

ATSS-MH (870)

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

SUBJECT: Access Agreement for Personal Experience Papers

1. I, HENDRICKS, BRIAN C, have submitted a Personal Experience Paper to the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy archives regarding events and experiences from my participation in DESERT STORM 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:

- () None
() Other:

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: 16 MAR 2011

Printed Name: HENDRICKS, BRIAN C

Signature: Brian C Hendricks

Accepted on behalf of the United States Army by:

Printed Name/Date: LOOKER, KEITH 16 MAR 2011

Signature: Keith Looker

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Abstract

In this paper I described the problems I faced coming from a unit which was deactivating to being assigned to a unit which was being deployed to Southwest Asia in support of Operation Desert Storm. There were some trying times during the period I was assigned to that unit. Not all experiences will be pleasant ones. It will be up to the individual concerned on how they will best handle any given situation.

Context

I joined the in 1984 Army when I was 25 years old. I had always wanted to join the Army and the time seemed right. I enlisted in the Chemical Corps because it seemed to be an exciting job and I could be in any type of unit in the Army. I trained as a decontamination specialist in a chemical unit and worked with live chemical agents in a chemical storage facility. I learned the administrative portion of my MOS working in a NBC room in several artillery units. I felt that I had learned my job well and was ready and able to handle any situation.

The unit I was assigned to in Germany was being deactivated after the fall of the Berlin Wall and Communism. The unit was busy with all of the business of deactivation- turning in of equipment, reassignment of personnel and turning in of the barracks.

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait came at a time when no one expected it. Units were in various stages of deactivation and a decision had to be made on how to best handle the situation.

Unit Deactivation

I came to Germany in the fall of 1989. It was the first time I was stationed in Europe and I was excited. I was assigned to A 1/18 FA Regt, which was located in Augsburg, Germany, in southern Bavaria. It was a great assignment with great Soldiers. I learned a lot about the Army, the different culture I was associated with and about responsibility while I was stationed there. I made a lot of friends there and gained some valuable experience interacting with different leadership styles. Some I worked well with and others I tolerated. All in all it was a good time that I wouldn't soon forget and would miss greatly.

In November 1989 the Berlin Wall came down and so did the threat of communist aggression. The fear of invasion from the east evaporated and the need for foreign troops stationed in Europe ended. Rumors spread about which units who were to be deactivated and those that were to stay. It got to be a little frustrating when the German public knew which units that were to be deactivated and were telling us we were and our leaders were telling us we weren't. We had to maintain our professionalism during that process and not jump to conclusions. We were finally told we were being deactivated in the early summer of 1990 after just completing an ARTEP. We busied ourselves with the complexities of cleaning, repairing and turning in large amounts of equipment. It was a busy time and there were a lot of stressful moments when we had to work long hours and weekends to meet deadlines. This stressful time in my career taught me to be patient with the supply process and to take one day at a time. The hard work was paying off and the end was in sight.

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on 9 November 1990 changed everything. All deactivation processes stopped and the situation had to be reassessed. Our unit was too far along in the

deactivation process to get our equipment back. A decision was made to break up the unit and send Soldiers to other units which were being deployed to Saudi Arabia. I and about 20 other members of my unit were told we were being sent to other units to fill vacant slots needed. We had to get our affairs in order, pack up all of our belongings and outprocess in order to transfer to our new units. That was a whole new experience for me as I had purchased a car and had to prepare it to take it with me. We were told of our new assignments and the day in which we had to report to them. For me it was a little stressful but I dealt with it the best that I could. The day came when I was to report to my new unit and I drove my car behind a bus loaded with other Soldiers and a truck carrying our belongings. I was a little apprehensive about the move.

Assignment to new unit

When we got to our new unit we were placed in the battalion conference room. We were met by the commander and he welcomed us and gave us the typical newcomer's brief. All seemed to be going well and I started to feel a little better about being here. After the brief I was greeted by the battalion NBC NCO. He described why I was here and to watch my back when I was around my platoon sergeant. I was led to believe that he was a difficult person to work with and that the last battery NBC NCO I was replacing was so distraught having to work with him that he started using drugs. He was being chaptered out of the Army and I was here to replace him. That bit of news didn't start my first day here off well. I wondered what I was in for. I was taken over to B battery to see my new home. Peden Barracks was situated on a hill overlooking Wertheim Germany. Nice scenery, but not much else to look at. I met my platoon sergeant and he was exactly what was described to me. Arrogant and self centered. His opinion

was the only one he wanted to hear. I decided then that this wasn't going to be a happy experience for me at all. I met the commander and 1SG and they seemed pleasant and happy to see me, still I kept an open mind and remembered what the battalion NBC NCO said about watching my back. I inprocessed and got my room where I put my hold baggage and clothes. The platoon sergeant then took me to the NBC room where I was to work. The sight I saw was beyond belief. I have never seen such chaos before. There were protective masks piled on the floor, equipment scattered around the room and piles of paper everywhere. Clearly this room hasn't had an inspection in quite some time. I was told to get this room in order quickly like it was my fault it was in this condition. I was then taken to the motor pool where the NBC conex was located. The sight that greeted me was unbelievable. Deadlined equipment was in one corner, boxes of mouse eaten mask filters in another corner and heaps of clutter strewn everywhere. I now knew why I was here, to get this place cleaned up before some high ranking official saw it and relieved the whole chain of command. I went back to the barracks to meet my roommates and other members of my squad. They all seemed like good people so maybe it won't be too bad after all.

