

REED, PARRIS D. MSG

31B5X2, CMATT

Coalition Military Assistance Transition Team (CMATT) Operation Iraq Freedom, Primary events
accrued in the central and northern portions of Iraq, 05/2004 through 01/2005

Written 06/21/2008 through 05/22/2009

USASMA Class 34 phase II

Unclassified

Assignments included; Senior Enlisted Advisor IA SGM, Senior Enlisted Advisor Operations
NCO (S-3), Primary Driver (battle position), LNNCO (LNO) MNSTC-I to I Corps

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The following document is given as a narrative, chronologically as I recalled events.

1. Table of contents	Page 2
2. Context	Page 3-4
3. Narrative (BODY)	Page 5-13
4. Lessons, learned	Page 14
5. References	none
6. APPENDIXES	none

CONTEXT

Personal background; I entered service in January 1974, completed signal AIT 31M and was in Korea during the fall of Saigon. I was chosen to train ROK signal corps soldiers to integrate their FDM systems with our PCM systems; this was my first experience training foreign armed forces. After serving 6 yrs 9 months I ETSed, and entered the work force as a communication specialist, went to college, and became an electrical construction Lineman. I reentered the Army Reserves during the first gulf war, joined a signal unit, activated but was not deployed. Following the 100 hour battle, I applied and was accepted to the Drill Sergeants School and transferred to the 91 DIV (IT). This gave me some limited experience as a drill instructor, but a lot of training as an infantry soldier. It was a command emphasis at that time that all DI's in the unit would become qualified infantrymen. After moving to Hawaii I rejoined the signal corps, but did duty with B Co. 411 Engineers on Maui, here I worked as a 56R, my civilian occupation equivalency. Later I rejoined the 91 DIV (TS) becoming an Observer Controller/Trainer (OC/T), working primarily with the Military Police Units in Southern California and Arizona. My previous infantry experience was useful in this, but I felt that I should attend the MP school if I was to be the best trainer I could be for these soldiers. I completed the MP school 95B, now 31B in 2002 and was mobilized in 2003. Our immediate mission was to assist in the mobilization of Army Reserve Forces being sent OCONUS. The mission changed to training these soldiers, and I moved to Ft. Bliss TX where I established a range that included squad/platoon movement to contact, assault on an objective and passage of lines. During this time a request for volunteers came down for senior NCOs to join the CMATT effort, this I did.

Unit/Organizational background; All of the soldiers picked for the mission were from the 91 DIV; I was aware of LTC Phillips but did not know him. I did know FSG Bailey from the old 91st as a drill instructor. Major Marshal and SFC Arana were new to me, but all had served with LTC Phillips except me.

Operational situation prior to events; The operational situation prior to events was very fluid; there was no definitive plan as to what CMATT was to do. No tactical information was available on what we were to train the Iraq Army on; every detail was subject to change on a moments notice. As a team we trained on

anything we felt we might need to know, land navigation, calls for fire, weapons, hand to hand, physical fitness, signal operations and combat life saving. For the mission I was sent to the Battle Staff School.

Tactical Situation; The tactical situation in Iraq was controlled chaos, the insurgency was still new at terrorism and was not very sophisticated, and a lot of suicidal type operations were being thrown at our forces. The IA was not in existence, and the unknown factors far exceeded what we knew. Simple things like how the Iraqi Army would be structured, what model would they follow, were known. Most of the competent IA Officers had been in the Iraqi Guard, and they were excluded from service. The remaining were a mixed patch of political appointees, and many incompetents.

