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Uzbekistan the unknown War Zone

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United States Army Sergeants Major Academy

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## Abstract

The events of September 11, 2001, resulted in the deployment of America's Armed Forces to multiple locations around the world to initiate President George Bush's new Global War on terrorism. As a result, the Department of Defense began planning operational missions to root out the perpetrators and supporters of terrorism in the unstable country of Afghanistan and surrounding regions. Termed Operation Enduring Freedom, combat operations in the Afghan region started just a few days after the attack of the World trade center. The mission is ongoing and the United States continues to spearhead the relentless search to bring Osama Bin Laden and others responsible for terrorism to justice.

September 11, 2001, I was at Fort Hood attending ANCOG Phase II one week from graduation. The day had been fast paced and my fellow students and I were completing one of our last assignments when the instructor abruptly stopped us and ordered us downstairs for an unscheduled formation. Puzzled, we did as we were told and awaited the instructors arrival. The instructor and the Commandant came before the formation and appeared shaken and upset. The commandant told us that the World Trade Center and the Pentagon just been attacked. Shocked, my fellow students and I gathered around the television in the break room to hear the latest news. Looks of dismay filled the room and we all discussed how the attacks would impact our units and knew future deployments were on the horizon.

On July 2002, I submitted my transfer request to fill a E-7 Maintenance position in the 373<sup>rd</sup> Combat Support Battalion to further my career. September 5<sup>th</sup> 2002, I received my transfer orders assigning me to the 373<sup>rd</sup> CSB and had a scheduled Battle Assembly the weekend of September 14<sup>th</sup>. It had only been four days since the one year anniversary of the terrorist attacks and you could not turn on a Television or radio without hearing how the terrorist had dealt a serious blow to the United States. While attending Battle Assembly on September 14<sup>th</sup> my fellow Soldiers and I, wondered when we would have the chance to serve our nation in the War on Terror and have an impact of our own.

On October 19<sup>th</sup> 2002, my unit completed a M-16 Range qualification at Fort Polk Louisiana and had just returned to the barracks. Shortly after unloading our equipment and the vehicles, the Command Sergeant Major called a mandatory formation. The Battalion Commander took over the formation and informed us we had just received an alert to deploy but did not have a location. We all suspected we were going to Afghanistan or Bosnia.

In November 2002, The HHC 373<sup>rd</sup> CSB received our mobilization orders to deploy to Karshi-Khanabad, Uzbekistan, Camp Stronghold Freedom or "K2" as we would soon learn. The Command staff immediately took action and trained up on all the necessary briefings, CTT tasks required. Our unit was only the second rotation to deploy and many of the standard mobilization procedures in place today had not yet been implemented. The Battalion staff quickly meshed and synchronized their training efforts ensuring the pre-deployment activities were executed swiftly and to standard by the end of December 2002.

On January 3<sup>rd</sup> 2003, the 373<sup>rd</sup> Corps Support Battalion deployed to Fort Hood, Texas. The unit went into action with equipment draw, medical and dental readiness, deployment rehearsals, and first line leadership workshops. Upon completion of our mobilization requirements we palletized our equipment and boarded the Plane on January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2003 for Karshi-Khanabad, Uzbekistan and Camp Stronghold Freedom.

Camp Stronghold Freedom stands on an old windswept plateau in central Uzbekistan. The sole purpose of the base is to serve as the forward logistics hub for combat actions in support of OEF. This isolated atoll once was home to a Soviet MIG fighter base. From every vantage point within the perimeter, the reminders of the former Russian occupants were visible. Enormous bunkers with their four-foot wide blast doors that once held fighters make convenient shelters and storage areas.

Just one square mile in size, the perimeter of K2 Camp Stronghold Freedom consisted of three security layers. The outer two layers were manned by the Uzbek forces and the inner layer was manned by United States Soldiers. The majority of facilities at K-2 were tents, with only two hard stand buildings both used by the Air force. The base had a population of about 1200 Soldiers and Airmen, with the Army providing the support functions of the dining facilities, fire department, base defense, tactical and non-tactical vehicle maintenance and construction projects.

Supporting United States forces in Afghanistan and in Central Asia required surface transportation movements by train and truck across thousands of kilometers of some of the most forbidding territory in the world. After shipments traveled by ocean carrier to Bremerhaven, Germany, they then completed the rest of the journey by railcar to Uzbekistan. Once the shipments reached Karshi-Khanabad in Uzbekistan, a

transportation contract detachment contracted private trucks to distribute the supplies to US and allied troops in Afghanistan. The sustainment supplies were shipped primarily to the Afghan cities of Mazar-e-Sharif, Bagram, and occasionally Kandahar. There were three main transportation nodes in the AOR: Bagram, Kandahar and K2, all, which operated multimode port activities. The two primary modes of transportation to the AOR were fixed-wing coalition aircraft and local national contracted commercial trucks. The surface shipments served as a means to relieve pressure on the overburdened aircraft and freed the aircraft to move high-priority, sensitive, and perishable cargo. As my unit would soon discover, expanding the supply chain to Mazar-e-Sharif, Bagram and Kandahar would prove to be the most difficult challenge because of the distance from K2 (1,500 kilometers) and the harsh road conditions and hostile activities on these routes.

