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Abstract

My personal experience paper is a snap shot of my experiences while serving as the First Sergeant of HQ & A Company Forward Support Battalion during Operation Enduring Freedom IV, Afghanistan. I have also served on other battle fronts such as Operation Desert Storm, Operation Desert Shield in Saudi Arabia. Throughout the contingency operations I have faithfully served over the past twenty three years of military service. One thing I have found to be true, through my own personal experience is that we must train our Soldiers to the Army standards. Because we don't know what tomorrow brought or where we can find our self deployed.

My Personal Experience Paper

My personal experience paper reflects a snap shot of my combat experiences while deployed in Afghanistan. I served as a first sergeant for HQ & A Forward Support Company "Henchman" as part of combined Joint task Force 76 and 3rd Brigade Combat Team, in support of Operation Enduring Freedom-IV. HQ & A Company was responsible for providing Direct Logistical Support to the 3rd Brigade Combat Team and coalition forces throughout Afghanistan as a combined arms service team. The Company was also given the mission to provide base support to units on Kandahar Airfield. Because of the multinational forces and split base operations throughout Afghanistan, my unit was task establish several Forward Logistic teams throughout the joint support operations Area (JSOA) in the continuous effort in support 3rd Brigade Combat Team(BCT) and the Joint Logistical Command with (JLC). During the deployment we received additional Soldiers for our sister battalion and one platoon of reserve ammunitions Soldiers. Though brought some challenges and integration did not go well. After months of working and training together the Soldiers started work as team.

My unit went from supporting a brigade combat team, to an area support. The area support brought other challenges to my unit, of which were: equipment shortages and equipment that needed to be repaired, we were also tasked to provide base support, with critical MOS shortages. We were basically providing water supplies to three areas with only five 92 W (water soldiers), and two forward area water point supply systems. There also came the challenge of providing fuel, but after through put distribution was established things got easier and that meant less time on the road for my soldiers.

During my deployment one important lessons learned come to mind; the unit must be task organize at least eighty days out prior to deployment. This would give the Leaders a greater opportunity to build their teams, through individual readiness training (IRT) as part of the pre-

development process. During our deployments many doctrinal lessons were learned. The most important one was to know the way the unit on the ground was doing the mission. All in-country recons were conducted by our Operation Support Officer. Well needed information was never briefed down to the company level for planning. That meant we had to learn the present mission and change things as time went on. Because of the ever-changing combination of division units operating in the brigade area, my NCOs and I had to maintain constant contact with our Forward Support teams, to anticipate future support requirements. This experience helped my young NCOs learn to plan and coordinate logistical requirements.

When substantial changes are made in size and types of units supported by a FSB, no additional augmentation support was provided from a corps unit. Getting through all the challenges that were thrown at us really helped my soldiers and NCOs learn to work through everyday changing doctrinal. But of course poor planning, coordination and mission briefs caused many shortfalls during the operation.

During first six months we changed our daily operations to support the mission. Because there was a shortage of critical equipment and MOSs, we were forced to cross-level within the company. The Supply Support Activity (SSA) worked 24 hour shifts to process all customer demands and push supplies forward to the Forward Support teams. After being in country for two months, we were informed that civilian contractors would be taking over the SSA operations for us. That gave us a new problems, how to keep 24 Soldiers busy for next ten months. The central receiving point was problem and critical supplies were been lost. So we established new procedure to fix the problem. By move our 92A supply personnel to the CRP help fix both the Soldiers issue and CRP operations. By given up the SSA operation that allowed us cross train Soldiers to critical shortage areas. Providing water support to three different areas was challenging with only five 92W (Water Specialist). Our 92W (Water Specialist) were tasked to

provide water support to all dining facilities and shower points on Kandahar Airfield. The water point ran a 24 hour operation with only five Soldiers; we also pushed water forward, to three Forward Operating Bases (FOB's). My Soldiers quickly developed ways to reduce the amount of time on the road by establishing water wells on the Forward Operating Bases.

Keeping the equipment running for 24 hours for weeks and months, was one of the greatest accomplishments my NCOs and Soldiers did to support the warrior fighter. The company transportation platoon was equipped with equipment to move one infantry company at a time but was tasked to support distribution missions around Kandahar Airfield and support moving 3rd Brigade Combat Team and coalition forces throughout Afghanistan. This outstanding platoon accomplished their entire missions without losing a single Soldier.

During the deployment my company received a platoon of reserve ammunitions Specialist. They were tasked to receive, store, and issue of all ammunition in support for the 3rd Brigade Combat Team and coalition forces within the southern part of Afghanistan. The fuel section was one the busiest section in the company. They were tasked with receiving, storage, and inspecting a fuel that was received from the civilian companies. Everyday a team went out the gate to escort the civilian fuel truck but before they came anywhere near the base camp, the drivers and trucks was searched by bomb dogs. The fuel section established a safe zone to off load the fuel. The civilian fuel truck never came close to main base camp. Before contactor fuel could be delivered to forward operating base, the fuel section at least three trips a week to different locations. Once contactor fuel started to be pushed forward, our soldiers spend less time on the road. During the year rotation in Afghanistan use civilian truck to push supplies to the Forward Operating Base, we did lose some supplies to the enemy but no Soldiers were lost. The company was tasked with many other missions out side our daily mission, we were tasked with base security, and to provide security to local worker that were used to pickup trash and build motor pool buildings.

Our female soldiers were often task out to infantry and Special Forces units as female searcher. The training soldiers had received in Schofield really paid off for the soldiers.

