



~~SECRET~~

HEADQUARTERS  
UNITED STATES FORCES, AFGHANISTAN  
KABUL, AFGHANISTAN  
APO AE 09356



Commanding General

27 December 2009

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: AR 15-6 Investigation into COP Keating Engagement

I have reviewed the AR 15-6 Investigation into the engagement at COP Keating on 3 October 2009. I approve the Investigating Officer's (IO's) findings and recommendations, subject to the following comments:

a. The report does not squarely identify who was responsible for directing operations (e.g., Barg-e Matal, DUSTWUN recovery, and the delayed execution of MOUNTAIN DESCENT) and allocating scarce resources (e.g., resupply aircraft and ISR) that had an impact on the events at COP Keating. This might imply that that COL (b)(6) alone was responsible for these decisions, which is incorrect. The brigade-level operations in Barg-e Matal were directed by ISAF and CJTF-82 and at GIRoA's request. Likewise, DUSTWUN recovery, Afghan election support, and delays in the closure of COP Keating were not COL (b)(6) decisions. The report notes that ISR, rotary airlift, and ground forces were diverted to support these competing missions, but it should be noted these decisions were made at echelons above TF Mountain Warrior.

b. Regarding the recommendation to issue letters of admonition and reprimand to four of the officers involved, I approve that recommendation; however, I do recognize the extremely difficult missions and extraordinary responsibilities we have given these officers in a challenging, complex combat environment. I am aware of the extent of those demands, the weight of their responsibilities, and the truly superb results these officers have achieved in other areas.

c. The TTP recommendations imply that the MEDEVAC plan imposed undue manpower burdens on the force, which is certainly worth considering for current and future COPs. However, direct enemy fire on the MEDEVAC aircraft, not a faulty plan, was the primary cause of MEDEVAC delays.

d. The recommendation to close "undefensible or high-risk COPs" offers no comment on the adequacy of then-existing and current plans to reduce the number of outposts in RC-E. In a separate memorandum (encl), I am directing COM IJC to conduct a detailed assessment of COPs and FOBs.

Encl  
as

STANLEY A. McCHRISTAL  
General, U.S. Army  
Commander  
United States Forces-Afghanistan/  
International Security Assistance  
Force, Afghanistan

~~SECRET~~



**Headquarters  
International Security Assistance Force**



**KABUL AFGHANISTAN**

**MEMORANDUM**

8095.1080/HQ ISAF/LEGAD

MEMORANDUM FOR: See Distribution

SUBJECT: COMMAND-DIRECTED REVIEW OF COPs/OPs

DATE: 27 December 09

1. The purpose of this memorandum is to disseminate command guidance related to recommendations made in a recent investigation regarding an enemy attack on a remote Combat Outpost (COP).
2. Following a recent large-scale, organized insurgent attack on a remote COP which resulted in a significant loss of coalition forces, I directed an investigation into the event. The investigating officer made several important recommendations which are of value to the entire force (enclosed). I expect these recommendations to be disseminated to commanders and NCOs at all levels. I charge all commanders with applying these important lessons-learned.
3. Counterinsurgency requires decentralized operations in order to interact with and protect the population. Decentralization necessarily entails some risk to our force; however, that being said, the risk must be carefully balanced against the gain. Effective counterinsurgency requires that we sometimes forward-deploy our forces to key remote areas, but commanders must fully understand the risk-to-gain calculus for each location. The tactical, operational, and strategic gain of each OP and COP must justify the risk involved.
4. Accordingly, I direct COM IJC to assess the operational and tactical value, as well as the risk to force, of each COP and OP in the battlespace. COM IJC will recommend, in coordination with the Regional Commanders, which ISAF COPs/OPs should be closed due to a lack of benefit to the mission. All US-OEF units will also submit the same recommendations and assessment of their COPs/OPs through the appropriate battlespace owner to the IJC.

5. The recommendations and assessments are to be forwarded in a report to me no later than 28 February 2010.



STANLEY A. McCHRYSTAL  
General, U.S. Army  
Commander,  
United States Forces – Afghanistan/  
International Security Assistance  
Force, Afghanistan

ENCLOSURE  
Recommendations for FOBs/COPs/OPs

DISTRIBUTION:

External

Action-  
COM IJC

Information-  
DCG-S, USFOR-A  
CDR, NTMA/CSTC-A  
CDR, CFSOCC-A  
Regional Commanders

Internal –

Information:  
DCOS SPA

**Recommendations for FOBs/COPs/OPs**

Commanders at all levels must assess the tactical and operational value of individual Forward Operating Bases (FOBs), Combat Outposts (COPs), and Observation Posts (OPs) in their area of operations. Commanders should recommend for closure those COPs and OPs which contribute little or no value to the mission while being relatively indefensible and/or high-risk.

