

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, TROY D. COOK, have submitted a Personal Experience Paper to the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy archives regarding events and experiences from my participation in OIF 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.

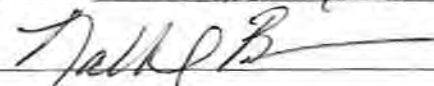
Date: 12 JAN 2012

Printed Name: COOK TROY D

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Accepted on behalf of the United States Army by:

Printed Name/Date: Richardson, Anthony 26 Jan 11

Signature: 

USASMA FORM 7273-R, APR 06

Advice and Assist

SGM Troy D. Cook

United States Army Sergeants Major Academy

SMNRC Class 35 Phase II

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Unclassified

AWG, C Squadron Command Sergeant Major

Abstract

This paper describes some events and lessons learned during my deployment to Baghdad, Iraq 2007. I have when possible listed the events in chronological orders as they happen. I will discuss the problems encountered while conducting embed operations to Advise and Assist Brigade Combat Teams in the Baghdad Area of Operation (AO). Some Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (TTP's) made tactical as well as strategic implication in both Iraq and Afghanistan in 2007.

Advice and Assist

In March 2006 the Asymmetric Warfare Group (AWG) was established at Fort Meade, Maryland and the Group was tasked with a unique mission. The Asymmetric Warfare Group conducts operational advisory assistance to Army and Joint Force Commanders enabling them to identify and close capability gaps, enhance training, and exploit enemy vulnerabilities in order to mitigate and defeat asymmetric threats and help form a mentally agile and adaptive Army culture. I attended selection March 2006 and was selected to attend the Asymmetric Warfare Group Tactical Training Course in June 2006. Upon my completion of the six months Tactical Training Course I was assigned to Able Squadron Troop Two.

Upon reporting to Able Squadron, Troop Two already deployed to Iraq I was paired up with my team member a prior Special Forces Team Sergeant and now contractor. AWG and its unique mission required contractors and Active Duty Soldiers to operate in a combat environment as a team. AWG contractors have a background in Special Operation Command (SOCOM) or Joint Special Operation Command (JSOC), this was essential in accomplishing the task of closing the capability gap between Special Operation Forces (SOF) and General Purpose Forces (GPF).

After being paired up with my contractor counterpart and briefed on the current operation I was tasked with conducting an embed with an Infantry Platoon located in southeast Baghdad, Iraq. Conducting tactical embeds at this time was often mistaken by the gaining unit as individuals coming in to the area of operation (AO) and conducting an evaluation. Evaluations were conducted CONUS at the Army designated Combat Training Centers (CTC's) located at Fort Polk, LA and Ft Erwin, CA, not in a combat environment. Our intent was always to embed with units from Brigade TOC to Platoon and Squad size and give a new perspective and look at the current fight and threats.

Conducting operations/embeds as an Operational Specialist you are a guest to and at a unit. The initial engagement with the BCT leadership outlined our capabilities and what our goals were while conducting the embed and also this allowed the leadership to identify their areas of concern. Being tasked with conducting tactical embeds at Division and below relies heavily on the ability to build rapport with the Division/Brigade Commanders, Command Sergeant Majors, and all levels of tactical leaders. It is the Commanders (regardless of level of command) guidance what I will assist or advice their unit and focus on as a priority.

The SOP for AWG personnel to move around the battle field significantly relied on the unit we conducted embeds with. The BCT Commanders Personal Security Detachment (PSD) or Combat Logistics Patrol (CLP's) provided ground insertion if air insertion was not available. This particular embed with the infantry platoon, which included myself and two other AWG Operational Specialist was with the Brigade Commanders PSD via four vehicle convoy. The movement to the Combat Out Post (COP) was uneventful, the Soldiers conducted this movement several times a week and utilized route clearance in depth.

Arriving at the COP, I found myself as a NCO identifying security and observing the current morale and mission focus of the Soldiers. I met with the Platoon Leader (PL) and received a Situation Brief focusing on his current situation and disposition. At the time the company was responsible for security of suspected water crossing site for insurgents. Additional responsibility included the COP internal security and conducting recovery/sustainment operation at Camp Victory Central Baghdad, Iraq. The current Operational Tempo (OPTEMPO) of the COP was one squad providing internal perimeter security, one squad conducting a Blocking Position (BP) at water crossing point, one squad conducting dismounted patrols, and one squad conducting recovery/refit operations at Camp Victory.

The major threat was enemy chance contact and HME IED's in the local market and the ease of enemy movement back and forth across the river check point. The platoon had been in position for eight months and had lost one NCO to an IED and one injured and Returned to Duty (RTD) from chance contact. The NCO was killed by a pressure plate IED that was located in a previous IED sight. A current enemy TTP was to use previous IED sights again for future IED emplacement. This was a current TTP well know and to this day the leadership does not know why the NCO moved thru the IED sight. The other casualty was a chance contact while conducting a dismounted patrol in their AO. The COP itself suffered multiple indirect fire attacks weekly. As the squad conducted BP change out they were attacked with Home Made Explosive (HME), almost daily upon returning thru the local market. These attacks resulted minimal to no damage to the vehicles or Soldiers.