Coalition Military Assistance Transition Team (CMATT) Operation Iraq Freedom

I volunteered for the CMATT Advisor Support Team (AST) mission in 2005, the Training and Transition mission was not new it was the Special Forces mission, however the scope of the mission was much larger then had ever been tried before, or at least since Vietnam. Since our active duty ground forces were over extended and all of the Armies Training Support Battalions (TSBN) was in the reserves, the task was assigned to the reserve component. The initial call was for infantry soldiers; however the reserves had reassigned almost all of its infantry to other duties, and had none to offer. As the lead time shortened, the acceptability of enlisted soldiers widened to any warm body who had some combat arms training, for the officers it was whom ever volunteered regardless of qualification. This of course led to a hodge podge of teams, teams that were not compatible on a personal level with each other, doing a job that on one would define, under circumstances that were unimaginable.

Train up for the mission was a collection of what ever the team leaders thought might be needed, since I was assigned as the senior NCO on a Brigade team I was sent to the Battle Staff Course at Ft. Bliss. However, volunteers dropped from the roster as quickly as they were identified and a more senior NCO was eventually assigned to that position. The final team consisted of a LTC Phillips, MAJ Marshal, FSG Bailey, MSG Reed, and SFC Arana. Under this was three battalion teams with Majors or Captains as the team leaders, there was no official chain of command beyond the individual teams, so LTC Philips became the defacto teams' leader, with all of the responsibilities but none of the authority. We attempted to cover all of our bases, many hours were spent in the gym to ensure we were in good physical condition, long field marches and everyone received the Combat Life Savers course. And then there was weapons training. The Alameda County Sheriffs' Department and FBI sponsored most of this training and it was thorough. We formularized on every weapon we might come in contact with, and special emphasis was placed on the knowing the AK 47.

Assigned to CMATT we arrive in Kuwait to find that no one expected us, did not want us, and were unprepared to support us. We spent the first weeks scrounging ammunition and a flight to Baghdad. The flight in was one of the two most wild flights I have ever been on, the aircraft was fired upon during its

rapidly descending, spiral approach, and that pilot was determined to be on the ground. The mix was more than a few stomachs could handle that night. After a couple of days in Camp Striker's transit tents and a short civilian bus ride across Baghdad to Camp Cooke in Taji, we were ready to work.

The CMATT commander, a Marine Colonel, was an inspiration. His welcome, this is your mission statement was, disconcerting to say the least. My expectation of actually knowing what our mission would be was to go, again unanswered. I did however learn to look upon our fine facilities as an "upgrade". During these weeks we drove trucks, busses and any other equipment that needed to be moved, this equipment was for the Iraqi Army, an Army that did not exist beyond a paper dragon. We spent many hours exploring the bombed out ruins of the Taji Military Base, taking pictures of battle damage and eating at Camp Cooke's fine dining facilities. Once our Iraqi unit was stood up we went to work the unit was a mess the Iraqi Army (IA) officers did not want our assistance and mostly ignored our advice however they were totally unable to accomplish any mission by themselves. Building the rapport that would eventual lead to a successful mission took a long and delicate road. The first hurdle was the official existence of an Iraqi Army, CMATT headquarters handled that. Getting the Iraqi soldiers paid was the next hurdle and to this day it is not a done deal. Who knew that the Iraqis' did not have a banking system? This lack of infrastructure is still interfering with the country today.

Small things like treating an Iraqi soldier, whom had been shot in the calf, getting paper and pens for the staff, coordinating for unit training with CMATT, would eventually overcame the resistance to our presence and advice. Major problems like how the Iraqi Army's C2 was to be structured were never addressed, and the Iraqi Army eventually returned to the pre war British model they knew. This model does not mesh well with ours (USA); however it is what the Iraqis' use. Promotion and position in the Iraqi Army are synonymous with who you know, not what you know. Frequently this plagued our teams' officers as they had to work with staffs and commanders who at times were inept, incompetent and unremovable. On the enlisted side it was and is a training nightmare. "Enshala ", is the answer to every thing, meaning "it is Gods will", and the ultimate excuse for stupidity.

