

ATSS-DAS

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

SUBJECT: Access Agreement for release of Student writing assignment Personal Experience Paper.

1. I, MSG Geier Jason, submitted a Personal Experience Paper to the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy archives regarding events and experiences 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:

ALL: Initials Publish all.

NONE: Initials

4. 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: 3 Dec 10

Student Printed Name: Geier, Jason D.

Signature: Jason D Geier

Accepted on behalf of the United States Army by:

SGA Printed Name/Date: MSG Dale III, Geier 03 Dec 10

Signature: MSG Dale III

A Chance to Wear the Diamond

MSG Jason Geier

United States Army Sergeants Major Academy

Class #61

SGM Grear Dale

3 December 2010

### Abstract

When a Soldier gets an opportunity to achieve a professional goal, it can at times place a Soldier in a personal dilemma of choosing between his Soldiers or accomplishing a professional feat.

This is not just a normal feat, but also that of a First Sergeant in a combat zone at the Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq, one of the highest levels of command in Iraq. To add to the dilemma the Soldier must relinquish a solid leadership position, and carry the reputation of another highly visible command, Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-Arabian Peninsula to perform at the next level with an end state of opening doors for others to follow.

## A Chance to Wear the Diamond

### **The Dilemma**

Sometimes when you least expect a chance to meet a professional goal, an opportunity presents itself, and the author realizes he is going to have to make a personal decision between his Soldiers or fulfilling a professional goal. Not only is this just simply a professional goal to be a First Sergeant (1SG), but a chance to be a 1SG at one of the highest commands in Iraq in support of OPERATION Iraqi Freedom. For most senior enlisted non-commissioned officers (NCO), the opportunity to serve as an actual diamond wearing 1SG is a professional milestone that can at times challenge you mentally, physically and emotionally. Nevertheless, it is the one enlisted leadership position that most strive to achieve and succeed in before retirement. To reach this goal, senior NCOs sacrifice many years of hard work and dedication just to get a chance to reach this highly visible position. However, to reach this professional goal, the author places himself in a personal dilemma to choose between his 10<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group (SFG) support Soldiers or his own professional goal.

### **Background and Responsibilities**

When a professional goal becomes available, it normally means forfeiting another leadership position. In this case, relinquishing the Senior Military Intelligence Enlisted Advisor to the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-Arabian Peninsula (CJSOTF-AP) in Balad, Iraq. My responsibility was to oversee and administer the daily staff functions of a 102-member, highly specialized J2 Joint Intelligence Directorate with personnel operating in the Headquarters staff, two Special Operations Forces Battalions, one Naval Special Warfare Task Group, and a Temporary Holding Facility directly supporting combat operations and the training of Iraqi forces throughout the Iraqi Theater of Operations. Simultaneously I served as the Senior

Enlisted Advisor for a 64-man forward 10<sup>th</sup> SFG Support Company in support of J6, J3, and the medical section. These two organizations were comprised of officers, enlisted, and civilian personnel from all branches of the Department of Defense and all Intelligence Occupational Specialties specifically brought together to support the Foreign Internal Defense and Counter-insurgency mission in Iraq. To give these leadership positions up only after six months to become the Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq (MNSTC-I), Headquarters Commandant 1SG in the International Zone (IZ) (also commonly referred to as the Green Zone) (Appendix A, p. 10), Baghdad, Iraq, forced a soul searching dilemma to transpire.

### **Train-up and Deployment**

All leaders want to train their Soldiers, deploy their Soldiers, and finally re-deploy with all their Soldiers. However, when an opportunity arises, and the leader has to miss the last steps of a complete deployment cycle (completing the deployment and redeployment) to fulfill a professional goal, one has to dig deep to decide which position to chose. The mindset of all the mission requirements a leader goes through just to accomplish a deployment, hopefully the reader can identify the dilemma to give it up at any stage to fulfill another professional goal. Start with home station pre-mission train-up to fulfill theater deployment requirements (i.e., ranges, convoys, medical, and communications training); followed up by pack out of all equipment and baggage, then right into nailing down all time-phased force & deployment data timelines for Soldiers deploying. Then lead Soldiers to the International Staging Base for final manifest into Iraq with not only sensitive items, but also classified documents and sensitive equipment. Next conduct Relief in Place/ Transfer of Authority with the outgoing unit. Lastly, establish a battle rhythm to synchronize intelligence to the CJSOTF-AP commander and staff, and outlying units.

