

AAR for MOB of the 425 INF at Ft. Bliss Texas. As seen from the eye of the enlisted!

- 1.) Condition of facilities at McGregor training center.
 - a.) Chow hall and food
 - b.) Initial barracks received
 - c.) Gym
 - d.) Transportation to training sites
 - e.) The TMC or lack there of ? + poor medical treatment from medics
 - f.) CIF
 - g.) SRP
 - h.) RANGES
 - i.) MAINTENANCE

- 2.) Issues that need to be mention
 - a.) Smothering safety procedures remove all training value
 - b.) Lack of ammo and poor coordination for ammo
 - c.) Units providing training were of poor caliber and not subject matter experts
 - d.) Misreading of our mobilization order removed over one month from our training cycle
 - e.) The 425th Infantry is a combat unit and had no business at Ft. Bliss.
 - f.) Poor training sites as it pertains to Infantry operations.
 - g.) SASO Training as it pertains to our mission plus refusal of trainers to accept our input.

Our experience here at McGregor has been one of absolute agony by way of “bull shit” the personnel here can not be trusted to plan a square dance this generalization applies to the highest command of this fiasco called a “MOB”. The soldiers of the 425th are only prepared for their deployment for operations in harms way because of their own efforts. Very little credit can be given to the MOB site except for issues pertaining to supply and maintenance.

The Chow hall

As chow halls go, the place was not bad. The flexibility of hours and constant flow of hot soup and coffee was appreciated. The tent atmosphere did take away from the whole mood of the dining experience. The trash was always empty and the service was always with a smile. The lay out was well thought out and made the flow of personnel move quickly and smoothly. The food, on the other hand became unbearable within three weeks of our arrival. On several occasions the eggs could have been drank from a glass, but there is only so much that can be done with UGR’S. We understand this and give the chow hall at McGregor a pass. *The chow situation at Ft. Hood for our brothers from the Iowa unit was completely unacceptable. There chow was trucked in the morning and the evening at random times. This made planning around chow very difficult. The morning eggs were raw, and the sausage was also raw. This was a severe health hazard as well as just F***ED up. The orange juice was made with piping hot water and the cool aid and lemonade were so strong they had to be cut with the hot water just to be fit to drink. The milk was 6 months out of expiration and the salad dressing spoiled. This problem could be solved if the personnel cared enough to just inspect the chow before accepting it. This chow was prepared by an existing dining facility and there is no excuse for this at all. Severe repercussions should fall on the OIC of the facility for allowing this to happen.*

Barracks

Upon our arrival we were put into an “H” building to hold 160 soldiers plus all their equipment, to include all M-toe equipment. This gave the barracks the feel of a warehouse with soldiers sleeping on piles and crates of their necessary equipment. The heat on one side of the building did not function until 2 days before F Co. **left**, and that is only because one of our soldiers investigated the problem and fixed it. As a result to the over crowding and lack of heat in the building, sickness ran rampant through the ranks. Among the most popular were strep throat, bronchitis and the flu. The effects of this are still being felt, and hospital personnel were heard talking about the “McGregor Cough.” Additional buildings were requested and we were threatened with being moved to a large circus tent where security of our equipment and personal belongings would be impossible. After one month we

were given an extra building, but over crowding of the main element was still a factor that was never solved. Again I must fall back on the generalization that the personnel of this post are apparently not capable of planning a square dance.

The GYM

First point; having a gym is critical to the morale of any unit.

