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Running Head: Preparation and Transitioning

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Abstract

This paper outlines key issues of my experience during Operation Iraqi Freedom 09-11. I will discuss two areas to me that would have helped in streamlining the deployment for an Army National Guard Unit. The areas of discussion and lessons learned will cover preparation for the deployment and transitioning from Title 32 Army National Guard Soldiers to Title 10 Active Army Soldiers.

A brief overview of my military experience prior to the deployment is I joined the Army for three years in September 1979 as an Armor Crewman. During my time of active duty, the Army stationed me at Fort Stewart, Georgia and Gelnhausen, Germany. I left the Army for about a year and joined the Army Reserve with the 100TH Training Brigade out of Louisville, Kentucky. After a little over a year in the Army Reserve, I took another year break from the military. In August 1985, I joined the Tennessee Army National Guard, where I have since remained a member of the military. As a member of the Army National Guard, I have held multiple positions within a variety of units. I have five military occupational specialties and two additional skill identifiers along with completion of numerous other courses.

In August 1988, I became a fulltime dual-status Military Technician with the Tennessee Army National Guard as a tools and parts attendant in an aviation tech supply. Since that time, I held positions as an aviation life support equipment (ALSE) technician and a flight operations specialist in three different Army Aviation Support Facilities across the state of Tennessee. As of May 2000, my current position is the Program Analyst in the State Army Aviation Office. Essentially this position manages the aviation budget for the Tennessee Army National Guard and works directly for the State Army Aviation Officer.

In May 2008, I became the First Sergeant of HHT 1-230TH Cavalry Regiment. My excitement level about our deployment was high because in my thirty years of service I have not been on a deployment which not only was I deploying I would have the privilege of being a First Sergeant of a unit. My excitement will soon level off quickly. This brings me to my first area I would like to discuss and that is preparation for deployment.

To have a better understanding, I would like to give a little history on the calling up the National Guard for deployment since the event of September 11, 2001. Upon notification of a

deployment, the National Guard unit would receive individual deployment orders calling them up for Title 10 active duty not to exceed a certain amount of days. The orders will have them report to their mobilization station to begin train up for deployment. The unit would report to their mobilization station to complete up to six months of training, complete a year in country for the deployment and up to two weeks of redeployment. In all, the unit could be gone away from home for eighteen months. The Secretary of Defense along with Congress decided this was too long for the citizen soldier to be away from home and their civilian employers. At that time, the deployment timeframe became one year from time of start until finish. This requires completion of majority of the pre-mobilization training at home station prior to the deployment. This allows the Soldiers to remain with their families and working with their civilian employers longer.

The Army established the Pre-mobilization Training Assistant Element (PTAE). The purpose of the team is track all pre-mobilization training completion at home station in preparation for deployment. Since being my first deployment and I never dealt with the PTAE before, once we arrived at the mobilization station I soon realized how important they are in making sure they document the pre-mobilization training accurately. We had our PTAE representative show up at the mobilization station with the advance party personnel but for either some reason the PTAE representative incorrectly transferred all pre-mobilization training documentation to the mobilization station or proper documentation of training was in incorrect, we had to repeat some training at the mobilization station. We had to end up adjusting our training schedule once we arrived at the mobilization station to redo training.

Completing the pre-mobilization training at home station has its pros and cons. Allowing the extra time at home with family and working as long as you can with your civilian employer is a plus for the National Guard Soldiers. To complete the pre-mobilization training at home

