

Straight Talk on Strategy and Mission

No staged "dog and pony show" for VFW Communications Director Jerry Newberry

May 12, 2011

It's been a whirlwind of a week thus far. The command has bent over sideways to provide me with a comprehensive view and inside look at implementation of the strategy and mission in Afghanistan.

Now just to set the record straight, it might be natural to assume that someone is staging a dog and pony show or serving up a heap o' disingenuous pablum for the guy from the VFW, but it just ain't so. Seriously.

See, we at the VFW know how to ask questions. We like to ask questions. We especially like to ask HARD questions if we catch wind of, or even suspect, just a teeny-weeny bit that someone's trying to blow smoke. It honestly hasn't occurred. No smoke. Not even a wisp. Questions are answered in a direct and straightforward manner. There's no ducking, dodging or sidestepping a question or issue. In fact, when an occasion does arise whereas my jaundiced eye and oft-jaded personality spots something that provides an opportunity to pounce with an exuberant "gotcha," one of our service members steps up and points out or acknowledges any existing problem or potential obstacle or challenge that will need to be met in order for the mission to succeed.

A condensed view of the week goes like this:

Dinner with CG and senior staff, meetings and interviews with Sr. Advisor to Afghanistan Uniformed Police, Senior Advisor to the ANA Chief of the General Staff, Sr. Advisor (Canada) to ANA Assistant Chief of Staff and Afghanistan Ministry of Defense Spokesman Mohammed Zaher Azimi.

Have viewed D-Com Program (Afghan First) and program sites including manufacturing facilities.

And a while ago was briefed at ISAF HQ by RDML Hal Pittman, Deputy Chief of Staff,

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Communications.

And of course, in between all of that, the very best part has been many great conversations with Soldiers, Sailors, Marines and Air Force personnel. Hope to have opportunity to sit down and bring some of those stories and interviews to you before heading off to Kandahar in a couple of days.

—Jerry Newberry