The free weights in the gym were a life-saver. More equipment should be added to the room. During SASO one of the tin huts had weight equipment in it just wasting away. It would make sense if it could be moved to where it could be used at McGregor. We, as a combat unit, following the guidance of at least a half dozen AAR'S from theater were implementing the recommendation to train on hand to hand combat. We began training on this task immediately upon arrival. We, as a unit were using the wrestling mats for this purpose. Within a week the mats were locked up so they could not be used. The word given was that 1 person wanting to bounce a basketball in the gym was reason enough to remove the mat from the floor. (There were 6 basketball hoops in the gym, and the mat only took a small corner of the floor area.) This is a prime example of your GSU not supporting our mission and not supporting our training. The punching bag, which was poorly anchored to the wall, broke the first night it was used by the 425. This was on Dec 12 2003. A note was left by the OPS SGT on Captain Lewis' desk to have it repaired and it was still broken upon leaving the facility eight weeks later. Though there were at least a dozen cardio exercise machines, only one was functional. The only equipment operational in the gym was the weight room and the basketball court. The gym hours were more than adequate, though erratic at times, but those who chose to use that facility found little difficulty in finding time during operational hours.

Transportations to training sites

During our stay here at this MOB site we were transported via commercial bus to each and every training site. The buses were of good quality and in fair to good running order. Only on a few occasions did the proper amount of busses NOT report for pick up. Also the busses were clean and well kept inside; On only one occasion was the portable lavatory in back of a bus in need of service. My only negative comment was the extreme cost of this expense, when we could not even get ammo to fire our weapons to the level of proficiency needed by a combat unit. This will be covered in another section.

TMC or lack there of?

Medical Care AAR

Hospital

1. E.R.

Slow - long wait time, like most hospitals this is the norm.

Rude - treated troops like idiots. We were not welcome. We were called to active duty and there are many soldiers who need medical attention from time to time there is no reason for this unprofessional behavior.

2. Pediatrics

Rude - treated troops like they were trying to get out of PT.

Pissing contest between E.R. and Pediatrics about who covers weekend sick call. This caused resentment toward the sick soldiers and further exacerbated the poor treatment.

TMC

1. Main Post

Extremely slow. Way too many patients the order of treatment was usually broke down into this order; permanent party, basic & AIT, and mobilizing troops". By the time the mobilizing troops were seen there was next to no diagnosis made, and every one had "sinusitis". One soldier from my company was treated in this manner; he was hastily treated, given a medication in too high a dose and he almost died from profuse bleeding through his lower intestine, obviously a bad reaction to the medication.

2. McGregor

It took almost a month before the TMC at McGregor opened. There were times when there was no medical coverage at all. When it finally opened the return to duty time did improve. But why did it take so long to get coverage?

We were also told in our in-brief that the fire department had an ambulance and paramedic support. This fallacy became painfully obvious when the civilian licensed paramedics had to give emergency medical aid to a soldier who was having a heart attack at McGregor. The fire department showed up 10 minuets later and stood there and watched while the patient was stabilized and transported to the helipad, with our vehicles, after we called in the helicopter medevac. Even our own soldier had to wait for two hours, while

profusely bleeding from his rectum, to get transported to the hospital. Is it too much to ask that the fire department work and maintain a standard now that there are actually people here.

Sick call quota?

Today on Feb 4 2004 only 20 sick call soldiers were seen the rest were turned away. Do you have any idea how wrong this is? This is a congressional investigation all in its self. Someone is going to get turned away and die or worse. This is utter insanity!

CIF

CIF was as it should be, it was well run and in good order. There were the usual shortages for those of the "freakish sizes", it went smooth and by the numbers. The only negative is they are in need of more personal to help run the facility. The person in charge deserves a commendation for running it so well with the skeleton crew assigned.

SRP SITE

The actual site where shots and mandatory briefings were administered appeared to go smoothly at first glance. But lost medical records caused some delay and confusion. Several members had to return in following days because of oversights by the SRP staff. The sign in logs for stations were reviewed and the soldier did sign in only to be miscounted and sent back. This again took time away from the training of the soldiers. The large event that I found the most disturbing is the 47 soldiers that were cleared by the legal station, only to be told that the person who cleared them did not work there. This oversight amounted to 30% of our unit. How this was allowed to happen is still a mystery. Our state, Michigan, did our full SRP in a weekend perhaps; this GSU at Ft. Bliss should call them for some guidance.

