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Abstract

The 220th Military Police Brigade received its warning order for deployment on December 2002 to provide command and control of combat units during Operation Iraqi Freedom. This Mission was anticipated after September 11, 2001 attack on the United States. Since that attack, the MP Brigade has been conducting exercises in anticipation of its possible mission. When the mission was received in December 2002, the senior NCOs and Officers in the unit were not surprised. As such, as a Paralegal NCO, I was prepared to perform my duties as well as any other duties as assigned.

Command Post Exercises

After the attack by terrorists on the United States in 2001, the command leadership of the 200th Military Brigade started to implement its war time training mission which was to conduct exercises at the command level to access its command and control. In 1998 I was assigned to the 220th Military Brigade in Gaithersburg, Maryland as a Legal NCO in the Staff Judge Advocate Office, after being discharged from the active army two years prior. The Command Post Exercises were conducted and all senior staff in the headquarters participated as though it was an active operation in theater.

Pre-Deployment Training

The duties of the NCOs during the pre-deployment training at Fort Meade were very challenging because of the change from peace time operation to war. Most of the NCOs have had limited or no deployment experience. Additionally, we were expected to mentor and train the junior soldiers in soldier's skills and Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) in order to function as a team.

Initial Deployment in Theater of Operation

My deployment during Operation Iraqi Freedom was my first deployment in a war zone along with most of the members of my unit. Since the unit landed in Kuwait, I realized that I would be required to perform other duties assigned to me by the command headquarters. Originally, I was assigned as Platoon Sergeant and Convoy Commander in and around Kuwait because the permanent Platoon Sergeants of the unit were in the rear detachment and they were not expected to be in the Theater of Operation until three weeks after our arrival.

The 220th MP Brigade was tasked as the command responsible for Force Protection within the theater of operation during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Although units under our command were mostly MPs, there were National Guard Infantry Units that were involved in convoy protection. So, in addition to NCOs being tasked for duties outside of their MOS, units were also required to perform missions outside of their specialty. This brings up the principle of Flexibility which is important to accomplish the mission. At the time of war, the mission comes first and therefore all NCOs are required to hold that foremost in their minds.

As the convoy commander I had to be familiar with convoy operation and the other orders at the time of the mission. I had to review these documents and incorporated them in my briefings. As an NCO assigned to the Staff Judge Advocate section, I had to assist the attorneys to advise commanders and soldiers on options that were available to them on matters such as their rights under USERRA and matters concerning wills, powers and other legal instruments. By taking care of these matters, the soldiers were able to focus on their respective mission on deployment. Our vehicles and other equipment were shipped by sea to Kuwait. I had to perform as a senior leader whenever the First Sergeant was not available. As an example, I was the NCO in charge of the team to transport our vehicles and other equipment from the sea port in Kuwait to the base in Camp Arifjan, Kuwait. There were Logistics NCOs in the unit but they were involved in other missions. The NCOs in the unit were aware that as leaders we have to be involved in tasks that are different from our MOS in order to accomplish the assigned mission.

Interaction with Active duty

In Kuwait, my unit was in command with 9 Battalions which included active duty, National Guard and reserve units with a total of over 5000 soldiers. Therefore, I had to deal with other

organizations to coordinate legal actions in their unit. Because we were on deployment, we had to follow Army Regulations in carrying out most legal actions.

Interaction with Other Forces

Because the Army reserves were mobilized to support the U. S. Military in the Operation, we had to coordinate across different service during the operational phase. In addition, my unit had liaison from members of the multinational force such as Britain and Kuwaiti national army. This type of interaction enabled the NCOs and the senior leadership in the command to understand the operation of other forces. The other forces were able to integrate with our command and staff in the tactical operation center.

Battle Handoff

The 200th MP Brigade had a battle handoff with an active duty MP Brigade from North Carolina. It was a very interesting experience to interact with our active duty counterpart. From the time the unit was notified about their possible deployment, there was constant communication with different sections. At my level in the legal office, we were able to talk with our counterparts and provide them with information that they would not have otherwise had had they not been in contact with us before they deployed. Unlike this unit, we were not such information because my unit was the first providing that mission during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Problems Encountered

In any operation, leaders should expect to encounter problems. That was not different with the 220th MP Brigade. The issue is how the problems and issues are solved. One reason the leadership solved those problems is the constant communication between officers and NCOs. As

NCOs, we were part of the decision making process in the unit. We were allowed to make suggestions to our commanders and even make routine mistakes that were correctable.

Availability of Equipment was another problem encountered by the 220th MP Bde. Most of the equipment that was available was given to the combat arm units without taking into consideration that the support units were required to perform front line tasks. This problem was eventually solved by systematic distribution of troops who were required to form the task that needed such equipment.

Reason for Success

I think the one the important reason for the 220th MP Brigade's success was our thorough preparation for deployment. This was accomplished by the exercises that were conducted after being given the warning order for possible deployment. During these exercises we conducted thorough analysis of the country and operation environment. The members of 220th were adaptable to the conditions on the ground. When we arrived in Kuwait, we had to live in tents for a period before we were moved to buildings. Another area that we adapted was the performance of our duties while our equipment was enroute to Kuwait. We went left Continental United States we realized that we will arrive in Kuwait before our vehicles and other equipment.

Documentation of Lessons

As a paralegal NCO in the command headquarters, I was required to provide sound advice to the attorneys and other legal personnel in the staff Judge Advocate Office. As such, I have to ensure that we document all legal actions in the office are properly documented. To achieve this task, I had I instructed the members of my office to use the tracking in the office and to provide recommendation on how to improve the process. Because the 220th MP Bde was the first MP combat support unit we did not have the information that was passed on to units that

followed us on deployment. However, I was able to provide a list of lessons learned as a legal office to the Judge Advocate School and Center in Charlottesville, VA. These lessons were as a result of after action reports. These lessons were compiled and incorporated into standing operating procedures.

Conclusion

At the end of the deployment, I felt that the NCOs assigned to the MP Brigade were an integral part to the success of the unit. The deployment to Operation Iraqi Freedom was an educational and challenging for the NCOs and me. Because this was my first deployment I was exposed to the concept of operations that were only taught in class room on my NCO courses and the Command Post exercises that were conducted at the Bde level. As an NCO I was given the opportunity to brief my command staff on legal issues in the command and to respond to inquiries on disciplinary matters with soldiers while the JAG officers were not available.

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, SGM VERNET FRASER, have submitted a Personal Experience Paper to the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy archives regarding events and experiences from my participation in _____ 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: 12 JAN 2010

Printed Name: VERNET W. FRASER

Signature: Vernet W Fraser

Accepted on behalf of the United States Army by:

Printed Name/Date: _____

Signature: _____

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