

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, Timothy A. Lehman, 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: 11 Nov 2010

Printed Name: Timothy A. Lehman

Signature: Timothy A. Lehman

Accepted on behalf of the United States Army by:

Printed Name/Date: Gonzales, David / 2 Dec 2010

Signature: David Gonzales

USASMA FORM 7273-R, APR 06

Running Head: TASK FORCE J6 SGM

Task Force J6 SGM

SGM Timothy A Lehman

SMNRC Class 35 Phase II

Operation Iraqi Freedom, Baghdad, 2003 - 2004

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Unclassified

### Abstract

This paper describes the issues and concerns of a Task Force J6 SGM while deployed to Baghdad, Iraq, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). I talk about that challenges that I experienced fulfilling the role of a Sergeant Major position while only a Sergeant First Class while also fulfilling the role as the only Automation Information Systems (AIS) technician supporting the battle staff. I discuss what training I had received at that point in my career that assisted me in performing the job of the J6 SGM. I make recommendations on how to counter some of the problems of working on an over tasked staff.

## Task Force J6 SGM

Late 2003 and into the early months of 2004, as a Sergeant First Class, I found myself being deployed to support Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). I was assigned as the Task Force (TF) J6 SGM as well as the lead, and only, Information Technology (IT) Systems Technician to support the headquarters battle staff and subordinate maneuver elements. As a 25B, Information Systems Specialist and having graduated the Advanced Noncommissioned Officer Academy less than a year prior I felt that I was adequately trained and uniquely qualified to fulfill this dual-hated role. I have held various signal related positions in the Special Operations community since 1994. I have deployed numerous times in support of various missions and operations all over the world. At this time I had already completed two combat rotations in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) so I felt that I knew what I was getting into. I was sadly mistaken.

I arrived at Baghdad International Airport, better known as BIAP, approximately four months after the Task Force and was to be the second individual to hold the IT position. Due to manpower shortages, I was told, about two hours after my arrival, that I would also be manning the TF J6 SGM position. This was a challenge that I readily accepted and began working towards. The TF J6 SGM and the IT Tech have drastically differing areas of responsibilities. As the TF J6 SGM, I was responsible for all facets of communications to include automation, satellites, radios, frequencies, COMPLANS, personal communications and executive communications. I was also responsible for the health and welfare of the other signal personnel in the TF as well as manning requirements, supply transactions, and logistics related to communications. On top of this I was still responsible to administer and maintain the computer networks of three different classifications with duties ranging from basic help desk tasks,

creating new accounts and email mailboxes, installing software, running cables and installing new workstations, managing telephone services, scheduling and running VTCs, and administering servers and network devices.

I had the added challenge of being the only J-Staff senior NCO that was not in the rank of Sergeant Major. This aspect made me rely very heavily on my personal communications and team building skills. This made holding this position even more challenging. I had the responsibility to work with all of the other J-Staff elements in some form or fashion and feared that my junior rank would be a detriment to the J6. This was not the case due to the professionalism of each of the Sergeants Major that I had the pleasure of working with during this deployment.

One of the major challenges that I faced was broken or battle loss of equipment and getting replacements to the subordinate elements in a timely manner. Due to the nature of the battle space at the time, very mobile, the subordinate maneuver elements did not have a lot of spare equipment and getting replacements to them at remote sites could be a challenge. If I did not forecast supply parts well in advance, there would be a long down time waiting on equipment to be shipped into Iraq from the U.S. The conditions of Iraq are not conducive to standard operating conditions for communications equipment. The heat and sand are killers and if proper care is not taken the equipment will break relatively quickly. The continued shift of forces on the battlefield made resupplying the subordinate elements a challenging and time constrained process. This allowed me to travel a great deal and meet the Soldiers and NCOs that worked communications for the TF. Each member had fresh and new ideas on how to employ communication systems on the battlefield and all were open to suggestions at improvements. When coordinating support from or working with a communications specialist

from one of the subordinate elements, having someone who understands how they operate and their unique requirements speeds up the process and ensures missions success.

