

Date: Wed, 29 Jun 2005 21:37:15 -0700 (PDT)
From: Mike Moses <ki7wh@yahoo.com>
Subject: Response to Letter of Complaint--(We have met the enemy and They is Us)
To: Mel Rathbun <marymel51@comcast.net>

MEMORANDUM

To: Mel Rathbun

CC: RACES members, EOC staff, FYI Parties

From: Mike Moses, R.A.C.E.S Officer

Subject: We have met the enemy and They is Us

When young I did eagerly Frequent

Doctor and Saint and heard great Argument

About it and about but evermore

Went out the same door where in I went.

--The Rhubiyat of Omar Kayaam

And here I thought everything was going okay. Membership is increasing. My status is official (indicating improving relations and credibility with EOC and ARRL). There are upcoming training opportunities and agreements with other organizations within the scope of emergency communications. One of the thorny issues was the Englewood subset of R.A.C.E.S members. Gerry Mallet and I had discussions with 3 leading members of the Englewood group and it seemed that prospects for having a viable and cooperative R.A.C.E.S effort were very positive.

Lo and Behold! Here comes a letter attached to the renewal postcard. It is accusatory and negative and, candidly, in my view it poses questions on the viability of the entire R.A.C.E.S organization in our county. I will explain why I feel so strongly about this letter. Before I go into the letter, I note that I called you, Mel Rathbun, the author, to arrange for a meeting to discuss the problems. This meeting will probably take place next week. But, we talked on the landline for quite some time. The conversation was not heated but did not go well. I don't think it is possible for me to continually assuage the sensibilities and sensitivities of those pushing for a de facto separate R.A.C.E.S organization who march to their own drummer—with primary loyalty to the Englewood Radio Club. I have met already with three leaders from within the Englewood R.A.C.E.S subset. I had hoped that those meetings were representative and still do. But, apparently there are other opinions. Who speaks for Englewood R.A.C.E.S members? Are the leaders talking to one another?

What I am trying to do with this memo is put the issue out in front. Let's let the whole organization chime in. It is important to note that I do want input but will not accept veto power from individuals just because they are upset. There are always those who are upset. As one of the speakers at the recent emergency radio conference in Tallahassee noted on his slide, "Working with Ham radio operators is like herding cats. " If there is consensus from Englewood R.A.C.E.S members and others, so be it. I may act accordingly and have no qualms about stepping down. I think that would be unfortunate, however, for while the Englewood region has good participation, the R.A.C.E.S organization as a whole needs a lot more to keep going.

There are many other possibilities, including: If the remainder of Charlotte County and/or a portion of Englewood R.A.C.E.S encourages me to remain, perhaps Englewood members feeling strongly would want to

form their own emergency radio club—separate from R.A.C.E.S and R.A.C.E.S assets and locations. Maybe, the Englewood group could officially split off and form their own R.A.C.E.S group with the county’s blessing—complete with their own R.A.C.E.S Officer (may god have mercy on his soul). Certainly the possibility exists that, the EOC leadership, who would prefer not to be bothered with the extraneous concerns and petty squabbles of a volunteer group, can join the majority of counties in Florida who are not convinced that amateur organizations are indispensable and consequently eliminate R.A.C.E.S as a sponsored organization, relying on the built in support of the FEMA request system (TRACKER or G.R.O.O.V.E) during emergencies for ARRL support. The EOC has come close to disbanding R.A.C.E.S in the past so this is not idle banter. The EOC also has the option of dismantling the RACES portion of West County.

Now to (Mel Rathbun’s) your letter and comments:

You Said: “your comments are not totally factual...you stated that no one from West County step (sic) forward to assist you...must I remind you no one was aware or notified of this position that you are now holding until your e-mails such as they are, came “rolling in”.

My Response: I was unable to find the correspondence you mention. I do remember saying either verbally or in writing that I am basically doing the admin work pretty much on my own. I have technical help at times and folks have been helpful on this side of the river in assisting with net control functions. But with respect to planning, logistics, administration and the numerous positions listed in the Emergency Plan, no one has stepped up to the plate. That you were unaware of me until you became aware of me seems pretty obvious. I was unaware of me, too. My policy is: when in doubt read the manual. I came into the position and read all that I could about it and took the actions I thought needed. Admittedly, they were not baby steps. *Mea culpa*.

