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**Sent:** Friday, October 09, 2009 9:09 PM  
**To:** (b)(6) USA LTC USA 2-12 IN BN CDR 431-2510; (b)(6) USA LTC USA TF Steel BN  
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**Subject:** Initial Keating AAR Comments ~~(SECRET)~~

Sir,

We have done the initial platoon level AARs, and here are the lessons learned from the attack on COP Keating.

Intel. The reporting stream leading up to the events of 3 OCT did not really indicate the scope or complexity of the attack, but there were indicators. They were common to previous reporting of large groups in the 100-200 range that never materialized. But all the platoons can see in hindsight where they believe the enemy used small attacks to monitor their battledrills and force protection measures, and create detailed plan to counter them. To an extent they were lulled by numerous false reports that desensitized us for when the big attack actually came. We absolutely believe that the attack was triggered by the impending closure, and the perceived weakness.

#### Enemy TTPs.

- The enemy specifically targeted generators, the mortar pit, and the vehicle positions with large numbers of RPGs, and did not begin the ground assault until they achieved fire superiority. This is not new, but should never be underestimated.
- The enemy positioned snipers and machineguns to cover the doors from buildings and living quarters where they had observed reinforcement exit during previous attacks. At least two Soldiers were killed by accurate SAF immediately on exiting their building. This targeting resulted from careful analysis of our TTPs during previous attacks.

#### Force Protection.

- Concertina Wire. Although the COP had 360 degree coverage, the ANA had an area adjacent to their positions that they routinely stepped through and over to use the latrine and gather firewood. The weak point was covered by one of their fighting positions, but once that position had been suppressed, the enemy could easily breach the wire. Upon initial contact, a large number of ANA (10-15) fled through this weak point, even before the enemy breached the perimeter. A number of these were subsequently captured or killed, but a number hid outside the COP until the attack was defeated, and then came back to the ECP, claiming they had escaped. We have seen this problem with the ANA establishing their own informal ECP before, and fixed it, but it is a pervasive problem.
- ECP. The ECP was not strong enough, had deadspace, and relied primarily on ASG who abandoned their positions upon contact. When the US overwatch positions were suppressed, the enemy was able to enter the COP. The lack of vehicle traffic, and the need for frequent movement of water and slingloads from the LZ led the troop to accept too weak a position.
- Claymores. The troop attempted to detonate several claymores that failed to operate. Some may have been cut, but we expect it may have been a matter of age and exposure.

- Perimeter Size. The size of the perimeter was simply too large and spread out for the number of Soldiers assigned to protect it. In the three years since Keating was established, it has grown and expanded without a coherent plan. The mortar pit was too isolated, and the outer perimeter wire left wide open spaces that served no useful purpose. Fixing this would have required a complete reorganization of the COP. We knew it, and didn't do it because of the perception the COP would be closed.
- Guard positions. The rotation of maneuver and force protection platoons left too few Soldiers on guard to adequately defend the perimeter, while maintaining a sustainable patrol schedule. The troop attempted to mitigate this in their force protection plan by having pre-established, well rehearsed teams to quickly augment force protection upon initial contact. While the plan was successful, the isolation of the mortar position and two of the vehicle positions separated by open ground allowed the enemy to focus on those areas.
- Fire Control. The buildings on COP Keating were primarily stone and wood, with plywood roofs reinforced with sandbags. They were very closely spaced, particularly in the ANA living areas. When RPGs set several buildings on fire, the onhand fire extinguishers were unable to control the spread of fire. We have heard the AAF used gas-filled RPGs specifically to ignite the buildings.

#### Complacency.

- We fell in on the force protection plan during RS/LS ride, and made initial adjustments to reinforced the perceived weak points. But these efforts were insufficient, and we did not do enough to reinforce the positions over time. This was magnified by the plan to close the COP. We became focused on closing the COP, rather than continuing to improve our positions as the closure was repeatedly delayed. Even though problems were identified, many were not fixed. HESCOs and sandbags were emplace to protect the COP from long range direct and indirect fire, rather than preparing better positions to defend from a largescale ground attack.
- As force strength was reduced by EML, and we became more comfortable with the enemy's predominate TTPs of long range attacks, we accepted more and more risk with standing guards – defending the position for the most likely enemy COA rather than the most dangerous.

Our Soldiers fought with tremendous courage and tenacity, but we made our lives harder by having inadequate force protection measures in place.

We have initiated 100% replacement of all of our claymores. We are also inspecting and reinforcing our wire on all COPs, with a focus on the ASG and ANA areas that are routinely, consciously weakened.

Thanks for the tremendous support from all of the BCT, particularly (b)(1)1.5a and (b)(1)1.5a that supplied the QRFs. It was a tough day, but could have been much worse without their support.

v/r

(b)(6)

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