

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
UNTIL RELEASED BY THE  
HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
NATIONAL SECURITY,  
EMERGING THREATS, AND  
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

**STATEMENT OF  
STAFF SERGEANT JUAN SANCHEZLOPEZ  
UNITED STATES MARINE CORP  
BEFORE THE  
GOVERNMENT REFORM COMMITTEE  
HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY, EMERGING THREATS,  
AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS  
CONCERNING  
COMBATING TERRORISM: TRAINING AND EQUIPPING  
RESERVE COMPONENT FORCES  
ON  
MAY 11, 2004**

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**Staff Sergeant Juan Sanchezlopez,  
United States Marine Corps**

SSgt Sanchezlopez was born on October 5, 1973 in Michoucan, Mexico. He enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps in February 1991 and in December of that year he attended Recruit Training at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot (MCRD) in San Diego, California. Upon graduation, he reported to Marine Combat Training at Camp Pendleton, California. He then reported to Camp Delmar for Motor Transportation school and was assigned the military occupational specialty of Motor Vehicle Operator (3531). His first assignment upon graduation, he reported to Battery E, 2nd Battalion, 11th Marines as a Motor Vehicle Operator.

In October 1992, he deployed on a six-month western pacific and participated in Operation Restore Hope in Somalia. In April 1994, SSgt Sanchezlopez was appointed the Battery Motor Transport Chief. During five-month Air Contingency Force, he received a Navy Achievement Medal for the successful preparation and coordination of this evolution. SSgt Sanchezlopez also deployed to twentynine Palms, California for a Combines Arms Exercise. He was awarded a second Navy Achievement Medal for duties as the Motor Transport Chief and successful preparation and organization of all battery convoy operations. In May 1995 he deployed with Battery E, 2nd Battalion, 11th Marines to Okinawa for a six month tour. In October 1992, he reported to 3rd Recruit Training Battalion at MCRD San Diego where he served as a Marine Drill Instructor. SSgt SanchezLopez assisted in the training of over 15,000 Marines during his tour. He was awarded his third Navy Achievement Medal and a Navy Commendation Medal. In January 2000, he reported to 2nd Battalion, 23rd Marines in Encino, California and in January 2002 he was activated in support of Operation Nobel Eagle and Operation Iraqi Freedom serving as the Logistics Chief.

His additional awards include the Combat Action Ribbon with Gold Star, Presidential Unit Citation, Joint Meritorious Unit Award, Meritorious Unit Citation with two bronze stars. Marine Corps Good Conduct Medal with one Bronze Star, Selected Marine Corps Reserve Medal, National Defense Service Medal with one bronze star, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, Southwest Asia Service Medal with two Bronze stars, Sea Service Deployment Ribbon with two bronze stars, Drill Instructor Ribbon, Armed Forces Reserve Medal with Mobilization device, and the Kuwait Liberation Medal.

## **Introduction**

Chairman Shays, distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, my name is Staff Sergeant Juan SanchezLopez. I am a member of 2nd Battalion, 23rd Marines, United States Marine Corps Reserve, located in Encino, California. I was mobilized in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and reported to Camp Pendleton, California where I served for 13 months. My unit was deployed with Regimental Combat Team One, 1st Marine Division in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom in February 2003 for an additional 4 months, returning to the United States in May 2003. I served on active duty for a total of 24 months. Prior to serving in the Reserves, I served on active duty for 8 years. I have been in the Reserves for four years. My Military Occupation Specialty is Motor Transport Chief.

While serving in Iraq we did not face insurgents. During the fighting we faced Iraqi Regular Army and Republican Guard units. These units were defending from within buildings and forested areas. These Iraqi's normally fell back once we attacked. There were some incidents of Iraqis in civilian clothing attacking our positions while driving taxis and private vehicles that had been hi-jacked. We believed that Iraqi Army and Republican Guard units held the driver's family members captive and ordered the males to attack our positions. Sometimes Iraqi soldiers forced women and children to stay in the vehicles while the vehicles were used to attack our positions.

My unit was not involved in fighting insurgents during Operation Iraqi Freedom I. We did change our fighting tactics based on how the enemy was fighting. Our roadblock procedures were one of these changes: based on intelligence reports we changed the setup for the conduct of roadblocks. This change was based on information from another Marine Regiment. Another

change to our tactics occurred once we entered Baghdad. These changes involved our convoy procedures. At this time we stopped allowing Iraqi civilian vehicles from passing and mixing in with our convoys. This was due to reports of attacks on convoys from passing cars.

My battalion recently completed a battalion field exercise. In this exercise we incorporated the lessons we learned from the war into our training. Some of these lessons were convoy procedures and local security procedures.

I am not familiar with the Army's Improvised Explosive Device Task Force or the Central Command Combined Explosives Exploitation Cell. During our support of Operation Iraqi Freedom we did not experience any incidents of Improvised Explosive Devices. The minefields we did see were known ahead of time and marked as we crossed the Kuwait-Iraq border.

My unit participated in the same training as our active duty units prior to deploying from the United States to Kuwait. We served on active duty for 13 months prior to departing the United States in support of Enduring Freedom. Our only equipment difficulty was we did not know whether we would be using amtracks or trucks to transport the entire battalion during the war until after we got to Kuwait. The decision to move our battalion on trucks was made approximately one week prior to the start of the ground offensive.

I would like to thank all the Members this committee for allowing me to speak. I hope my testimony will assist in answering any questions you may have.