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MSG Marilyn Z. Mazalewski -

Assignment to 6th Bn, 43d ADA, Ansbach, GE, Sep 92-Nov 96 -

42A40, Battalion S1 NCOIC, 6h Bn, 43d ADA -

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Abstract -

My assignment to the 6th Battalion 43d Air Defense Artillery in Ansbach, Germany proved to be one of my challenging and rewarding assignments. I was assigned to the unit as the Battalion S1 NCOIC from September 1992 to November 1996; my first assignment to an MTOE unit. I completed two Southwest Asia rotations and participated in several field exercises. I will highlight my first deployment with the unit and related it to the second deployment. The unit was redesignated as the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 52d Air Defense Artillery on 15 February 1996.

### Deployment with 6-43d ADA

This personal experience paper consists of events that occurred while I was assigned to the 6th Battalion, 43d Air Defense Artillery in Ansbach, Germany. I consider these events significant because they were challenging and rewarding and allowed me to get to where I am today.

I have now been in the Army for about seven years and I am enroute to an Air Defense Artillery (PATRIOT) unit in Germany. I am leaving the Baltimore Recruiting Battalion which I worked as an administrative specialist from April 1989 to September 1992. I arrived at the recruiting battalion as a Specialist and left as a Staff Sergeant; therefore, I was somewhat apprehensive about my first combat unit assignment. The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 43d Air Defense Artillery consisted of a Headquarters and Headquarters Battery and 6 firing batteries, with approximately 700 Soldiers. Upon my arrival, I was informed that I would be in charge of the Battalion S1; my first leadership position. Because of Human Resource Personnel shortages, the S1 was managed by a 14T Staff Sergeant and staffed by Supply and Air Defense Soldiers as well as Human Resources Personnel. Soldiers assigned to the S1 ranged from 9 to 15 and I was responsible for training them. The environment, training and counseling was challenging at first, but I managed to put it all together.

My first deployment and field experience comes from the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 43d Air Defense Artillery. In July of 1993, our battalion deployed to Southwest Asia on a scheduled rotation. This was my first time in a combat unit and deploying anywhere. All of this was new to me, the training, the numerous field training exercises and the real world deployment. It was amazing how we managed to get everything we asked for, including fillers. All our vacancies were filled even though we had a Soldier in a different rank slotted in that position. For instance, the unit still got a

Sergeant First Class 42A even though I was filling that position, as a Staff Sergeant. We deployed with over 1000 Soldiers with varied MOSs and plenty of talent. The make up of our rotation was different from other Patriot battalions because they all had their own maintenance company. We did not. V Corps remedied the situation by sending fillers from all over USAREUR based on a maintenance company MTOE. My section was responsible for ensuring we received all our fillers, orders were published properly and maintained accurate personnel strength. I was responsible for manifesting all assigned and attached personnel; a first for me. While we were deployed, I was able to come up with a training plan for my Soldiers. We cross trained and improved our individual and collective tasks without distractions. Prior to this, I had difficulties training my Soldiers because I lacked support from my leadership. For instance, we wanted to shut down for training and we could not. My S1 created a template for deployment awards which made it easier for the batteries to complete and us to process. We processed over 1000 awards and conducted ceremonies in the area of operation. The things that I got most out of the rotation were realistic training, the captured (focused) audience, the camaraderie, the outstanding caring leadership, and getting more comfortable with my job.

We returned in late December and the train never stopped moving. We took our Christmas block leave and returned to work with our Brigade complaining about missed suspense, Unit Strength Reporting, Quarterly Training Briefs, Command Inspection (CI), and Soldier personnel and financial problems. Ironically, most of this fell on me and the S1. We had a SSG in charge of the rear S1 so I did not have much of a clue of what happened, but now I had to fix the problem. I wondered how I would ever get time to fix all this mess. On top of all this, the First Sergeants were constantly blaming the S1 for late suspense. We had to go through a NATO Tactical -

Evaluation and which provided me the opportunity to get more training under my belt and the opportunity for my section to get things done while in the field. We successfully passed the TAC-EVAL, and now we had to go through a Command Inspection (CI). I saw the CI as another opportunity to get some things fixed in a hurry by having a second set of eyes look at us. Before our Brigade inspected us, my section looked at the companies to ensure they were doing the right things. My section worked long hours to make sure everything was in order; we received commendable ratings. Next, we had to go through a ranged density. Apparently our expert qualification rate was not good enough and so we received a tasker telling us to fix our weapons qualification. We the NCOs had to come up with a plan to get qualification up. The plan was simple and already in the book; it was called Preliminary Marksmanship Instruction (PMI). We took the book and used it and we were successful. I could not imagine what I was beginning to learn. We were learning more and more about training and Soldier care. I was beginning to realize what it meant to train and “Train as you fight.” I found out that training was very important and equally important was to have competent NCOs leading and conducting the training. We as trainers must train our Soldiers and train them right the first time. We began executing other programs such as Sergeant Time Training (STT) and Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development (NCOPD) that would help make us a more professional and stronger Corps.