### **New Responsibilities**

Now comes the hard part, deciding between your current Soldiers and responsibilities or forfeit it all, and take on a professional goal that has been on a personal list to achieve before retirement. Unfortunately, time was of the essence. Arriving back into the Iraqi theater, after witnessing another personal milestone- birth of a son- the author only had minutes to decide. Fortunately, another in-house 10<sup>th</sup> SFG Master Sergeant was arriving therefore relieving the feeling that the Soldiers were going to get someone they knew vice a new leader to the unit. After making the decision to take the MNSTC-I ISG position, and between turning over my responsibilities to my replacement, minimal time could be spent researching MNSTC-I's organization before reporting within three days to the IZ in Baghdad.

### **MNSTC-I**

The branch of the Multi-National Force- Iraq responsible for developing, organizing, training, equipping, and sustaining the Iraqi Security Ministries (Ministry of Defense (MoD) and Ministry of Interior (MoI)) and their associated Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) (i.e., the military of Iraq and the Iraqi Police(IP)) was MNSTC-I. According to Wikipedia (2010), the stated mission was to assist MoI, MoD, and Counter Terrorism Service by improving the quality of the ISF and institutional performances. Allowing ISF to increasingly assume responsibility for population protection and develop Iraqi security institutions capable of sustaining security with reduced Coalition involvement. Therefore, the MNSTC-I mission was a central part of the U.S. exit strategy.

**History of MNSTC-I Commanders and Sub-Commands.** As part of the overall retrograde phase, MNSTC-I was replaced by United States Forces-Iraq in 2010. Wikipedia (2010) indicates prior to that MNSTC-I was commanded (since October 2009) by Lieutenant General (LTG) Michael Barbero and was headquartered in the IZ in Baghdad at Phoenix Base (Appendix A, p.10), a former elementary school. Prior to LTG Barbero, MNSTC-I commanders included, LTG Frank Helmick (July 2008-October 2009), (Commander during my tenure), LTG James Dubik, LTG Martin Dempsey and LTG David Petraeus. The last Sergeant Major was United State Marine Corps Sergeant Major Daniel Twelling. The command was established out of a requirement to create a new Iraqi Army (IA) under the Coalition Provisional Authority. The original command consisted of the Coalition Military Assistance Transition Team (CMATT). MNSTC-I was originally organized into three training teams, but had grown dramatically as newer missions and needs had been identified. The three former organizations were CMATT, which organized, trained, and equipped the IA, Joint Headquarters Advisory Support Team (JHQ-ST), which assisted the joint headquarters of the IA in developing a command and control system. Also, JHQ-ST assisted in operational planning and gave strategic advice to the Iraq government. The last original organization was the Civilian Police Assistance Training Team (CPATT), which organized, trained, and equipped the IP. MNSTC-I expanded from the three original organizations to consist of the following subordinate units (see Appendix B, p. 11) organized under the Directorate of Defense Affairs and Directorate of Interior Affairs. In addition, the commander of MNSTC-I became dual hatted as the commander of the NATO Training Mission-Iraq (NTM-I) as well. (Wikipedia, 2010)

### **My New Responsibilities**

The comparisons from what I left at CJSOTF-AP to MNSTC-I were drastic and complex, and the timeline to figure it all out was minimal. First, primarily having the responsibility of overseeing intelligence production, taking care of 164 joint service members and civilians' quality of life and administration issues at CJSOTF-AP, a sprawling camp inside Life Support Area Anaconda, commanded by Special Forces Colonel Darsie Rogers and Command Sergeant Major Chuck Sekelsky. To go to the 1,200 person MNSTC-I command, which on any given day had 15 General Officers (or civilian equivalent) and their Command Sergeants Majors, Master Chiefs, or Chief Master Sergeants on a compound the size of a normal, urban city block. My new responsibility at MNSTC-I consisted of a 25 joint service member headquarters section. However, compared to CJSTOF-AP, I now had to coordinate all logistics, life support, and facility maintenance, not only at Pheonix Base, but also at a large portion of Blackhawk and Embassy housing areas. Additionally, I had oversight of a 350- person contract force. This force included a 50 person base security detail under supervision of Triple Canopy, and the other 300 people fell under Alamco, which covered all aspect of life support on Pheonix Base (i.e., vehicles, dining facility, barber shop, maintenance, plumbing, cleaning, etc.). The other unique element of the headquarters section was the responsibility to see that all Iraqis who entered the IZ went through the badging process.

