

TASK FORCE 165 MILITARY INTELLIGENCE

Task Force 165 Military Intelligence

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ABSTRACT

In today's Army, units task organize and form Task Forces for specific operations and missions; this paper discusses the events involved in creating, training, deploying, and redeploying a Military Intelligence Task Force in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. It will primarily focus on the activities of Delta Company, Task Force 165 Military Intelligence from the personal point of view of the First Sergeant. This unit was composed of elements from the Active, Reserve, and members of the National Guard, giving a key insight to the interoperability of today's forces. Additionally, we will discuss some of the successes and some personal thoughts.

Context

SGM Welker's previous assignments include First Sergeant for Headquarters and Headquarters Service Company, 165th Military Intelligence Battalion during Operation Iraqi Freedom I, Senior Counterintelligence Non-commissioned Officer at the National Assessment Group, Kirtland Air Force Base, New Mexico and for 1st Special Forces Group, Fort Lewis Washington. He also served as the S-2 for C 3/7th Special Forces Group in Panama and Puerto Rico, as the Senior Small Group Leader, 97B Basic Non-commissioned Officers Course, and as an Instructor, 97B Trainers Course, both at Fort Huachuca, Arizona. SGM Welker is a graduate of the United States Army First Sergeants Course, Battle Staff Non-commissioned Officers Course, Combat Lifesaver Course, Counterintelligence/Force Protection Source Operations Course, Advanced Non-commissioned Officers Course, Basic Airborne Training, Basic Non-commissioned Officers Course, Small Group Instructor Course, 97B Transition Course, Basic Instructor Training Course, Primary Leadership Development Course and numerous other military courses. SGM Welker is married to the former Malena Ingram of Panama City. They currently reside in El Paso with their two daughters, Shonie, a 15-year old High School Sophomore, and Jaycee, their 10-year old daughter.

UNIT BACKGROUND - Delta Company, Task Force 165 Military Intelligence was composed of members from D Co. 165 Military Intelligence Battalion, 66th Military Intelligence Group, 500th Military Intelligence Brigade (National Guard), and members for the Military Intelligence Reserve Command. The main portion of the unit came from the 165th Military Intelligence Battalion, who had recently returned from Operation Iraqi Freedom in February 2004. Many of the members had prior combat experience in both Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as other

peacekeeping missions such as Kosovo and Bosnia. The command team had served together previously as the S-4 and 1SG of Headquarters Company, 165 Military Intelligence Battalion in Iraq. Additionally, one platoon leader had previously served with the 1SG as the Executive Officer for Headquarters Company in Iraq. Two new platoon leaders arrived shortly before the deployment directly from their Officer Basic Courses. The unit had just undergone a Battalion Change of Command in June, and would receive a new CSM in December prior to deployment.

OPERATIONAL SITUATION - The 165th Military Intelligence Battalion redeployed from Iraq in February of 2004. In June 2004, the unit received orders to begin assembly and transformation to a Military Intelligence Task Force for deployment to Afghanistan. Deployment would be in multiple stages with the first scheduled for January 2006.

Pre-Deployment

Just a few days after receiving a new Battalion Commander, he announced the order to create, train, and deploy Task Force 165 Military Intelligence to support Operation Enduring Freedom. Many of the Soldiers were surprised to hear this information, as the unit had just returned from combat operations in Iraq in February 2004 and it was now only June 2004. The first unit to deploy would be Delta Company, Task Force 165 Military Intelligence, to replace the Tactical Human Intelligence Teams that would reach their tour completion in February 2005. As the Headquarters First Sergeant, I had a good idea of what to expect, based off my experience in Iraq. However, many new situations and personnel within the unit quickly caused me to discount my pre-drawn conclusions.

Equipment

Equipment for training was the first problem we encountered with the deployment timeline. Upon our return from Iraq, we put almost every piece of rolling stock in a rebuild program. Although pieces arrived from the program in an almost new condition, the rate was at approximately one vehicle per month. This left us with the need to control the few vehicles we had with the utmost of scrutiny. Every major training event planning session started with resource allocation, due to the fact this was a major factor. Luckily, we were able to use vehicles and equipment from other units. Vehicles were not our only concern; the battalion originally consisted of three companies, HHSC, D, and E/51 IN. However, the Task Force would consist of five companies. The majority of the equipment to stand-up these additional companies came from within the Battalion. Although this may seem like it was not such a big crisis, E/51st IN was not deploying with the Task Force, instead they would return to Iraq in October 2005.