On February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2003, our unit conducted a Transfer of Authority with the Logistics Task Force 329, the present CSB on ground at K2. Prior to our Main body arrival, we identified a team of 20 personnel to conduct a TOA with personnel at our Forward Logistics Element or ( FLE) in Mazar-e-Sharif. The FLE was our units number one priority because it housed a Jordanian Humanitarian Field Hospital and served as staging area for Special Forces Soldiers to operate a Safe house to use as a re-supply point.

The LTF 373 headquarters took command and control of the services of a 500 Soldier multi-functional Logistics Task Force at K2 consisting of 12 subordinate companies working in support of OEF. We had direct administrative control over the 22<sup>nd</sup> Postal Company, 91<sup>st</sup> Provost Marshal Office, 972<sup>nd</sup> MP company, 126 Finance Det, 54<sup>th</sup> Mortuary Affairs Det, 154<sup>th</sup> Petroleum Oil Lab, 659<sup>th</sup> Maintenance Company, 754<sup>th</sup> EOD Det, and the 945<sup>th</sup> Engineer Company. The LTF 373 provided all classes of supply, water purification/distribution, field showers, laundry services, consolidated and direct support maintenance, Cargo documentation, Mortuary affairs, Finance, Postal and personnel support to all US forces operating in the vicinity of K2 Air Base as well as the FLE at Mazar-e-Sharif and Kunduz Afghanistan.

The three greatest challenges I faced as the Senior Maintenance NCOIC for the S-4 was the lack of Standard Operating Procedures for maintenance at K2, lack of adequate maintenance manpower within our subordinate companies and improperly trained supply and maintenance personnel. Upon completion of our TOA I immediately conducted an assessment of our subordinate companies maintenance assets with respect to personnel, tools, parts, and operating procedures. I quickly learned each of our subordinate companies were lacking the necessary personnel to run their own motor pools effectively.

When I conducted an analysis of the over 90 day work orders, I noticed a trend of parts on back order with no updates for several weeks. I then conducted a face to face recon with the SSA and quickly discovered that approximately 90% of the supported customers were not using the correct priority designators and RDD's for their parts requests. I also completed a PLL review for all our units and found that many units had parts on-hand that other units had on order for non-mission capable equipment.

I reviewed and assessed a few courses of action. I briefed my Battalion commander on my plan and asked for him to support my course of action by directing the subordinate company commanders to adhere to his directive to implement my plan. The course of action that I decided upon was to consolidate all the maintenance personnel, assets and funding under my HHC using a consolidated maintenance program for the entire base at K2. I instructed my motor sergeant to place derivative UICs in the ULLS-G so we could track each unit. All the maintenance funding was rolled into the parent UIC for tracking the total spending. I could now track all parts ordered through one report and prevent units from ordering parts that were on-hand since I had total control of all ASL and PLL.

The next step was to direct the subordinate units to conduct immediately a joint inventory of their PLL and ASL on-hand and turn it in to my HHC. I requested and was authorized

additional motor pool floor space and parking area from the Direct support unit at K2 and began to set up our HHC consolidated organizational maintenance program.

Once I had control of the personnel, funding, parts and tools, I drafted an SOP on how organizational maintenance would be conducted from beginning to end. I also requested the assistance of an Army material command logistics assistance representative to provide guidance and training to company supply personnel on how to expedite parts and utilize various parts tracking software to lessen the turn around time for all class IX repair parts. Once my SOP draft was finalized and signed by the Battalion commander, I held a maintenance meeting with all the maintenance customers, the supply support activity, and the direct support unit located on K2 to ensure each player knew his or her role. The actions I took had an immediate positive impact. Within 60 days there was zero reportable equipment in non-mission capable status on K2 our maintenance turn-around time stayed well below 30 days for the remainder of our tour for all of our supported customers.

Creating the combined organizational maintenance program pooled the maintenance expertise within one office and ensured the efficient control and execution of maintenance operations on K2. The success of the organizational maintenance program quickly caught the attention of the base commander. My maintenance team was given the task to create Standard Operating Procedures for the vehicle licensing program on K2

and the evacuation/liaison procedures for returning equipment from the Forward Logistics Element at Mazar-e-Sharif. These two programs both proved to be successful and prior to our final rotation out of theatre our maintenance team was supporting Air force, Marine, and Special Forces from Uzbekistan to Bagram.

Our greatest challenge upon arriving at K2 was earning the respect of our full-time counterparts in the Active Army. The LTF 373 headquarters' ability to construct lasting fixes to chronic supply and maintenance shortfalls is testament to the drive and outstanding grasp of complex logistical operations our unit personnel brought to the fight. An effective maintenance program was nonexistent before our Battalion's arrival, prior to our departure it was the best in the region. We not only earned the respect of our Active Duty counterparts, we demonstrated our tenacious and aggressive abilities to resolve a myriad of complex logistics issues that had plagued them before our arrival making them question their own abilities. I am proud to have set the standard by which all units would conduct maintenance in the Afghanistan region and do my part in the War on Terror.

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, Chad C. Brown, have submitted a Personal Experience Paper to the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy archives regarding events and experiences from my participation in Operation Enduring Freedom 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:

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\_\_\_\_\_  
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: 12-7-09

Printed Name: Chad C. Brown

Signature: Chad C. Brown

Accepted on behalf of the United States Army by:

Printed Name/Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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