Taking the PL's Situational Awareness (SA) and knowledge of the current enemy TTP's, enemy composition and disposition into consideration I advised him on several courses of actions. Based on the enemy TTP's and the COP's current battle rhythm, I recommended to the PL that he refer to basic infantry tactics and procedures. He should implement friendly forces TTP's that have been proven to reduce the risk to Soldiers and increase mission accomplishment and enforce security measures to protect and secure the COP. The recommendation was briefed in detail utilizing the map overlay the PL had been using to track attacks and Troops in Contact (TIC's).

Once the brief was completed with the PL I spoke with the ISG assigned in reference to the COP security and the COP's priorities of work. The current security and the SOP's for the Sergeant of the Guard (SOG) were less than desirable and needed to improve the existing standards. This a TTP's commonly seen as Soldiers and leaders became complacent and lose

situational awareness. Identifying areas of improvement within a platoon's capabilities is a unique situation and for the most part is welcomed by the leadership.

Security operations conducted within the COP put every Soldier at risk every hour of the day. An example is when they chose to conduct weapons maintenance at 1000 daily and all three machine guns at the same time. This was a major issue to me and once again it is a result of an AWG internal saying "You do not know what you do not know". This was an issue that and I easily influenced the leaders to correct. Correcting the issue at the tactical level to reduce the strategic implications was my priority. The strategic implication of the COP being attacked and seized with a Soldier or Soldiers being killed or captured would be an international Information Operation (IO) success for enemy forces. These are factors that the PL and NCO had not taken into planning considerations or operations. A TTP that was currently being used at this time was the use of the Raven UAV at the Company and below. This was brought up the PL and the necessary means to request and implement the combat enabler.

The constant attacks on the patrols as they conducted convoy operations thru the local market to the BP were not a complex incident. Conducting convoy operation thru the market with the Soldiers and identifying the enemy TTP's and course actions were similar to the insurgent in northern Iraq. At no fault of the Soldier performing convoy operations they were not aware of the enemy TTP's using cell phones and "Christmas Tree Wire". As enemy forces have done consistently since the emplacement of IED's used cell phones to initiate or plan for attacks. Even with the current systems used by friendly forces to defeat this TTP the enemy continued to utilize cell phones as a primary means to carry out attacks. The insurgents utilized the locals in the market to alert them of CF (Coalitional Forces) movement thru the market. This would allow the enemy to emplace the HME IED prior to the CF returning along the same route. A recommendation was for the convoy to drive thru the market and immediately turn around

and collect cell phones from the personnel at the market. In doing this they could collect numbers and call times from individuals phones and compare numbers and call times to target the individuals responsible for the attacks.

The use of the "Christmas Tree Wire" was a TTP commonly used and still being used in both AO's. Question the Soldiers if they had ever searched the market they said "no". Once we searched the market the local phone dealer in the market was the individual making the "Christmas Tree Wire". To my surprise the platoon occupied the small AO and was not aware of the personnel living and working throughout. Working with the platoon to emphasis on Counter Insurgency (COIN) and their own personal safety thru having daily interaction with the locals, their families, and place of employment. As I was embedded with the platoon we conducted several key leader engagements with the local leaders, market owners, and general population.

The security of the COP was a that I assisted the NCO's of the platoon to implement effective security measures. At one point the platoon had an Iraqi local walk in the building and walk thru the area where the soldiers prepared food. The individual was an Iraqi local that was looking for a point of contact to join local Iraqi Army or Police Forces. The individual was not challenged when he approached and entered the perimeter. Advised the NCO's on some tactical options to emplace for security measure and cover dead space. A technique with new technology was to use a REM Ball kit made by Remington, has limited battery life capabilities but can assist in observation of known and unknown areas. Advised the Sergeant of the Guard to rotate the schedule he conducted weapons maintenance and not to do all three guns at the same time. Emplacing personnel on the roof top to identify suspected indirect fire location with optics. Building standoff barriers along high speed avenues of approach was recommended to the PI..

There was not a barrier or standoff check point at that time for the entry point to the COP. The local populace could walk up to the wall and to the entry point at any point of the day. I discussed this with the PL and NCO's and identified simple measures that would be effective and control the traffic in around the COP.

I discussed several options and TTP's that would improve the combat effectiveness and survivability. AT one point the PL identified the Rules of Engagement (ROE) and Escalation of Force (EOF) did not allow him to effectively employ his Soldiers. The incident the PL was focusing on was employing a squad to conduct dismounted patrol in their AO. Based on the constant chance contacts the patrols faced moving as a 12 man element I suggested the patrol move in smaller elements with mutual support. The PL's understanding of the ROE did not allow him to separate his forces. I advised him what he ROE stated and also that this was a TTP that units in northern Iraq were currently employing both dismounted and mounted to find IED's and trigger men.

The advice and assistance given during this one week embed allowed the leaders and Soldiers to see the operating environment from a different perspective. The advice and recommendation were given based on what I observed during the embed and past experiences throughout Iraq. At the conclusion of the embed, the NCO's were grateful for the advice and assistance given. I truly believe the NCO's are the 'Back Bone of the Army' and the Soldiers will follow a competent, tactical, technical proficient NCO without hesitation. As I addressed in the beginning I am focused more on the tactical considerations than the strategic, especially the time frame of this embed. The platoon focused on conducting basic infantry platoon patrol base activities and sustainment operations. Enemy and friendly TTP's and other capabilities were passed along to the platoon that will improve their mission accomplishment and combat survivability.