Therefore, they needed to maintain their equipment in order to deploy before we returned from Afghanistan. The three new companies' equipment needed to come from within the other two companies, HHSC and Delta, and from lateral transfers within the theater. With diligent work from the staff, we acquired the major specialized pieces of equipment, weapon systems, and computer systems.

Personnel

The acquisition of personnel to fill the new companies and to fill shortages in the existing companies was also extremely time-consuming. Other Military Intelligence units within Europe attached personnel to us for the deployment. However, due to current operations and many other situations these personnel stayed with their parent organization for the majority of the duty days, except for major training events. In early November 2004, the Soldiers received their Temporary Change of Station orders, assigning them to the Task Force full time. We asked for approval for Relaxed Grooming standards to give our Soldiers an advantage for building rapport with the local personnel. We received approval to allow our operational Soldiers to grow beards in late November 2004. Upon their return from leave in January, they started growing their beards.

Reallocation of Assets

Personnel acquisition was one problem; however, another was the reallocation of already existing assets. While I was attending the First Sergeants course in August 2004 at Fort Bliss, I received notification that upon my return, I would assume responsibility of Delta Company, Task Force 165 Military Intelligence. Additionally, CPT Qureishi, Romeo took command of the company in October 2004. The continuity remained at this time with the platoon leaders and platoon sergeants, but this changed in December 2004 also. One Platoon Leader, CPT Opie transferred to a sister company and Second Lieutenant straight out of her Officer Basic Course

and West Point replaced her. The Commander and I decided with the additional personnel, we needed another platoon to better coordinate and execute operations. The leadership positions for this platoon remained unfilled until after deployment, again with a lieutenant fresh out of Officer Basic Course, 2LT Hatalla and an infantry Sergeant First Class. Unfortunately, I needed to replace personnel in these positions throughout the deployment.

Deployment

On 28 January 2005, my company and I boarded the buses to take us to Ramstein Airbase. We arrived, conducted pre-flight manifesting, and waited for the call forward to board the plane. Due to unknown reasons, the Air Force delayed the flight to the following day. Instead of having the Soldiers return to home base and put the families through another emotional departure, the commander and I decided to keep everyone together and wait at the barracks for flight. We were the first company from the Task Force to depart for theater; the next ones would depart in the middle of February. The flight on the next day went extremely smooth and we arrived early in the morning on 30 January. Things started happening very quickly for the next two months and our careful planning went astray almost immediately.

Team Locations

We knew 28 Soldiers from the 321st Military Intelligence Battalion; US Army Reserve arrived in Afghanistan on 11 January. Upon our arrival, they were supposed to belong to my company, and we planned to send their preformed teams to very specific locations. However, because they arrived without a command element the MI unit from the 125th Military Intelligence Battalion attached them to the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force and put the interrogators into the Joint Interrogation Facility until late March 2005. We were completely powerless to stop this act because we too fell under this battalion. To temporarily fill

the locations where the 321st teams would have gone, we juggled our teams. Luckily, we did not need to place four teams down South until later and moved these teams to cover the gaps. After the first two and a half weeks, we finally had almost all our organic teams in-place conducting relief-in-place operations.

Billeting

Upon our arrival, we billeted our company in two "fest" tents, one strictly for our males and another was a co-use tent for females. Although the tents were adequate as our teams were not supposed to be in Bagram Airbase for a long time, I needed to acquire permanent structures for the personnel that would live on Bagram during their tour (this included the billeting for the entire Task Force). After many arguments and coordination, I finally acquired permanent structures for billeting our Soldiers. Additionally our plan for office space changed because other units had already moved into places originally allocated for our task force. Billeting was an issue throughout the deployment; however, it primarily affected the other units within the task force.