RANGES

My first experience with your ranges was getting up at 0500 hrs only to be turned back at 1130 hrs, because the ammo coordination was not done properly. One would think if this were your full time job you could get ammo to the range in a timely manner? The next day we again got up at 0500 hrs to

start shooting a 1000 hrs, again there was an ammo coordination problem. Please keep in mind this same problem happened back to back. This learning curve needs to be fixed, a horse is a horse and ignorance is ignorance. When we were finally allowed to run our own ranges, the time and training value did increase.

AMMO

Ammo for training is key when training for combat.

We are not a CS or a CSS unit: We are Infantry “we fight” I cannot put it any simpler than that. While here we fired 24 rounds to zero and 40 rounds to qualify. We were then given 120 rounds of blank ammo for the entire SASO training block. **Who in their right mind signed off on this?** We have been called away from our homes and families for hostile operations. We are owed a chance to be trained properly and given the tools to obtain that objective. I, and all the soldiers resent the fact that we are just “checking the blocks” to be moved into theater. As an 11B we are supposed to fire the AT-4, use a claymore mine, throw hand grenades, fire the 203 grenade launcher, fire our crew served weapons, fire the MARK-19 grenade launcher, fire a .50 cal machine gun; almost none of which has taken place. While in theater we will be expected to execute any number of tasks, most will involve infantry duties and accomplishing the bare minimum is not an option when my soldiers are in the game. May God have mercy on your souls you miserable wretches?

TRAINING SAFETY

Safety is very important, but a compromise must be made. Soldiers that are going into harms way need the necessary programming. Because one only fights as he trains. This is a true statement. When is a convoy under attack going to halt the action so they can all safely exit the vehicle and get on line and then lock and load? Well I tell you, when cold beer is served in hell! If the soldier cannot be trusted with his or her weapon guess what? The soldier does not go forward into theater. As for my unit, we gleaned almost no value from your training package because of the stifling, overbearing safety measures. Again most of these problems would go away if more ammo could be expended in training.

UNITS PROVIDING TRAINING

We did not request to come here; we requested Ft. Lewis or Ft. Benning “The home of the Infantry”. The officer that sent us here needs to severely re-examine his priorities. The reason we were sent here is a leap of logic, that

I as an NCO am incapable of making. The GSU, in hindsight should have made severe modifications to their training plans. The GSU personnel should have covered the basics and the guidance from theater, and then allowed us to drive our own training to meet these objectives. The GSU as a whole does not have the knowledge or experience to effectively train an Infantry company in combat operations. The GSU should have used the internal knowledge to sharpen the training experience: For example, using our existing SOP'S during SASO training. Instead we were told to shut-up, get through it, and get the hell out of here. SASO for us should have been combined and the convoys run from the cordon and search area. QRF vehicles could have been hastily loaded and run out to engage hostile forces. Also QRF could have been run out to engage mortar positions. These are the types of training experiences we needed. With more blanks and the motivated OPROR from the cordon and search, the training would have been most excellent. But again this suggestion to SFC McKinny fell on deaf ears. We were trained like a CS or CSS unit and no one had the sense or the motivation to make necessary changes. Shame on you!

Here's a funny saying we will take with us "Keep you mouse out of the house". I am sorry but this is both incredibly stupid but yet strangely funny at the same time.

The second statement that will forever haunt my dreams is "guns and eye balls" That's just damn funny.

STANDARD CONFUSION WITH TRAINING

There are many instances of a tasks being taught one way at one station and that same task is being enforced in a completely different manner at another station. For example we just completed the squad live fire exercise, we were taught how to bound and move in squad and team size elements. The day after we complete the squad live fire we move on to the vehicle live fire range. Where they are enforcing a completely different standard on how to move under fire. Vehicle live fire focuses on individual movement as a squad; where the squad live fire focuses on moving and bounding in fire teams. I have been in the infantry for 18 years and I can quickly discern how to move in those situations. On the other hand, the CS and CSS units that have never done this are becoming confused on which technique is to be used. The stations should coordinate on how the soldiers are being taught and enforce the same standard across the board. This will help cement the tasks into the minds of the soldiers

A basic case of the right hand not knowing what the left hand is doing!

