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UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS  
II MARINE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE HEADQUARTERS GROUP (FORWARD)  
II MARINE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE (FORWARD)  
UNIT 73923  
FPO AE 09510-3923

IN REPLY REFER TO:  
3500  
S-2  
24 Jan 14

From: Senior Advisor, Brigade 4-215 Security Force Assistance Advisor Team  
To: Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned

Subj: AFTER ACTION REPORT, OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM 13.2 FOR THE  
PERIOD 29 AUGUST 2013 TO 6 DECEMBER 2013

1. On 29 August 2013, 33 personnel from Security Force Assistance Advisor Team (SFAAT) 4-215 deployed to Afghanistan in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM 13.2. Each discussion point will be presented with an item that was identified pertinent to be reviewed with a topic, discussion, and recommendation as it relates to the period of operations. The intent of this after action report is to provide lessons learned for future Advisor Teams and assist in refinement of periods of instruction at the Advisor Training Cell (ATC) and Advisor Training Group (ATG) Staff for pre-deployment training.

2. Administration

a. Topic: Access to Various Administrative Tools and Systems

(1) Discussion: Under construction of the SFAAT, the S-1 section is dual-tasked with advising the Afghan National Army (ANA) S-1 section as well as maintaining the internal administrative readiness of the SFAAT. In order to efficiently execute the latter, the S-1 section is required to have access and appropriate permissions to various administrative tools and systems, to include Marine Online (MOL), Secret Personnel Accountability, Marine Corps Total Force Structure (MCTFS), Defense Casualty Information Portal System (DCIPS), Individual Awards Processing System, Defense Travel System (DTS), Government Travel Charge Card, etc. However, because the SFAATs are not independent commands, they fall under the administrative control of higher headquarters, which may not choose to grant the S-1 section of SFAAT the permissions and or access to the above stated systems, particularly MOL, MCTFS, DCIPS and DTS.

(2) Recommendation: Higher Headquarters, both stateside and outside continental United States, should make every attempt to grant subordinate SFAATs within their unit access to as many administrative tools and systems as possible, particularly MOL, MCTFS, DTS and DCIPS. This allows the subordinate SFAATs the ability to manage their own administrative deficiencies and needs, thus reducing the amount of time and support required by Higher Headquarters. Limitations can and should be put on permissions granted to subordinate SFAATs for certain systems, but access should be granted nonetheless.

b. Topic: Establishment of Command Relationship (COMREL) During Pre-deployment Training

(1) Discussion: During execution of the SFAAT pre-deployment training both SFAAT 4-215 and 5th Kandak were on the same training schedule due to

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deployment timeline and location of employment. However, ATC and ATG allowed training evolutions to be independent between the SFAATs disrupting possible unit cohesion and relationships. By operating independently, the opportunity was missed in solidifying unity of command. Identifying the teams as separate entities with no command relationship resulted in points of friction during pre-deployment training and deployment.

(2) Recommendation: Establish COMREL during the pre-deployment training to establish unity of command and allow the assimilation between the SFAAT's leadership to reduce friction while still supporting interdependence, therefore, reducing confusion about chain of command and other associated administrative functions (i.e. awards, leave, reporting, etc.)

### 3. Intelligence

a. Topic: Reception, Staging, Onward Movement, and Integration (RSO&I) Intelligence Briefs

(1) Discussion: During RSO&I aboard Camp Leatherneck, there were several intelligence related classes the SFAAT were required to attend. Classes included functions of collections, targeting, and Counter Improvised Explosive Devices (CIED).

(2) Recommendation: Briefs associated with intelligence functions (targeting, collections, topography, etc.) should only be presented to the SFAAT primary staff. By focusing on this specific audience it prevents wasting time in preparation for forward movement. The entire SFAAT is needed only for general orientation briefs, current threat situation, and CIED related material because the information is pertinent to future operations in theater.

b. Topic: Foreign Disclosure Training

(1) Discussion: Five team representatives conducted foreign disclosure training during RSO&I at Camp Leatherneck. The course provides Foreign Disclosure Representative (FDR) certification in order to coordinate release of classified information through the Foreign Disclosure Officer at Camp Leatherneck. This is a requirement due to the mission of the SFAAT and the necessary information that needs to be provided to the ANA counterparts in order to prevent catastrophic failure in their mission.

