

Running head: MODERN TECHNOLOGY ON THE BATTLEFIELD QUICKLY

Modern Technology on the Battlefield quickly

James E Whitfield

SMNRC Class 35 Phase II

MOS 13Z

Operation Enduring Freedom OEF IV & V Kandahar Airfield 04/18/2004 - 10/15/2004

11/30/2008

Unclassified

Team NCOIC Rapid Equipping Force Forward (REF – FWD)

Abstract

This paper talk's about my deployment to Afghanistan during Operation Enduring Freedom OEF V. My job was to get embedded with the battlefield commanders, and get modern technology into the hand of troops on the frontline quickly. The venue to make this happen was the Rapid Equipping Force, an initiative that was introduced by the Vice Chief of Staff (VCSA) at the time, and spearheaded by General Cody who was the Army G3.

Modern Technology on the Battlefield quickly

The terrorist's attacks that took place on American soil September 11, 2001 has forever changed the American way of life. I was TDY at Fort Sill Oklahoma, when the attacks occurred. I was completing the Paladin Commander Course when the instructor came into the class room and announced that one of the Twin Towers in New York City was hit by an airplane. The same instructor came back to the class room about thirty minutes later, and announced that the second Twin Towers building was also hit by an airplane. All training came to a halt, and everyone moved to another class room to watch what was taking place. As time went by there were news broadcasting of other airplanes that were inbounded to strike other locations as well. These significant emotional events changed how we as Americans conduct our day to day business.

My deployment to Afghanistan in April 2004 was different than any other deployment I had been on. I deployed in a non-traditional role as the Team NCOIC for the Rapid Equipping Force-Forward (REF-FWD). The deployment was a different experience for me as a 13Z Artilleryman. My team consisted of a LTC the OIC, a MAJ the assistant OIC, a SSG who was the logistic NCOIC, and me; a 13Z Operation Sergeant forward. My job was to get embedded with the battlefield commanders and their troops on the frontline in order to quickly bring modern technology to an ever changing battlefield. This involved going on missions outside the wire with various task force elements in search of the Taliban's and Insurgents.

The technology included Commercial off the Shelf (COTS), and Government off the Shelf (GOTS) equipment. General Cody the G3 for the Army at the time felt that if we had to wait on the Army Material Command (AMC), to get modern technology in to the hands frontline troops it could take 5-7 years. This involves going through the acquisition, and safety process of new equipment being fielded to the military. The Vice Chief Of Staff (VCSA), understood what

the battlefield commanders, and their frontline troops were conveying to the Army G3 concerning this matter. As a result of this feedback from the battlefield commanders the VCSA introduced an initiative called the Rapid Equipping Force (REF). The primary focus of this initiative was to get modern technology into the hands of troops on the frontline.

The venue to make this happen was the Rapid Equipping Force; the Army gave the contract to Exponent Inc; a technical consulting firm headquartered in Menlo Park, California. The company had one engineer for each theater of operations one in Afghanistan and the other in Iraq. My team deployed April 18, 2004 to the forward operating base Kandahar. We worked in a building better known as the last Taliban Stand which was located on the back side of the airfield.

The Rapid Equipping Force-Forward had the responsibility of bringing modern technology to the entire Afghanistan Theater of operations. Once our team got on ground we did a right seat ride with the team that had been in and out of theater for the past 12 months. I went to several forward operating bases throughout the theater of Afghanistan to meet with the battlefield commanders and their troops on the frontline. I had the opportunity to see what type of Commercial off the shelf, and Government off the shelf equipment that had been procured through the Working Program, and the Budget Advisory Committee (WPBAC), formally known as the Joint Acquisition Review Board (JARB). What was so interesting about this initiative was how the Rapid Equipping Force- Forward was embraced by the leadership in theater from the CJTF commander all the way down to the frontline troops on the battlefield. The first thing that was asked, "What new equipment do you have for us to use," better known as licks and chewy the Soldiers so proudly nickname the equipment. Right then I knew us as the REF-FWD brought a unique psychological perspective to the combat theater. Some of the equipment that was procured for the Afghanistan Theater may not have been one hundred percent solution for the

missions at hand; it may have only been 85 or 90 percent solution. Once I became embedded with the battlefield commanders, and the troops on the frontline to determine the pros and cons about the commercial off the shelf equipment.

I was responsible for forwarding a weekly Situation Report (SITREP) to the REF-Rear in Fort Belvoir Virginia on the status of existing equipment that was brought into theater. The reports and conference calls weekly had a significant impact on whether or not vendors received the contracts to produce more of the same equipment. I am talking millions of dollars at stake!

