

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, Csm Chad R Walker, 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: 14 July 2010

Printed Name: Walker, Chad R.

Signature: 

Accepted on behalf of the United States Army by:

Printed Name/Date: _____

Signature: _____

USASMA FORM 7273-R, APR 06

The First Iraqi National Elections

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United States Army Sergeants Major Academy

Class 35

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Abstract

Early on in the planning phase of the elections the Iraqi leaders established an election commission. This commission was called the Independent Election Committee Iraq (IECI). Security in Mosul deteriorated as time continued to approach the election date. The unit was comprised of a 40 man unit that included the battalion commander, command sergeants major and first sergeant. Two days before the elections the unit leadership met and discussed requirements to provide security and logistical support to some Iraqi election workers coming to Mosul from other parts of Iraq.

The task of providing support to the election workers belonged to my unit. The unit leaders had to develop immediate relationships with higher headquarters, Civil Affairs units, contractors, tenent units on the FOB, security forces from the Air Force, IECI leaders and United Nations (UN) representatives who were in place as watchdogs to certify the election.

Our unit's plan was to place the election boxes with ballots in a huge warehouse on FOB Marez and utilize IECI workers and U.S. Military as security. The IECI, UN and my unit all played a role in the success of the elections in Mosul, Iraq.

Personal Background

With 14 years of active duty experience as an Infantryman and Artilleryman I had seen combat and spent many exercises in arid environments. I was the First Sergeant of the IHHS of 2-180th Field Artillery Battalion and the senior of all the other First Sergeants. In addition, I had worked closely with my NCOs to build a solid and competent team that depended and trusted one another.

The 2-180th FA did not have a history of war-time deployments. This Arizona Army National Guard unit had been called upon by the Governor of Arizona to assist with state emergencies in a state active duty capacity numerous times and most recent for the wildfires in 2003. These State Active Duty assignments stretched and taxed the battalion's leadership to look outside the box and react quickly with any and all information at hand. The core group of leaders within the battalion's staff and key leadership positions within the battalion had served together for the last three years. Numerous senior non-commissioned officers (NCOs), company grade and field grade officers had served together in some professional manner for upwards of 15 years. Of the 40 Soldiers that made up the derivative UIC that would become the 2-180th FA (FWD) long-standing professional and personal relationships were part of the equation and identified as strength to this deployable unit.

Operation and Operational Situation Lead In

In October and November of 2004, U.S. Army and Marine units began a push into the city of Fallujah in Central Iraq. These units faced intense fighting from an imbedded insurgency and Anti-Iraqi-Fighters (AIF). U.S. objectives were met and were successful in regaining the city and protecting the innocent citizens of Fallujah. Similar to squeezing a rabbit, as U.S. forces clamped down and began pressuring the opposing forces some of the AIF were able

to escape and move to the northern part of Iraq in the vicinity of Mosul. The AIF were men of violence, terror and unpredictability. With sufficient numbers they could wreak havoc on the already delicate security situation in and around Mosul, Iraq.

In early 2004 the 101st Airborne Division departed and since that time the northern third of Iraq was considered to be an Economy of Force effort. This change left only the absolute minimal numbers of U.S. and coalition Soldiers available to accomplish the mission. Over-tasked units with multiple duties beyond combat and civil affairs operations were stretched and taxed; this was a downfall to the strategy. With the influx of AIF fighters that fled Fallujah immediately deteriorated the already weakened security situation in Mosul.

President George W. Bush was hoping for a successful election could be performed by the now sovereign citizens of Iraq. The President saw this as a great step towards lasting democracy and also calming the rising insurgency. The first Iraqi National elections were scheduled to be held January 30, 2005. Iraq had a lot of work to do, on their part, to make this a reality. The leaders and citizens of Iraq had to establish election protocols, acquire all of the materials and logistics required for a national election that would span different regions of Iraq, and hire administrative and polling workers to implement the plans in a successful manner. Early on in the planning phase of the elections the Iraqi leaders established an election commission. This commission was called the Independent Election Committee Iraq (IECI). The IECI would serve as the lead agent for the successful execution of this historic election. The U.S. would serve only in a supporting role to allow the Iraqi people to exercise their new freedom and begin building their democracy.

Security in Mosul deteriorated as time continued to approach the election date. In December 2004 a suicide bomber attacked a U.S. dining facility killing or wounding over 40

Soldiers and Department of Defense civilians. This attack and the AIF pressures within the city caused the citizens of Mosul to fear for their lives.

As plans for the election progressed into January 2005 my unit was preparing to depart Fort Lewis, Washington for Kuwait and follow-on assignment in Mosul, Iraq. The unit was comprised of a 40 man unit that included the battalion commander, command sergeants major and first sergeant. This hand-picked unit was selected mostly from the HHS of the battalion and consisted of key staff officers and NCOs. The mission was to support force protection and operational functions on Forward Operating Base (FOB) Marez and Diamondback in Mosul. The unit knew very little about the base and even less about the looming elections.