Over the last year we continue to do training on all assigned weapon systems and convoy operations. With the ever-changing tactics of the enemy, Soldiers returning from the field would conduct after action reviews. By conducting this AAR, this gave the leadership a chance to look at areas that needed to be change on the next mission. Conducting AAR or debriefs really help the young NCOs and LTs improve SOPs, pre-combat checklists. But most important thing was what areas to stay away from.

One major challenge we had was keeping our Soldiers focus for a whole year. The worth times for young Soldiers is during the holidays, Soldiers start missing their love one even more. We planned different activities to keep them busy and with today abilities to call home or e-mail love ones it made life better for the soldiers. We tried not to have Soldiers out on forward operating base for more then 45 days at a time, so they could be around people they know and trusted. A year deployment is hard for Soldiers and as leaders we had to make sure that our Soldiers were doing well. During my daily rounds, I made a point to sit around and take to the Soldiers. I my seven months with the company down range, we had ever little problems. During our pre-deployment training we ensured that our Soldiers were trained to standards and discipline. Our soldiers understood that things were not going to be easy for them down range. The NCOs did outstanding job taking care of their Soldiers and build a great team. Some the Specialist made sergeants while deployed and showed great skills in leading the Soldiers that were once their friends just day before getting promoted. You can train your soldiers for combat and hope that the training you provide get them home safe. I was proud to serve with all those great Soldiers and NCOs.

After spending a year fighting an ever-changing enemy helped our Soldiers learn many lessons such as: never let your guard down, always train to standard and train as you fight. My NCOs learned a big lesson, that NCOs must play a bigger role in training, leading and taking care of Soldiers. I've seen NCOs worry more about themselves, then taking care of their Soldiers and completely forgetting that they have soldiers. We spend more time trying to get promoted and looking good then trying to lead our soldiers. Know yourself, your mission and your soldiers.

Things went well during battle handoff with the unit replacing my unit. All lessons learned during our tour were passed on to the incoming unit. My unit left behind all vehicles that had been was up armored and we also left behind critical equipment that would be needed to support addition forward operating bases. Before the unit that was to replace my battalion arriving in country, their leadership conducted a mission recon. Because the unit would be support the same areas of operation, they were advised to plus up their unit manning roster. Even though I left the unit in October 2004, I know that the company leaders would make sure that the unit replacing us did not make the same mistakes we did. The job as a company First Sergeant in my mind and heart is the great job in the US Army. Today most of my Soldiers are deployed to Iraq, doing duties in support of the Warrior Fighter.

Lesson learn

Unit should be task organize at least eighty days out prior to deployment.

Better in-country recon and key leader brief.

Critical MOS shortages and equipment.

Bronco Support: 325th FSB, 25th Inf Div (L)



BN METL ASSESSMENT 29 JUL 04

METL TASKS	OVER	STRATEGY	DATE LAST TRAINED	EVENTs TRAINED / EXECUTED DURING 15 JAN 04 - JULY 04
	ALL			
CONDUCT TACTICAL DEPLOYMENT / REDEPLOYMENT ACTIVITIES	T	OEF deployment, RSOI RIP w/10th FSB	APR 04	Executing OEF V Deployment, Push Teams, Download / Upload of Equipment via air and commercial truck, Personnel In-Processing, RIP 10th FSB
CONDUCT AN AREA DEFENSE	T	Convoys (CMAX), STT, Bazaar Security Detail	JUN 04	Convoy Defense for Qalat Resupply & CMAX, Convoy LFX
MANAGE CS/CSS FORCE POSITIONING	T	LOG TMs (POL, PM, H2O, MSTs), KAF Reorg, Make a Wave	JUL 04	MSTs and PM Teams to Firebases, FLEs at FBs, KAF Reorganization, RIP 10th FSB
PROTECT THE FORCE	P	QRF Support, Battle Drills,	JUL 04	QRF Support with Medical PAX / Equip, Battle Drill Rehearsals, Bazaar Security, LN Searches at VCPs w/Female Soldiers
PERFORM CSS AND SUSTAINMENT	T	Daily Mission, Make a Wave, RIP w/10th FSB	JUL 04	Daily Mission, Water/CHS/LOGCAP OPD, RIP 10th FSB

MISSION:

CJTF 180 conducts stability operations in Afghanistan in a Combine Joint Operations Area; create and maintain a secure environment in supporting effort to establish an Afghanistan that is able to deter and defeat the resurgence of Terrorism.

PURPOSE:

Security and Reconstruction- the center of gravity of our fight is the Afghani people.

INTENT: shape a secure environment for the Afghan Government.

Stability Ops / Strike Ops

Understand our fight:

Environment

Enemy

Ourselves

Operations Principles

- Situational Awareness
- Own the Battleship
- Strife: be poised to seize opportunity, react to contact
- Balance: force protection and mission focus
- Army Values

Respect- all around, everyone

Honor- protect the honor of the Nation

- Our chance to make a difference
- Discipline
- TIPS- Talk to Soldiers
 - Talk to Soldiers
 - Keep Soldiers Informed
 - Provide Predictability
 - Be Sensitive
 - Stay Trained and ready
 - Transform into tomorrow's Army
 - Take care of Soldiers
 - Be a Good Neighbor

Visualize the Battlefield

Leadership Responsibility

- Selfless Service
- Leave a Legacy of improvement
- Force Protection-Mission Accomplishment
- Accidents are Actions of "ill-discipline"

INTANGIBLES

- Attitude
- Persistence
- Balancing Demands- Wisdom
- Trust your Instincts
- Selfless Service vs Self Service Actions

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