

The Comparison of Desert Shield, Desert Storm, and Operation Enduring Freedom

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Class 57

Abstract

MSG Allen's PEP consists of three phases. Phase I of the paper discusses his deployment as an E-4, Specialist, in support of Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm in 1991. Phase II will describe his deployment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom as a First Sergeant, acting Brigade and Battalion Command Sergeant Major in 2004-2006. Phase III consists of a comparison of experiences between the two deployments. Topics of discussion will include duties and responsibilities, unit strength, training, morale, leadership, the Family Readiness Program, deployment and re-deployment procedures, and interactions of attachments and detachments. MSG Biography will follow.

The Comparison of Desert Shield, Desert Storm, and Operation Enduring Freedom

Approximately 1730 September 10, 1990, SPC Allen received the call for mobilization. The 327th Chemical Company was activated to deploy in support of Operation Desert Shield. The unit was chosen to deploy based on annual performance evaluations, strength reports, and overall readiness. This annual report was not 100% accurate. The unit suffered shortages of middle and senior Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs). The call up procedure was as follows: the unit receives the call from higher headquarters, the senior leaders called their subordinates, who in turn, called theirs. This proceeded all the way to the lowest ranking individual. That Soldier called his first line supervisor, who called his, all the way to the company commander. The units Standard Operating Procedure used code words to indicate the action of the personnel to follow. The code word was given in the telephone call and all personnel were directed to be present at the unit no later than 48 hours from the time of the call. The unit received two calls within a thirty-minute period. The first was a warning call, alerting the Soldiers of a possible mobilization, and the second call was to mobilize. Several Soldiers brought their spouses and children. The unit had never activated for mobilization before, but possessed several Vietnam Veterans. The units' mission was to deploy to Southwest Asia in support of Operation Desert Shield via Ft. Polk, Louisiana. The active Army was to train and verify the readiness of the unit before deployment. SPC Allen left the day of arrival at the unit on the advance party while the rest of the unit would depart three days later. Since the entire unit deployed together, logistics, chain of command, Uniform code of military justice authority and all other operations of unit integrity were assumed. The Soldier Readiness Program (SRP) screened each Soldier for medical, legal, dental, family care and financial

readiness among other categories. The operations of the unit were seven days per week including various day and night training missions. The unit certified all tasks such as logistics, weapons qualification, Nuclear-Biological-Chemical tasks, reconnaissance, and urban operations. At the time, the active component of the Army seemed jealous that a reserve unit was being deployed ahead of them. Many of the certification tasks evaluated by the active Army were executed in accordance with the appropriate field manuals or Army Training and evaluation manuals, but received a failure on the certification evaluation. Several tasks had to be performed many times. Fifty days elapsed and the unit received the green light to deploy.

The morale and readiness of the Soldiers was very high. Each Soldier was physically and mentally prepared to go to war. Many family and friends of the Soldiers traveled to Ft Polk before the unit departed to express gratitude and well wishes. Many Vietnam Veterans, present at the send off, expressed much concern for the safety and welfare of the Soldiers. Their underlying theme seemed not only a genuine concern for the Soldiers, but for the Army and government to give the Soldiers the latitude to fight and win on the battlefield with out governmental politics.

October 31, 1990 the unit boarded a commercial aircraft and departed the United States. The flight was twenty-four hours long and included several stops for refueling operations. The following day, the aircraft arrived in Saudi Arabia. The unit was resided in an abandoned cement factory named: Cement City. The unit conducted regular operations while awaiting their equipment via ship to arrive. The equipment would take three weeks to arrive. No ammunition was issued to the Soldiers with the exception of century duties. Upon arrival, the equipment was inspected, repaired and prepared for

movement into theatre. Approximately 20 November 1990, the unit moved very near the Kuwaiti border to Guardian City. Guardian City was a US Forward Operating Base (FOB) where several types of units were collocated. During its stay in Guardian City, the unit ran many training and combat missions with various units. SPC Allen and seven other Soldiers were trained and were operating as a Reconnaissance squad. They had received extra training at Ft. Polk and the unit preparing them to perform beyond the units' normal scope of operations. The Recon squad operated day and night until the unit relocated to the East of Saudi Arabia near Iraqi border. The unit was attached to the 24th Infantry Division. Although there were some leadership issues, the morale of the lower enlisted Soldiers at this point was high. Mentioned earlier, there were a shortage of E-6 and E-7s. The unit attained these ranks through volunteers, mobilized instructors, and Inactive Ready Reservists holding the 54B Military Occupational Skill (MOS). This created several issues such as lack of unit integrity and operational experience of some of the new arrivals into the unit. The unit was now poised for combat.

