a Marine in the lead vehicle had spotted something suspicious on the side of the road. It was a suspected improvised explosive device.