

Training. "The soldiers were trained and ready to perform their communication mission. I think the physical fitness and personal hygiene standards were very important...in keeping my soldiers' stress level at a minimum." *1SG Clarence Abrams*

"Technically I was prepared...but I'd suggest we do more infantry-type training to better prepare soldiers for combat situations...continue MOS and CTT training..." *SPC Randy Huffman*

"More team training... and training on convoys, M60, M203 and site defense because we weren't prepared for this type of enemy..." *SPC Michael Imperial*

"We need training as a team...not thrown together with soldiers from another unit with different jobs... also equipment palletizing would've been quicker if more soldiers were trained in air cargo loading..." *SSG Rickey Letcher*

Leadership. "We had some great senior NCO leadership...they put the junior enlisted before themselves..." *SPC Imperial*

Logistics. "Getting desert camouflage uniforms, flack vests, and other protective equipment (prior to deployment) was a last-minute rush...getting a flight...our fly-out date was changed five times before we actually left, causing some anxieties..." *1SG Abrams*

"When the MEDEVAC unit left we had no medical support for our five signal soldiers there (45 days remaining in country)...getting used to no (dining) facility...just MREs and T-RATs..." *SPC Imperial*

"Let's get there on a better aircraft..." *SPC Huffman*

Overall Observations. "We need to know about the soldiers from the other countries which will be working with us; customs, mannerisms, uniforms...more information on the mission, location, personnel, geography..." *SSG Letcher*

"The R&R was a positive experience for me...it helped relieve stress and get our minds off things..." *SPC Imperial*

"The mail was very slow...and often misrouted (once in country)...morale and recreation was limited...and I feel that some infantry and medical units got more slots (for morale trips) than other combat support units...we need more unity among different units (all for one, one-for-all concept)..." *1SG Abrams* ■

An OOTW leadership challenge...

Create a Positive Atmosphere

By 1SG William Fassinger

The sting of frigid air and blowing snow hitting my face is just as vivid today as the day we loaded the last vehicle on the rail car. I reflected on the words my mentors gave me and searched for the knowledge and the courage to serve my country without fear.

I wanted to lead my soldiers in the best possible fashion on this and every mission. I knew my company was the best in the Army and our leadership would rise to the challenges at hand. I was also reassured in knowing my soldiers had received the best and most realistic training. The only thing that I feared at this point was the unknown.

"Welcome to Somalia!" It was almost a contradiction in terms. Why would you welcome someone to a country that has nothing? However, the time for leaders to motivate soldiers was at hand. It was hot—very hot—and the humidity sapped our strength.

The leadership challenges were in full force—lack of sleep, an unforgiving climate, back-to-back missions, etc. Field manuals, classroom training, exercises, role playing. All these things and more didn't get us close to the harsh reality that we were about to face. Every day was a new challenge in the art of leading and motivating soldiers.

Reflecting on this mission has allowed me to see what helped me and my NCOs create a positive leadership atmosphere. One of the keys to this, I believe, was the tough and realistic training standards we established in garrison and in field training environments. These scenarios were tested time and time again for both the leaders and the soldiers.

Our platoon sergeants and squad leaders were given missions, but were also given the opportunity and flexibility to plan for and execute those missions. They were given the chance to perform as NCOs.

In Somalia, the unit performed a variety of missions ranging from area security, battlefield circulation and control, convoy operations and raid operations in search of arms caches to base cluster defense operations.

There were many examples of exemplary duty performance among the soldiers and NCOs of my unit. I attribute this to realistic training, not cutting corners, setting standards and enforcing them, mentoring and taking care of soldiers.

Leaders at all levels react differently to each situation. I sincerely hope every NCO and soldier who participated in an OOTW mission will pass on all their experiences, good and bad, to all soldiers and leaders. We must continue to develop our soldiers to fill our shoes in the NCO Corps of tomorrow's Army. ■

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A Ft. Drum soldier provides security for Somali children during Operation Restore Hope. [Ft. Drum PAO photo]