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659TH DEPLOYMENT TO AFGHANISTAN AND MY THREE DEPLOYMENTS TO IRAQ

MSG Gerardo Betancourt

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63Z5M/1SG, 659TH FSC, Fort Bragg, NC

63Z5M/BMS, 2ND BN, 6TH IN (2BCT), Baumholder Germany

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Abstract

This paper will introduce to you the sequence of events that took the 659TH Forward Support Company to Afghanistan and then to Saudi Arabia in route to Iraq, in order to support Special Operations Units. This unit was able to change their day to day mission as a Direct Support Company to a Forward Support Company in combat a very astonishing accomplishment. The leadership and all the training that was accomplishment in the months leading up to the two deployments play a big roll in the 659th Forward Support Company accomplishing their mission and coming home with no loses. The two deployments of the 2ND Battalion 6TH Infantry Brigade (2 BCT) and the experiences that the Battalion Motor Sergeant encounter, that forever will change the appreciation and respect that I will have for his Soldiers.

659TH Deployment to Afghanistan and my Three Deployments to Iraq

I. The 659TH FSC, 1ST Call to Duty

The year was 2002, January, prior to this day my battalion had been training intensively. Preparing ourselves to fight terrorist, these were dangerous times and our enemy had shown their face. I was the First Sergeant for 659th Forward Support Company, First COSCOM; I was called in by the Battalion Staff Duty Officer to report for an early meeting with the Battalion Commander. When I arrive at the battalion my Company Commander was there already, but he had no idea on what was going on himself.

II. The FRAGO and Then the Disappointment

The Battalion Commander and the Command Sergeant Major made there presents and in no time the slide presentation went up and there it was, we were going to Afghanistan to support the War Fighters. I was happy but at the same time scare, scare because I new that these terrorist were just not going to sit there and let us take over there country and of course I was scare for my Soldiers because in war we will always loose Soldiers. In spite of all that happens in war I was still patriotic about getting back at the people that came into my country and like cowards attack innocent people and killed thousands of my fellow Americans. 659th Forward Support Company you will provide a large maintenance and logistical package,

Commander and First Sergeant not included. The Battalion Commanders words were like an electrical shock up my spine; you will select a Senior Non-Commissioned Officer and a First Lieutenant, give them the package and let them run with it. I didn't like the idea, but in the Army we follow orders. I had trained these Soldiers, but I was not going to war with them, quite a disappointment. We wanted to continue taking care of our Soldiers, something that never happen. This is something we cannot control, this is the requirement and we will follow orders. Those were the exact words that came out of my Battalion Commander mouth, (COL Jose Enriquez, 189th MSB, Battalion Commander January 2002).

III. The 659TH FSC Leaves For Afghanistan

When the meeting was over everything had been decided we would sent a logistical team of ninety personnel; consisting of one Lieutenant, three Sergeant First Classes, a platoon of twenty logisticians to order all classes of supply necessary and the remaining sixty eight Soldiers were a combinations of all types of mechanics. The mechanics team needed the capability to accomplish a variety of mechanical tasks from changing a Bradley engine to repairing a weapon system, (Forward Support Battalion, FM 63-20, 26 Feb 1990). We were then told that we had two weeks to get them ready to deploy. I looked at it with dismay, I did not believe deep in my heart we had enough time, but I took it

upon myself that I was not going to cut corners and that I was going to make sure my Soldiers got the correct training to be able to survive in a combat zone. I was very successful; all ninety Soldiers came back after six months in Afghanistan without a scratch in their bodies.

IV. The 2ND Call to Duty for the 69TH FSC (IRAQ)

November 2002, the Battalion was again call upon for logistical packages to be sent out to support the War Fighters, this time Iraq. I was told that my company would not go anywhere accept for a small number of Soldiers I would be task to give up. My company would need to stay at Fort Bragg to support customers within the 18th Airborne Corps. I was told by the Battalion Commander that my commander would be the Rear Detachment Commander and I would be the Rear Detachment Sergeant Major. I saluted the Flag and continue business as usual, even though deep inside me I was thinking, I'm being left behind again. The Battalion task force accomplishes a CMTC rotation in preparation for their deployment to Iraq and they were ready to depart by late January 2003.

