

ENEMIES AT THE MOSHARI

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All was quiet; I returned to the base to find myself and my team immersed in a rather peaceful environment. This was completely unexpected given that these were troubled times. The enemy had started to breach our frontlines, moving closer to civilian territory with each passing day. We were doing our best to try and hold them back but to no avail. Our tactics were being outmatched by them. Back at base, our peace and tranquillity was suddenly shattered by a soft and familiar sound. "BUZZZZZ!"

"The life you knew before is gone. Today, we fight to bring it back." – Captain John Price, Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3.

It didn't have to be this way. There was no need for a war of this magnitude. However, as history has dictated throughout the ages, war is never really the product of need. It is merely an act, the curtains of which are lifted when the level of tolerance is broken by an atrocious force. Same was the case with MARA.

The Mosquitoes Allied Revolutionary Army, or MARA, were advancing towards human civilisation with hostility. They were always by our ears and on our exposed limbs, but this time, they had crossed the limits of non-consensual contact. The mutual agreement and hospitality that existed between humans and mosquitoes was now jeopardised thanks to their incessant blood thirst. They were now trying to take over human territories and build their own infrastructure. In response to their atrocities and to bring them to justice, we, the allied forces of the United Humanitarian Front, or UHF, were now tasked with the responsibility of carrying out a counterattack against MARA and to ensure the peaceful survival of the human race.

At the base, the buzzing sound of the mosquito could no longer be heard. The cheeky MARA operative was probably trying to make a mockery out of us. We went to look around and see if they were trying to set up camp near our base. As the others looked inside the main compound, I decided to check out other areas and in the process, subconsciously, stepped out to the balcony. That is when I realised the grave mistake I had just made – I was now behind enemy lines.

The balcony was full of potted plants, the perfect place for a MARA hideout. I remained calm and looked around for a bit when suddenly, the familiar buzzing sound pinched my ears. It was perhaps too late for me to go back. The sound was getting closer and closer. I was at a loss, not knowing what to do. It felt as if the war was over for me. Then, out of nowhere, a comrade shouted, "On your nine, lieutenant!" and went on to splatter not one, but three mosquitoes with his electric racket. This was then followed by more racket shots – forehand and backhand – by my other platoon members. I then splattered a mosquito that had just landed on my left arm using my bare hands, mercilessly.

"Are you alright, son?" asked my commanding officer, "Any critical injuries?" Before I could even reply, the colonel noticed the mosquito corpse on my arm and shouted over his radio, "I need a medic, ASAP. All units fall back. Return to base immediately." Under the watchful eye of our commanding officer and the approaching medic, we quickly evacuated to the base with some of our brave soldiers covering the retreat.

That night, we were advised to get some proper sleep. We needed to get our body and mind in proper shape for the coming battles. Some of the troops from the reserve unit took turns to stay on the lookout and guard the fort. Headquarters also sent in reinforcements since the commander had personally requested for

fresh boots to be present on the ground. In the medical chamber of the base, I began wondering about all the chaos and havoc MARA had caused over the last year or so. They sucked our blood, rendered us sleepless, and led us to the outbreak of diseases like dengue and chikungunya. Payback was now the only thing resonating in our minds.

The next morning, at exactly 0700 hours, the commander briefed us all on the upcoming operation. It was an intense hour of strategic talk that included instructions for every step of the plan along with alternatives and other necessary details. We then put on our combat uniform, greased ourselves with mosquito repellent cream and geared up with the latest in mosquito counterattack technology. Our orders were clear: complete annihilation of MARA.

Commence "Operation Moshari Tangabo Na".

I was stationed with the rear-guard as the second in command. We positioned ourselves right by the balcony's glass door planning to launch a guerrilla attack on the enemy's hideout. The battle began; we could hear the gunshots and see smoke grenades being launched on enemy territory. The advance team and the vanguard were going all out on MARA today. There was no stopping them. We then followed suit and launched our attack.

We first went in the old fashioned way, using our physical strength and flattening them with our bare hands. Deployment of mosquito coils followed next, right at the centre of the balcony. The MARA soldiers in the balcony were probably new recruits. They hardly went on the offence and also lacked fire power. Most of their troops were of the low-flying range. All of them were eradicated by the influence of our first wave of attack. The balcony a.k.a. Sector B, was now once again under the control of the UHF.

"Great work, team!" exclaimed the commander over the radio, once we told him of our conquest. "Rendezvous to the Sector Zero and wait for further instructions. Over." We then quickly swept through the area to look for any intel we could find and headed towards Sector Zero as per the commander's instruction. Once there, we were told that the advanced squad had been pinned down at Sector G, the garage. We were advised to assist them.

The garage was a complete warzone. MARA was all over our forces. They too lacked proper air support but had a strong artillery regiment. The mosquitoes were coming at us with everything they had in their arsenal. They even had a few kamikaze mosquitoes diving in towards us. We regrouped at the stairwell near the garage and decided on proceeding with electronic counter measures. We powered up our rackets and decided to go all out with our liquid mosquito vaporisers. The advance team then initiated a baton charge on the MARA operatives using the rackets. They maintained a steady formation at all time during the charge. We on the other hand had finished setting up the vaporisers and coils. Our squad was now knocking down the kamikaze mosquitoes with our rackets. Within a few

minutes, the vaporisers had started to work their magic and mosquitoes fell from their flight paths into oblivion. Section G was cleared.

As the casualties were being accounted for, we got word from the base that the vanguard sent to handle the roof section was not responding. We were needed there. Also, since our squad's first-in-command was injured and had to be taken to the base, I was now charged with the duty of squad leader.

Quickly but carefully, we made our way through the stairs all the way up to Section R where we were devastated by the sight in front of us.

Our troops were completely pinned down by the MARA forces. Up on the roof, underneath the open skies and surrounded by foliage of potted plants, the mosquitoes were at their best. To make matters worse, the slight drizzle had made manoeuvring through the rooftop terrain difficult for our soldiers. MARA was jamming our radio signals for which the soldiers couldn't call for air support. Now that we were here to assist them, the troops on the frontline advised us to send a flare signal to alert the base that we needed air support, as well as the special ops team, to back us up. We did just that and received a counter flare signal from base: they were sending in reinforcements.

However, the way the mosquitoes were trying to retaliate against our attack, it seemed as if we would all perish right over there. Many of our soldiers had fallen. By noon, we were all exhausted and being pushed back. Defeat seemed inevitable. With the mosquitoes needling our troops one by one and with our coils and vaporisers running out, we had lost all hope for victory. But then, there was a grinding sound of a rotor.

First there was one. Within the next two minutes, there were five friendly helicopters to support us. The special ops team rappelled down the copters on to the roof and immediately began their assault on the MARA soldiers. Reinforcement flying high above us carpet bombed the mosquito-infested areas with aerosol. Finally, the ground team rolled in with the commander accompanying them. It was a full scale invasion on MARA. We had taken over; victory was ours.

As the sun began to set on a gruesome day, we set off towards the base, leaving the warzone behind us for the time being. The battle may have been won, but the war still wages on. As I glanced at the beautiful sunset on my way, I began to ponder over this war of ours. Maybe we will get back our right to sleep without a moshari. Maybe we will be safe once again and be able keep our doors and windows open after sun down. Maybe we will have defeated them.

But, at what cost?

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