Preparation for movement to Southwest Asia

Once I got settled in the work began. I sorted through all of the stacks of paper to find the hand receipts for all of the protective masks and chemical equipment signed out to all of the users. I organized the NBC room as best as I could then went to the conex and did the same. After I was satisfied that the mess was as clean as it was going to get, I did a 100% inventory against the master hand receipt and was pleasantly surprised that all of the equipment was there. I was given an assistant to help me load all of the NBC equipment onto the trailer in preparation for movement to the railhead, a dirtbag private who was demoted because he threatened to shoot

another Soldier as soon as they got to the desert. I see how much they cared for their NBC program. This fellow didn't believe in using soap and water on his body or his clothes. He had total disregard for authority and didn't care what people thought of him. Still he was my Soldier and I had to take care of him also. He worked well when I gave him something meaningful to do, but I had to constantly keep him from fighting some of the other Soldiers because they didn't like him. That didn't do much to lower my stress level. We packed all of the equipment on the trailer and another truck and when the day came to move to the railhead we were ready. After the vehicles were gone the work load lessened and so did the stress. We busied ourselves with PT and weapons qualification and other training to keep ourselves busy. There was some down time and I was able to go back to my old unit to see some of my friends who were still there. It was a nice visit but I had to get back. I had a lot of time to think while we waited to go. I decided to make the best of things until it was over. We finally got our deployment date and on Christmas Day 1990, we had steak and eggs in the motor pool and flew to Saudi Arabia. Merry Christmas!

Build up for war

After we arrived in Saudi Arabia we had a week or two before our equipment arrived. We conducted training and did PT to keep us busy and in shape. All the while I had to tend with my private and platoon sergeant. My private was always in trouble and I was made to feel that it was my fault he was that way, not like he wasn't that way before I arrived. I don't know why he hated soap and water, but I spent too much time looking after him than I should have. When our equipment arrived we finally had meaningful work to do. The days seemed to go by faster and

the Soldiers were in better spirits now that we had something to do. My platoon sergeant and private helper weren't the only ones I had friction with. There were a few other NCOs and officers who were a bit of trouble. The 1SG was one of the bigger problems. It seemed like there were two sets of rules, one for his Soldiers and one for the Soldiers who came from other units to augment them. I talked to the other new Soldiers and we all agreed that we were being treated differently, which means not as good. I felt that we were being treated like step children and weren't good enough for them. A lot of other NCOs were having their own problems with each other. I have never been in a unit where so many people were stabbing each other in the back just to get ahead. The supply sergeant and my platoon sergeant who was also the FDC chief were constantly fighting to see who was going to be the platoon sergeant. Those two changed positions several times before we even left Germany. The in house fighting in that unit did not do well for the morale for the other Soldiers.

We got all of our equipment loaded on the vehicles and were ready to move out. All that was left to do was line up the vehicles for the convoy and wait for our marching order.

Movement to Staging Area

The day came for us to move out. The advance party had left a day earlier so we would have a site waiting for us. The movement was uneventful which was ok with me. I didn't want anything to happen to cause a delay in our plans. It was a long drive and we arrived long after night fall. We were allowed to go to sleep right away as the advance party was going to provide security for us. The next morning we moved into the assembly area and set up our perimeter defense. This is when the uneasiness started. I guess people were getting jittery because the

stress level was rising due to the fact we were really in it now. The commander wanted me to set up the chemical agent alarms the first night in the dark around our perimeter. The 1SG came around and said to wait until morning. The commander was mad at me the next morning for not doing it. The confusion was starting already and it was only the second day. I was being pulled in different directions by the platoon sergeant, 1SG and commander. They all wanted things done their way because that's what they wanted. Add my non bathing disrespectful private to the mix and my stress level skyrocketed. It wasn't long before I started smoking. We moved several time before we finally settled into our final assembly area. The 1SG was one of the most difficult people I had ever worked with. Most of the Soldiers in the unit hated him which did nothing for the morale. He was always yelling for no apparent reason and changing his mind on everything he said. Sometime I felt I couldn't get a break. His buddy, one of the other platoon sergeants, seemed to have a certain dislike for me. He was on me since I first came to the unit. I felt there wasn't anything I could do right for him so I avoided him every chance I got.

The air war started so we knew it wouldn't be long before we moved out to do our part. Final preparations were made and we were ready to go. My assistant was anxious and kind of settled down a little. I wasn't having too much trouble with him, but my stress level was still high.