(2) Recommendation: SFAAT intelligence representatives should work to achieve this training prior to arriving in theater to expedite the timeline. Training prior to arrival in theater enables the representatives to be fully read in on procedures associated with foreign disclosure without competing priorities. Once trained, SFAAT personnel would only have to conduct initial coordination and introduction to the system organization in theater.

c. Topic: Data Transfer Agent Training

(1) Discussion: Five team representatives conducted Data Transfer Agent Training during RSO&I at Camp Leatherneck. The course certifies personnel in appropriate handling, transfer, and copying of classified



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information between Secret Internet Protocol Router (SIPR) and Combined Enterprise Regional Information Exchange (CENTRIX-ISAF / CX-I).

(2) Recommendation: SFAAT intelligence representatives need this training prior to arriving in theater. This certification parallels duties associated with FDR responsibilities and is critical in managing classified materials and preventing wrongful release of information.

d. Topic: Collections Coordination

(1) Discussion: During the first 60 days, the intelligence section encountered difficulty in basic requests for Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR). The ISR request process was not clearly explained during RSO&I at Camp Leatherneck. The instruction only explained different types of collections and how the bidding process works with points of contact. Upon arrival at Camp Delaram II, it was identified that different platforms required unique request forms due to employment criteria. This degraded response time for requests (i.e. development of request for collection, submission, request for collection bidding, approval, final coordination, and tasking.)

(2) Recommendation: The inbound intelligence section needs to be shown current bids approved for their area of operations and receive instruction in filling out ISR request forms properly. This alleviates gaps in collection between inbound and outbound units. Information gained through proper introduction and instruction positively affects turnover at the unit level in support of future operations.

4. Operations

a. Topic: Training Submission Authority

(1) Discussion: At ATC, the S-3 section maintained a pre-deployment spreadsheet detailing the training events the team conducted. The team, as well as ATC S-3, was unable to submit annual training events, such as the physical fitness test and combat fitness test scores, into Training Management System on MOL or into Marine Corps Training Information Management System. Training events had to be submitted to II MEF Headquarters Group (II MHG) S-3 via ATC, and unnecessary coordination had to be made between the SFAAT, ATC S-3 and II MHG in order to ensure training events were documented into personnel's Basic Training Record prior to deployment.

(2) Recommendation: The SFAAT Operations Officer and Operations Chief should have training submission approval via MOL to ensure proper documentation of training events. II MHG should retain approval authority and the SFAAT S-3 section point of contact can make liaison with II MHG to ensure all events are submitted properly and approved.

b. Topic: ATC Pre-deployment Training

(1) Discussion: While at ATC, Marines and Sailors received the Human Factors Cultural Immersion (HFCI) training in order to expose them to Afghans and cultural norms. There were several instances that mirrored the training



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received at ATG, which prepared Marines for the realities of their mission while conducting advising as part of the scenario.

(2) Recommendation: Continue HFCI training at ATC to include additional iterations before deployment. Conducting training at ATC and ATG for the Mission Rehearsal Exercise produced an exponential increase in language skills. The training in soft skills will only benefit the team's ability to function while interacting with counterparts.

c. Topic: RSO&I Combat Marksmanship Program (CMP)

(1) Discussion: Prior to deployment the SFAAT conducted several CMP ranges with advanced rifle and pistol drills. Advanced courses of fire included transition from rifle to pistol and speed drills with the pistol. Drills maintained condition one weapons systems during execution reinforcing realistic conditions for deployment. This training was completed both at ATC and ATG. During RSO&I at Camp Leatherneck, the SFAAT conducted a battle sight zero, modified transition drills with rifle and pistol, and a culminating insider threat live fire event. Prior to execution, the range safety brief conducted by RSO&I personnel lacked details in execution resulting in error while supervising the range. This issue occurred once the SFAAT began to execute modified transition drills. The range staff dictated that prior to holstering the pistol between drills an empty magazine be inserted to verify it was clear instead of executing proper procedures to make a clear, condition four weapon. This action inhibited previous training and resulted in confusion across the firing line. The culminating insider threat live fire event briefed that SFAAT personnel would engage the safety and holster the pistol while moving between barricades. This mandate further disrupted previous training on weapons handling at ATC and ATG.