The air campaign was to begin January 17, 1991. The Recon element and several other unit personnel were sent two days prior back to Guardian City to recover equipment left behind due to the speed of the order and execution to move. The recovery of that equipment took an entire day and ended after sunset. The air would begin that night so the Soldiers so the Soldiers gathered around a radio to listen to any news available. Shortly after sunset, aircraft were heard flying overhead and moments later began bombing Iraqi positions in Kuwait. The display and sound of the exploding ordinance on the horizon was quite impressive. Moments later, one of the units Soldiers would be injured and became the first non-lethal casualty of the war now referred to as Desert Storm. The Recon

element returned the following morning to the units' position in the East and assumed operating training and combat missions. Nearly one month would elapse before the ground war would begin and the unit would assault into Iraq with the 24th Infantry Division. This time was spent Preparing personnel and equipment for ground combat. By this time, nearly 80% of the volunteers had developed cases of questionable medical issues. While these senior NCOs were traveling to and from the aid station, the subordinates had to execute their tasks as well as the tasks of their leaders. Even though there was again a shortage of senior NCO leadership, the junior NCOs stepped forward and accepted the challenge of managing Soldiers one or two pay grades beyond their own. They accomplished it extremely well. The morale of the troops dipped at this point, not from the work force shortages, but because the senior leaders would return from the aid station and treat the subordinates poorly and issue undue requirements. The living conditions had diminished from Cement City to of the Eastern border. The unit went from amenities as hot showers and wooden latrines, a makeshift movie theatre, telephones and a well-established dining facility to cat-hole latrines, no running water, no phones, and rationed food prepared by the units' cooks. The morale remained high by the quality of the food and unit supply functions. Nearly all the medically challenged senior NCOs would depart the area before the ground assault would commence.

The ground assault began by each unit starting its movement separately moving into a collective force. That force did not stop for 100 hours of the ground war. Drivers changed positions with their assistants, fuel was distributed and the term shoot move and communicate was practiced fully during the assault into Iraq. No loss of personnel and only a few cases of non-disabling equipment damage occurred due to small arms fire in

route to Bas-Rah, Iraq. The unit proceeded to a highway known as the highway of death which traveled through Iraq into Kuwait. This section of highway possessed the bodies of Iraqi troops and destroyed Iraqi equipment. This was a contribution of the US Air Force who performed their sorties with amazing accuracy and deadly results. The ground war soon ended and the unit would return to Saudi Arabia. The troop morale met its highest peak, besides the return to the US. Mission accomplished with no lethal unit casualties.

The return to Saudi Arabia took several days. The unit received an additional mission due to its personnel possessing secret security clearances. The unit would assist US Customs inspection teams, clean and ship its equipment, and operate the initial equipment receiving point for various units returning from theatre. The unit split into three groups for redeployment. Ironically, most senior leaders, both Officer and NCO, were on the first two groups returning to the US for demobilization.

Ft Polk performed its mission of demobilizing the 327th very well and expeditiously. The following three months would prove busy for the returning Soldiers. During weekend drill assemblies, the unit conducted many parades including several unit Soldiers attending the National Victory Parade in Washington, DC. Morale was high even in the absence of a single individual award while in theatre. The unit prepared and turned in necessary requests for awards to the active Army and did not receive any in return. The unit strength dropped from 100+ to approximately 31 Soldiers in the course of a few months. This, in part, was due to the new Battalion Commander closing the unit's headquarters and ordering all unit members to travel beyond 50 miles of their homes.

The morale of the Soldiers and junior leaders unit remained high throughout the deployment. The lack of experience and professionalism by senior leaders was offset by

the commitment to duty and selfless service of the Soldiers. Equipment maintenance issues were an issue due to the lack of replacements in theatre and the length of time to receive them from the US. Several Unit members' spouses operated the Family Readiness Group creating a conduit between the US and the unit creating an additional opportunities for the boosting of morale.

