Global War on Terrorism Personal Experience Paper: Program Objectives
Memorandum 08-13

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Abstract

This personal experience paper is an attempt to document my experience with the Program Objectives Memorandum 08-13. In January 2006 I took over as the Troop Sergeant Major of a section charged with executing a program revolving around developing and acquiring support for USASOC elements. Nothing in my background or experience had prepared me to manage this type of program or fight for the funding required to execute its mission.
Personal Background

In 1989 I enlisted in the Army under the Delayed Entry Program in July 1989 and began Chemical Specialist One Station/Unit Training (OSUT) at Ft. McClellan, Alabama in January 1990. Following OSUT, I attended Airborne School at Ft. Benning, GA. My first duty assignment was Ft. Carson, CO where I was assigned to the 31st Chemical Company where I served as a smoke and decontamination specialist and the unit Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical (NBC) NCO. In October of 1991 I transferred to B Co, 2/501st AVN Battalion at Camp Humphries, Korea where I served as the company NBC NCO. After returning to the U.S. in January 1993, I was assigned to the HHC, 525 MI BN as the Company NBC NCO. Eighteen months later I requested an inter-post transfer to the 101st Chemical CO where I served as Assistant Squad Leader and Squad Leader. In June 1995 I transferred to The United States Army Special Operations Command where I have served in a variety of positions. Since being assigned to USASOC I have deployed to various countries in support of numerous operations. During my career I have attended PLDC, BNCOC, ANCOC, Combat Lifesavers Course, Basic Airborne Course, Air-load Planners Course, Military Freefall Course, Static line Jumpmaster Course, and Battle Staff Non-commissioned Officers Course as well as others.

Unit Background

The Troop supports USASOC elements with development and acquisition. In December 2005 I moved to the troop and began an inventory of the multi-million dollar Troop hand receipt prior to assuming duties as the Troop SGM. The Troop Commander was scheduled to deploy to Iraq a little over a week from my arrival and my predecessor
was in the final stages of out-processing in order to retire. Fortunately for the troop and me, the Troop Operations Sergeant had been in the troop for several years and was there to ease the transition. Most of the NCOs in the troop had completed at least one if not more rotations in Iraq.

Organizational Situation

In September 2005 I was informed that I was selected to take over a troop size element as the Troop Sergeant Major. Nothing in my background or experience had prepared me to manage an element charged with development and acquisition. I considered not taking the position due to what I saw as my lack of qualifications for the job. However I agreed to take over as the Troop Sergeant Major because it was a leadership position, which a mentor had counseled me long ago to “never turn down” even if it wasn’t your ideal job. Despite my misgivings the unit Commander and Command Sergeant Major wanted someone with my type of experiences to lead the Troop.

Although my position as the Troop SGM was a leadership role, it encompassed several roles usually held by staff elements. During the month long transition with my predecessor I found out that in my new position I would manage over a $7 million annual budget and serve as the Contracting Officers Representative on several contracts which accounted for approximately more than half of the troop budget. On New Year’s Day 2006 I officially took over as the Troop SGM of a 44-man element comprised of active duty military, Government Civilians, and Contractors.

Within the first week I received an email from the Unit Budget Officer informing me that as the Troop/Program subject matter expert I would need to brief the Program
Funding Line to the MACOM Assistant Directors (ADs) in approximately a week. Although I knew the Troop had a significant budget, I was unaware of how it was acquired. Up to that point in time I may have heard the acronym POM exactly once. Talk about drinking from a fire hose, add my lack of knowledge to the Budgeting Officer’s words of encouragement “You better be ready, because they are coming after your program line” and my first major challenge as the Troop SGM began. I had a $7 million dollar annual budget, no idea how I got it, a little bit of knowledge on how it was expended, a retiring predecessor’s input of “The Troop Commander handled the POM, you can find his files on the LAN.”, a deployed Commander, and approximately 1 week to figure out how to defend the program funding.

Hopefully the humor in this situation comes through, because any other senior NCO could be thrown into a similar position and I believe that humor, help from every member of the command, and some sleepless nights were the only things that led to a favorable outcome. To explain my experience in the POM process and how it secured funding for the program I will first explain the four phases of the Resource Allocation Process.

