

In 2010 heaven gain a new angel. Ralph J. Fabbri was a 1st Marine Division Combat Cameraman on his first tour in Afghanistan. When he got his 3 week notice he immediately called home. A week before they were set to come home they left on their final mission. September 29th was his birthday, instead of celebrating we spent the day crying. We got the call, Ralph was Killed in Action. His job as a combat photographer ultimately took his life. Combat Photography is one of the most dangerous jobs in the military for many reasons including positioning, vulnerability, and deployment.

Positioning in the military is key. You want to stay low and out of sight from your enemy. In most other jobs in the marines you are able to get low to the ground and stay hidden. In a combat photographers shoes, they need to stay on their feet and in the front line to capture the moment with their best ability. Combat photographers run into battle with the camera in their hands to get that perfect shot. These photos will be used for government and military uses. This means that the photographer must me through in their work. To get good photos they need to be visible and able to see the action that is going on.

Along with positioning comes the vulnerability of going into battle with a camera. The main mission of a Photographer is to capture the moment of the battle going on. **As cameraman you have the choice to either shoot your weapon or take pictures.** Ralph was in the thousands of the pictures he took, he would rather have been shooting pictures than shooting his weapon. **“ They get training in aerial, underwater, night-vision and low-light photography and videography. But they also learn combat skills and small unit tactics to allow them to integrate with ground combat forces at any level”** said Navy Cmdr. Thomas Cotton. Even though a combat cameraman has the ability to fight that’s not their main job. Their first job is shoot the pictures and then if needed to shoot their weapon. Armondo mendoza, a fellow cameraman in ralph’s brigade, said **“As cameraman you have the choice to either shoot your weapon or take pictures. You have**

numerous guys to the left and the right of you shooting back at the enemy so I know I rarely ever shot my weapon because I felt safe around my fellow Marines.

“You have your cameramen that never deploy, the ones who deploy but don’t leave the base, and then the ones who actually get attached to an infantry unit like we were.” said Armondo Mendoza. The type of deployment depends on the level of danger that the marine is in. Like Mendoza said you have the Cameramen who never deploy, they are in no danger. Cameramen who deploy yet stay to the base are in some danger because their put in hostile location but are still protected and far from the front lines. Then you have the front line cameramen who are attached to an infantry unit like Mendoza and Fabbri. They are in the most dangerous position because they are taking photos of the actual combat that is going on including the firefights, foot patrol, and daily civilian encounters.

Although i believe that combat photography could eventually take more lives and is very dangerous compared to what other military jobs are. Some may argue that the engagement distance, and weapons argue against that. “a lot of the time the people engaging us used weapons without optics and from a mid range. What that means is from (idk how far he was from Ralph) 100 yards away the average person looking through iron sights is not going to be able to make out differences in gear.”said Sgt. Jonathan R Davis. The weapons that were used may or may not have had optics on it which meant the enemy was just trying to take down a target because, “Some of these people were paid good money by the Taliban to kill US service members.” as Sgt. Jonathan R Davis said. Without the lense the engagement distance and little to no optics meant that they were only firing to kill but it could have been anyone.

Ultimately positioning, vulnerability, and deployment is what makes combat photography one the the most dangerous jobs in the military. While they are all separate reasons, they all interconnect to make this job more dangerous. The positioning leads to the soldier being vulnerable, the deployment leads the soldier to the positioning, just like a never ending cycle. Although all jobs in the

military are hard and require different standards, they all all dangerous in their own way. But because of these reasons combat photography is one of the most dangerous.