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Recruiting Company First Sergeant at War

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### Abstract

This paper tells the story of my experience as the Cincinnati Recruiting Company First Sergeant during the attack on the World Trade Centers and Operation Enduring Freedom. The events covered are from 11 Sep 01 to 1 Jul 04 in Cincinnati, OH. The most exciting day in my Army career was the day I was promoted to First Sergeant. I never expected the country to be at war during first my tour nor did I expect such a challenge to achieve my assigned mission. My challenges included Future Soldiers not wanting to ship, parents refusing to talk with recruiters, and my Soldiers wanting to serve in combat with their friends.

The responsibilities and duties of a first sergeant are of high status and one of the toughest jobs in the United States Army. I was assigned on 20 Feb 01, as First Sergeant of the Cincinnati Recruiting Company. My first day as first sergeant was very special. I addressed my company, told the Soldiers my leadership philosophy and explained how our company will achieve mission box for the year. All the Soldiers and station commanders in the company were very excited and ready for the challenge of being number one. The company took off quickly and success started spreading rapidly throughout the recruiting stations. The company achieved mission box during the months of March, April and May. Never before had the company achieved mission box three consecutive months in a row. During the month of June, the recruiting company had a set-back and finished the month eight contracts short. During the After Action Review, all of the Soldiers gave their personal commitment to get back on track and make up the shortfalls from June. The Soldiers of the Cincinnati Recruiting Company did just that. Not only did we achieve mission box during July and August, but we overproduced and finished number one in the brigade for the quarter. I had never been so proud of a group of Noncommissioned Officers since entering the Army. Many of the recruiting stations were short recruiters and Soldiers, but still found a way to make it happen. The month of September began and the company was again off to a great start. Soldiers were focused on mission box for the month, quarter and finish the year number one in the battalion and the brigade.

The Day of Change

The morning of 11 Sep 01, started just like the previous days as a first sergeant in Cincinnati Recruiting Company. After sending the morning status report to the battalion S1, I proceeded to my office around 0800 and found my company commander already at his desk preparing an award for a Soldier. We began to talk about how the company would finish the month and the possibilities of being number one in the battalion. After updating the commander for about an hour we began our daily duties of talking to station commanders, recruiters and the battalion leadership team. My secretary always had her radio playing while completing the morning reports. She suddenly ran into my office and turned on the television to CNN as they broadcast the coverage of a plane crashing into the World Trade Center. I remember sitting there saying to myself "this cannot be happening". The Commander and I watched without saying anything to each other in disbelief. We both were thinking it was just a very bad accident and the pilot was just off course. It wasn't until we watched the second plane hit the second tower that we realized the country was under attack. The phones began to ring from recruiters, mothers, fathers, and spouses, all wanting answers that I could not give. I received my orders from battalion to secure all recruiting station, government vehicles and property. The Commander and I released the company to go home and ensure their families were safe and remain there until we contact them. The next two days were full of questions and concerns from my recruiters and new enlistees waiting to know if and when will they ship to basic training. All planes and buses were grounded, so the only answer I could give them was "stand by and stay ready". For the first time as the company first sergeant, I did not have the answer. I never realized just how much the company look to me for answers. For the next eight days, the recruiting company remained shut down. We conducted accountability formation each morning and ensured all recruiters were taking the necessary precautions for themselves and their families. The station commanders

ensured all recruiting stations and government vehicles were secure and checked for any suspicious activity around the recruiting stations. The Commander and I contacted all parents of the new enlistees to keep them motivated about shipping to basic training.

### I changed my mind

After days of watching CNN, listening to radio, and waiting, President Bush instructed the country to go back to work, to include the recruiting command. With rumors of war, and combat on every channel, the phone calls from concerned parents and new enlistees poured in. Many wanted their son or daughter released from the Delayed Entry Program. Some parents wanted a guarantee their son or daughter would not go to combat. I knew my recruiters were getting frustrated with the same questions and did not know how to answer all the calls. I then brought all recruiters to my office and conducted training on how to address questions about the war, combat and setting the example in the community. For the next three months we lost approximately five of the new enlistees per month. They changed their mind, or their parents changed their minds for them, about shipping to basic training. As we approached 1 Mar 02 and Soldiers began deploying, television coverage was very positive about being a Soldier. People began coming to the recruiting stations wanting to enlist. Many applicants were too old to enlist and veterans from previous wars wanted to get back in and serve their country. Production began to improve and the company regained its momentum toward mission box. Many of the enlistees that initially feared shipping to basic training came back and eventually shipped. Parents and community members routinely would stop by the recruiting stations and drop off donations and care packages for us to send to the troops deployed. People in the community began embracing the recruiters as our fellow Soldiers began to deploy for combat.

### Recruiters wanting to deploy

After months of rebuilding the company posture and getting back to solid recruiting, many of the recruiters were hearing about friends dying in combat and felt they needed to be back with their old units. Many of the infantry and field artillery Soldiers in the company wanted to deploy and get to do their primary MOS. Morale began to drop during the initial months of combat.

Soldiers wanted to watch television and track the war during the day instead of prospecting. By 01 Jun 02, we had a 40% turnover rate of Soldiers in the company. This brought new and highly motivated recruiters but they all needed training fast to get the company back to the top. The monthly mission began to increase by fifteen contracts. A contract amount the company had never achieved. The Commanding General of the Recruiting Command sent a personal letter to each company leadership team emphasizing the importance of mission achievement. We were depleting the Delayed Entry Pool and Soldiers were needed in combat now. I instructed the station commanders to call all new enlistees and inform them their ship date was moved up for basic training. Many of the Future Soldiers were more than happy and some refused to go. I had parents curse and swear at me saying we are killing kids for oil and power. I often tried to explain that we are Soldiers defending freedom, but I often got hung up on or the door slammed in my face. The recruiters were facing this daily but maintained a positive attitude and just said thanks for your time sir or madam.

A few months past as the war continued and the company achieved mission box for the fiscal year of 2002. Cincinnati Recruiting Company finished the year number one in the battalion and number three out of 42 companies in the brigade. We also finished as the Most Improved Company in the brigade. We began seeing Soldiers come back from basic training and

going straight to Iraq or a unit getting ready to deploy. All were highly motivated and ready to serve their nation. The recruiters took them back to their local high schools in uniform and they were a big asset to us for high school seniors trying to decide about enlisting. They showed other prospects they can make it and that they were fully trained and ready for combat.

### Well worth it

Although my time as the First Sergeant of Cincinnati Recruiting Company brought many challenges others in the past had never faced, I would never trade it. The events of 11 Sep 06 brought my recruiters, my company and our nation together. I enlisted six Soldiers into the Army who deployed to Operation Iraqi Freedom that did not return alive. One Soldier is still missing, Specialist Matt Maupin, and many returned injured. Not only was I their first sergeant, I became a part of their family. It is extremely painful to live in the civilian community daily with the family of a Soldier lost in combat. The Soldiers of Cincinnati Recruiting Company remain very close today. Many remain in contact with those deployed and their families. Being a first sergeant was the most challenging and most rewarding position I ever held.

### Lessons Learned

The lessons learned from my time as First Sergeant of Cincinnati Recruiting Company, during the attack on the World Trade Center and Operation Iraqi Freedom, are extremely valuable. My planning process has increased. I will focus on basic common task for my Soldiers during

company training and place a large emphasis on common task testing. This will keep my recruiters prepared when called upon to deploy.