Eventually we were ready to start training our new Brigade, our first staff function, a mission, and to our chagrin we learned the "Iraqi way". The Iraqi commander, after listening patiently to our explanation of the staff function in the military decision making process (MDMP), received his order and promptly went on leave. His XO who would (eventually) win our LTCs' heart was left to explain that the unit would be told to go on leave and reform at Kirkuk Military Training Base (KMTB). No equipment would be accounted for or taken with them and we should expect "many desertions" since this was far from home. And so it was. We, the three brigade and nine battalion teams, loaded up most of the equipment we could, all of the assigned pickup trucks, and convoyed across Iraq. This was done using excess civilian style body armor to line the interior of the Nissan pickups, which is all that we had. I had a passenger, a navy engineer, whose job it was to teach the Iraq's to build military structures, an oxymoron if ever there was one. Our three convoys crossed Iraq with only one incident, the loss of one truck and a fine Army Major, his wounds from the Improvised Explosive Device (IED) would take years to heal.

KMTB proved to be an "upgrade", the post was never attacked, during our stay, and as long as I was able to gather information for. The logistical commander on the American side of the post required that all of his command remain in full body armor at all times, this post in the middle of the deepest desert, was stifling hot and I truly felt sorry for the soldiers who endured it. The CMATT side was in the same uniform as the Iraqis', plus weapon. Our days there were spent bridging the cultural gaps, building rapport and exploring, any entertainment avenue available. Boredom would eventual lead to the injury of two soldiers in a motorcycle accident; it was a totally avoidable situation. The days consisted of raise and shine, physical training with the IA, drill and ceremonies, and off to class room instruction for the unit. The team would gather for breakfast then a daily situation brief, link up with our counterparts, gather required information, check on classes, call home, visit the engineers, take a M113 perimeter tour, have lunch. After lunch we would link up with our IA soldiers, spend time with the IA NCOs, do checks on learning, and try to de-conflict the Arab-Kurdish problems within the unit. For entertainment we would shuffle this schedule, go on long aimless marches, join a combat patrol to the near by towns, shot thousands of rounds of ammunition on the range, and take pictures. During this time David Hasselhoff and some show girls stopped by for a "meet and greet", it was not interesting to me, but it was a break from the routine.

One Iraqi battalion lost two of three buses during one of their payday leaves. Our advice to the AI commander had been to use armed officers to escort the soldiers thru the local bus and taxi stands, however this was not culturally acceptable so the soldiers would just go, open the gate and walk out as a group. The taxis were a known part of Sadams' information network, and his loyalists were still fighting. The buses were rented by the Jundi (soldiers) to take them into Baghdad; the insurgents replaced two drivers with two of theirs, surrounded the buses at a traffic circle and forced them off the road. The third bus refused to stop and escaped. The Jundi were taken off the buses, lined up next to a drainage ditch, forced to kneel, and then shot in the back of the head. At times like this we questioned the loyalties of the IA command. Simple solutions would have prevented the whole thing or at worst given those Jundis' a fighting chance.

Training complete, we prepared to move back to Taji, determined that the same events that happened on our way to KMTB would not happen again we started the planning early, and as before the commander took leave and the XO was left holding the bag. The hard part was that the IA staff would not even try to request the support they needed; we were told by them, that they would not be supported so why ask? This created logistical problems and eventually our team flew by C47 back to Taji with many boxes of Iraqi supplies. When the IA quartering party arrived, it consisted of an IA LTC who was in poor physical condition and two IA SGMs' determined to not break a sweat. The next few weeks were insane, we acquired a pod, found the bunks, lockers, desk, tables and any other items needed to house a brigade, then moved and set it all up. When the unit arrived we sent them to CIF, Iraqi style, where they were issued some uniform parts a blanket, sheets, pillow and pillow case. The first formation was less than 50% assigned strength, very few were in uniform, and the commander went to Baghdad to confer with his C2. Many soldiers who did not make it to KMTB resurfaced and of course wished to be paid for their time. It created quite the controversy when we suggested and enforced the no pay for time not spent rule. The lack of an IA UCMJ would be more than problematic during this tour. Our team was troubled by personality issues during this stay at Taji, most of which stemmed from the perception that we were doing the IA work for them, instead of coaching them to do it for themselves. SFC Arana found that the Jundi would sell uniform parts faster than he could supply them, and that sheets were a big item to sell down town. I was fortunate to have a good MAJ and SGM in operations; between them with minimal input from me they were able to produce reasonable briefing tools. Collection of accurate data was always a problem and required a lot of

