

Running head: OPERATION IRAQ FREEDOM III,

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents 2

Abstract 3

Being Alerted 4

Activation..... 5

Early Deployment 6

RSOI 7

Redeployment **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Abstract

Since the attack on 11 September 2001 this Country has gone through a lot of changes President George Bush declared war on Iraq, with are armed forces already engaged in Afghanistan it became quite apparent that the reserve component would be a major contributor to the War efforts, this paper is to share my personal experience while deployed during Operation Iraq Freedom III, I will share with you my experience at homes station, Mobilization station at Fort Drum New York, Conducting RSOI for the 42nd Infantry Division in Camp Arifijan, Kuwait and finally Theater of operation Tikrit Iraq Forward Operation Base(FOB)Spicher.

On September 11, 2001, the United States of America was attacked by members of al-Qaeda this day will never be forgotten, on this day I felt helpless, it was personal attack on every American citizen, I knew on this day that it would affect my life directly and personally, I've been a member of the Massachusetts Army National Guard since January 1975, I've seen the Army National Guard change from Vietnam draft dodgers wearing weekend warriors summer camps that would not begin without a truck full of alcoholic beverage to a very professional organization that has become a major player in the war against Iraq, Afghanistan and support home land defense, I was assigned to Headquarters 42nd Division Artillery (DivArty) out of Rehoboth, Massachusetts, I worked in the S4 office (logistics) I was the senior supply sergeant my responsibility as the senior logistic Noncommissioned Officer (NCO) I was to ensure that all Modified Table Of Equipment (MTOE) equipment was on order and was on a valid request for 42nd units in Massachusetts conduct inspection monitor and enforce supply discipline, I been in the Logistics (92Y) arena in different capacity since 1986, Commodity Manager, Supply Clerk, Supply Sergeant, Property Book Officer and finally Senior Supply Sergeant a position I'm still holding, prior to that I spend 11 years as a heavy equipment operator in an Engineer Company. Our Headquarters 42nd Infantry Division was in Troy New York, We had received word from Division that Division HQ and HQ Battery (HHB/ HQ) 42nd DivArty was preparing to deploy to Bosnia 2004 our mission was going to be command and control for a six month tour, It was early February of 2004 the DivArty staff had a scheduled meeting at Division Headquarters, the staff was going to division on a monthly basis to get briefed on the possible Bosnia deployment. I remember arriving at Division Headquarters and noticing that the group was unusually large, as the meeting started the topics change fast from Bosnia to Iraq, I remember the Division Commander walked in to the conference room and starting the meeting, I will paraphrase, what

the General said, Gentleman our mission has changed, we are now going to Iraq and we were going to be the first Army National Guard Division deployed since World War II, another sobering piece of information that was share with all the staff members was look around in the room, some of us will not make it back, they brought out some statics that put everything in prospective.

The previous deployments depleted the Massachusetts National Guard with equipment and soldiers the 42nd DivArty was being disassembled piece by piece, losing equipment and soldiers, The 42nd DivArty was broken and no way had anyone thought it would be ready for any type of deployment. As we got closer to the deployment date we received a warning order it became official this was going to happen.

The Directive of Logistic from United States Property and Fiscal Office for Massachusetts did an incredible jog getting the equipment we needed for deployment, by directing lateral transfers throughout the state and asking the National Guard Bureau for any equipment that could not be filled with in our state, this referred to as push backs.

Under our call up Massachusetts also got orders to activate 272 Chemical Company, 42nd Military Police (MP), and Battery E 101 Field Artillery (FA) Target Acquisition Battery (TAB) and shortly after 1-102 FA Battalion all these units would mobilize in Fort Drum New York

This activation was involved more that just Massachusetts National Guard it affected the New Your National Guard also, the 42nd Infantry Division Headquarters and other unit from different part of the country that made up Division. We were part of history, the first National Guard Division to deploy since World war II and it was a National Guard Division based from the same State that was devastated by the 9/11 attack I think this was supposed to be a political statement.

In June of 2004 we mobilized spent four days at home station. Once active our status change from reservist to Title 10 active duty soldiers, this means that Massachusetts National Guard will no longer support us in any capacity, no equipment unless it was identified prior to the activation, all of our support now had to come from Big Army, I think the Army and the National has to come to some kind of agreement to do a better job during a battle hand off. We arrived at the mobilization site Fort Drum New York home of the 10th mountain Infantry Division our fifth day of our mobilization were we report to our Division Headquarters who also was mobilizing there, the billets was the old World War II barracks that had been condemned and marked for demolition, once the war started all demolition was halted and they issued them to National Guard units, needless to say we had our work laid out in front of us, most of the seven barracks that was issued to us had to be painted, patch walls and repair floors just to make it livable we used allot of self help, by the time we deployed the barracks were 100% better

We spent the next four months preparing for deployment and making our living condition better every day, training was long days, long night and hard work, being the Senior Supply Sergeant it required for me and the members of the S4 section to continue with daily operations in concurrent with training for deployment. The M16 rifle range was particularly hard for me, being a supply sergeant I was usually to busy to go to the range to qualify “wink” “wink”, it probably had been four or five years since the last time I actually qualified with a M16 and it showed, I was rusty I couldn’t even zero my weapon, it took three separate attempts to zero my weapon it took another four time to qualify as marksman with the M16A2 rifle. Lesson learned never be too busy to conduct your required training.

