

ATSS-MH (870)

MEMORANDUM FOR Commandant, United States Army Sergeants Major Academy, Fort Bliss, Texas 79918-8002

SUBJECT: Access Agreement for Personal Experience Papers

1. I, SGM William T. Stoddart, have submitted a Personal Experience Paper to the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy archives regarding events and experiences from my participation in OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM that may be of historical significance to the United States Army and the Noncommissioned Officer Corps.

2. I understand the manuscript and attached documents will be accessioned into the historical holdings of the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy archives and will belong to the United States Government to be used in any manner deemed in the best interests of the United States Army as determined by the Chief of Military History or his representative. I also understand that I may retain a copy for my own use subject to classification restrictions.

3. I hereby expressly and voluntarily relinquish all rights and interest in the paper to the United States Army with the following caveat/exception:

- (  ) None  
(  ) Other:

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I understand that the information in this paper may be subject to the Freedom of Information Act, and therefore, may be releasable to the public contrary to my wishes. I further understand that, within the limits of the law, the United States Army will attempt to honor the restrictions I have requested to be placed on this material.

Date: 15 SEP 10

Printed Name: William T. Stoddart

Signature: Will. T. Stoddart

Accepted on behalf of the United States Army by:

Printed Name/Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

USASMA FORM 7273-R, APR 06

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

COMBAT SUSTAINMENT SUPPORT BATTALION OPERATIONS SERGEANT

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM 06-08

SGM WILLIAM T. STODDART

UNITED STATES ARMY SERGEANTS MAJOR ACADEMY

CLASS #35

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### Abstract

This personal experience paper follows my career from the beginning of my service in 1978 and culminating in my deployment as the S3 Operations Sergeant of the 630<sup>th</sup> Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, North Carolina Army National Guard, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom rotation 06-08, July 2006 through July 2007.

I joined the United States Army on 1 November 1978 in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. At this time I had dropped out of school and had been drifting around South Florida with no job and no home. Much like today there was “double-digit” inflation and little hope for improvement. As I have stated many times in my career, joining the Army was one of the best decisions of my life. I scored well on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) and was able to choose the career of my choice. My first of many Military Occupational Specialties (MOS’s) was 35E, Special Electrical and Electronic Device Repairman. The Delayed Entry Program allowed me to spend a few months preparing myself before I was to board a train for Fort Dix, New Jersey to begin Basic Combat Training on 26 February 1979. I arrived at 17 years old, five foot eleven inches tall and 118 pounds. I gained 38 pounds in Basic Training and much more in the way of confidence and courage.

My first duty station was Fort Hood, TX as a member of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division. A Company, 27<sup>th</sup> Maintenance Battalion contained the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division’s Direct Support Electronic Maintenance Shop. There were more 35E’s than needed working at this location so a few of us worked in to other, less populated, sections. I reported to the repair parts section and soon earned my second MOS, 76C. This MOS became 92A and would be the skill that culminated at the E8 level as the S3 Operations Sergeant for a newly formed Combat Sustainment Support Battalion (CSSB). After three years of active duty I was discharged and went back to Florida. It was February 1982 and jobs were scarce. At first, I attempted to reenlist but my request was denied due to downsizing. I joined the Army Reserve August 1982 as a Fuel Handler, 76F, Command Aviation Section, 3220<sup>th</sup> USAG.

I would alternate between MOS's as I made my way throughout my Army career. In 1989, I moved from Florida to North Carolina and joined the North Carolina Army National Guard. I was very disappointed in the Army Reserve. When I was a reservist, it became clear that my fellow Soldiers were under trained and ill equipped. I was very excited when I joined the NC National Guard. Soon I was training with modern equipment from Paladin Artillery Pieces, M1A1 Abrams Tanks and Apache Attack Helicopters. At this point in my career I decided to rejoin active service in the Active Guard and Reserve (AGR) status. This meant that I would take an administrative reduction from E6 to E5 in order to join but in hindsight, it was a good choice. I had 19 ½ years of service at this point.

I was appointed as the BN NBC NCO for the 1/130<sup>th</sup> Aviation Battalion (Attack) in Morrisville, NC. Little to my knowing the unit would deploy to Kuwait within three months of my becoming AGR. This would mean three things. First, I would get my E6 back. Secondly, I would deploy for 9 months in support of Operation Southern Watch and last, I would celebrate my twentieth year in the Army in the desert of Kuwait smoking a Cuban cigar and drinking near beer. This was my first combat operation spent in the operations section of a deployed unit. I had no idea I would be good at it by my third rotation.

My second deployment, this one after the terrorist attack on 11 September 2001 would again be with the 1-130<sup>th</sup> Aviation Battalion (Attack) but this time it would be to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom IV. This one would be as Platoon Sergeant of the Motor Maintenance Platoon. In total, this deployment would have me and the rest of the members of the unit deployed for 19 months. This would test my leadership skills as I had only recently been assigned as the Motor Sergeant and had yet to establish myself as a mechanic with the rest of the

Soldiers. This was truly my most challenging yet rewarding assignment and I would need all of this experience in a couple of years when I deployed to Iraq.