physical time, to try and track, a tremendous amount of my time went into coordination within a staff that did not wish to share information.

Stays at Taji were punctuated with attacks on the base, one soldier was KIA on Camp Cooke and a number of Jundi were injured during our time there. Our team NCOs spent our free time assisting the understaffed Marine contingent on the main Iraqi gate to Taji or on foot patrols with the local National Guard unit around the eastern fence line. Here we mentored and supervised the IA National Guard and the Teji perimeter guards, this was invigorating to say the least, and there were many bomb threats, attempts to hijack, and smugglings. These were just a few of the issues we faced on a daily bases. A night time fire fight is beautiful, and makes you wonder how anyone could survive the effects of our fires, yet to my knowledge we only killed one insurgent during that time. Drive by shooting of the guard towers was common, but I came to suspect that many of the guards were creating the fire fights by attempting to shoot out the lights so they could sleep. There was also an Iraqi National Guard base a short drive east of Taji in line with were much of the fires originated; I suspect that it was the source of much of the fires, or a well planned attempt to get the two posts to shoot at each other. During one large fire fight, we spent the night guarding our IA unit, since they had no weapons or ammunition; it was difficult to stand the post and not charge into battle, when yards up the road a fire fight was in full swing.

Our teams suffered some internal issues during our last stay at Taji, created by what most of our team members felt was US Soldiers doing Jundi work. IA standards will take years to reach a semblance of what US military standards are. The tension between the Officers and enlisted got to a point where no communication was taking place, and remained so until I return to the team in Kirkush. I personally found some release from the tension by talking to the CSM at CMATT HQ. The ASTs lack of a defined chain of command, and the uncertain mission parameters, made life very confusing. Some soldiers went “native”, a term used when an US soldier started following the IA command structure at the expense of the American structure, others just shut down, refusing to leave the FOB, or even in one case his room. Living amongst 6000 jundi with no chance of survival if they turn on you can bring out all kinds of phobias.

The day prior to our move to Mosul I was told by LTC Phillips that CMATT wanted him to provide a soldier to assist the LNO to I Corp in Mosul, our IA units' new area of operations. The team moved by C 47, to Mosul, then to Kirkush Military Training Base (KMTB) and I moved to Camp Victory, I Corps HQ in Mosul. I was met by a MAJ and SSG who had been at the position for four months, I once again had no job, except to be available. I learned the basic task, manned the desk during the off hours and picked up mail for the Division teams in the Mosul area. I attended the I Corps CSM meeting during which I created a stir when I said I might be able to assist with issues in regards to the National Police unit attached to the base. I was reprimanded and told to keep my mouth shut, as an LNNCO, I was to pass all request to the proper channels, and offer no solutions to any problems. As a senior NCO used to providing solutions to difficult problems, this order was hard to follow, but when in Rome... To exasperate this, the National Police commander found me; he had been told to link up with the CMATT representative in Mosul as his link to CPATT, both commands fell under MNSTC-I, the new allied HQs'. I can not say what his relationship to my new MAJ was, but I became his ad hoc councilor, until they departed the AO. After about a month the MAJ and SSG receive their marching orders, and no replacement was scheduled, and my team received word that we were to remain on the ground until December 2005. All at once I had a job, two weeks to be ready to be the LNO to I Corps.