(2) Recommendation: RSO&I range staff must be rehearsed in range expectations in order to ensure understanding for all personnel present. Based on previous training at ATC and ATG, the range course of fire needs to be tailored to the training readiness level of each SFAAT by understanding confidence level in advanced weapons handling drills. This reinforces previous training without sacrificing safety.

d. Topic: Clarification of the Battle Space Owner and the Role of SFAATs in Supporting Operations.

(1) Discussion: Several times in the first few months of the deployment Coalition Force (CF) units have unilaterally conducted operations in the ANA 4th Brigade, 215 Corps area of operation with no prior coordination. In addition, these elements often wanted to operate from Delaram II and required support from the SFAAT for fuel, food, living space, and security. Some units require little support while others request areas outside of the CF compound on the ANA base. The SFAAT team has the minimum required amount of personnel attached to it to accomplish the mission of security force assistance and advising. The team is not resourced to provide support to other units and doing so prevents the team from accomplishing its primary mission which is the stated main effort of Regional Command Southwest (RCSW) and International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF). Untimely notification resulted in ANA Brigade Staff expressing several concerns about who is within their battle space and what operations are being conducted.



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The ANA questions required information management from the SFAAT to maintain operational security and support the external unit operation.

(2) Recommendation: Higher Headquarters needs to reinforce what it promotes in regards to who owns the battle space (i.e. ANA) and the meaning of Lead Security Responsibility to dictate who can operate in the ANA's battle space. In addition, if Higher Headquarters wants to use the SFAAT location, then it must produce the personnel and materials to support the desired operation. This will prevent interference of the SFAAT primary mission task of advising and secure life support internal to the team.

e. Topic: SFAAT fielding of AN/TPQ-48 Lightweight Counter Mortar Radar (LCMR).

(1) Discussion: During the first 90 days of deployment, two 107mm rockets impacted in vicinity of the SFAAT compound. The SFAAT requested a radar asset and received an AN/TPQ-48 LCMR through the RCSW Anti-Terrorism Force Protections Liaison Officer (LNO). Five Marines conducted training on the equipment with an on-site LCMR trainer. Training included set-up, basic operation, and troubleshooting. The LCMR operates in two modes; counter fire and sense/warn. Counter fire mode on the TPQ-48 provides a much more accurate point of origin (POO) than sense and warn mode but does not detect rockets as effectively. Sense and warn mode is used primarily in conjunction with a Counter Rocket, Artillery and Mortar (C-RAM) system. Both modes pick up approximately 20 false-hits per 24 hour-period. Without a C-RAM system, the LCMR is still being operated in sense and warn mode due to its ability to detect rockets. An updated version of the software allows the TPQ-48 to pick up rocket detections in counter fire mode, but is not available to the Marine Corps. The ATPF LNO coordinated the transfer of the LCMR to Delaram II and training support. The primary purpose of the system is to detect accurate POOs for rocket attacks and allow the SFAAT and the ANA of 4th Brigade to collect intelligence and target the POO site. The TPQ-48 can only detect rockets in sense and warn mode with limited POO accuracy since it has the older version of software. The LCMR's ability to warn is limited to only a few seconds without a C-RAM and audible alarm system.

(2) Recommendation: Obtain the TPQ-49 LCMR system to reinforce force protection and counter fire abilities through use of more accurate and recent software systems. If the TPQ-49 is not available, obtain a TPQ-48 as it still reinforces force protection.

f. Topic: SFAAT Fires Advisor Billet

(1) Discussion: The 4-215 SFAAT was initially fielded with both an Artillery and Fires Advisor during pre-deployment training. The SFAAT restructured and removed the Artillery Advisor billet before deployment. The Fires Advisor currently works with the ANA Brigade Fire Support Officer on developing a functional Brigade Fire Support Coordination Center and advising on the employment and integration of fire support assets into maneuver operations. As 4th Brigade is the most recent Brigade formed in 215th Corps, many specialized units within the Kandaks require significant training to be able to operate independently. The Artillery Tolai of 4th Kandak has had little experience with 122mm D-30 howitzer and still requires advisor

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support. The Fires Advisor fills this gap by providing daily interaction with the Tolai's staff and soldiers.

