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Operation Restore Hope

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OIF 3, Operation Restore Hope, 6 March 2005- 21 February 2006

15Z5M4, 1SG, Tomahawk Troop 4/3 ACR

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Abstract

This personal experience paper covers my second deployment to Iraq OIF 3. The following events, reconsolidation of equipment in Kuwait, Convoy to Camp Sykes, Operation Restoring Hope make up the content of this paper. My name is Stephen D. Tillman, MSG 15ZM4. Name and make up of unit, Tomahawk Troop 4/3 ACR aircraft maintenance troop, 175 soldiers, and 20 civilian contractors. Name and make up of aviation squadron 4/3 ACR Longknife, 8 AH64D Longbow Apache, 10 UH60L Blackhawk, and 24 OH58D Kiowa Warrior helicopters. The squadron leadership completed change over in before deployment. Changes covered CSM, CDR, XO, S3, S4, and S1. Mission consisted convoy escort for logistic supply routes. Attack missions coordinated with armor squadrons. Patrol Iraqi-Syrian border for insurgent activities and black market traffic.

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Tomahawk 4th Squadron 3rd Armor Cavalry deploys to Operation Enduring Freedom 6 March 2006. Tomahawks mission began with reconsolidation of equipment in Udari Kuwait. My unit deployed with vehicles that were not up armored. Our first mission consisted securing our equipment and preparing it for the armor process.

My stay in Kuwait lasted 30 days. During this time I had to struggle with some my own leadership issues. I have my own personal issues with the Iraq war. I develop these issues from my first deployment to OIF 1. The First Sergeant has to present himself as the top Soldier in their unit. Soldiers look at 1SG as the standard bearer. Soldiers will take on the personality of their 1SG if he's strong. My dilemma was how to properly lead my soldier into war even though I didn't fully agree with the reasons why we were there. The professional behavior NCOs exposed me to in my career and all my training received from NCOES led me to one conclusion. Professional and personal issues must require separation. As a 1SG I must be professional and put mission first. My job is to ensure mission completion and bring my Soldiers home.

My unit went into intensive convoy training. Convoy training for IEDs is a new training process they are no establishing guidelines to measure against. The CSM, my fellow 1SGs, and I organized and developed the convoy training. We only had our deployment to OIF I, and current TTPs to follow. Task, condition, and standards on convoy operations with IED threat had not been establish. We develop our own training strategy, which consisted of Crew-serve weapon placement in the convoy, medic placement, vehicle recovery assets, and action with or without contact upon an IED attack. My concern was soldier reaction time and knowledge of what to do when under attack. We implemented the training for a month and anytime before convoy operations. Soldier completing training for convoy operation is a challenge in aviation units. Aviation officers want to focus only on aircraft maintenance and operations. This causes a constant struggle for time to properly train for non-aircraft problems.

When my unit completed the vehicle armor process and convoy training we convoyed to Camp Striker, Iraq with no incidents. Our squadron conducted escort mission around the Bagdad area while the theatre commanders decided where they wanted to employ the 3rd ACR. The commanders decided Tall Afar, Iraq was the area of concern. Tall Afar is located in northern Iraq close to the Iraqi-Syria border. Tall Afar proximity to Syria made it easy for insurgent to conduct resupply operations and have strong hold to launch attacks against Multinational forces. Our Regimental CSM Caldwell received career-ending injuries in a convoy while at Camp Striker. CSM was well respected and liked in the 3rd ACR. This event caused serious morale problems amongst the Soldiers. I pulled my unit together and explained to them that their country needed them. I told them that if a regimental CSM could sustain such injuries, the seriousness of this war must be evident. This unfortunate incident helps me enforce the importance of convoy training.

My unit executed a convoy to Tall Afar, Iraq on 5 May 2006 from Camp Striker. As the convoy commander I had the responsibility of ensuring my soldiers were prepared for any obstacles to our mission. I felt that I had prepared them well during convoy training at Kuwait and prior to our departure. My convoy came under attack by IEDs and small arms fire about 10 miles from our objective Camp Sykes, Iraq. The soldier in the convoy reacted with quickness and purpose. The soldiers' quick reaction time resulted in no casualties and minor injuries. I was impressed by how the Soldiers performed without letting their fear paralyze them. This greatly reinforced to me how important proper training, and NCOs responsibility to train their soldiers is. The IED attack came out of nowhere and was followed by small arms fire. The insurgents couldn't take advantage of their surprise attack because the Soldiers returned fire and drove quickly out of the kill zone as trained. Soldiers performing training was not an issue after this incident.

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Camp Sykes airfield had minimum resources and required us to build it up for us to conduct missions. We developed areas to conduct aircraft maintenance. My unit consisted of 182 soldiers, and 20 civilian contractors. We had to erect aircraft hangers and have major power sources installed. My squadron began convoy escort operation and border patrols in Tall afar and along the Syrian border. These operations continued while we attempted to win the heart and minds of the people of Tall Afar thru humanitarian missions.

During these missions we distributed water, schoolbooks, clothing, and other needed items. We guarded workers while they fix bridges and buildings. My unit mission was the water mission. Our guidance from our Regiment was to attempt to win over the people thru humanitarian missions and then take Tall Afar from the insurgents.

My squadron suffered our first casualties when one of our OH 58D Kiowa Warrior aircrafts was shot down. The Squadron morale hit a low, but my Soldiers performed exemplary during the recovery of the aircraft. I held a formation and talked to my soldiers about the importance of mission. I explained to them why focusing on their jobs was important to avoid these situations. I told that last thing a pilot needed to worry about was maintenance issues when being shot at.

Operation Restoring Hope started 1 Sep 2006. The synchronization of air and ground forces is devastating tactic. Insurgent forces had been destroyed in every conflict leading up the objective of taking Tall Afar. The practice of armor units with aviation cover from above seizing an objective was very effective. This technique so was effective that when we converged upon Tall Afar for the final attack. All the insurgents that hadn't been killed had fled the city.

The lesson I learned were that realistic training of our Soldiers is critical to our mission. Winning the hearts and mind of the people is just as important as superior firepower.

References

The title of your paper

Click here and type your paper. In the Introduction, you should:

- 1) Introduce the problem (APA 1.08).
- 2) Develop the background (APA 1.08).
- 3) State the purpose and rationale (APA 1.08).

Method

Describe what you did and how you did the experiment (APA 1.09).

Participants

Disclose the demographic characteristics of your sample population (APA 1.09).

Apparatus

Identify specialized equipment by supplier's model number and location (APA 1.09).

Procedure

Summarize every step in the execution of the research (APA 1.09).

Results

Report and summarize the results of your experiment (APA 1.10).

Discussion

Evaluate and interpret the implications of your results (APA 1.11).

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References

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