V. The Change of Mission for the 659TH FSC

First week of February 2003, all personnel from the battalion that are not going are task organize to my company, I now have a company of four hundred plus Soldiers. The beginning of week two, February 2003 I get a call from the staff duty

officer to report to the Brigade Rear Detachment Commander, as soon as possible along with my Commander. When I get there I'm told, that we need to put a maintenance package together of one hundred personnel from my company; mechanics, logistics clerks. I will get a platoon of transporters, (truck drivers), and a platoon of ammo handlers from two other Battalions. I would have to take this group of Soldiers and make them into a functioning Forward Support Company" (Forward Support Company, FM 63-20, 26 Feb 1990). I was also told you and your commander will lead this FSC and you be supporting Special Operation Soldiers. This was something that had never been done, to bring an outside organization to support Special Operations Soldiers; we were the first, so to me and my organization it was an honor.

VI. The Mission

I reported to the 530th Forward Support Battalion, the battalion that we were going to be task organized to. For the planning phase, I met with the CSM and got his intention and then I met with the Support Operations Officer to get the support operations packet, (Forward Support Battalion, FM 63-20, 26 Feb 1990). This battalion took us under their wing and within hours I had the entire mission and time frame of the upcoming deployment. From the minute I got my brief by the Support Operation Officer to when we were in Saudi Arabia, ten days that is astonishing. Our equipment was flown in by C17 Air Force

aircraft and thirty days later we had establish a Forward Observation Base in North Saudi Arabia.

VII. Supporting the War Fighters

Once establish the unit we were supporting commence daily operations in Iraq, and this is where my unit came into place, (SUPPORT), twenty four hour operations, seven days a week none stop, my Soldiers were doing what they were train to do and I was right there to make sure that they were being taken care of. Some of my Soldiers were call upon to accomplish LOCPACS into Iraq, (Transportation Operations, FM 55-1, 3 OCT 1995). When the time arrive to conduct these LOCPACS, I had plenty of volunteers and grateful to the lord not one of my Soldiers got hurt in the couple of months that we spend in Saudi Arabia and Iraq, quite an accomplishment, but it was due to the outstanding leadership within the Non-Commissioned Officers and the training and discipline of the Soldiers of the 659th FSC.

VIII. My New Assignment 2ND BN, 6TH IN (2 BCT)

Seven months after I return from Operation Iraqi Freedom, I was transfer to Baumholder Germany, (PCS). I was assign to HHC 2ND Battalion, 6TH Infantry Brigade, (2 BCT), 1ST Armor Division, the only Armor Division in the Army. I arrive their 20 January 2004, and by 14 February 2004, I was back in Operation Iraqi Freedom 1 and 1½. This organization was at fifty percent strength mechanics and accomplishing the tough missions. For

reasons the unit could not control earlier in the year they had lost most of their mechanics to include their BMS due to a mistake in their deployment orders and in spite of the shortages these men and women were doing an outstanding job across the Battalion. Despite all the combat missions this battalion had accomplish in nine months, the battalion had lost only one soldier in an improvised explosive device, the morale was high and the discipline was great. I imagine the worst before I got there, and I was wrong. The biggest problem that the maintenance team had was lack of senior leadership, and that was one of the main reasons the Command Sergeant Major wanted me down range fast. To make the story short the top three in the maintenance section were not best of the crop.

IX. The Extension

One month to the schedule movement back to Germany, we had an insurgent up rise north of Baghdad, various units from Spain and Honduras were being shot at and attacks on their FOB had increase. My battalion task force was alerted and sent forward to assist, that was the beginning of our extended tour in Iraq for three more months. I never saw something like this before our Soldiers kept that morale better then ever, these Soldiers didn't care, they kept on going like nothing was going on. They did not loose their focus, despite loosing three more

Soldiers during the extension and our FOB getting mortar every day.