2-180th FA (FWD) arrived at the new station via C-130 around midnight on the 25th of January 2005. After a few hours of rest, I began waking the unit and we quickly began to learn our new responsibilities and began the relief in place process. The final transition of authority was scheduled initially for the first week of February. During the process of relieving the unit we were to replace it became clear to all of the leaders of my unit that they didn't seem too worried about Fragmentary Orders (FRAGOs). The unit seemed to believe that everything was under control. The FRAGOs coming down from higher headquarters were discussing Operation Flying Circus which outlined and defined the assistance coalition forces were to provide to the Iraqis in Mosul for the January 30th election.

Two days before the elections the unit leadership met and discussed requirements to provide security and logistical support to some Iraqi election workers coming to Mosul from other parts of Iraq. With the degraded security situation and increased intimidation of the citizens of Mosul by the AIF only a handful of individuals from the local population were willing to

work the polling locations. This created the need for the hundreds of polling workers to come from areas in Iraq outside of Mosul. These Iraqi polling workers were to be flown into Mosul Air Field where they were to be housed, trained, paid, fed and protected so they could run approximately 50 polling locations in the city of Mosul. This would ensure all election protocols were followed and the Iraqis were running this historic election.

2-180th FA (FWD) Takes Charge

The task of providing support to the election workers belonged to my unit. Despite being in country for less than five days and not officially completed with the transition with the unit we were to replace we were going to take charge of the situation. Over 500 Iraqi polling workers from all over Iraq were being flown into the Mosul Air Field. Unit leaders immediately found the hood of a HMMWV for an impromptu meeting to tentatively plan to provide security and logistical support to the IECI workers. As the First Sergeant, I checked the status of each of the Soldiers within the unit and helped place them with the correct mission requirement for the commander. My NCOs and Soldiers barely knew their way around the FOB and now would be moving material and people in support of the elections.

The unit leaders had to develop immediate relationships with higher headquarters, Civil Affairs units, contractors, tenent units on the FOB, security forces from the Air Force, IECI leaders and United Nations (UN) representatives who were in place as watchdogs to certify the election. As the security situation in the city continued to be volatile the situation on the FOB deteriorated as the lack of a concise plan was evident. We had one more long meeting and reviewed weeks of FRAGOs and came up with the needed plan for our FOB. These plans needed to be acted upon immediately and efficiently to provide security, accountability, a sanitary living area, bedding, food, water, latrines and other necessities. To add to the stress of

out unit, the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment's Chief of Staff made a personal visit to our FOB and saw some of the confusion and frantic work being done in preparation. He directed the 2-180th FA (FWD) commander to make things right and ensure that the plan came together.

The CSM and I were dispatched by the commander to go speak to the unit's NCO leadership on LSA Diamondback and FOB Marez. Plans came together as the tenant units stepped up to the plate and assisted with all the tasks we needed to accomplish by providing quality support. The night before the election AIF fired ten mortars within the perimeter of FOB Marez. The safety and security of the IECI workers was maintained despite the fact that the rounds impacted close to the 500 IECI workers. The next issue I dealt with personally was the lack of cigarettes and tea for the workers. They expected these items to be furnished to them and demanded them. This almost caused a revolt but the fact I was a smoker and had a calm interpreter the situation was taken care of and both items were taken care of quickly and calm was restored. The unit leadership also had to deal with cultural issues. Sunnis and Shiite Muslims were being housed in the same area. This was a big deal and we were not very aware that this could cause such an issue. By dealing with each sides "leader" the leadership, through translators, negotiated a consensus between them and a compromise solution was found. A simple curtain separated the two groups with separate entrances.

With everyone happy, smoking and drinking tea the day ended and we prepared for the election. The next morning came, January 30, 2005, and the Stryker Brigade Combat Team (SBCT) vehicles arrived at dawn to pick up the IECI workers and deliver them with voting materials to the 50 polling places within the city of Mosul. This would be a historic vote but nobody knew how many IECI workers would return that evening or how much violence would be in the city.

The day of the election was much quieter than anyone expected. IECI workers began returning to FOB Marez around 1900hrs that evening. Within the city only a handful of civilians attempting to vote were killed or wounded. None of the IECI workers were injured and the vote itself was considered a huge success.

Our unit's plan was to place the election boxes with ballots in a huge warehouse on FOB Marez and utilize IECI workers and U.S. Military as security. This would allow a place for safekeeping and the ballots would be counted later at a different location. Around 2200hrs that evening the commander was at the warehouse as the last ballot boxes were arriving when it began to rain. The downpour in Iraq was a sign that something bad was going to happen and it did as he watched IECI workers carrying the large plastic boxes into the warehouse.

The senior United Nations representative came over to the commander and CA representatives and asked who was in charge. The United Nations representative told the commander that this location was unsuitable for storing ballots and a new plan was needed or the election would not be certified.

Once again, the unit had to move quickly and decisively or the elections would not be a success. I was dispatched immediately to recon a new location to store the ballots. I did not come back with a suitable new location. Another idea was in the works and a secondary location was quickly prepared. Security was established and all of the election materials were moved to the gymnasium. This allowed the IECI workers to be the lead group in the success of the elections. Once the ballots were delivered the workers began counting the ballots and the UN certified the election.

The first Iraqi National Elections were a success and the seeds of a democracy were planted in Iraq. The IECI, UN and my unit all played a role in the success of the elections in

Mosul, Iraq. Success was obtained because of initiative, dedication and the ability to solve problems in a timely manner. These facts and the experience carried over for the following 11 months and helped distinguish my unit from other units.