station the clock for some training does not count unless you are a certain time out from your mobilization date. Usually the time begins one year from mobilization date and some training has to be within six months of the mobilization date. To complete the pre-mobilization training the National Guard unit is approved an additional two week annual training period. When a National Guard unit has an annual training period, you always have some soldiers who cannot make the training for certain reasons. To give a couple of examples a Soldier may need to reschedule training, the Soldier's employer has their peak time during the annual training period and it might be devastating to the employer for them to be off for the two weeks. Another reason the Soldier is attending college, the final exams are during the time of annual training, and they cannot perform the duty at the time. One of the most important issues in the National Guard is working with the civilian employers to keep a good relationship so no one suffers an impact when the Soldier is off work or cannot attend training. The Commander normally excuses the Soldier from annual training and reschedules their annual training at a different time for the benefit of the National Guard. Once we received notification of the deployment, we began to setup the timeline for training which included the two annual training periods to meet the pre-mobilization training at home station. What we did not count on at the time were the Soldiers who could not make the training for the same reasons that were their issues if it was a regularly scheduled annual training period. This caused a dilemma for the Soldiers needing the training and when could we do the makeup training. We had to end up taking the time to schedule makeup training and ensuring all Soldiers met the requirements needed for pre-mobilization training. If the unit moved to the mobilization station and completed all of the training at the site this never would have been an issue.

Once the unit arrived at the mobilization station we had further training requirements. The mobilization station gave us the training requirements needed and told us since it was our deployment and training, it was our responsibility to coordinate with the mobilization station to schedule the training and it was their responsibility to conduct the training. This was a plus since we are an aviation unit it allowed the unit to complete their flight training in conjunction with the rest of the required training. The only issue that could have helped the unit streamline the training was to have all training requirements prior to arriving at the mobilization station to setup a better training time line.

The next personal experience I would like to highlight is the Soldiers transitioning from Title 32 Army National Guard to Title 10 active duty. Essentially, when a Soldier is Title 32 Army National Guard, provided they are not full time National Guard Soldiers, they have duty one weekend a month and annual training two weeks out of the fiscal year. When put into perspective a National Guard unit is training together for thirty-nine days a year. The time a unit has to train together makes it hard to get to know your Soldiers until you have spent years training together. What you can determine is the two days a month you are training together, the Soldiers are on time and complete the tasks assigned to them. They complete their two week annual training period without incident and perform all tasks assigned to them. We received Soldiers to fill our vacant slots prior to deploying which could have created a problem because you do not know the Soldiers and their capabilities. Another issue is Title 32 National Guard Soldiers are not punishable under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ).

Handling personnel problems became a time consuming issue on the deployment. I will describe some of the issues I encountered once we became Title 10 active duty. The first issue is the punishment of Soldiers under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. General Order Number

One is the leading cause of having to punish Soldiers under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. The no alcohol rule is probably the first punishment you will have to perform on a Soldier. At annual training, we very seldom have an issue with the rule of no alcohol because you are only away from home for two weeks and majority of the Soldiers will abide by the rule. I had to address the issue of Soldiers using their chain of command for jumping the chain more than once. I do not understand why but disrespect from the lower ranking Soldiers was a problem on the deployment, which required action immediately to put a halt to the disrespect. You have some soldiers who think they know the regulations or only read what they want in the regulation, which causes problems and difficulties. Prime example, a soldier filed an Article 138 requesting a redress because she felt the Commander wronged her. Upon emailing the redress under Article 138 to the Commander, she courtesy copied the Secretary of the Army, because she read in the regulation that the Commander is supposed to forward the outcome of the redress to the JAG office of the Secretary of the Army, and her Congressman, this caused a Congressional to have to answer as well. What she failed to read further in the regulation was if the Commander denies the redress, there is no requirement to forward the outcome of the redress to the JAG office of the Secretary of the Army. The Commander denied the redress because under the regulation it also stated she had to name the officer who wronged her, I was the only named person who wronged her, redress under Article 138 does not apply to the First Sergeant.

A First Sergeant in the Army National Guard very seldom deal with any family issues the Soldier may have because of the time they are away from home. What I encountered during the deployment that I should have better prepared myself for is family problems not only soldiers that were under me but mine as well. Red Cross messages were a problem to an extent because a Soldier believes that when they get a Red Cross message they will be going home immediately

on emergency leave. They do not understand that is not always the case. Once the Commander denies the emergency leave because the Red Cross message does not justify emergency leave, they immediately want to go to the IG or file a Congressional. They also go to the Chaplain because they think the Chaplain has approval authority over emergency leave instead of realizing the command is the approving authority. The Chaplain is there to consult them in a time of need.