### **Highlights**

Although I had several personal and professional highlights that positively impacted me as a person and a professional, from the people I worked for (LTC Rob Wittig [HQ Commandant] and CPT Pat Jeter [HQ XO]) to leading all personal security details on Pheonix Base, the one highlight that I will take away is the Danish End Of Mission Ceremony. On 17

December 2010, I led in a color guard before Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and LTG Helmick, plus several other high-ranking dignitaries', and requested permission to case the Danish Colors. To some this would not be much of a highlight, however, I directly developed the plan, to include parking and security and briefed LTG Helmick, when most of his staff officer indicated he would not approve of my course of action. For me it proved not only could I operate in the small knit Special Operations community, but also I could quickly transition, operate, and communicate under a more senior, political environment.

### **Conclusion**

I knew prior to taking the 1SG position at MNSTC-I that it was only going to last for six months. This played heavy into making my decision, which at the time felt like I was leaving my Soldiers for only six months of 1SG time. However, in the end, I had the full support not only from my Soldiers, but also to a degree, I felt as if I was representing all of CJSOTF-AP. For my battalion CSM and the CJSOTF-AP CSM to have full confidence in my ability and afford me the opportunity to achieve a professional goal, I knew they were also taking a chance. If I went down into the IZ under such a large footprint of general officers, diplomats, and media and did not perform, not only could their reputation suffer, but that of CJSOTF-AP as well. In the end, I know I represented CJSOTF-AP well, and opened doors for the command to continue to fill or give another senior NCO a chance to fulfill hopefully their 1SG time as well.

References

Wikipedia. MNSTC-I. Retrieved 19 November 2010 from

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Multi-National\\_Security\\_Transition\\_Command\\_%E2%80%93\\_Iraq](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Multi-National_Security_Transition_Command_%E2%80%93_Iraq)

Appendix A

## Appendix B

- **HQ CMDT** – CAMP LIFE SUPPORT
- **J1** – PERSONNEL AND MANPOWER
- **J2** – INTELLIGENCE
- **J3** – PLANS & OPERATIONS, TRAINING, MOVEMENT
- **J4** – LOGISTICS
- **J5** – PLANS & STRATEGY
- **J6** – COMMUNICATIONS
- **J7** – ENGINEERING
- **J8** – COMPTROLLER
- **HA** – HEALTH AFFAIRS
- **STRATEGIC INITIATIVES GROUP** – PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE AND PROTOCOL
- **SJA** – LEGAL
- **CAATT** – COALITION ARMY ADVISORY TRAINING TEAM
- **CPATT** – COALITION POLICE ASSISTANCE TRANSITION TEAM
- **CAFTT** – COALITION AIR FORCE TRANSITION TEAM
- **JHQAT** – JOINT HEADQUARTERS ADVISORY TEAM
- **INCTFTT** – IRAQI NATIONAL COUNTERTERRORISM FORCE TRANSITION TEAM
- **ITT** – INTELLIGENCE TRANSITION TEAM
- **MODAT** – MINISTRY OF DEFENCE ASSISTANCE TEAM
- **MOITT** – MINISTRY OF INTERIOR TRANSITION TEAM
- **CMD GRP** – ADMINISTRATIVE SECTION FOR MNSTC-I COMMANDING GENERAL
- **SAO** – SECURITY ASSISTANCE OFFICE
- **IG** – INSPECTOR GENERAL
- **DIA** – DIRECTORATE OF INTERIOR AFFAIRS (HQ for CPATT + MOITT)
- **DDA** – DIRECTORATE OF DEFENSE AFFAIRS (HQ for MODAT + JHQAT + CAFTT + CAATT + MaSTT + DDA FCTs)
- **MaSTT** – MARITIME STRATEGIC TRANSITION TEAM
- **HQ FCDs** – HQ MNSTC-I FUNCTIONAL CAPABILITY DIRECTORATE TEAMS