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Huntsman Graduate, Jordan Phillips, Gets Education at USU and Iraq

By Allie Jeppson

Before attending Utah State University, recent Huntsman graduate Jordan Phillips gained a less formal education — one that involved Howitzer guns, a journey to Iraq, and proved to be every bit as valuable as his business administration degree.

For the last 10 years, Jordan has served in the Army National Guard. His decision to enlist in the military was one that was made at a young age, shortly after high school graduation.

"It was a good way to pay for college," Jordan said, "but more importantly, I felt that I had been blessed with a lot and wanted to give back."

Not long after he enlisted, during his time in basic training, Jordan was notified that his unit would shortly be mobilized to Iraq. Five months later, after the completion of his training, Jordan found himself in a different country during the height of the Iraq war.

Jordan said that his mission in Iraq involved many convoys and route clearances because one of the biggest problems at that time was roadside bombs.

"It was unconventional warfare," he said. "There was a lot going on and I was just a young kid, but it helped me grow up a lot and it was eye opening."

Jordan said his experience taught him how to adapt and overcome obstacles.

"At a young age, learning that (lesson) kind of helped me in the future with school too," he said. "When you feel like you're overwhelmed with assignments, ultimately if you just push through it, you're ok, but if you think about giving up it's just going to get you in trouble."

Jordan's deployment lasted a year and a half after which time he worked at a car dealership for two years and then decided to attend Utah State in fall 2008.

Two years after that, in August 2010, Jordan postponed his schooling as he was sent to Iraq a second time.

During his second deployment, Jordan served as a leader within his unit over a team of seven other men. His mission this time was
to work alongside Special Forces in helping with things like training Iraqi Security Forces, and targeting and pursuing high value insurgents. His service lasted one year, after which he returned and finished school. Though it took him a little longer than usual to earn his degree, Jordan said that the experiences he had in Iraq are invaluable to him.

"My experiences in the military helped me be a better student and my education at USU helped me become a better soldier," he said.

Particularly, Jordan noted that his second deployment helped him to become a leader and discover what type of leader he wanted to be.

"There's a saying in the military that states, 'you can push your men into battle or you can have your men follow you into battle,'" he said. "You want to be the type of person people can respect and that they want to follow."

Jordan stated that he found this lesson to be applicable in classroom settings where he needed to work effectively with other students and group members. He believes it will also be an important component in his upcoming job as a corporate sales development specialist with Workday where he will help corporations implement Workday's software.

"The job requires excellent communication skills and the ability to listen to assess client needs," Jordan said. "Both skills that were developed from the military and my schooling at USU."

Though his experiences in the military were valuable to his scholarly and professional success, Jordan said that there are many other ways that students can gain school-enhancing experiences.

"I chose the military," he said, "but that's not to say that is the best route for everyone. Students can still gain their own unique and valuable experiences through community service, club involvement, student body activities, internships, etc., to help them become better students.