One major family incident I had to handle was a Soldier sent an email to the Commander and myself requesting a discharge early or request for us to grant a hardship discharge because his wife was threatening to hurt herself and needed him home. I do not take these situations lightly because I had an ex-wife who committed suicide and since I have been on the deployment; my nineteen-year-old son became depressed and suicidal. I had my father react immediately and get him to see a doctor and everything turned out fine. I asked the Soldier has she seen a doctor and was there a Red Cross message coming to verify this information. He said she has been to a psychiatrist and he should be generating a message to send to the Red Cross. I then informed him that once we receive the Red Cross message we will evaluate the situation but we could not do anything until then. At that time, I referred him to the chaplain. A week has gone by and we still have not received a Red Cross message over the incident. We had our family support group personnel call his wife to find out if she needed any help and what was the status of the Red Cross message. Her reply was the doctor wanted to evaluate her further before generating the Red Cross message, which made her even more impatient and wanted her husband home immediately. The Soldier would call his wife to try keeping her calm and patient until the doctor can evaluate the situation and generate the Red Cross message. When we finally received a Red Cross message, we thought that the doctor completed his evaluation and felt her husband needed to be at home. The surprise was she shot herself in the foot supposedly doing target practice.

His wife was caring for a two-year-old, a nine-month-old, and was seven weeks pregnant with her third child doing target practice was the last thing we suspected so we placed the Soldier on emergency leave to get him home as soon as possible to calm the situation with intent of granting him a hardship discharge. How family matters are handled can be crucial at times, the best thing to do is refer the Soldier to the Chaplain immediately for consultation.

I will discuss some of the lessons learned through my experience that may help National Guard First Sergeants better prepare for the deployment. I recommend you know the PTAE team members and who does the documentation of all pre-mobilization training. Appoint the unit training NCO as the point of contact with the PTAE to ensure all documentation of the pre-mobilization training is complete and you receive copies for a backup. The unit training NCO should be part of the advance party to the mobilization station. The PTAE representative and the unit training NCO together should sit with the mobilization station representative to ensure all pre-mobilization training documentation is correctly logged. Also, ensure the unit receives all the training requirements conducted at the mobilization station in a timely manner prior to arriving at the mobilization station to streamline the training process. After notification of deployment, the command should notify the Soldiers and inform them of the timeline for the training as soon as possible. This will allow the Soldiers to adjust their schedules with employers, schools, and any other issues they may have to allow them to attend all pre-mobilization training at the scheduled time.

The major key issue is better train the Soldiers on transitioning from Title 32 Army National Guard to Title 10 active duty. Reiterate to the Soldiers that this is not annual training. Prior to deploying, if the Soldier has issues that needs taken care of at home they must take care of it. Ensure the Soldier's spouses are more involved with the Family Support Program by

letting them know what the program can do for them while the Soldier is on deployment even if this takes bringing in all the spouses at one time to teach them all about the Family Support Program. All Soldiers must know their chain of command but the First Sergeant needs to have an open door policy and listen to the Soldiers' concerns. This can resolve issues before they become a problem if the Soldier feels they can come to the First Sergeant. Emphasize to all Soldiers what constitutes emergency leave upon receiving a Red Cross message. The Soldier must know the Chaplain does not approve the emergency leave. The command is the approving authority but must ensure Soldiers understand that in time of need the Chaplain is there to help. We brought the Chaplain in on active duty six months prior to the deployment to help families that were having difficulties because their spouses were leaving on a deployment. I highly recommend when the state receives pre-deployment funds to bring on a percentage of the leadership to prepare for the deployment that your Chaplain is part of the personnel because it can make a difference. The last thing that I think is the most important is having a legal advisor train every Soldier from a legal standpoint about the Uniform Code of Military Justice. This training is not only for leadership but for all soldiers.