

Running head: SENIOR MOBILIZATION NCO

Senior Mobilization NCO, 90th Regional Readiness Command

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Abstract

This paper is a record of some of the events that transpired during my CONUS based mobilization with the Headquarters of the 90th Regional Readiness Command at North Little Rock, Arkansas from February 2005 to March 2009. I discussed the impact of the Army Reserve Transformation on the mobilization process.

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After 9-1-1, reserve forces began to be mobilized almost immediately for CONUS and OCONUS missions. The mobilization of reserve forces placed an increased workload on upper level Army Reserve commands as they struggled to manage their day to day mission, maintain command and control of their down trace Soldiers and still prepare units and individuals for deployment. As a result of the increased operational tempo at these commands, the Department of the Army authorized Mobilization Augmentation Teams to mobilize at these headquarters to provide additional manpower to support the mobilization mission. The 90th Regional Readiness Command was one of 11 Readiness Commands in the Army Reserve structure. The 90th RRC had seven major subordinate commands with personnel strength of approximately 18,000 reserve Soldiers spread over a five state area. The mission of the 90th RRC was to provide command, control, and support, and to ensure wartime readiness of all USAR units in Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, New Mexico and Texas not assigned to a Functional Command or to a Reserve Division or Special Operations Force.

The 90th Regional Readiness Command (RRC) was approved a mobilization team to provide support and direction to units and individuals deploying from units under their command and control. The team members were assigned to various staff sections throughout the headquarters of the organization. The majority of the team was divided among the Personnel, Operations and Logistics sections. Additional support personnel were assigned to focus on deployment and redeployment issues in the Chaplain, Legal and Surgeon sections of the command.

I mobilized with the HQs, 90th Regional Readiness Command in North Little Rock, Arkansas and served on active duty from February 2005 to March 2009 as a part of a

Mobilization Augmentee Team. I mobilized initially with 31 other Soldiers as part of 90th RRC, Detachment 19 and was assigned to the Operations section of the command. My military background included, six years as an Active Guard and Reserve (AGR) unit clerk at company level, several years as an Executive Assistant in a two star command group, a three year tour as an Inspector General NCO and over two years as a Regional Area Manager for a Personnel Services Battalion in a Training Division. Each one of these duties provided learning opportunities and experiences that enabled me to function more effectively during the mobilization with the Operations section of the 90th RRC.

My initial duties during this tour were to serve as a Liaison NCO and to manage the mobilization of the members of the Mobilization Augmentee Team. Managing the augmentee team involved assisting with the determination of the type and number of Soldiers necessary to support the mission, submitting the request for the augmentee team through USARC to Department of the Army and processing the individual packets to bring the Soldiers on duty. The Liaison NCO duties were difficult to define, but definitely the most critical part of my job. I served as a liaison between the Operations section, the HHC, the individual mobilizing Soldiers and the gaining command where the Soldier would be serving on active duty. If there was a Soldier mobilizing as an individual from under the 90th RRC, whether for a CONUS or OCONUS mobilization, at some point I was responsible for providing assistance or coordination or support for that Soldier. The support could involve anything from assisting with travel orders to coordination for lodging and meals. Many times the most important thing I did was to act as a point of contact for the Soldier and direct them to the individual or section within the command that could solve their problem or meet their need. A critical part of this duty was to follow up and ensure that the Soldier received the necessary support. Since the majority of the Soldiers

mobilized as individuals were at a duty site away from the headquarters location, they were often viewed as someone else's responsibility. Holding the individual or section responsible for providing the support accountable was critical to making sure the action was completed, the Soldiers needs addressed and, the loop closed. Other duties included; serving as the senior NCO for the mobilized Soldiers in the Operations mob cell, manning rotations in the 90th RRC Emergency Operations Center (EOC), tracking the history of mobilized units, preparing briefs for weekly battle staff updates, attending the weekly USARC Mobilization Teleconference and Readiness Progress Review video teleconference, and monitoring multiple classified and unclassified message systems.

An additional responsibility for the mobilized Soldier at the 90th RRC included the requirement to serve as Casualty Notification Officer, Casualty Assistance Officer or as a team member on a Funeral Detail. I had talked with several NCOs who had served in these roles, but it wasn't until I made my first notification that I understood how traumatic it can be for the Soldier making the notification. The entire building always knew when someone had to make a notification. I soon learned to make every opportunity to check in with the Soldier making the notification before and after. Before, to check and see if they needed anything and provide moral support and after to allow them the opportunity to talk about the experience. Many times I found that the Soldier had a strong need to walk through what he/she had said, done or experienced during the notification process. At times the Soldier seemed to want the opportunity to process through their emotions, other times there was a need for reassurance that they had handled the situation appropriately, with dignity and professionalism.