In early spring of 1995, the Battalion got its marching orders to proceed back to Southwest Asia (SWA) in early 1996 on a schedule rotation. This was not anything new because the battalion had returned in December of 1993 on a similar rotation. The battalion’s game plan was to begin training and certification and eventually complete the training with an external evaluation (EXTEV). All went very well and the Soldiers continued with the train up in preparation to

deploy. We were going on field training exercises (FTXs) every month in the configuration that we would deploy. Most of the leadership deemed this mission as a piece of cake. We were full of experience, confident leaders, and my confidence level was really high also. I will finally get to deploy my section with me in charge. Then I can see if the training of my section paid off. A good percentage of the unit was either combat tested during desert shield/storm or had been on similar rotations in other ADA battalions after desert shield/storm. Some Soldiers in the battalion had deployed as many as five times; this was my second. Around the middle of November 1995, the situation changed. A terrorist attack in downtown Riyadh, Saudi Arabia targeted American civilians and left dead and wounded, thus changing the mission of the ADA unit that was there. They now became a security force for the rest of their tour, as well as continuing their ADA mission.

The attack caused concern for the senior leadership and prompted us to employ a more stringent certification before we deployed into the area of operation. The battalion was ordered to relook its certification procedures and get an outside source to conduct the evaluation before deploying. One good thing we did was to get a lot of Soldiers Combat Lifesaver qualified. All my Soldiers were Combat Lifesaver qualified. Little did we know that this would eventually pay us great dividends. We conducted a range density to ensure we were going in trained and ready. I made sure my Soldiers were qualified with assigned individual and crew served weapons as well as certified in all facets of the deployment phase in preparation for deployment. My Soldiers were trained and ready to deploy. I left with the advanced party and left a Corporal in charge. Unlike the other rotation, there were positions left unfilled. We deployed with what we had and we were our own security force. Based on the first deployment, we made sure we got a finance clerk -

attached to our unit. She took care of all our finance issues, verified all entitlements were received and entitlements were stopped upon return. We used some of the same process we had from the last deployment with minor changes. We used the time to improve our information papers and Standard Operating Procedures. My best Corporal handled the rear detachment and my best specialist handled the Riyadh operation. I oversaw the S1 operation that extended from Ansbach, Germany to Riyadh and to Dhahran. The cross training we conducted finally paid off. During the deployment, I was on the phone constantly and it all came together.

On Tuesday evening around 2100, a very large boom was heard around the perimeter. Buildings shook, hangers shook, and glass flew everywhere. It was a night you would not forget. I remember I was at the airfield to presenting awards to some of our sister unit's Soldiers who deployed with us but were departing to return home to prepare for deployment to Bosnia. We heard the loud boom and the hanger shook while we were presenting the awards. We did not know what had happened. We stepped outside and a security police approached us to see why we were standing outside. He then told us that there had been an explosion at Khobar Towers and there were injuries. We quickly went to headquarters to find out what happened. That night our combat medics and combat lifesavers became the heroes of the deployment. They were in the fight pulling the dead out, tending to the injured, and manning triage points. For me that night became the capstone of the rotation.

### Conclusion

The 6th Battalion, 43d Air Defense Artillery experience was a turning point in my career. I learned and accomplished so many things. Prepare your Soldiers to fight using tough, realistic and

relevant training. During training, Soldiers should be pushed to their limits and beyond while still maintaining high standards. Insist that Soldiers understand the importance of being proficient in their individual tasks so they and their section accomplish their mission. Continually cross-train your Soldiers to build confidence and ensure the jobs get done. Drills and rehearsal instill confidence in the section and ensures every Soldier knows his job. My section truly made a difference in the unit. We took care of Soldiers by ensuring timely processing of actions, keeping them informed of changes and providing the best customer service possible. Caring for Soldiers is indeed a “hands on task”.