Replacement Operations

As previously stated, we could not receive the members from the 321st MI Bn until they returned from attachment. Additionally, 32 members of the 500th Military Intelligence Brigade, (National Guard) fell under the 125th Military Intelligence Battalion. Once our Task Force Headquarters took over operations, these Soldiers became part of my company raising the total to 156 Soldiers. Their redeployment date was approaching and we needed to move quickly to ensure all their equipment and personnel made it back to their demobilization station on time. This meant having our personnel go to each location and bring back equipment that needed palletized and sent beforehand. Simultaneously, we conducted certification training for the 321st

teams that returned from CJSOTF. At CJSOTF, the teams split and deployed to different locations and redeployed at different times. Due to this fact, we reorganized teams in order to get them trained and certified as quickly as possible. In April 2005, 28 more members of the 321st MI Bn deployed and fell under my unit. These Soldiers would replace the members of the National Guard that were to redeploy in May 2005. We organized, trained, certified and deployed these teams during the entire month. In May, we redeployed the 500th MI Bde Soldiers back to Fort Bliss, Texas. I thought we were done with replacement operations. I was wrong, continually throughout the year I replaced individual Soldiers due to illness, problems, or complacency. In October, I became aware some of the Soldiers that arrived in April were near the end of their 24-month mobilization and we needed to redeploy them no later than December. So again, restructuring and shifting of personnel in order to fill gaps. At this time, I also restructured some teams in order to facilitate unit integrity for redeployment operations.

Interoperability

My unit was composed of members from all three components of the US Army. I had no previous experience working with Reserve and National Guard Soldiers. I heard stories about problems and "horror stories" about these Soldiers, which may have tainted my opinion. However, from day one, the commander and I wanted to treat them just as we treated our active duty Soldiers. I must say I was quite impressed with their skills and abilities. The National Guard Soldiers were under the "Mobilize, Train, and Deploy Model, they had absolutely no Tactical Human Intelligence experience before deploying to Afghanistan. They did an amazing job and the two Lieutenants in charge really outperformed many of their counterparts. The reserve members although some had prior deployments, most were young and inexperienced. You could not tell by their actions, they were mature, hard charging, adaptable, and very

motivated. What they lacked in experience they made up for in motivation and enthusiasm. We integrated many teams with members from the Active component and the reserve (the National Guard teams were on the end of their deployment and were already in place when we arrived). From feedback of Soldiers as we redeployed, I believe this unit was successful in incorporating and proving the interoperability of each of the Army components.

Redeployment

Redeployment began in late November 2005 with small groups coming back to Bagram to out-process and fly home in December. We learned valuable lessons from the redeployment of our National Guard members earlier in the year. Our replacements arrived in December and we were excited to see them. Many of their Soldiers just graduated from their respective MOS courses and had no experience, especially combat operations. We conducted training and certification, and left volunteer members of our unit to stay as advisors until they felt comfortable with operations. As we prepared to redeploy the 321st MI Bn Soldiers, I also decided to step down as the First Sergeant. This was a difficult decision, however since I was promotable and the unit would inactivate in September, I moved to the Operations NCO position within the Task Force. This allowed someone else to get the rating for at least nine months and I wanted to make sure our volunteers that stayed behind were safe. The 321st Soldiers redeployed in the middle of January 2006, with the main body of the active component redeploying at the end of January, almost going over their 365-day "boots on ground" date. I redeployed with a small group of Headquarters Soldiers on 11 February 2006. Most of Delta Company was on "block leave" however, many came to welcome us home. After the reintegration, I switched focus to the redeployment of the rest of the task force. Although this was a rear detachment responsibility, I assisted as much as possible. The final member of the Task Force redeployed in

June 2006. Units and Soldiers returned to their parent organizations, and companies inactivated with no ceremony to acknowledge their accomplishments. This occurred from March through June, while the unit focused on preparing for inactivation.

Results

Throughout the deployment, we tracked the successes of the unit. During the timeframe, the task force had a very successful year of operations. My company increased collection and reporting over previous years and recorded numerous "firsts" in theater. We gathered intelligence, which led to the capture or neutralization of numerous high value targets and the capture or tones of enemy weapons. Many of which I cannot discuss in this forum. We did not lose a single Soldier during the operation to a combat related injury. Many of our Soldiers were in direct action and received Bronze Stars with Valor for their actions. Numerous others received the new Combat Action Badge, to recognize their direct actions with the enemy. In addition to the success, we also experienced difficulties and problems, which resulted in numerous lessons learned. I believe the true success of the command team is the fact many of the Soldiers stay in contact with us to this day. I used the knowledge gained from the First Sergeant course about National Guard and Reserve differences on a daily basis. My advice is to pay attention to the lessons about Reserve and National Guard because you never know when that information will come into play. If I had to do it over again, I would make some changes, however I would gladly serve with these Soldiers again, Active, Reserve, or National Guard. I am extremely proud of their accomplishments and can wholeheartedly say they have earned my respect.