And what about you Mel, and the other officers of West County whose names are found as the position holding officers in R.A.C.E.S. Three of you guys are listed as the Planning and Logistic Coordinators. Well...what kind of planning and logistics has been undertaken since hurricane season? And if there was no one at the EOC that was managing all the coordinators and coordination, why didn’t one of the officers say, “hey let’s do something or get someone”.

Your Comment: Many of the West County RACES members would have more than been happy to assist you in giving you all of the facts that we have, No, you did not ask for our input until you “rocked the boat”.

My Response: Your enmity is blinding you to the facts. This is an excerpt from an email (the first one!) dated 7 May titled “Targeting the Wet Noodle”:

I look forward to meeting all RACES/ARES volunteers in person at the forthcoming meetings and training sessions and drills and to working with those of you who continue or elect to fill the necessary positions. In the meantime, please, please forward your comments and ideas to me.

The email sent out on the 24th of May said:

I am willing to expend whatever time and energy I have to accomplish this providing two things:(1) I get the support of the membership (at least a central corps component willing to commit to vital stations); (2) I get the active and interactive support of the EOC in developing and maintaining a RACES organization that is competent and respected.

So far, item number 2 is coming along fine. And, obviously, I DID ask for your input from the earliest.

As far as the “rocked the boat” allegation, West County may have had a boat, but we here South of the Myakka were already going under. As you know, there had not been an active presence during the R.A.C.E.S nets for this side of the Myakka in many months. The problem is that West County complainants are looking at R.A.C.E.S from your side of the river and I do not have the luxury of seeing it that way. And so, I ask myself, what does he mean by “rocking the boat”? Does he mean that I implemented changes right off the bat? Sure enough, I did do that. I am still trying to effect the net schedule to reflect one activity each week. I want each net to focus on some kind of drill or exercise. I want one tactical net control held at a single time. Why did I

implement these things? Not because I wanted change for changes sake, but because I read the FEMA R.A.C.E.S guidelines and implemented them. Let's recap some of these:

The role of local governments is to establish and train a RACES organization designed to provide or supplement essential emergency communications within their local jurisdiction.

To establish a RACES organization, the Director, State or local government Emergency Operating Center (EOC) or Director of Emergency Management (or designated representative) should first appoint, in writing, a reliable amateur to serve as the RACES Officer.

Notice that R.A.C.E.S is established by local government—not by local radio clubs.

RACES members are responsible for:

- 1. Participating in the training sessions;*
- 2. Briefing the RACES Officer of any changes in equipment or amateur status that may affect operation in the RACES program;*
- 3. Developing a strong background in emergency procedures, FCC Rules and Regulations, and network procedures;*
- 4. Being available when emergency communications are required by the appointing Director;*
- 5. Helping strengthen the organization by offering suggestions and positive feedback to correct deficiencies;*
- 6. Complying with volunteer standards established by the jurisdiction; and,*
- 7. Notifying the RACES Officer, in writing, when terminating membership.*

I ask that you look at the above responsibilities and tell me honestly if you think West County is in compliance. We will talk some about that later in this memo, as it is pertinent to your comments to me. But I would fault West County on numbers 1 (your own exclusive sessions don't count, sorry), 3. "Positive" feedback has been given but I do not consider your comments and some of those in your particular camp positive. 6. I have established a schedule for operations and tactical nets. It seems that you folks are purposely continuing with the nets as you have done in the past. Here is an excerpt from FCC part 97 (note this is a rule, not a guideline):

*Communications for RACES training drills and tests (are) necessary to ensure the establishment and maintenance of orderly and efficient operation of the RACES as ordered by the responsible civil defense organization served. **Such drills and tests may not exceed a total time of 1 hour per week.***

The FEMA guideline is:

Training sessions should be scheduled to exercise the efficiency of the emergency plan and the proficiency of the RACES members. On the average 1 hour per week should be devoted to RACES activities and training.