I can recall Armor System International, a vendor that had supplied the Rapid Equipping Force with Up-Armor modification kits for the HMMWVs (M998s) that was supposed to stop small arms fire, and reduced Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) fragmentation metal. The team of contractors came into theater with the shipment of equipment. I took one of the Up-Armor modification kits to the range along with the team of contractors to test the validity of the Up-Armor modification kit. I fired several 5.56mm rounds into the plates of the Up-Armor kit; after the fourth round was fired, the fifth and six rounds penetrated the plate of the UA kit. The UA kit was not able to withstand the penetration of 5.56mm or 7.62mm round. I estimated that the Rapid Equipping Force spent over \$525,000 on this shipment of UA kits.

I also had the Task Force 2/5 Infantry to give me their assessment on the UA kits. They stated that the UA kits in their current configuration were unsafe and impractical. The Up-Armor modifications did not line up with doors of M998s. It added additional weight, which created problems with the vehicles suspensions and tires. The window designs also cause problems. They finally recommended against additional purchases of the UA kits.

The Rapid Equipping Force also brought into theater a lot of Commercial off the shelf equipment that was a success. For example the Remote Amplifier Multi Band Platform (RAMP-

25); which was used to extend the range of the Multi Band Inter/Intra Radio (MBITR)? This piece of equipment was used by the Infantry Soldiers on the frontline who had to maneuver through rugged terrain in the Afghanistan Mountains. The Well Camera which had a view of 360 degrees was used to search Wells for weapon caches and ammunitions that was used against Coalition Forces. The Joint Land Attack Cruise Missile Defense Elevated Netted Sensor (JLENS_RAID/TOWER) was used at various forward operating bases throughout the Afghanistan Theater. It had a range of five miles with clarity and able to observing the enemy day or night. The Iraq Translator (Pocket TERP) was loaded with Pashtu; the common language in the southern region of Afghanistan. The Pocket TERP was helpful to Soldiers who did not have a translator's with them as they conducted village searches. The GA-92XT Hand-Held Magnetometer was used by Soldiers on the frontline conducting Cordon Searches at villages to find weapons hidden in walls, under the ground, hay bales, and in outside toilets. The Pack-Bot a remote control robot was used in Iraq and Afghanistan to combat IEDs attacks. This remote control robot can be employed in three Configurations; Scout, Explorer, and as an Explosive Ordnance Device. This was an expensive piece of equipment that was well worth its value in American lives that have been saved. A robot can be blown up at anytime, and replaced but the death of a Soldier cannot. These are just to a few of the Commercial off the shelf equipment that was brought into both theaters of operations.

Appendix A will give a detailed listing of all equipment that was procured or already in theater during my deployment to Afghanistan OEF V (CJTF 76). Also there is an article published by Defend America (U.S. Department of DEFENSE News about the War on Terrorism), and an article published by Freedom Watch that will also be attached to Appendix A.

The most important thing I took away from this deployment is the psychological impact on a Soldier being able to use and wear the proper equipment on an ever changing battlefield. The equipment may not have been the one hundred percent solution when first fielded, but through honest feedback it could remain in use or either be scrapped, saving the military millions of dollars and the life of a Soldier. I give a lot of credit to General Cody, who saw the urgent need to get modern technology in the hands of our Soldiers quickly. The Rapid Equipping Force was that piece of the puzzle that was a conduit between the Army Material Command, and the frontline Soldiers.

APPENDIX A:

- (1) REF-FWD EQUIPMENT THAT WAS ISSUED OEF V:
- (2) FN203 (Less Lethal Launcher)
- (3) Close Quarter Barrel Receiver (CQBR)
- (4) Barret 50 Cal
- (5) Enhanced Battle Rifle Special Operation Peculiar Modifications (ERB-SOPMODS)
- (6) Swing Arm Mount
- (7) Ex- Spray
- (8) Remote Amplifier Multi-Band Platform (RAMP-25)
- (9) Armor Windshield
- (10) Fiberscope
- (11) Armor Kits
- (12) Maxi Beam Light
- (13) Izlib Laser
- (14) Walk thru Metal Detector
- (15) Metal Detector
- (16) AR8200 Scanners (Hand- Held)
- (17) Medical Bags
- (18) Vent Vest (worn under body armor)
- (19) Ipaq
- (20) Reflex Sight
- (21) C-More Sight

- (22) Leopold Scope
- (23) ACOG
- (24) EO Tech Sight Holographic
- (25) Spotting Scope
- (26) JLEN Tower/RAID
- (27) Thermal Imaging Infrared Camera (FLIR Camera)
- (28) Satcom Antenna
- (29) X-wing Antenna
- (30) Rino GPS
- (31) Amplified Speaker
- (32) Odis Robot

PUBLISH ARTICLES:

Defend America: U.S. Department of Defense News about the War on Terrorism

Freedom Watch: edition publish August 8, 2004

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, JAMES E. WHITFIELD, have submitted a Personal Experience Paper to the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy archives regarding events and experiences from my participation in OEFV 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:

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: 11/20/2008

Printed Name: James E. Whitfield

Signature: James E. Whitfield

Accepted on behalf of the United States Army by:

Printed Name/Date: _____

Signature: _____

USASMA FORM 7273-R, APR 06