(2) Recommendation: Future SFAATs maintain an Artillery Advisor in the task organization. An Artillery Advisor would allow the Tolai to develop gunline, fire direction center, and forward observer skills and allow the Fires Advisor to focus on employment, de-confliction, and fire support planning at the brigade level.

## 5. Logistics

### a. Topic: Medical Liaison

(1) Discussion: During RSO&I, there was not a II MHG Medical Representative to provide proper guidance in regards to theater medical assets or points of contact in order to facilitate medical equipment or conduct coordination.

(2) Recommendation: Communication should be made with the incoming SFAAT medical providers prior to arrival into theater. II MHG Medical Aid Station could then anticipate respective RSO&I training times and coordinate initial introductions during administrative hours.

### b. Topic: Baseline Rolls and Responsibilities

(1) Discussion: The outbound SFAAT had a different task organization than the inbound SFAAT. When conducting the RIP, personnel were assigned to cover responsibilities and receive turnover from the outbound team with full knowledge that they would likely not be performing that duty for the duration of the deployment. Since TOA, it has taken 30 days of being in a lead role to correctly assign tasks and place individuals in positions of responsibility that best reflect their specialties.

(2) Recommendation: Understand billet descriptions and staff relationships of the outbound team coupled with a projection of the inbound team's billet descriptions and responsibilities through pre-deployment planning. Use an operational planning team and assign responsibilities for the RIP/TOA prior to arriving on deck.

### c. Topic: Team Liaison Officer

(1) Discussion: After 45 days of advising and daily operations, it was identified as ideal to have a LNO positioned at Camp Leatherneck to act as a logistics representative for meetings and movement/billeting organizer. The position would serve as a force multiplier which requires an individual with strong intellect, sound tact, positive relationship building skills, and who can operate independently.

(2) Recommendation: Employ the billet of LNO on the manning document for future team deployments. Utilize someone with a strong foundation of supply knowledge and both ground and air transportation requirements.



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d. Topic: II MHG and Command Medical (C-MED) Realignment

(1) Discussion: As of 1 December 2013, C-MED gained administrative control of the SFAAT Medical sections. Prior to the unit realignment, there was minimal dissemination of reporting procedures and points of contact. This has caused confusion for designated reporting requirements (i.e. Controlled Substance Inventory Board monthly reporting, supply requests, etc.)

(2) Recommendation: Respective points of contact should be established and educated about the SFAAT teams to ensure ease in transition between administrative controlling units prior to unit realignments. This will prevent redundant reporting and a decrease of efficiency in supply requests and receipt.


7. Communications

a. Topic: Deployed Non-Classified Internet Protocol Router (NIPR), SIPR, and CENTRIX-ISAF/CX-I Accounts

(1) Discussion: System Access Authorization Requests were created in garrison for deployed NIPR, SIPR, and CX-I accounts along with associated Joint Personnel Adjudication System verification for team members. Once the team arrived at Camp Leatherneck, accounts were immediately created by the II MEF Helpdesk. Each day, all accounts created by the II MEF Helpdesk are screened to ensure that every account is Controlled Access Card (CAC) enabled as a security measure. The S-6 requested that the helpdesk ensure that the team's accounts remain exempt from this scan. At Delaram II, it was discovered that the accounts were not modified, resulting in each account requiring a CAC for login. Correcting this issue with the helpdesk compounded with the priorities of work associated with RIP/TOA prevented several users from accessing their accounts for up to four days.

(2) Recommendation: Schedule a time block with the II MEF Helpdesk upon arrival in Camp Leatherneck in order to ensure that each user can access his accounts in accordance with outlying base standard operating procedures.

8. For any questions, please contact Captain Theodore P. Martin (theodore.martin@afg.usmc.mil) or Captain Jason D. Beninate (jason.beninate@afg.usmc.mil).



T. D. PATTERSON

Copy to:  
Senior Advisor, 215th Corps SFAAT  
Operations Officer, II MHG  
Director, ATC  
Director, ATG