Commanders and NCOs at all levels will review and apply as applicable the following recommendations, with special emphasis on those COPs and OPs in remote locations:

1. Assess improvements to coalition force techniques, tactics and procedures (TTPs) to prevent or mitigate future incidents:

a. Location and enemy historical actions. Commanders must continue to evaluate mission, effectiveness, and tactical and strategic value of each FOB/COP/OP, and ensure location and terrain do not unnecessarily give the enemy a tactical advantage. Recognize that patterns of enemy attack in locale or against specific sites may change dramatically. Review intelligence reports and indicators against the enemy's most dangerous course of action, and exercise caution tempering indicators against attack history or experiences.

b. Resupply. Where air is only means of resupply of COP/OP, ensure necessary force protection or other barrier materials do not get lost in priority. Airlift may be canceled for weather, re-tasking, or maintenance, but enabling force protection must remain a unit priority. Pursue augmenting the normal supply schedule.

c. MEDEVAC. At COPs/OPs, ensure location of LZ for resupply or MEDEVAC will not impose undue additional manpower burdens on already undermanned forces.

d. Constantly Improve Your Position. As forces realign in theater, continue to stress importance of improving defensive positions and maintaining the proper force protection posture. Do not economize on base defense, even if we expect a site to close soon. Assume the enemy learns our plans as we engage locals or government officials. As the unit approaches planned closure, maintain heightened awareness to intelligence reporting and indicators.

e. Joint Terminal Air Controller (JTAC) Support. When possible, push JTACs to outlying COPs/OPs in order to expedite target execution from CAS.

f. Operational Security (OPSEC). Maintain OPSEC on specific movement dates. Security is a special challenge in a COIN environment where we seek to work closely with ANSF and the local populace, but expect that information is shared with the enemy and plan accordingly.

g. Communications. Ensure a redundant communications structure at remote or isolated COPs/OPs for use during a fight. This enemy demonstrates good understanding of our reliance on generators and other critical infrastructure to power our communication systems. It is incumbent on commanders to protect critical power infrastructure while maintaining other

alternate communications systems, such as TACSAT , to continue the fight in case of loss of power.

h. Personal Protection Equipment (PPE). Reinforce standards and constantly reevaluate PPE posture.

i. Force Protection. Never let up on force protection. Reinforce battle positions; maintain adequate security force; check perimeter regularly; secure unauthorized and unmanned entry points; evaluate perimeter of site against force size available to defend and pull in perimeter as required; locate key weapons systems where they can be defended by maximum force; secure routes across compound, especially to ASP; protect entry/exit points to buildings to deny enemy sniper targets; alter responses patterns so as not to inform enemy of unit TTPs/SOPs.

j. "Fresh Eyes." Maintain vigilance in intelligence analysis and indicators so that we are not lulled into false sense of activity based on enemy historical patterns.

k. Security Patrols. Disrupt enemy reconnaissance by conducting aggressive security patrols, within available manpower constraints. Higher headquarters should reinforce as required to facilitate security patrols.

2. Leader Battlefield Circulation. Commanders and leaders must conduct frequent battlefield circulation across their battlespace and especially to those sites where Soldiers are isolated, in order to gauge unit morale, Soldier well-being, and force protection.

3. Frequent Shuras. In the COIN environment leaders at all levels must conduct frequent meetings with local civic leaders to continually gauge atmospherics, develop situational awareness, and assess operational security.

4. Synchronization of Partnered ANA/ANSF on COPs and OPs. Local commanders need to integrate fully with ANSF partners. Increased emphasis is needed on how to integrate local ANSF units into unit or installation force protection plans.

5. "Fighting Unassisted." Commanders and leaders responsible for defense or force protection of remote FOBs, COPs, and OPs must plan to fight unassisted for up to one hour. As a planning assumption, this is how long it will take in remote locations for significant reinforcement in the event of heavy enemy contact.

6. Combat Life Savers. Maximize the number of trained combat lifesavers at remote locations. This training is imperative.