

ATSS-DAS

MEMORANDUM FOR Commandant, United States Army Sergeants Major Academy, Fort Bliss, Texas 79918-8002

SUBJECT: Access Agreement for Release of Student Writing Assignment Personal Experience Paper (PEP)

1. I, Pozzetta Donald J, submitted a (PEP) to the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy archives regarding events and experiences 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:

() ALL: Initials

~~()~~ NONE: Initials

4. 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: 13 DEC 2010

Student Printed Name: Pozzetta Donald J

Signature: [Handwritten Signature]

Accepted on behalf of the United States Army by:

SGA Printed Name/Date: HANKINS David 13 Dec 10

Signature: [Handwritten Signature]

Personal Experience Paper

MSG Donald J Pezzatta

USASMA

Ron Matzen

November 15, 2010

Personal Experience Paper

In 2003, during 3rd Infantry Divisions initial push in Iraq, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) platforms enabled ground commanders to have eyes and ears on the battlefield that in effect increased their situational awareness and understanding of the fight. These ISR assets included various manned and unmanned platforms essential to limiting if not removing the fog of war that normally would place a higher risk to ground commanders and the Soldiers carried out the fight. The success of the ISR assets and the natural evolution of enemy tactics increased the need for a more robust ISR capability. The Army G 3/5/7 pushed for approval of a Task Force manned and equipped with the latest manned and unmanned aircraft and sensors to aid the ground commanders with the increasing need for timely intelligence of the enemy. The Task Force named Task Force ODIN-I (Observe, Detect, Identify, and Neutralize – Iraq). In 2007-2008 the commander of the 82nd Airborne Division while commanding RC East in Afghanistan, submitted an Operational Needs Statement (ONS) that essentially asked for the same type of unit for the Afghan theater. The experience of taking part of the initial operating capability of Task Force ODIN-Afghanistan (TFO-A) and correlation of that fielding with the surge in Afghanistan is going to be discussed in this paper.

In August 2008, I was informed that I was going to be assigned to a newly formed task force and would be deploying to Afghanistan within the next 90 days. At the time I was assigned to the Unmanned Aircraft Training Battalion as a 1SG of the Warrior-A Quick Reaction Capability (QRC) unit scheduled to test, field and deploy the Army's version of the Air Force Predator UAV. Within four weeks I was on a plane to Fort Rucker Alabama to link up with the 159th Combat Aviation Brigade, who would be the parent unit of TFO-A, for a training exercise and to meet with the command. The second part of the trip would be a two-week PDSS to

Bagram, Afghanistan to coordinate for the arrival of the TF. After the PDSS was complete I was to return to Fort Huachuca, clear, PCS to Fort Hood and meet the Soldiers who I would be taking to Afghanistan. Most of the Soldiers assigned to TFO-A had the same or similar timelines and a majority of the unit showed up around mid-November. After 20 short days of training and pre-deployment activities and an additional seven days for leave, TFO-A were on the way to Bagram in December 2008. Initially there were around 50 Soldiers of various ranks and MOSs that came with us; however upon arrival there were around 300 Soldiers would be assigned to the unit. In addition, an expected increase each month for four months until we would reach a total of around 400 Soldiers and civilians. After that increase, the projected Full Operational Capability (FOC) would bring the total to around 750 personnel.

Because the surge was ongoing and there was no existing plan in place to accommodate for the billeting of the influx of personnel, space for living, and working was at a premium. The lack of planning was not the issue, as the plan to increase the number of Soldiers in Afghanistan was not a matter of if, but when will the surge be approved. The fact still remained that the leadership in theater at just about every level was not prepared to take on the increase. For instance, in Bagram, which was the RSOI for the entire theater, the FOB was originally designed to accommodate around 10,000 personnel. At the time that TFO-A arrived there were already 19,000 on the ground. This did not include units going through the mandatory reception training. The projected number of permanent personnel that would be on Bagram was unknown to me at the time, but it is safe to say that Bagram was already overcrowded at the time and the surge was not yet complete.

The significant personnel footprint that TFO-A was projected to have brought further challenges to the mix. By July 2009, the total personnel assigned to the TF was projected to

increase by at least 200. Also the 101st Airborne Division was scheduled to conduct a Relief in Place (RIP) with the 82nd Airborne Division. This was a RIP of the Division Headquarters only but would still strain the already limited space. Several Provisional Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) were also making their way into theater to be housed on Bagram until placed in their respective Areas of Operation. At one point during the surge there were anywhere between 25 and 30 thousand personnel on the FOB. Considering the FOB was built and designed to hold and house around 9,000, it is safe to say it was crowded. Compounding the problem was the process that was in place to contract the construction of barracks. It would seem in an attempt to grow the local economy and win hearts and minds that all large contracts such as barracks construction were given to local contractors with limited United States supervision. This proved to be a time-consuming decision because over the 12 months I spent in Afghanistan no barracks were completed.

The potential setbacks brought on by the surge had little impact TFO-As ability to accomplish the mission. My position as the command sergeant major for the Provisional Battalion proved to be an intense learning experience that will affect me the rest of my career and beyond. The accomplishment of the mission and the welfare of Soldiers indeed took on a whole new meaning once I assumed the title and responsibilities of the CSM. Almost overnight I realized that the experience I had as a first sergeant was helpful but not enough. One example and probably the most significant to me, was that I had to consider a much bigger picture. Sounds like common sense now, but dealing with other Battalion CSM and Brigade CSM I quickly realized that conducting business as a 1SG like I was accustomed to would not cut it. I was fortunate to have a couple of the other BN CSMs guide me and The BDE CSM that we were

ADCON to was very helpful. It also helped that what TFO-A brought to the fight everyone needed and wanted.

Within the first three weeks of settling in Afghanistan it became obvious that the surge was not only going to continue but also that it was also very much needed. Increase in personnel always poses challenges but as a leader it is critical to meet those challenges and drive on with accomplishing the mission. Of course there was the occasional complaint usually aimed at me as the CSM by the Officers and Warrant Officers (Pilots!) who were not happy with their living conditions. I would tactfully and boldly tell them that I was working on obtaining more space. In the meantime they could certainly enjoy a hot coffee/pizza/PX visit and take comfort in the fact that no matter how tough we think we have it here, there are Soldiers in a fight with the enemy as we speak.