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The Cornerstone 1

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The Cornerstone of Information Security

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Table of Contents

Paragraph Title	Pages
Abstract	3
Personal Background	4
Unit Background	4 - 5
Mission Obstacles	5
NCO Solutions	6
Mission Execution	7
An Isolated Snapshot	7 - 8
Lessons Learned	8 - 9
Systems, Processes, and Procedures	9 - 10
Impact	10

Abstract

Fall 2003 marked the beginning of a critical time in the execution of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) began its third rotation as operational controlling (OPCON) authority for Afghanistan. At this same time, the US Army NATO (USANATO) Brigade celebrated its first year in existence. Neither NATO nor USANATO understood the roles and responsibilities that lay ahead to accomplish their mission. Every facet of support to the newly created NATO International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), in Afghanistan, required certification. Everything from pre-deployment training and equipment issue, to deployment transportation and operational execution, to transfer of authority processes and resettlement procedures proved ineffective. Over the next two and a half years, NCOs got the opportunity to solve these problems. These results served as the cornerstone for all present and future Information Security operations.

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The Cornerstone 4

Personal Background

Prior to arriving at the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE), I served as the Noncommissioned Officer in Charge (NCOIC) of Military Intelligence Collection Management at United States Central Command (USCENTCOM) from January 2001 to August 2003. Our staff was responsible for drafting, coordinating, and executing the military intelligence collection management plans for Operation ENDURING FREEDOM and Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. When offered the newly created Operations Sergeant Major position at Information Security (INFOSEC) Command, I saw it as an excellent opportunity to make a difference at the foundation of a critical mission. The experience and network I had built at USCENTCOM would significantly contribute to the ultimate success of NATO's future operational missions. When I arrived at SHAPE, the highest priority tasks I received were to establish the Operations Sergeant Major and Senior Enlisted Advisor (SEA) positions for INFOSEC Command and to resolve its deployment issues.

Unit Background

Since NATO traditionally served as a peacekeeping force it made many mistakes in taking over operational control (OPCON)

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The Cornerstone 5

for the Afghanistan Area of Operations (AOO). To this point, NATO selected a specific Nation to lead its first three International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) rotations. This approach caused NATO to experience many systemic problems. NATO never outlined or established the procedures for training, equipment issue, and transportation in and out of theater, because each lead Nation always handled these matters on their own.

**Mission Obstacles**

In order to establish deployment procedures for future operations, a reconnaissance mission required coordination and execution as soon as possible. Over the 18 months prior to this mission, INFOSEC Command attempted to deploy and failed on four separate occasions. In the process of coordinating this mission, two things became very apparent. First, the young, international officers responsible for ISAF deployments, at Joint Forces Command Brunssum (JFC-B), were inexperienced and unprepared to perform their role. Second, USANATO, at SHAPE, was not prepared to execute pre-deployment training, issue theater equipment (body armor, desert uniforms, boots, ect.), perform pre/post deployment medical screening, or coordinate transportation.

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The Cornerstone 6

NCO Solutions

Due to the current operational philosophy, JFC-B and USANATO could not provide the critical deployment support required. I identified, understood, and advised the INFOSEC Commander, a British Colonel, on these issues. He in-turn provided clear guidance, to the entire command, when he stated, "Officers have tried and failed to accomplish this mission. I am confident that where our Officers have failed, our Noncommissioned Officers will succeed." I validated his statement by obtaining the required support through personal contacts at USCENTCOM J-3 and 80<sup>th</sup> Army Support Group (ASG). USCENTCOM provided the pre-deployment training requirements and 80<sup>th</sup> ASG supplied the equipment support. As I coordinated with these commands, I identified Belgium as the nation responsible for transporting theater supplies and equipment. Through close coordination with the Belgian National Military Representative (NMR), I tracked down the Belgian SGM responsible for manifests and made flight arrangements for the recon team. After nine weeks of stop and go coordination, the recon mission was finally scheduled.

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The Cornerstone 7

### Mission Execution

The recon mission's execution phase provided as much enlightenment as its preparation phase. Once on the ground it was imperative to determine the effectiveness of ISAF's operational execution and NATO's international agreements. While the previous nationally led ISAF rotations were successful, some major problems remained undeniable. As each Nation transferred authority to the next, it took the entire infrastructure with it. For example, the communications cabling, computer networks, working containers, and living shelters the German led (ISAF II) rotation had built over a nine-month period would all be torn down and taken away when it transferred authority to the Italian led ISAF III rotation. Instead of building on the achievements of previous rotations, each ISAF rotation was reinventing the wheel. Consequently, at the beginning of every rotation operational execution, international agreement effectiveness, and all facets of security suffered.

### An Isolated Snapshot

Each ISAF rotation proved to be an isolated snapshot in time. The transfer of authority processes and resettlement procedures were unorganized at best. Handover/changeover

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The Cornerstone 8

procedures did not exist. The nationally led ISAF rotations adopted their own cultural environment, working language, and social atmosphere. What was important to one Nation was not as important to another. Consequently, while ISAF II conducted resettlement operations a suicide bomber killed twenty-six German soldiers as they traveled to the Kabul International Airport on the day they were going home. When rotations ended, personnel simply went home. They did not care about after action reviews or post deployment medical screenings. Subsequently, these tasks went undone.

Lessons Learned

Over the two and a half years that would follow, I led every operational deployment in support of ISAF (III - X). Through detailed reporting and cooperative efforts with the SHAPE J-2 and J-6, dramatic shifts in procedures took place. NATO identified the Joint Warfare Center (JWC) as the pre-deployment training site for all future ISAF rotations. Now each ISAF staff deploys to the JWC for three weeks of immersion training, three months prior to entering the operational theater. JFC-B created an operations center, where all in-theater movement requests get coordinated. European Command (EUCOM) and USANATO adopted USCENTCOM's pre-deployment training

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requirements, and established a one-week, intensive, pre-deployment course for all US personnel to attend. EUCOM and USANATO also established a pre-deployment program (PDP), including pre/post deployment medical screening procedures for all US personnel. USANATO, in conjunction with EUCOM, added essential, operational theater equipment (body armor, uniforms, boots, ect.) to its inventory.

#### Systems, Processes, and Procedures

This recon mission identified critical problems with NATO's standard communication channels, pre-deployment requirements, and operational policies and procedures. Now, before any Soldier receives deployment orders, they must meet all PDP requirements, draw the required equipment, and complete the one-week pre-deployment course. Starting with ISAF IV, NATO not only identified a lead Nation, but NATO also took command responsibility for all systems on the ground and began to lay a foundation for the future. This basic change in philosophy improved operational effectiveness, allowing each rotation to enhance the Techniques, Tactics, and Procedures (TTPs) of the rotation before them. Operating systems became more compatible with reach-back commands, reducing confusion and creating a

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The Cornerstone 10

clearer common operating picture. Handover / changeover procedures became the norm, not the exception.

Impact

Due to the efforts of NCOs NATO, EUCOM, JFC-B, ISAF, and USANATO identified, assessed, and corrected critical operational shortfalls. In this two and a half year period ISAF's information security, force protection, and war-fighting capabilities vastly improved. INFOSEC Command installed over \$200,000 in electronic countermeasure equipment throughout the ISAF AOO. These countermeasures assisted ISAF in securing democracy, as over 8 million voters participated in Afghanistan's first-ever Presidential elections. These improvements also helped secure several very important person (VIP) visits; including the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), U.S. Secretary of State, the U.S. First Lady, and the U.S. President.

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