Conduct of War

The day came for the ground war to start. We loaded up, moved to the border and waited to cross. As we were waiting the 1SG raced up in his vehicle yelling like a mad man for us to get out security. We just looked at him and shook our heads. We finally crossed the border and

it was on. For the next 3 days all we did was drive and shoot fire missions. Sleep was hard to come by. You took it every chance you got. Once on a night move we stopped to do a fire mission. As we waited, my assistant fell asleep. When I woke up we were alone in the desert. The rest of the unit had move out and we didn't hear them. I had on my night vision goggles and could see the tracks of the vehicles in front of us. We followed them and after about 20 minutes we caught up with the rest of the unit. I never felt so relieved.

It wasn't long after that when we got the word about the cease fire. We were relieved that it was over and no one was hurt or killed. We spent about a month on occupation duty in Iraq. During that time the commander thought it was a great idea to have several 100% layouts of equipment since he was leaving the unit when we got back to Germany and he wanted to clear his hand receipt. We tried to make our stay there as fun as we could. We had volleyball and flag football games to boost morale. It helped a little, but we all wanted to go home.

We got the news that we were going back to Saudi Arabia soon and that got everyone in better spirits. We packed up once again in preparation for another movement. The word came for us to finally move out. Everyone was in a good mood. We lined up the vehicles and started off. We were about an hour into our drive when I got a flat tire. Since Humvees don't have spare tires I had to get a tow. Someone else picked up my trailer and the wrecker picked up my vehicle and was ready to go when I asked the 1SG where my assistant and I were going to ride. He said that we would ride with him and then he promptly drove off leaving us standing there. I asked the wrecker driver what we should do and he told us to get into the Humvee and ride there. We hadn't gone too far when the wrecker stopped and I heard some yelling. As I got out the 1SG came around the front of the vehicle yelling at me and poking his finger in my chest for riding in the Humvee while it was being towed. I tried to explain what happened but he wasn't

listening. I thought he was going to blow up! We finally reached Saudi Arabia but not our final destination.

Return to Saudi Arabia

When we first got back to Saudi Arabia we were camped outside the King Khalid Military City. There we repacked the vehicles and formed them into convoy serials in preparation for movement to the port of Jubail. We spent about a week there doing maintenance and sightseeing. When we got to the port of Jubail we knew the end was at hand. We unloaded the vehicles, washed them and repacked them for shipment by boat back to Germany. Once my vehicle was inspected and put into the holding area it felt like a great weight was lifted off my shoulder. All I had left to do was clean my personal equipment and wait for our turn to board the plane for home. At this point we were able to relax and enjoy what the Saudis had to offer. There was a huge swimming pool for us to use, which we did. There were a few shack shacks set up and some small stores. Life was finally easy for a change. When time got near for us to leave, we had to lay out all of our clothes to be inspected by the MPs to see if we had any illegal items that was being smuggled back to Germany. As I was waiting for my turn, the battery commander came up to me and said that people were looking for me and that he denied having me in his unit. He wanted to keep me in the unit and wasn't going to let me go back to my old unit, which was supposed to happen. I couldn't believe it. Just when I thought I was going to get away from these people. No wonder the old NBC NCO started using drugs! My inspection was completed, my bags repacked and put into the clean area. Tomorrow was the big day!

Redeploy to Germany

The day we all were waiting for finally came. Going home! We boarded the buses for the ride to the airport. Everyone was calm. No need to get excited, we weren't in the air yet. We boarded the plane, got settled into our seats and waited. The plane started down the runway and as the wheels left the ground everyone let out a big cheer. We let out another big cheer when the captain informed us we left Saudi airspace. The flight back to Germany was uneventful. When we landed there were buses waiting for us. We boarded the buses and were on our way back to Peden Barracks. When we got to the gate there was a fire engine waiting to escort us to the motor pool. When we got there the families of the married Soldiers were waiting for us. When we got released and the family member rushed to greet their husbands, all of the single Soldiers felt a little disappointed. There was no one there to greet us. As I walked around looking for my duffle bags I saw two Soldiers from my old unit looking for me. They were there to take me back to Augsburg. I couldn't believe it. Finally rescued from hell. I found the battery commander and told him what was going on and he asked who said I was going back. When I told him the battalion S-1 said so he said I guess you are. Then he started being nice to me. He said that he really wanted to keep me because I did a great job for him. He wanted me to come back when the equipment arrived to check it out. I made no promises. All I wanted to do was get the heck away from them.

Back to previous unit

The two Soldiers from my old unit and I drove back to Augsburg right away. All I wanted to do was get as far away from Wertheim as I could. When I told them about my

experiences they couldn't believe it. When I got back to Augsburg it was about 1100 pm and my commander and the battalion XO were waiting for me. I told them about what went on and they were astounded. I was told not to worry about anything that I wasn't going back there. I went back to my old barracks, got a room and went to sleep. It was a restful sleep, one which I hadn't had in a long time. I spent another month at my old unit helping them to complete the deactivation process. After that I went to another unit in Hanau, Germany, not to the hellhole I came from.

Lessons Learned

I learned a valuable lesson from that frustrating event. No matter what happens always be a professional. When things seem like they can't get better, hang in there and be true to yourself. No matter what you still have to be accountable for yourself. Remember the 7 Army values and the Warrior Ethos.