MISSREADING OUR MOB ORDER

If there is a crown jewel in this crown of F*** up's, this is it!

What in the hell is up with that? We lost many days of training because of this "over sight". Again we come down to "is this your job?" Don't you think that little "tidbit" is kind of important? Holy smokes batman we lost a month! Look, this cannot be allowed to be swept under the rug. Someone needs to have their ass nailed to a cross or at least dig a 6X6X6, to remember mistakes like this, get people killed.

Maintenance

We turned our vehicles in for maintenance, we played the game and filled out all the paperwork in quad-triplicate and were told we were good to go. On Feb 2, 2004 we signed our vehicles out for a test drive. "Thank god we did" because almost half developed problems within 10 miles of leaving the facility. Some of the Vehicles blew transmissions. Bottom line we were told that all problems had been fixed and the vehicles were cleared to go into theater. The vehicles were 5 ton trucks and HUMMWV's. The whole army is using them, you would think that your maintenance facility would know how to fix them by now.

GUN MAINTENANCE ISSUE "perhaps we should throw stones?"

We turned in a total of 21 M-60 machine guns to be "TI'ed" during our stay here at Ft. Bliss. Now upon deployment to the theater we have a total of 3 guns that are deficient free. These guns were given a complete inspection just before "load out" began. I am a former 18B and I also re-inspected these weapons to confirm the gross amount of issues found immediately after weapons were returned from the "CUBE". The initial inspection was conducted by SSG Karamol, a school-trained armorer. He has attended several armorer courses and has worked as a battalion armorer for the 82nd AIRBORNE DIVISION and the 502nd Berlin Brigade in West Germany. SSG Karamol worked in this capacity for over 3 years; needless to say I trust his opinion. SSG Karamol and I noted the following list of deficiencies.

Gun 1. Two cracked barrels, firing pin spring out of tolerance, ejector worn below accepted tolerance, operation rod burred and sear burred and uneven.

Gun 2. Bolt lock leg chipped, extractor pin need replacing, sear uneven and rear sight cracked completely threw.

Gun 3. Feeder arm binding, vent needs replacing, firing pin spring below tolerance.

Gun 4. Good to go

Gun 5. Feeder arm binding, firing spring out of tolerance,

Gun 6. Dead-lined failed to feed, operating rod spring below tolerance, operating rod needs grinding, Lock lug chipped and burred, Firing pin spring below tolerance, barrel flash suppressor loose and missing anchor pin.

Gun 7. Lock lug broken and bolt needs replacing.

Gun 8. Dead-lined will not feed, operating rod needs grinding, firing pin below tolerance, cotter pin missing from feed tray cover, feed paw bent, forearm will not lock into place.

Gun 9. Good to go

Gun 10. Operating rod spring below tolerance, extractor worn, firing pin below tolerance,

Gun 11. New rebuilt

Gun 12. Operating rod spring below tolerance, ejector worn, sear worn, Buffer leaking fluid needs replacing.

Gun 13. fixed during inspection but still old and worn

Gun 14. Firing pin spring below tolerance, ejector worn, sear worn.

Gun 15. Ejector worn, sear worn, firing pin spring below tolerance.

Gun 16. Not inspected

Gun 17. Not inspected

Gun 18 sear worn, operating rod needs grinding, firing pin spring below tolerance, ejector worn, Bolt lock lug broken, spare barrel piston frozen.

Gun 19. Not inspected

Gun 20. Not inspected

Gun 21. Not inspected

Several M9 Pistols, and 20 of our M203 grenade launchers had deficiencies as well, none of these were repaired by your "CUBE". SSG Karamol fixed all but a few that needed replacement parts.

Weapons were turned in with 2404 and 2407 forms completely and correctly filled out. These noted all deficiencies, and all weapons were returned untouched with the exception of one or two weapons. (Quoted by SSG Potter our units supply rep and NBC NCO.)

