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Over the past 12 years I have struggled over aspects of my military occupational specialty, 92Y-Unit Supply Sergeant, which has caused me to self-assess my integrity and honesty while making mission in the Special Operations community. In early 2003, I was deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. I was assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) in November of 2002. My job as the battalion S-4 NCOIC was to provide expert guidance in all aspects of logistics. While in Kuwait from January 2003 to late April 2003, I experienced an ethical dilemma related to making the mission happen for my unit. I'll provide some background on how I was involved in an ethical dilemma. My unit was deep into the planning of identifying re-supply drops for A-Teams that were to be inserted covertly behind the enemy lines for various missions of unconventional warfare, surveillance-reconnaissance, and direct action. My job was planning the re-supply bundles and their contents based on prior coordination with the A-teams' input on what they needed in each bundle. I also coordinated with a supporting rigger detachment for parachute and rigging support for those bundles after prioritizing each load based on the dates of each airdrop and identified by team.

Traditionally, Special Forces units make do with what they are given, but sometimes Operational Needs Statements don't get budgeted until after you deploy into theatre. We found ourselves in that boat in regards to BA-5590 SINCGARS radio batteries. As my boss (S-4) and I were planning these bundles, the S-6 (C&E) NCOIC of the battalion informed my boss (the S-4) and I along with the battalion S-3 Sergeant Major, ODA team sergeants, battalion XO and other key staff during a coordination meeting that the battalion could not support re-supply efforts of additional batteries to the teams once they were inserted inside Iraq. They announced that they

only brought enough batteries to supply each of the teams for 4 days. Well, this was a bombshell to us. It was going to impact all 15 teams going in, and really put a damper on the mood in the battalion. The battalion commander went ballistic. We found all this out on 3 February 2003, a week after arriving in Kuwait. That was the start of my ethical dilemma. Of course, you ask, “how can that be? Well, usually, the commander or first sergeant turns to the supply sergeant and simply and matter-of-factly says, “make it happen, supply!” My boss turned to me and off to the side asked, “Can you get it for them on time?” I said, “I’ll try and make it happen, but I’ll make sure I keep you and the S-6 abreast of the situation.”

My next step was to go upstairs in the building we were located at on an airfield, and see members of a logistics cell that were attached to us from Special Operations Support Command (SOSCOM) out of Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Their mission was supporting 5th Group’s logistics efforts in theatre. I informed them that our battalion was critically short on the BA-5590’s and that we needed help locating some in theatre. I placed orders at the SSA in Camp Doha for the companies short of batteries. Based on the fact that several divisions were arriving through Kuwait at the same time, and I figured they would have the same requirements for batteries, I placed my orders on an 01 Priority. I left the SSA feeling really good about batteries. I had 30 days for them to come in prior to the teams’ departures.

The very next day, members of the support cell came back to me and the S-6 NCOIC and told us that after talking with the J-4 at Coalition Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC) in Kuwait, that there was an Army-wide shortage of BA-5590 batteries. The proposed solution for theatre, according to CFLCC, was to consolidate ordering the batteries at their level, cancel all existing orders that were in the system, and streamline the distribution of batteries based on priority of units going into Iraq. Once I found this out, I told my boss that the command was not

going to accept CFLCC telling them what priority they were in the BIG PICTURE. I asked for his advice, and he said we'll have to make something happen. At that moment, I realized I was going to have to step into the GRAY ZONE of acquisition. I got with my unit supply sergeant, and he suggested that we start at the new SSA shipping/receiving yard over near Camp Doha. It was brand new, and very disorganized he said. I made the decision to go that route, based on what I had heard from senior planners, and physical inventories conducted by the unit. With a short suspense prior to the mission execution, I felt it was time to stop pushing the pencil and make something happen for the boys dropping into Saddam's back yard.

Two days later, I had a plan of action and briefed my boss and the battalion XO. I left out the part of misappropriation of government property intentionally or otherwise, because I don't exactly recall what my train of thought was. My supply sergeant and I drove to Camp Doha's new shipping and receiving yard. We only needed Military I.D. to get in. We didn't stop to collect 200 dollars, but headed straight for a huge area of pallets lying on the ground in neat lines with unit identification panels mounted on stakes intermittently placed between rows. Unit Identification Codes identify specific units, and in this case, battalion-sized elements were being addressed in the rows. Rows and UIC boards were laid out in the desert as newly arriving divisions hit Kuwait, set up their accounts and started requisitioning supplies.

As my supply sergeant and I were walking up and down the rows after leaving our vehicle, we were intently studying boxes that were similar in shape to the BA-5590 shipping boxes. We didn't notice the Sergeant First Class coming up behind us. We heard a, "I'm Sergeant _____; can I help you find what you're looking or hunting for?" Well, we tried not to act startled. We said we were looking for BA-5590 batteries, but couldn't remember our exact

UIC. We said we were told by our commander that we were supposed to come down and pick up our batteries for our signal battalion.

The Sergeant looked at us, shook his head and told us to follow him. He took us to another area of the yard and showed us a smaller line of pallets. He said, “ You might find what you are looking for in here somewhere.” This area is where we put unit orders that haven’t picked up in over 30 days. We tell them several times to pick up, and if they don’t come we close their requisitions and cancel their account. He said space was so precious at the yard, that they couldn’t keep unit supplies there very long. Apparently he didn’t believe our story. So he left us, and we went to work going through the pallets. Lo’ and behold...there was an entire pallet of BA-5590 batteries sitting in the line about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way down the line. I looked the unit UIC on the paperwork up later at my unit location on WEBLOG and discovered it was a reserve unit out of Pennsylvania. We brought the batteries back to our unit location and everyone was happy about the “mission”...except me. I thought about the misappropriation all night and the next day, and it turns out for another week.

About two weeks after the incident, I spoke to my boss about my thoughts of doing the wrong thing. He said it was up to me to make things right in order to feel better about the situation, even though, he said I shouldn’t worry about it, and that I did the right thing for the unit’s mission. Meanwhile, during the day, our attached SOSCOM support cell had gotten a phone call to come pick up “our share” of CFLCC-controlled batteries. They called me and let me know where to pick them up. I drove over to Camp Arifjan, and signed for the shipment realizing that this shipment alone covered not only what the battalion needed for missions, but, I was thinking about the shipment I had misappropriated from the reserve unit. As I drove the

large battery shipment back to my unit, my mind was already working to get the batteries I took from the reserve unit back to the spot where I found them at Camp Doha.

I executed my final battery requisition and shipment, albeit in reverse, three weeks after my initial misappropriation. My conscience and my Army Values had spoken to me, and that Reserve Unit got back their shipment of batteries and a little extra in “interest”. I would never advocate “stealing” or whatever label one could slap on this situation. I learned that if your buddies are going in harm’s way and bureaucratic red tape is causing them undue danger in Indian country, you may need to step out from behind the clipboard and make something happen. However, that doesn’t quite square with what the qualifications to hold my Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) say in DA PAM 611-21 Military Classification and Structure. Paragraph 10-258 (b)] clearly states, “No documented instances in the last 5 years of character, honesty, or integrity issues.” How is this squaring with my personal experiences over the last 12 years? I think I’ve demonstrated a lapse in judgment, but hopefully, I will never have to experience this particular dilemma of placing the perceived needs of a unit at war, with my own personal values and ethics.