

General Comments: Operation Apollo

James Yeager May 25th, 2005

Mission Focus

Our mission is the protection of the eight Iraqi Election Commissioners. As we all know these are high priority targets. If one or all of them were killed, especially during the pre-election period, it would have potentially destabilized the entire country even further. Many times our team leaders referred to it as a “resume builder” and said we were a part of a “historical event”.

Our team leaders feel our clients are a nuisance. One example of the day to day failure of our team leaders is the simple task of manning our team at the Interim Iraqi Government Building. We do it every day and we never have a team leader up here. This is the most prime target we operate in and we never get a team leader up here. Leadership is always handed off to an operator while all of our other team leaders do other things, every single day. I was a team leader during a 30 day break and I took over for Johnno. I asked if I could be the “IIGB Team Leader” for the month and work it every day. They refused and said “Team Leaders don’t belong there.”

We have a team here EVERY day along with our EIGHT clients and it is not important?

SOPs

Operation Apollo has no written S.O.P.s for wearing body armor, weapons maintenance, tactics or anything else relevant, but we have S.O.P.s for “fraternization” and “Haji Dress”. This is inexcusable, reckless, and above all an indicator of our lack of leadership.

If the individual teams will not write S.O.P.s then ERSM should hand them a set to abide by. As a new operator coming fresh onto a project how are you supposed to know what all the other operators are going to do? You won’t.

Leadership

Operation Apollo has no Leaders. Operation Apollo has no Administrators. Is there even a formal written job description for Project Managers and Team Leaders? There cannot be! We have Fred Lynch as a PM and he goes on every “cool guy” mission and we have no one left to do administration. Admin duties get passed around this project constantly to lower team members who do not get Team Leader pay. Team leaders are micromanaged by Lynch. I cannot say enough bad things about Fred Lynch. If I were to cover his incompetence the book would be larger than *The Odyssey*.

I would like there to be a thorough and formal review of all CVs and résumés that have been submitted by ALL members of this project. I doubt their validity and allowing them to continue is negligent. I can assure you we have some outright LIARS when it comes to past deeds and qualifications.

I would like every member of this project to be tested for steroids, hashish, marijuana, valium, cocaine, and ecstasy. Drug use is rampant on this project including within certain members of our command staff.

Training

Our clients were gone for virtually and entire month after the election. Did we use that time for much needed training? No, our team saw fit to build a BAR at our house and party all night long with every drunk they could invite virtually every night for a month. One night the music lasted until 0635. I had to be ready for work at 0800. As soon as I got off work I had to go on a BIAP run because over 50% of our team was mission incapable because they were hung over and or asleep. I had just gotten back from the U.S. the day before and hadn't slept. I went on a BIAP run because I was the most able and I hadn't had sleep for nearly 48 hours.

It still happens, even now, 3-4 nights a week. We have a bunch of alcoholics on our team.

Weapons

- The recent craze with short barreled M-4s is foolish. No American ammunition manufacturer recommends a barrel shorter than 11.5. It reduces the velocity far too much to be effective. You can find plenty of info on-line.
- I have heard "We don't need this and we don't need that." Tell me when I am going to be in a gunfight and I won't go but don't tell me what I need and don't need.
- We have no Armorers and no spare parts for any of the guns. If a part breaks it will take weeks to get replacement parts.
- SAWs and GPMGs are not implemented correctly on the team. We have been told we don't need them. People need to be trained and they should be put into proper use.
- Operators who carry AKs with folded stocks should unfold them when they are being used.
- Pistol gripped shotguns are far more popular here than they should be. They are totally useless and anyone who thinks they aren't should take one to the range and try it out. When you actually shoot and train with gun you figure these things out.

- Guys collapse their stocks on the M-4s and leave them collapsed. They should be adjust for fighting and left alone. The constant collapsing and opening is unnecessary.
- Some personnel cannot unload their guns fast enough after missions. Why? A fear of loaded guns should be overcome long before someone comes to Iraq.

Other Theater's of Operation

We have people from Britain, Canada, Australia, America, and South Africa on our team. Many have had experience in hostile environments prior to coming to Iraq. But I could care less about the people who fought against the IRA in Northern Ireland. We are in Iraq in case someone didn't notice and whatever a person did some other place simply isn't relevant. I was a Cop in "Pig Knuckle" Tennessee and I have never mentioned it. Do you know why? It isn't relevant. Last time I checked The IRA and Northern Ireland is no success story and I wouldn't be resting my laurels on a group of people who's operators were suspected to be less than 200 at the height of their insurrection. More bombs go off in Iraq in one day that the IRA set off in 30 years. Even Afghanistan has no relation to what is going on here. There are guys here who were in Beirut during the 1980s and say it was child's play compared to Iraq. We need to get out of the past and get into THIS game.

General Mindset of Apollo Team Leaders

I was told by Fred Lynch "It isn't your job to motivate people. It's mine." If you listed every trait that made someone a good leader he would be the exact opposite of that. He is a "yes man" to his superiors and a "no man" to his subordinates.

The team was told by Tom Powell to carry un-zeroed and unfired M-4s on Election Day. When we protested he told us "Don't worry. The Army will protect you." He said this just after he found out he was named in the Blackwater lawsuit for allegedly playing a part in the liabilities that led to the deaths of his 4 operators in Fallujah. He is apparently playing some part in the new ERSM training facility in Florida since I fired him from my company as soon as I found out he was a fraud. He also absconded with all of my training materials which are copyrighted so I am sure they won't end up in any ERSM classes.

Rob Lister is a good man but when he was placed into the crew of unqualified leaders he just blended right in to the group. He knew the things he was seeing were wrong but he was not motivated or dedicated enough to make them right. That makes him a failure.

Bob Graham is illiterate, incompetent, insubordinate, insecure, inhumane to our staff, and indifferent to the team's problems. I would ask that he be thrown out of Iraq but I am afraid he might go back to the U.S. and breed.

I was told by Stu Senior that this job isn't about carrying machine guns and playing "G.I. Joe" it is about lighting a cigarette for your client. Did anyone check his references? Every time I meet one of his former co-workers they want to know where he is so they can kill him.

I sent an article out to all the e-mails I have for ERSM employees. It was essentially about sheep, wolves, and sheep dogs and about Warrior Mindset. Crispian Cuss, the Operations Director sent a one word response and said the article was "Drivel". I think that sets the ERSM corporate tone for the importance of a fighting Mindset. Yesterday he sent me an insulting e-mail about my incident report saying it was a "fantasy" and needed a rewrite. Is insulting people who lay their life on the line for your company a standard S.O.P. or did he make that one up just for me? I expect more out of a senior corporate representative of the company.

Solutions

I despise people who only complain and never offer solutions. In that spirit I am going to put my money where my mouth is. After I take a short break when I go home I will come back and train all of the in-country ERSM operators with a full shooting and tactics package (about ten days per team) for free for as long as it takes. The number of projects you have multiplied by 10 days is how long I will stay with no questions asked. I will pay my own airfare and all I ask is a roof over my head for the time I am training.

I do not have all the answers but I do have a few and I would be honored if ERSM took me up on my offer.

Respectfully Submitted,

James Yeager