Did your "CUBE" even touch these weapons? I think not!

I know if you were going into harms way, you would ensure that your guns would be 100% functional. Why would you not do the same for us? OH wait, I know, pass the problem along and maybe it will get fixed down the line, a typical answer, and one we heard repeatedly! ("It'll be taken care of in

Kuwait.”) Bottom line your facility did next to nothing. I have no idea why this base was awarded the number one MOB site in the country? I could believe number one in “bullshit”, I will give you that!

BIGGS “The final insult”

BIGGS is nothing more than a circus of stupidity. The security unless provided internally by units is notional at best. The tents are roasting hot in the day and freezing cold at night. There were several days that there was no heat at all, it was the weekend and the civilians would not work.

The action that took the cake

We of the 425 can go into harms way; most of us have 15 years or more in the military system and we have to turn in our I.D. card to use the toilet? Who is the numb skull that cooked that up? It sounds to me like something a West Pointer would do. I would like to thank whoever came up with this policy from the bottom of my heart for destroying our last spark of morale, and humiliating us this one last time, before we depart your festering stink hole.

THE FINAL OUT BRIEF “BUT OF COURSE IT WAS”

On Feb-18-2004 we were awakened at 0430 to have a final breakfast at the D.A.G. and General Vane was to give us our motivational departing speech. Breakfast did not show and neither did the general. One would think that the Generals staff would have passed the changes along? But this did not come to pass. General Vane sent his stand in, General Yingling who delivered his speech with a gusto, and did hit several of the predetermined comments we have listed from past lip service speeches we have attended.

List as follows:

1. ***Good training, hooah***
2. ***Hooah***
3. Hearts and minds
4. Embark
5. Journey/adventure
6. Finest soldiers
7. ***Take care of your buddy***
8. ***God’s speed***
9. Good luck
10. Sacrifice
11. ***Wish I was going***
12. See you in a year

13. ***America is proud of you***
14. Weapons of mass destruction
15. ***War on Terror***
16. Count of soldiers on left and right
17. We will take care of your families
18. ***Your fore fathers fought for your freedom***

The ***highlighted*** phrases from our predetermined list were hit on, in the General's speech. Over all, we give the General's speech a passing grade.

CONCLUSION

This is not an officer AAR where there is a discussion and a recommendation. I don't play that game! This is the Ft Bliss MOB site in all its glory! We in the National Guard and Army Reserve are not 19-year-old fools who don't know any better. We know when there is no support and/or meaningful guidance from higher. We are on average 30 to 35 years old with a bachelor's degree under our belt and/or 25 years of hard life experience to call upon. When, and if, any soldier from this MOB site is killed or wounded, his family will get a copy of this AAR. Also every SENATOR and REPRESENTATIVE in every state will receive a copy and you can explain to them and to America why you miserably failed at your task.

24 rounds to zero
40 rounds to qualify
120 blank rounds for Urban and Convoy operations
60 rounds for reflexive fire
100 rounds for squad live fire
50 rounds for blank fire convoy operations
80 rounds for live fire convoy operation
16 T.P. and 9 live 40 MM M203 rounds
NO AT-4 firing
200 rounds per M-60 for gunners only
200 rounds per gun for M249 saw for gunners only
NO MK-19 rounds we have guns "not authorized ammo"
NO Hand Grenades "not even dummy grenades"
Not allowed to use smoke or throw pyro.
2 months to validate an Infantry Company when our state, MI, did it in a weekend.
2 months to fix our equipment (DEC 10 to FEB 2) and half of our vehicles break down on test drive.

YOU DO THE MATH! ARE WE PREPARED?

MSGT POPP
CO F 425 INFANTRY
Former AIRBORNE RANGER
Former Green Beret

Sworn statements from the soldiers of the 425 can be provided upon request to validate that these are true events that actually took place during our stay at
Ft. Bliss

LET THE FINGER POINTING BEGIN!