

Task Force Falcon

Kosovo, 2005 – 2006

Operation Enduring Freedom

CSM Tony Carter

United States Army Sergeants Major Academy

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Abstract

During 2005 - 2006, 1SG Anthony Carter deployed with HHC 36th Infantry Division to Kosovo. This story explains the operation I experienced in conducting command and control of a Headquarters Company operations in the AOR. It also explains the unique command relationships experienced with other U.S. forces.

Headquarters 36th Infantry, Texas Army National Guard, mobilized on 7 July, 2005 at home station in Austin Texas. We became a Task Force Headquarters with four maneuver Task Force Battalions in the whole deployment organization. Task Force Falcon conducted mobilization training at Fort Hood, Texas for 150 days and after a brief pass to visit home, deployed to Kosovo, arriving in country on 5 December 2005.

Task Force Falcon was a sort of enhanced Brigade size organization with a one star General in command. The Task Force was assigned a Finance company from Massachusetts that joined the task Force at the mobilization platform at Fort Hood. A Personnel Support Detachment was formed from the State of Texas National Guard to provide administrative support to Task Force soldiers. A combat aviation Battalion was formed from three different Army National Guard states to provide aviation support to the mission. The aviation Battalion mobilized in Fort Hood with the rest of the Task Force. Once the Task Force arrived in the AOR, the Task Force inherited more enablers to round out the mission. Some of these enablers were a small US Army Psyops team. One was a company size Civil Affairs team. Another was Military working Dogs section, and a small Criminal Investigations Detachment.

The maneuver Battalions had Areas of Responsibility where they conducted patrols and Peace Keeping Operations in accordance with United Nations Resolutions. The Task Force Headquarters was responsible for overall tactical operational control over the maneuver Task Forces. Task Force Falcon Headquarters was comprised of over three hundred and seventy five soldiers for the headquarters element. The percentage of female soldiers of the Headquarters was over one third of the total number of soldiers assigned. There were also five O-6 grade colonels assigned to the Headquarters.

We had many things to accomplish as a company, to support the large demand of the Headquarters element. Some of those things included Rest and Recuperation leave Program development and processing, Fighter Management Pass Program, awards, ongoing individual training, administration of Army Physical Fitness Testing, UCMJ, administrative support for soldier individual records and files, billeting, logistical support.

Our organization responded very well to the overall mission it was handed. Administrative support for three hundred plus soldiers became a challenge, but with careful management, we overcame the challenge quickly. UCMJ was not considered an issue, because my Company Commander and I felt if we went hard early on discipline issues with our soldiers, the less we would have to put with later in the deployment. Physical Fitness was a hard sell for us to our soldiers. Standards being met while administering the APFT became a hot topic. It's seemed soldiers were used to being pencil whipped for APFT's. The standards were laid down in a policy ahead of time, and they were strictly enforced later. A good news story for us would be the administrative support we provided to the soldiers in which we supported. Every soldier assigned to the unit got a hard copy and digital copy of all awards, evaluations, and relevant piece of paper document at the end of the deployment. This was due to the excellent record kept by my orderly room.

The Lessons learned for me on this deployment was clear. Get the team assembled as soon as possible. Once the team is assembled, work together and develop a plan to make things run smooth throughout the deployment. I never had strong plan for my Rear Detachment Personnel. My Rear Detachment was picked by someone other than me. They also didn't have the tools to negotiate the problems I encountered with soldier issues from the Rear.

The problems experienced during the deployment were mostly contributed to the Rear. Soldier issues such as emergency leave, AWOL's, family problems took away from time allotted to the mission. The Rear Detachment Personnel were not trained or equipped, and staffed properly to handle such issues.

These problems were solved on an individual basis, and handled as a team by myself and my Commander. As part of the Headquarters, we were constantly second guessed by staff members of where the soldier was assigned as their duty position. We stuck to our guns and solved the problems and issues of each soldier in the best interest of the soldier.

The biggest success stories of the deployment were the fact that no lives were lost, and there were no serious injuries. This was a huge fear of mine as a leader over so many soldiers. My fear was that I would be standing in front of a family member at the end of the deployment explaining the loss of the family member assigned to me for the deployment. I would have to explain why I failed to bring their son or daughter back home to them.

My Soldiers hailed from all over the state of Texas. As mentioned earlier, a large part of my organization was female soldiers. This wasn't as difficult as I first had envisioned. This was my first deployment as a leader of female soldiers. I come from a background of combat arms where female soldiers didn't exist. The one thing I discovered early in dealing with female soldiers is that you treat them fairly, and treat them as a soldier. The next challenge with the females was turning the minds of my male soldiers to where they respected our female soldiers as fellow soldiers, and no think of them as possible future date partners.

All things said and done, I think the deployment was a complete success. I learned a whole lot of things about soldiers' welfare that never even crossed my mind before in past deployments. I gained a unique friendship and relationship with my Company Commander that created a strong unified command team bond that I had never been part of in the past. I learned more about the big picture, and what it means.

In conclusion, my year in Kosovo taught me the importance of soldier welfare, training, pushing information down to the lowest level and encouraging subordinate leaders to take charge. This is an NCO driven, modern Army. My NCOs performed magnificently and served their country well.