So, if we have a Wednesday night ops net and then a Thursday morning Tactical net, we are probably going over the "rule" part limiting drills to no more than 1 hour per week. That is one reason why I changed the schedule. The other reason is that I don't want to have two R.A.C.E.S organizations within the county. You can make disclaimers about how you are still part of R.A.C.E.S and not separate, but the problems I am having all stem from the bonding among a number of you in West County, the perceived separation, the closing of ranks, etc. Your letter brought this to a head and maybe that is just as well.

Continuing on with your letter:

Your Comment: "A good leader is a team player.... At one time you were invited to attend the EARS

meeting...Unfortunately, you did not ...present yourself.”

My Comment: I disagree with your convenient contention that a good leader is (always) a team player. The truth is that a good leader leads. Sometimes that means conflict, persuasion, cajoling, and pulling rank. Believe it or not, I have studied leadership a bit. Leslie Fielder was a social psychologist who was the eminent authority on leadership in his day. His findings influenced the development of the Army’s leadership field manual. Fielder’s contention was that there are two types of leaders from opposite philosophic camps, each effective in one situation and ineffective in the other. The two types are the Laissez Faire leader, the inclusive one, and the Authoritarian leader. You told me that you knew and admired Admiral Hyman Rickover, who is reputed to be quite the authoritarian model. I don’t believe he was much of a team player but he was an excellent leader. (By the way, I AM a team player. That does not mean rolling over or joining teams whose views are not my own).

Your comment reflects closely the comments by your EARS President in his also rather hostile email to me. I had intended to attend the EARS meeting until his email. I decided not to attend because the tone of this court was obviously hostile and I am too old to hop like a kangaroo. I was also warned off attending a meeting with your particular club for two reasons: (1) You folks (and I am sorry about telling you this) have a reputation of nit-picking and attacking outsiders with whom you disagree. Your relationship with West Central Florida’s ARRL section has suffered precisely because of this. Now, that does not mean that all of West County R.A.C.E.S or all of Englewood Radio Society are guilty of this. In any organization there are the bold and passionate believers who broadcast their views stridently with such vehemence where others (the silent and passive majority) may not agree. The damage is however done.

The other input about clubs in general comes from a gentleman who contacted me early on. He is, in my view, the most knowledgeable person in the county when it comes to emergency communication and R.A.C.E.S, given his background, education, and experience. His views and suggestions were seminal in establishing my priorities and goals. Here is an excerpt:

The Charlotte Co. RACES organization is for the most part made up members who are associated with a radio club. The radio club seems to have influence over the operations of RACES. ..

There is nothing wrong with members of a radio club belonging to a county RACES organization but there is a communications problem and RACES should be a separate distinctive entity, we are talking about taxpayers dollars here.

Here is another tidbit: In Negotiation theory, they tell you that when two people disagree, it is rare for one person to convince the other to change their mind. The only thing you can do is to find points of agreement with which to start a dialogue. Perhaps that will happen. I hope it will.

Your Comment: “you keep bringing up that we must attend various programs to...handle emergencies. This is a kind of a slap in the face for many of us that have worked for over forty years in emergency situations...”

My Response: You may be referring to the slideshow from the emergency communication conference that talks about a need for emergency operators to have some training in several key National Incident Management Systems. Well...yes, this probably will be coming down and is a good idea in my view, but is not my idea. You may be talking about the operations and tactical nets I have been running that have some exercise or drill attached to it. I want you to know that comments other than from West County have been favorable toward these. Let me give you another excerpt from my knowledgeable source:

The RACES personnel have virtually no training or operations skill. Many most likely do not have the experience of interfacing with Public safety. In dealing with first responders Professionalism is expected. As was experienced with out-county backup radio operators during Hurricane Charley.

The Charlotte County RACES current membership is made up of volunteers who are for the most part retired senior citizens while other are partime (snowbirds). This is a problem and must be addressed by defining the roles of the membership. Many of these members are well meaning but if they are not trained the lack of their

capability will diminish the County RACES effectiveness .

There is no evidence the net is providing any on-air training but has reverted back to being a gab secession using the same old routine.