X. The Redeployment

Finally the day came when Major General Dempsey came to visit us at the FOB and the carrier of good news, we were going home. After fifteen months in combat the 1ST Armor Division was going back home to Germany, to their family, to mourn their fallen friends, to deal with their conscience and their demons, and to finally put Iraq behind them.

XI. The Homecoming and Then the Bad News

In the home front welcoming ceremonies, the excitement of being home, everybody was just happy. The excitement did not last, before long we were out training, fixing all the broken equipment that we brought back from Iraq" (Stability Operations and Support Operations, FM 3-07 Feb 2003). The hours were long, not too much time spend at home, plenty of brand new personnel coming in to replace the ones that had left long ago. Six months go by, January 2005, and the news hit the soldiers, family and the Baumholder community like a bomb shell, the 2ND BCT is going back to Iraq to implement the 101ST Air Assault Division" (The Mounted Brigade Combat Team, (BCT), FM 3-90.3). We expected this to happen; this was not just a regular one trip to Iraq. By now some of us had two tours under our belt. From February - September 2005, two CMTC rotations, two Gunnery Rotations and

one Iron Warrior train-up prior to leaving in November 2005 for Iraq 05-07.

XII. The Arrival in Kuwait and More Bad News

November 2005, we arrive in Kuwait, and soon after we hit the ground we get told the bad news, we are not going up North we will stay in Kuwait and become the Ready Brigade in support of the CENTCOM areas of operation. Camp Buering became our permanent home, we train like their was no end. During one of many EDREs, we finally made it up to Camp Falcon in Iraq to implement the 4TH Brigade, 4TH Infantry Division. Great Division great bunch men and women, they took us in like we were always there. We made it up their after three months of intense training and we were ready, this time I had a full crew of mechanics and logisticians ready, train and discipline and they would do anything they were ask to do with a smile, I can not begin to say all the rolls that these great Soldiers are playing on this Global War on Terrorisms, but I can certainly say one thing, these men and women are leaving there trace in this war, and for years to come their sons, daughter, grandsons will be proud of the sacrifice these men and women have done to keep our world save from tyranny.

XIII. The Insurgency

Since arriving in Iraq we have lost an average of one Soldier per week. The insurgency is getting smarted and more

sophisticated and these individuals are getting lots of outside help from countries like Syria, Jordan and Iran, but take it as a true statement we will never accept defeat, we will never leave our friends behind and we will continue to take the fight to them.

XIV. My Departure from Iraq

May 5, 2006 I get told by my Command Sergeant Major to pack my belongings you are going home to get your family ready to go on to the United States Army Sergeant Major Academy. In sincere respect to this great organization, USASMA I did not one to come; I did not one to leave my Soldiers behind. There is not one day that I don't think back, or feel guilty that I'm here safe and my Soldiers are there in Iraq in harms way. I will for ever be grateful to have been given the privilege to lead the 659th Forward Support Company and the ninety plus Maintenance Team of the 2ND Battalion, 6TH Infantry Brigade, in Garrison, in training and in Combat. Thank you for being great Americans, God speed and come home.

References

(COL Jose Enriquez, 189th MSB, Battalion Commander, and January 2002).

LTC Enriquez was the Battalion Commander, for the 189TH Maintenance Support Battalion from Aug 2001 - Aug 2003. He is currently working the Research Department in Aberdeen Proving Grounds.

(Forward Support Company, FM 63-20, 26 Feb 1990).

This field manual gives you the guide and tools on how to establish a Forward Support Company and what their concept of operations should be.

(Transportation Operations, FM 55-1, 3 OCT 1995)

This field manual is the publication that helps the transporter, conduct LOCPACS, should be revise with the different concept of operations we are conducting in Iraq and Afghanistan.

(The Mounted Brigade Combat Team, (BCT), FM 3-90.3)

The added Armor that the 101ST Airborne Division required, will help them out in case of insurgent up rise and for patrolling the country side or the outskirts of Bagdad.