Being on a General officers staff, even as a LNO from a higher HQ, is no joking matter, it is like being the fish bowl that a big fish is kept in, you must feed the fish, keep your piece of the bowl clean and hope he does not decide to poke holes in you or your part of the bowl. I by name want to thank BG Ham for his patients with me during that learning curve; I learned a lot watching him work with his subordinates, IA counterparts, peers and the media. I also learned quickly that no one wanted a void at the LNO post; the General wanted answers to IA issues immediately, CMATT wanted support from someone at I Corps, MISTC-I wanted respect, CPATT just wanted and I Corps had all the available resources in the AO. Some of my memorable conversations with the General were; (1) Why do my IA personnel numbers change so wildly on a daily basis? And (2) why are the IA Brigades not in the fight?

Communications were interesting, prior to our arrival I Corps had provided SIPER net to the out sites, but this had been removed as the sites were turned over to the IA. All traffic from I Corps to the ASTs

had to be sent VIA unsecured net or courier (me) when I delivered the mail. I honestly think I spent as much time in the BGs' helos' as he did, again creating issues. The commands were separate; the war fighters did not want us training what they felt were the same guys they had to kill the next day. ASTs were imbedded with the IA with out any support from the war fighters command, other then we were US soldiers in their AO, we could call for fire or extraction, get all the ammunition we wanted, and use other assets when available. I could get C 47s and fluids that were used as trade items, I could ask MNSTC-I to task I Corps to provide support, for specific issues, but barter was the normal course of action. Just prior to my departure an order from Southern Command finally made the welfare of the ASTs operating in the war fighters AO, a part of their responsibility. This opened the gates for funds and supply that the teams had not had and forced reluctant commanders to provide the support the teams' required.

A typical day for me at Mosal was to rise with the incoming mortar and rocket rounds, ruck up move to the HQ, about mile from my trailer. I did have my own trailer, a luxury, since I used it to store the mail for the teams. This mail, included packages that contained much of the food eaten by the team members, the IA rations were that bad. I would check my NIPER and SIPER nets then go eat. After chow we would attend a command briefing, the CSM briefing, then visit the spooks, pick up wanted list and such, spy stuff for the teams. Try to call the Marines, the DIV AST, on the radio pass what traffic I could, get the new SITREP numbers, and update my slides, put in air and ground transportation request, I always had something to be moved and check my e-mails. My e-mails would generally tell me when a shipment was moving to one of the Iraqi bases, but no schedules since the Iraqis used busses to transport most of their supplies. I would then field many of the requests for from MNSTC-I/CMATT to I Corps, since MNSTC-I/CMATT inevitably failed to cut an order tasking I Corps for the support needed. I would work with the Battle Captains to try and sort out what bus was burning and why it was moving in corps AO with out clearance, deal with the IA National Guard who could not control their battle space, try to translate for IA officers when the I Corp assets were not available, and then have lunch. After the previous LNO team departed the traffic to my desk increased exponentially. I do not know why, mission changes, more supplies moving in the AO, or willingness to do the job. What I do know is that I was doing something important every day.

As the battle for Mosul heated up the I corps battle captain would frequently be conducting multiple battles, troops in contact. MNSTC-I issues were pushed back in importance; however someone needed to handle the calls for support. These calls would be on the radio or the computer system, the latter was a total waist since I was only one person and I was not always sitting in front of the computer to receive an e-mail detailing a battle taking place. I was responsible to fielding these calls, directing available resources, and coordinating the allied response. Working with and in conjunction with the officers assigned the task of Battle Captain at Corp level I learned great respect for what these officers do and the burden of responsibility they carry. As I recall, the Iraqi police forces in Mosul lost control of 13 of 27 police stations in the city, USA and IA in cooperation with the local Police would recapture the stations, as we did so the insurgents would attack in a different location, and the cycle would continued. At one point an Iraqi National Guard Jundi called me and a very frightened senior Iraqi NCO told me that all of the post officers had gone home. I counseled the NCO to take charge of the soldiers, maintain his position and soldiers, I then requested a patrol be established to support them from I Corp assets, the next day a team was sent to evaluate their situation. With US support they maintained there post and loyal IA officers were reassigned. During this time I worked a minimum of 16 hours daily, often I only left the HQ to eat, conduct resupply missions, and crash for a few hours of sleep.