The Resource Allocation Process

The Department of Defense funds all military programs by providing resources or budgetary dollars through the Resource Allocation Process (RAP). The RAP is a four phase process which identifies and allocates funding for weapon and information systems, people, buildings, or operating and support costs. The four phases of the RAP are the Planning, Programming, Budgeting and Execution (PPBE) Process, Enactment, Apportionment, and Execution. The four phases of the RAP overlap. When the current
year budget is being spent or executed, next year’s budget is in the Enactment Phase and programming for the 3rd year’s budget is underway. The RAP is a continuous process. (See Figure 8-2 for an illustration of the overlapping nature of the RAP Phases) (Defense Acquisition University, 2005)

**PHASE ONE**  
Planning, Programming, Budgeting and Execution (PPBE) Process

The Deputy Secretary of Defense is responsible for PPBE process, which produces Dept. of Defense (DoD) Budget. The Defense budget is DoD’s portion of the President’s budget or fiscal plan. The Dep. SECDEF relies on advice and input from the Senior Leadership Review Group (SLRG), which he chairs. The SLRG includes the
five Under Secretaries of Defense for: Acquisition, Technology and Logistics; Policy; Comptroller/Chief Financial Officer; Personnel and Readiness, and the Director of Program Analysis and Evaluation, as well as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Secretaries of the Army, Navy, and Air Force. The SLRG considers all relevant information during the PPBE, including DoD’s Strategic Plan, the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR). The QDR is an assessment of the roles and missions that the military expected to address. It is produced once every 4 years, influences all military related programs, and drives the PPBE process.

The PPBE process is based on a 2-year cycle. During even numbered calendar years, called the “on-year”, DoD formulates 2-year budgets and PPBE produces three key documents for each military department, defense agency, and selected other agencies/offices the Strategic Planning Guidance (SPG) and Joint Programming Guidance (JPG), and a Program Objectives Memorandum (POM).

In the odd numbered or “off-years” DoD concentrates on budget execution and evaluates program performance. The SECDEF may choose to issue the JPG during the off-year, it is at his discretion. Small programmatic adjustments are allowed during the off-year to address real world un-forecasted requirements. Updates to the Future Years Defense Program (FYDP) occur during both on- and off-years, and a DoD budget is produced every year. (Defense Acquisition University, 2005)
Phase II

Enactment

The Enactment Phase begins in February of each year when the President submits his annual budget to Congress. During phase two of the RAP Congress reviews the President’s budget, holds hearings, and passes legislation. The Enactment Phase lasts approximately 9 months and ends when the President signs annual Authorization and Appropriation Legislation. The Authorization Bill approves both military and civilian programs, sets funding levels, and specifies systems to be procured. Budgetary authority to obligate, expend, and outlay government funds is provided through the Appropriations Process. These authorities are executed during Phase IV. (Defense Acquisition University, 2005)

Phase III

Apportionment

The Apportionment Phase begins after the President signs the authorization and appropriations legislation. Once the legislation is enacted, funds are made available to DoD and other federal agencies through apportionment. The Office of Management and Budget oversees the national budget and releases funds to DoD as well as other federal agencies during this phase. Once DoD receives its portion of the budget, it is further proportioned by the Under Secretary of Defense to his counterparts in the separate branches of service and various defense agencies. Funds are then transferred downstream to MACOMs and eventually reside in program funding lines. (Defense Acquisition University, 2005)
Phase IV

Execution

The Execution Phase of the RAP is the phase where funds are spent on approved programs. This phase is where Contracting Officers obligate funds by awarding contracts for materials or services and then expend funds by writing checks or electronically transfer funds in order to pay bills. Outlays happen when government checks are cashed and money actually leaves the U.S Treasury. (Defense Acquisition University, 2005)

Summary of My Role in POM 08-13

In January 2006 I stepped into the four phases of the RAP are the Planning, Programming, Budgeting and Execution (PPBE) Process, Enactment, Apportionment, and Execution. Since 2006 was an “on-year”, for Phase 1 of the RAP, as a Program Manager I was responsible for planning and forecasting my Troop/Program budget. In order to project the Program budget out over a seven year period I had to take the most recent QDR, SOCOM POM Planning Guidance, our current Mission, and possible future Missions into consideration. In the 08-13 POM SOCOM directed that Program Managers re-look their programs and forecast for GWOT expenses that were currently funded under the Annual GWOT Supplements passed by Congress to fund un-forecasted expenses associated with the war. (See Redacted Program Funding and Detailed Funding Sheets in PDF attachment) In conjunction with my unit Budget Officer and Comptroller I developed and gave multiple briefings to SOCOM ADs who would make a recommendation to the SOCOM Commander on continued program funding. (See Redacted Final POM 08-13 Briefing in Attachment.) The final outcome of the 08-13
POM resulted in the establishment of a new Research and Development Line and a Procurement Funding Line for our program.
Bibliography