November 2004, 1SG Allen along with two Captains, were individually mobilized from the Army Reserve (USAR) in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). The battalion excelled in preparing documentation for the Soldiers mobilization. The Division hosted its mobilized troops for a three day SRP in Oklahoma City, OK. Two hundred plus Soldiers would receive telephone calls and e-mails informing them of their deployment orders. Of those troops, roughly half would go on the initial mobilization to Afghanistan. Morale was mixed. Most mobilized Soldiers were captains and senior NCOs. The 95th Division leadership displayed professionalism and were present for the entire SRP. The mission of the 95th Soldiers was to serve as Embedded Training Teams (ETTS), which would train the newly forming Afghan National Army (ANA). These ETTs would deploy to Ft Hood, Texas and integrate with National Guard (NG) Soldiers mobilized for the same mission. The NG Soldiers possessed the senior ranking Officers whom many had served together in NG units in the past. The Soldiers were divided into teams based on experience, rank, and motivation. These teams conducted all training together such as, physical fitness, weapons qualification, a five-day field exercise and the SRP. Ft Hood provided excellent, real, and relevant training, adequate quarters, transportation, supplies and equipment food and ranges in preparation of the deploying troops. The ETTs spend 45 days preparing to mobilize and had no noticeable resistance from the active Army. The

ETT's were issued All the personal equipment needed to deploy, however, did not receive critical equipment such as Night Vision Goggles (NVGs), weapon rail systems, Global Positioning devices (GPS), or communication equipment.

February 14, 2005, the ETT's departed Ft Hood in route to OEF. The ETT's arrived in Kyrgyzstan on Feb. 15. The weather was extremely cold, snowy, and icy. A lieutenant slipped and broke his leg after departing the bus upon arrival at the US Air Force base there. The amenities were plentiful and included massages, shopping, Post Exchange, phone and internet center, coffee shop, and Morale center. Quarters were in heated tents and latrines were containerized providing hot air and hot water. The time spent awaiting air transportation seemed a large waste of time due to the lack of training or preparation that could occur there. Feb. 20, the ETT's departed Kyrgyzstan and arrived in Kabul, Afghanistan. This group of ETT's would serve as intermediates between two NG Task Forces providing continuity with both US and ANA forces. Upon arrival into Kabul, Security Forces (SECFOR) would issue a single magazine of ammunition to each Soldier and provide escort to Task Force Phoenix (TFPX) in Kabul. After arrival at TFPX, the SECFOR secured the ammunition and directed the ETT's to their quarters. Tents and small wooden shelters (B-Huts) were available and adequate. The same amenities were available in TFPX than those of Kyrgyzstan. The ETT manning roster was immediately abandoned breaking apart the original teams who trained together in Ft. Hood. This caused many problems such as continuity between team members, equipment, and structural unit cohesion. The ETT's were separated into four groups. Afghanistan was divided into four regions and termed Regional Command Advisory Groups (RCAGs). 1SG Allen was assigned to RCAG-North (Mezar-e-Sharif) (MES). 1SG Allen performed the mission of

setting up a Brigade Headquarters as the Brigade Command Sergeant Major and conducting training and combat operations with the ANA. The ETTs received only a basic load of ammunition and 14 new Up Armored Humvees. The 76th Infantry Brigade from the Indiana NG commanded TFPX. Although TFPX had the shortage equipment of NVGs, weapons rails and other assorted shortage equipment, they refused to issue it to the new arrival ETTs. The ETTs convoyed over the Hindu-Kush mountains through treacherous passes without tire chains or tow-bars. This equipment was also refused issue to the new ETTs by PFPX. A small Forward Operating Base (FOB) was set up in MES consisting of approximately 30 NG Soldiers, and several amenities such as a dining facility, morale phone, containerized latrines, and internet. US government civilian contractors operated the latrines and the dining facility.

A Colonel commanded the RCAG. The morale of the troops in the FOB was low due to the Colonels orders not to travel outside the security of the compound except for critical missions such as logistical packs for food and air travel to TFPX. MES is located in an International Forces area (ISAF). The region had changing military commands such as the British and the German armed Forces. Operations in MES consisted primarily of on-site training of the ANA and limited civil affairs missions conducted by the ETTs. The Brigade staff established itself and more operations were taking place. Soon, for various reasons, the RCAG Commander was replaced by his complete opposite. A newly promoted O-6 and part of the newly arriving ETT group (TFPX 3.5). The morale of the Soldiers immediately sky rocketed; Soldiers would finally be able to perform their true missions. Unfortunately, this commander displayed very poor judgment and refused the advice of his staff including the CORP CSM or any of the Brigade staff. This poor