Nothing worked as it was planed, as with Thanksgiving Day 2005. The company hired to support the Iraqi training bases was also to support the American and Australian forces on post. The food supplied was of fair quality but very repetitious, however issues with sanitation were continual. Trips into the US bases and the dining facilities there were treasured by the teams, and were often made in spite of the risk of enemy fires. Two days before Thanksgiving, I was called by some of my fellow NCOs at the "Castle" near Tall' Afar, they told me that they had no Thanksgiving Day dinner since the roads were red (closed to US routine traffic by the US Local Commander) and the Iraqi contractor refused to drive the route from KMTB as contracted to do (US road closures did not apply to Iraqi contractors). After investigating the situation I found that the contractor was in default, however this did not help the teams who had no Thanksgiving Day meals other than MREs or worst the Iraqi dinning facilities. I was able to secure meals for all of the US forces on our out sites from the KBR facility on Camp Victory; General Ham then made his helicopters available to deliver the meals to the sites. During which we picked up and returned our reluctant Iraqi

Major General, whose main concern was that he had “heard” that Americans drink alcoholic beverages during this holiday. I spent many hours ensuring the IA Chain of Command that no booze would be served to him. I have always known, but that year truly brought home to me, the importance of Thanksgiving to our forces, and I am proud to have made it happen for them.

My relief arrived in the form of a LTC with the 98th DIV (IT). This unit brought with it many assets that the first teams did not have, up armored HUMMV's with M-2s' MK 19s, mortars and 18 man teams to start with. They also brought an opinion that they were training new Jundi. This lack of “situational awareness” and the subsequent failure of the units C2 to correct that misconception, in my opinion, lead directly to the fragging of the joint dinning facility in Mosul in early 2006. It also leads to an US Army policy that Drill Instructors would not be allowed on the future teams. It was a tremulous transition; I Corps wanted the IA in the fight, the IA wanted control of the Provence, the IA MG felt that his personality cult could control the insurgency, despite an alarming loss of many IA officers and NCOs'. My relief was given a baptism with fire, and I burned along with him.

Time and space prevent the detailing of the many different missions, task and requirements that were preformed during this mission, they seemed endless a constant stream of learning to cope with new events and requirements. During one meeting BG Ham asks that the entire reservist on his staff to stand, a full half of us stood, and as a testament to us, the general made note of the contributions made by them. My final mission was to ship myself to KMTB to rejoin my team, this was a road march with a transportation unit; we then flew from KMTB to Baghdad with BG Schwitters and departed Iraq within a few days. I do not wish to minimize the horrors of war; the painful days fade from memory, the simple joy of being with comrades, being alive after mortal danger, and the feelings that you accomplished your mission are what I am left with.

LESSONS LEARNED/INSIGHTS

I have since completed another tour with CMATT, most of the issues that arise in this document have been corrected. Thorough debriefings of the teams and well written documents by the officers' have had good effect. During future missions effort should be exercised by the chain of command to insure that personality conflicts and disorders are eliminated or minimized to the greatest extent possible. In addition to this it is imperative that the senior chain of command make command visits. Soldiers on ASTs are very much alone; they operate in environments wherein they may not see another American soldier during the duty day. Officers are likely to take operational command of their Iraqi units and NCOs bond with their counter parts. Providing outlets for the aggression that builds up is important even a phone call can help in the most extreme cases. Rotation of teams into the FOBs will help keep them orientated. At times the Chain of command can lose its focus, it may be legally correct, but not be right. Local commanders need to be aware of ASTs in their AO and ensure they have access to Chaplin services, IG, and C2.