One of the biggest problems our command experienced occurred across all the services. The conflict was lasting much longer than anticipated and the personnel resources were just not

available. Units were being re-deployed and the initial interpretation of the law set a policy that did not authorize a second involuntary mobilization for most Soldiers. This problem was essentially solved in January 2007 when the Secretary of Defense authorized a change to the Department of Defense mobilization policy to allow for involuntary remobilizations within specified time frames. Another problem was that there were less and less Soldiers available without medical issues or security clearance issues. Close communication between the deploying units, the personnel, surgeon, security and the operations sections of the headquarters was necessary to ensure each battle roster was filled and that there was a minimum number of Soldiers failing the installation Soldier Readiness Process (SRP). These problems were managed via bi-weekly battle update briefs with Mobilization Augmentee Team Members. Team members from each cell (personnel, security, logistics, operations, etc) met to discuss the status of the deploying unit to ensure that all problems were identified and tasked to the appropriate section for action. The plan was to ensure that no issues fell through the cracks so that when a unit departed home station for the mobilization station, all equipment and personnel problems had been resolved and the unit was able to focus on pre-deployment training with a minimum of disruption.

In 2007, as a result of the Army Reserve Transformation Campaign Plan and the pending inactivation of the 90th RRC, a large majority of 90th RRC units were reassigned to multiple Operational and Functional Commands. This was significant to my duties in the operations section in that many of these units were deployed, scheduled for deployment or had individuals Soldiers deployed, pending deployment or pending redeployment on both OCONUS and CONUS missions. The Operations mob cell developed relationships with the gaining commands and worked together to ensure a smooth handoff of units and individuals pending deployment or

redeployment. Many of these commands were fairly new and had little experience with command and control of multiple units, much less experience with the processes and potential problems involved with the business of mobilization. I worked closely with several of these commands, training them in the processes necessary to request a Mobilization Augmentee Team and the methods for processing individual mobilization requests. I shared procedures, processes and points of contact with the senior mobilization NCOs at the gaining commands. Also during this time many of the units under the 90th RRC were being inactivated. There were Soldiers in the inactivating units who were still deployed on both OCONUS and CONUS missions and injured Soldiers who had redeployed and were assigned to Warrior Transition Units. Again, via bi-weekly battle update briefings, the 90th RRC Mobilization Augmentee Team practiced close coordination between the 90th RRC staff and the units and individuals to ensure the Soldiers were not “lost” during the various units’ inactivation and transformation. The command was involved in a significant amount of force structure changes with the inactivation of 17 units and reassignment of 28 units. It was imperative that mobilized Soldiers were individually managed as they moved from one command to another.

At the same time the 90th was transferring ownership of units that were a part of the geographic 5 state area that had defined the boundaries of the 90th RRC for many years, the organization was taking over command and control functions for all CONUS-based Army Reserve Legal Support Organizations (LSO) in the Army Reserve. These units were located throughout the United States and Puerto Rico. Operationally the command went from managing on a geographic basis to a national basis. Again, the key to success was intense coordination and communication with the losing commands. While the business of mobilization was essentially the same, there were some changes with the management of legal personnel. All personnel

whether Officer or enlisted who were qualified in a legal military skill had to be approved for mobilization by the Office of the Adjutant General (OTJAG). The staff in the Operations mob cell now had to add an extra layer of communication to mobilize units and individuals. While the 90th had command and control of the legal units, by law OTJAG had the final say which Soldier went where and when.

During this time period my duties evolved as policies and procedures changed. As the war continued, more and more Soldiers were mobilized via COTTAD orders and then COADOS orders to provide CONUS based support to installations and other DOD entities. The amount of documentation required to justify the request for mobilization was burdensome. Additionally it was sometimes difficult to make sure the Soldier met the criteria, prior to the packet being submitted through the chain to DA for approval. The gaining command was usually an active component installation and did not have access to the reserve component systems necessary to verify the Soldiers status in reference to Height/Weight/APFT/ etc. Intense coordination was required with the parent unit of the Soldiers volunteering for duty, the installation or gaining command and USARC to process the requests for active duty. One of the most significant and I believe the most successful changes I saw occur during this time was the implementation of DAMPS-A. This web based system is used to initiate and process a request for a COADOS mobilization. The system is designed to pull information from various databases and populate the fields in a request for mobilization and verify that the Soldier meets the necessary criteria for mobilization. Mandatory use of DAMPS-A is responsible for a drastic reduction in paperwork and the processing time required to bring a Soldier on active duty.

As the Senior NCO in the Operations mob cell, I was responsible for five different Soldiers during my four year mobilization. Despite a hectic operational tempo and much

transition, I managed to get all five Soldiers the opportunity to complete their military education as well as some college courses. The current focus in our section is assisting these Soldiers with finding a new unit when the 90th RRC disestablishes in December 2009.

Throughout my mobilization I was constantly impressed with the level of professionalism and commitment I saw exhibited by the NCOs' that I worked with or communicated with via phone or email. I was in contact with Soldiers in deploying and redeploying units, NCOs working at various installations or commands and those on the 90th RRC Mobilization Augmentee Team. The characteristic of these Soldiers that will always stay with me was the intense desire to do their job well and the fact that they believed that the most critical task they had was taking care of the Soldier who was headed out the door or returning home.