One of the tasks that fell upon me, as the TF J6 SGM was to ensure that all TF personnel traveling in and around Iraq were properly trained on how to operate the radios they were issued. Since, by 'trade', I was not very familiar with the configuration and setup of the radios that the TF used I had one of the junior communicators teach me. I then developed and provided classes to the battle staff on the operation of the radio systems, proper radio procedures, loading or updating crypto, and how to read a call-sign matrix. I also provided basic classes on the eight line medivac procedures and how to call for fire. This was considered a critical skill; to ensure that each individual had the ability to call for help should anything happen, during their traveling around Iraq. I soon realized that this was to be a standard for all Soldiers that would serve with me in the future. This was something that was rarely touched on, or given 'lip service', at all of my NCOES courses and was not adequately trained on at my unit.

The responsibility of fulfilling the TF J6 SGM position was daunting. Many areas while trained on to a lesser extent were extremely complex and needed a large amount of coordination and leadership. One of those areas was the IT systems and network infrastructure that I was responsible for, not only as the TF J6 SGM, but as the IT Tech. To make matters worse each subordinate element had differing automation requirements that were often competing priorities. As the TF expanded its role across Iraq, we relied on other communications units or bases to provide network paths or support for our personnel. Unfortunately, not everyone had the same level of standards or sense of priority that the TF had. This caused longer that required down time at some of the outstations while relying on others to restore services. Most of that coordination fell to me to establish, as well as answer for. This was a challenge in itself as each organization that I dealt with had a different set of standards or

Service Level Agreements (SLAs). There was no consistency across the battle space. Two like Signal units would provide the TF with two drastically differing levels of support; even though we requested the same services. There is a requirement to have the proper skill level and training for each of these units and it became apparently clear that this was not the case. Maintaining a complex computer network requires skilled Soldiers and NCOs at each of the supporting units. While each unit had a large amount of individuals that could support the TF with networking functions there was a deficit in those that could support the systems or server side. I believe that this is a result of the lack of understanding on the Signal Corps and those that establish the training requirements.

One issue that we experienced routinely was new communications systems being placed on the network without prior coordination or being properly tested. This resulted in repeated network outages until we could identify what had caused the problem. I understand the need for new and updated technology, especially in battle conditions, thus giving us the edge against our enemies. However, without proper procedures in place to prevent this, or an understanding how systems operate and effect other systems, these network outages are unpreventable. During combat operations, this was completely unacceptable. Therefore, working with the J3 SGM, I implemented a policy stating that any new technology or new system had to be tested and approved prior to being instituted onto the production networks.

Due to the excessive operational tempo and short manning on the TF staff Soldiers became fatigued or 'burned out' after a period of time. To prevent this senior NCOs ensured that everyone took time to conduct daily physical training. We ensured that all Soldiers left the work centers to eat in the chow hall rather than at their desks. We encouraged all of our Soldiers to take time for them, relax, and find a stress reliever. When we were not running or planning operations we ensured that all of our Soldiers were out of the work places and not doing

'busy' work. Most importantly we sat down with each of our Soldiers to find out how they were doing and if there were any issues, if there were we addressed them immediately.

I had to use every lesson that I had learned during my career to be successful as the TF J6 SGM. Those lessons were learned through years of experience, mentorship from my superiors, and the training that I received at the NCO schools that I attended. I was presented with leadership challenges that I was not prepared for and had to overcome those with tenacity and by thinking of the best course of actions for the best possible outcome for the task force. These issues were not part of my training or were unique to the task force. This was one of the most rewarding experiences of my Army career and helped me grow both as an individual and as an NCO.

Like every other communications specialist within the TF I performed preventive maintenance checks on the TF radio systems, network devices, vehicles and other communications equipment. The knowledge and training that I acquired over the years and on-site proved invaluable. This kept the TF fully operational and allowed me to pass this knowledge onto some of the junior communicators, thus leading from the front. I was also instrumental in identifying communications requirements and the support required for missions. This was a new experience and was one that I was not adequately trained on. I had to learn through trial and error and take advice from some of the younger, but more experienced, NCOs that were working for me at the time. This was a humbling experience and one that I still cherish to this day. I dealt repeatedly with senior members of the TF battle staff on communications statuses and had to report to the TF commander on a routine basis. This was another aspect of my duties that was relatively new to me, the interactions with very senior leadership. Again, due to the support that I had and the training that I had previously received I was successful.

My time as the TF J6 SGM was one of the most challenging assignments that I have ever faced, as well as one of the most rewarding. I experienced different issues and problems to tackle every day. There was not much down time to relax or even sleep but it was one of the best deployments that I have experienced. I enjoyed the camaraderie and professionalism from the senior NCOs that I worked with the most. I will never forget this experience.