Two divergent views—his and yours. Whom to believe, whom to believe? I can attest that until I effected some changes, the nets were just check-in nets. I can attest that the nets we have had since (basic as they are) have indicated and already corrected shortcomings in net procedure and discipline, phonetics, use of equipment to QSY to other repeaters, simplex operation, use and coverage of backup repeaters. I am also interested in preparing our organization to meet far greater challenges in communication than those experienced by West County operators in the 2004 season. Your experiences were far from worst case. A storm surge that would inundate West County would **really** test equipment and procedures. Your tactical locations would be gone and many roads and would be impassable and communities inaccessible. What is the West County R.A.C.E.S plan for that?

Now, for your comment about my requirement that the nets involve drills or training, that they be more than the “gab sessions” you have become so used to, that this was a “kind of slap in the face” to you because you and all the others have so much experience. “Slap in the face”? SLAP IN THE FACE? That is over the top! There is nothing I have done, NOTHING that should have generated a comment like that! It is an indication that communication between me and the faction you represent is toxic. Why are you so angry? Because I reported in my first email what I had been told, that the EOC was disappointed in R.A.C.E.S performance? I conveyed something that all of us in R.A.C.E.S needed to know: the perception, justified or not, that was a reality. Having done so, the perception is starting to change. But before we can change it, we need to know about it. Having done so, the EOC was apprised by 3 of your leaders of many important contributions by West County. You **are** being duly recognized. Read, carefully read my latest emails. Are you angry because I am asking for historical data? Is that a slap in the face? Or, are you angry about what I wrote in my response to your club president? Here is what I said.

The ARES manual talks about what could be termed rogue units within an organization. It is not a rarity and is unfortunate given altruistic intentions to provide a service on the part of most volunteers.

My comments were part of a frank discussion in trying to deal with recalcitrance in establishing a different net schedule and in trying to change the policy of having a separate tactical net for your region and in trying to provide meaningful improvement in the skills of operators. I was quoting what I had been reading about ARES organizations and the resistance that can occur. At that point, I did not say that the West County group was a rogue. However, I will say now that there do appear to be rogue elements: obstinate, supersensitive, uncooperative, elements. What am I to do? Well, for one thing, I am not going to accept the status quo. I am going to respond in kind and hope, If I am right, that others on my side of the river and yours communicate an alternate view.

When I talked with you, I asked for a meeting so we could iron out our differences, in the same vein as the meetings with Vic, Gerald and Frank, which I thought went very well. You said you needed to bring someone with you as a ‘witness’ to what was being discussed. That certainly was a prudent and noble gesture, ensuring my optimism in a genial and cooperative meeting. The meeting is still open, but here is what needs to happen. In addition to your witness, I would like, if they consent, to have Vic, Gerald, and Frank there. I also feel that Neil Lauritsen, the Emergency Coordinator for the West Central Counties, should be there, as well as, Gerry Mallet, from the EOC. Representatives from other clubs or regions of the county are invited as well but please coordinate through me(this meeting cannot be open to everybody). What is on my mind, and here I am being optimistic, is that we can iron out some differences and maybe have some work arounds for other areas. I see Frank, Vic, and Gerald as objectively representing the R.A.C.E.S membership for West County. I see you as representing the E.A.R.S club’s interests and views. Ironing out differences to me includes in having a robust ARES operation and that should mean having a coordinator as liaison between ARES and EARS and why I would ask Neil to attend. Perhaps that club coordinator could be you.

We are having an annual meeting on July 20. There will be non-R.A.C.E.S people there and this meeting should

not be a “dirty laundry” internecine warfare affair. The purpose of the meeting is to get as many R.A.C.E.S members together, try to get some officers who are willing to contribute time and energy in bringing the organization up and to share a vision of what R.A.C.E.S could evolve into given the sophistication of county staff emergency responder and communications systems. We want to meet with other organization representatives and set up future meetings and coordination. We want our members to get to meet and know one another. So, any contentious type meetings need to be done beforehand. Give me some windows of opportunity when you would be available to meet and I will then try to coordinate with the other attendees. The venue of the meeting, given the number of people and the possibly heated nature of the discussion should be the EOC near the airport.

Mike Moses

MIKE MOSES--KI7WH
RACES Officer/Emergency Communications Coordinator(ARES)
Charlotte County