leadership would result in the deterioration of morale, a sense of personal safety and limited professional growth and development. The Brigade CSM was the Commanders Emergency Relief Program (CERP) agent, who would contract the digging of community water wells, aid to the local medical clinic, a bridge connecting Afghanistan and Uzbekistan, and many projects for the 26 schools in the MES province. The BDE staff operated as if all of its members had originated from the same unit. There were still several issues due to the integration of USAR Soldiers and NG troops. TFPX soon changed commands to 53rd Infantry BDE of the Florida NG. In MES, this would again cause a mixture of problems. The newly arriving task force displaced most senior NCOs in MES causing a lack of continuity with the ANA and knowledge and experience with theatre operations. The 3.5 RCAG Commander had no position to hold, so the command was shared. This again would cause the morale to dip. The new TFPX 4.0 would, issue all shortage equipment available to the 3.5 ETTs. Logistics remained an issue in the north due to being in an ISAF area. The US troops had to rely on ISAF air assets for a majority of its supplies and transportation of personnel and equipment.

The ETTs would provide support, training, and operations for the first parliamentary elections with the new democratic regime in Afghanistan. TFPX 3.5 redeployment date soon approached.

The individually mobilized Soldiers would have trouble in logistical operations such as awards, Officer and NCO Evaluation Reports and equipment issues due to the change of command half way through the deployment and unit integrity. Most issues were resolved; however, a few were not. Regardless of the paperwork and awards, the morale of the redeploying troops ascended higher the closer the redeployment date was. The ETTs

mission is 12 months in theatre. Most Soldiers experienced burnout and increased levels of stress. Many, many Soldiers explained that 12 months was too long. The consensus of many Soldiers was to spend six to nine months in country and twelve months total mobilization. The Soldiers also explained that in addition to shorter tours, keeping unit integrity would be much better for all aspects of the mobilization.

The comparison of Desert Shield/Storm and Operation Enduring Freedom, the first as an E-4 and the second as an E-8, there proves a variety of similarities as well as differences. The mobilization process is very similar with the exception of many more facilities for Soldier contact such as e-mail, cell phone, and pagers. A major difference is the mobilization of individuals compared to that of an entire unit. Unit mobilization utilizes the mobilizing units' chain of command, where higher headquarters contacts individuals directly. The duties and responsibilities of a SPC and 1SG are indicative of those ranks. The missions of Desert Storm were combat and combat support. The unit had very little, or no, contact with the indigenous population. The Embedded Training Teams spend a great deal of time working with local government, village elders, tribal leaders, community leaders the general public, different cultures and, of course, the ANA. The ETT mission required the use of language interpreters hired as local US contractors where Desert Storm did not. Although direct contact could not be avoided at times, the ETT mission was to build, train, coach, and mentor the ANA rather than to be the main combat effort. Both theaters possessed a medium to high level of morale. Soldiers given purpose direction and a genuine mission can and will work hard to fight and win on the battlefield. The major complains in Desert Storm were the volunteer leaders and their operational experience. The major complains in OEF were unit integrity, leadership and length of

deployment in theatre. Desert Storm had a normal ratio of Officers to NCOs. OEF, the ratio of the ETTs were 2:1 at least. This created problems for the NCOs to perform their jobs with limited micro-management by the officers. Punishment for minor offenses seriously affected morale of the Soldiers. An example of this was any Enlisted Soldier having a weapon negligent discharge at the clearing barrel, outside the entrance of the post or FOB, would see their commander immediately, and most often, would receive UCMJ action. A Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) negligently discharged his weapon inside the FOB and in the presence of the Task Force Commander, wounding and interpreter, only received a statement from the commander asking for a serious incident report. The LTC continued working in his job with no apparent consequence. Due to the nature of the personnel structure during OEF, the USAR, NG, US Navy, US Air Force, it was difficult logistically to satisfy individual needs. Unit integrity would solve most issues incurred by the Soldiers. Each theatre had significant numbers of Active Guard and Reserve Soldiers (AGR). The similarity of both theatres were that the senior leadership was, at times, more concerned for their personal career away from theatre rather than making difficult decisions and doing the right thing. The awards process seemed to get much better from Desert Storm to OEF; however, if that individual was submitted for an award, and the individual, or unit, re-deployed before the award was approved, it was difficult, or impossible to deliver the award to the Soldier. The Family readiness group (FRG) of a deployed unit has seemingly a more vested interest in the unit members than those of an individual Soldier whose FRG is operated from the chain of command, often having no personal connection to the individual.

Conclusion

Soldiers want and require good leadership, purpose, and direction. Proving them with these and leaders leading by example, American Soldiers will overcome and conquer any obstacle.

References