On 24 October 2004 I was a member of a team of twenty soldiers that deployed early to set up the RSOI operation in CCIFLIC Camp Arifijan Kuwait, We established a cell to receive

the rest of 42nd Infantry Division for OIF III, from October of 2004 to March 2005 we process through Kuwait over twenty thousand soldiers through the operation, we provided transportation, Buses and Non Tactical Vehicle (NTV) provided cell phones and armed escort for movement of soldiers, coordinate with Kuwait Police to assist in troop movement, provided billets, ration and training facilities to training up the soldiers prior to going in theater of operation. We also received and moved equipment in and out of Kuwait and Iraq for all deploying unit, a high profile piece of equipment was up armored HMMWV,s the Up armored vehicle was short throughout theater of operation they were high on demand and they were starting to arrive in bunches, prior to that I watched my unit convoy up to FOB Summerall, Trikit Iraq in hillbilly armor, basically It's spot welding quarter inch steel in designated location on the HUMMV and lining the floor with sand bags this was very upsetting to me and other members of the unit.

We also had clean all equipment that had been identified for early retrograde, every piece of equipment had to meet the port authority requirement, this means the equipment has to be washed and be free of any debris, early retrograde means piss poor planning allot of equipment moved for no reason and no use for it, we should of never deployed with them , this took extensive amount of work to prepare the equipment to be shipped back to the state, This was a very expensive mistake for the Army, The missions and equipment should have been accurate prior to deployment it would save lots of money for other short fall. I was commended for a job well done as the Senior Supply Sergeant, left in the RSOI team, the G4 Sergeant Major was sent to FOB Danger as soon as he arrived in Kuwait that left me as the Acting G4 Sergeant Major for the Division G4 in turn I had additional responsibility to look out for all logistic concern that may affect Division readiness.

On 21 March 2005 I a team of four soldiers including myself was the last to deploy to

Iraq. Upon arriving in FOB Spicher I was attached to Division G4, I was the LNO from DivArty to Division G4, my function was to make sure DivArty had no logistic concerns, Also because the DivArty had few artillery mission the Commander was also the ash and trash commander, he was the Approving Authority fall all report of surveys for subordinate units, that meant I processed all Report of Surveys and make to correct recommendation to the Colonel, also coordinated with the Judge Advocate for review ell. I monitor and requested all battle loss replacement, processed all up armored HMMWv's that's was still coming from Kuwait. Our time in Iraq was very successful most of the time, we had one incident that left our Division num for a long period, the HHC 42nd Commander and the Executive Officer was killed in their office/billets originally it was believed they were killed by in coming rounds, after a very short investigation of the impact are they declared it crime, the supply sergeant was charged with double murder, he is currently awaiting trial. I remember waiting at Spicher airport waiting for the two bodies' to be shipped, when a 5 ton truck drove up between the two lines of soldiers standing at parade rest on each side of the road I remember thinking what a ratty looking truck, ripped canvas, canvas flapping rope dangling, it drove up right through the formation and stopped at end of the line, I watched as the driver and the assistant driver put the tailgate down and I notice two body bags on the cargo floor, I was devastated, discussed that we would treat our dead this way, I spoke to The G4 Sergeants Major about this, not much was said I guess being in the combat zone didn't allow time to prepare the dead correctly, I don't by it. I believe once we recover the remains of our soldier it should always be treated with the most respect. Shortly after soldiers in ACU arrived, we realized out time was getting short, we started to conduct relief in place (RIP) with our replacement, on or about the 6 of October 2005 I left Iraq, I was part of the redeployment team I arrived in Fort Drum on 8 October 2005, we set up

operation to receive all unit that deployed with us from fort Drum, it took 30 days to completely redeploy all the units.

Division was activated for 18 months, this was one of the longest deployment, it was grueling, tiresome and a challenging time in my life, but I was a part of history, A National Guard Division was active and deployed in to a combat zone, the Operation Commander was a two Star General from the National Guard, the irony was this Divisions Headquarters was based out of New York the State that was attacked by al-Qaida.

This was a great experience; if my carrier was to end today it would be a very good carrier. For my leadership, my ability to get the job done for going over and above the call of duty for 42nd Infantry Division I was awarded a Bronze Start, the most proudest day of my carrier,

Once we arrived back to home station, we arrived just in time for an army wide transformation, DivArty hit the ground running, We had to reconstitute the units that deployed, deactivate the units assigned to 42nd DivArty, activate the units that was going to be assigned to the new Brigade is 79th Troop Command, a Troop Command is an 06 command and control unit for separate companies, batteries and detachments in the National Guard. This would be multi tasking at its best.

The lesson I learned during this deployment is that Reserve Component given the same training can perform the assigned duties as well as Active component without losing any ability to conduct missions and protect our nation security. In some aspect the reserves were better equipped or qualified, mainly in the combat support area, the Active Component excelled in the combat units.