During this deployment I was offered and accepted a position as the Operations NCO for the 540<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Battalion (POL), Lenoir, NC as a 92F May 2004. This unit was scheduled for realignment under a new MTOE as a Combat Sustainment Support Battalion September 2005. This would be immediately following participation in Operation Bright Star 05, Agami Complex, Egypt. After staffing this new MTOE we were ready for a new challenge. We quickly established all life-support functions for Port Operations receiving all of the forces that would be participating in the multi-national training exercise. Upon returning from Egypt we soon learned of our pending deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. This would be a tougher assignment than Bright Star.

Upon notification of sourcing for our pending deployment our leadership team began attending planning meetings with our wartrace units that included the 593<sup>rd</sup> Sustainment Brigade, an Active Duty support Brigade from Ft Lewis, WA and the 13<sup>th</sup> Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), Ft Hood, TX. I soon realized I would be counted on a lot throughout this deployment. I was able to draw on many years of experience and participate in the detailed planning for our deployment. Our mission was to support combat operations in Multi-national Forces West (MNF-W) Iraq. This area was approximately the size of Texas and included such hotspots as Fallujah, Ramadi and Haditha. Our Task Organization would include five active duty support and combat units, 3 National Guard units from such places as Puerto Rico and California as well as a Navy Reserve Cargo Handling unit. In all there were, at times, 1200 Soldiers and

Sailors from 11 different units assigned to our newly formed headquarters to support the Marines of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF)

The test for me as well as the rest of the staff of our unit was to establish credibility and confidence in our ability to provide Command and Control over these diverse units that were spread over many Combat Outposts (COP's) and Forward Operating Bases (FOB's). This was a very intense and rewarding time in the development of Operation Iraqi Freedom. At the onset of our rotation it was a goal to transition to Iraqi Forces within one year. This appeared impossible at first but after a surge of approximately 30000 additional combat forces in January of 2007 the goal was within reach.

Combat Logistics Patrols (CLP's) were steady with as many as five per day on just about every day of our rotation. This coupled with direct and indirect fire received by our forces throughout the Area of Operations made for a very busy Tactical Operations Center (TOC). By design, a CSSB has only six members of the S2/3 section. This made a tough schedule to maintain for a yearlong operation. Upon assuming control we were able to task additional Soldiers from our subordinate units to supplement our TOC. We were able to staff a Day-Shift Battle Captain as well as Message Center Operators and CLP Inspectors. Eventually we had enough Soldiers working in the TOC to break our schedule down to three shifts. This still was not a very orthodox solution as were most of the solutions I emplaced. I established two shifts of nine hours each and a third shift of seven hours. This was to overcome the fatigue of working the midnight shift and maintain good control over the combat operations as well as the personnel. Intensity of friendly and enemy activity shifted with weather conditions. We established our Operations Center in July 2006 when enemy activity was at its highest and running two twelve

hour shifts was what was needed due to limited personnel and intense operations. Later when surge forces arrived and friendly troop activity was at its highest I was able to break our staff into three shifts at the uneven hourly rate discussed earlier.

The operations center that we fell into from our predecessor consisted of a few folding tables and extension cords powering a couple of laptop computers. It appeared that no improvement was made to this setup since the building was occupied. The building, on Al Asad Airbase where we worked, was built by a Yugoslavian construction firm and was part of the largest airbase in Europe and Asia. The building was very sturdy with some odd cement tables distributed haphazardly around the building. In order to change the room containing the TOC we had to remove two of these tables and construct a stadium-style work area focusing on the video display screens. This setup when complete allowed 10 Soldiers to work and communicate while all having a view of the common operating picture utilizing six plasma displays mounted on an angled wall to maximize space and provide power management.

Power management was integrated into the design of the Operations Center. From the ground up outlets for both 220 and 120 volt systems were spaced and mounted under the tables to control cords and allow for better control. SIPR and NIPR cables were integrated as well to allow for flexibility in the setup of the workspace. A back-up power supply was installed to power the server and Army Battle Command Systems (ABCS) such as Movement Control Systems and Blue Force Tracker. Furthermore, a backup generator was installed to react quickly to frequent power outages. This system would allow the operations staff to return power to the TOC in less than a minute by simply flipping a switch and starting a generator.

All of these improvements as well as the 630<sup>th</sup> CSSB's dedication to providing support to the Warfighter whenever or wherever needed earned this unit many awards during this deployment. Myself, I earned a Bronze Star for my direct actions that contributed to successful combat operations in a very difficult area of Iraq. The 630<sup>th</sup> CSSB as well as all units assigned and attached were authorized to wear the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Expeditionary Force Shoulder Sleeve Insignia for Former Wartime Service (SSI-FFWS). This was very well received as an honor to have served the Marines so well. Additionally the Department of the Navy awarded the 630<sup>th</sup> Combat Sustainment Support Battalion with the Navy Unit Commendation Medal for its support of the Marines fighting in the Al Anbar Region of Iraq.

This mission was the most difficult and rewarding assignment I had to date. The assigned units and I earned accolades and awards for its service and will remain proud for their efforts. The challenge of adapting to a newly formed unit under the modularity concept was very enlightening proving that the idea of forming small adaptable units to deploy in support of unaffiliated units was a good idea and has proven itself throughout the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts.