

OPENING STATEMENT – MAJOR CHRISTOPHER F. FOXX

I am Major Christopher F. Foxx and I was the Battalion Support Operations Officer (S2/3) for the 812th Transportation Battalion (MT) during OIF II. The unit was mobilized to active duty on 11 December 03 (HSAD) and moved to MOBSTA (Fort Stewart, GA) on 14 December 03. The unit validated in late January 2004 and arrived in theater on 13 FEB 04. The 812th redeployed to Ft. Stewart on 28 OCT 04.

The Battalion deployed with a down trace of five transportation companies and one TTD to support the movement of American and Coalition forces in CFLCC and COSCOM AO. The second mission was to occupy Camp Navistar which was located just on the border of Iraq and served as a major Convoy Support Center for all North bound convoys entering Iraq. This included Antiterrorism and Force Protection for Navistar and for the Coalition Crossing which served as the staging area for all southbound convoys returning from the Iraq AO.

TRAINING AND EQUIPMENT PRIOR TO ACTIVATION

The overall readiness of the Battalion prior to activation was C-1. The majority of the companies were also trained and prepared with the exception of the 227th Transportation Company. This unit was stripped (cross-leveled) of all of its 88M's and leadership in support of OIF I. The unit was later mobilized to active duty and over 80% of its soldiers were cross-leveled to include the Commander and 1SG. This really affected training readiness because the assigned soldiers were already deployed and the new soldiers cross-leveled into the 227th needed a lot of personnel support and equipping. This process took time away for needed essential training. I am not arguing against Cross-leveling but we must do a better job managing the large requirements in the area of Personnel, equipping, and training prior to mobilization. I would like to see more guidance and standards established directing all units to conduct soldier readiness during BA to include perhaps a three day SRP and individual task training devoted during Annual Training. Some consideration could be given to extending the Annual Training period by one week if needed and Collective training during mobilization. This would allow us to put it all together before deployment in support of unit mission and the needs of the Combatant Commander. I support the model which moves us from the system of mobilize, train, and deploy to a system of Train, Mobilize, and Deploy.

The Pre-deployment training program was successful in correcting deficiencies once the soldier's personnel issues were resolved and they were available to train through the mobilization process. The Pre-activation equipment and training policies could be improved by early establishing the period to conduct Personnel Readiness and equipping. This will leave time during Annual Training and Mobilization for essential training. The change will positively improve on the time spent mobilized but not deployed.

The unit still struggles in the area of resetting due to equipment shortages. Most units redeployed minus their mission equipment to include M998's, prime movers, trailers, SINCGARS. Most of this equipment was SBE. It is very difficult to reset and start the training process again without the proper equipment. I strongly support SBE because it positively gives time to concentrate on essential training task during the activation, mobilization, deployment, and reset cycle. Recommend a Battalion size set of equipment in theater for units to fall on for its mission and have home station equipment to reset.

Training issues

Personnel Readiness and time allocation was the largest prevention of reserve units being fully trained prior to mobilization. During Battle Assemblies a large amount of time is spent in meeting administrative requirements which doesn't allow much time for mission essential training. Also, the lack of battle focused Annual Training missions to train on Warrior Task/individual soldier tasks. The number of training days acceptable to soldiers, families and employers will vary. Some soldiers could spend many more days than the prescribed (39) days. The Battalion needs the equipment, funding and support to focus on training for its wartime mission to reset for future deployments. The current training model is adequate only if the administrative requirements can be managed to a point that keeps training our focus during most Battle Assemblies and to a minimum during Annual Training and Mobilization. One option may be to have an annual SRP to capture these administrative requirements. A lot of time was wasted during the SRP at MOBSTA on areas that were identified earlier during an SRP conducted by the command during pre-activation. The intent was for personnel deficiencies to be identified and corrected prior to getting to MOBSTA but that wasn't the case.

CONCLUSION

Finally, the post mobilization process during my tenure was adequate and the opportunity for improvement as I see it is at the unit level before mobilization. The current priority that must be changed is administrative requirements. Training must be the priority and the support to accomplish this must be in place before units are able to reset for future deployments. Power Projection Platforms must continue to stay flexible in training and equipping to meet the full spectrum operation and the changes we face today and in future battles. Increased threats from the Contemporary Operational Environment present new challenges for CSS units in the area of training and equipment readiness. This threat continues to require tactical improvements and training and equipping being first priority.