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Joint Review Board Initial Report of Administrative Inquiry of the 14-15 September 2012 Insurgent Attack on Camp Bastion

DATE: 24-Sep-12

REFERENCES:

A. Terms of Reference Joint Review Board For 14 Sep 12 Security Incident At Bastion/Leatherneck – dated 17 Sep 12
B. Draft COMISAF Appointing Order and Terms of Reference – dated 20 Sep 12
C. RC-SW Force Protection Review (Bastion, Leatherneck, Shorabak Operational Base)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

~~(R//REL TO ISAF, NATO)~~ A Joint Review Board (JRB) consisting of (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)c (Chairperson), Cdr BSN/903 EAW and Cdr TFBW (executive members), and representatives, was appointed to conduct an informal administrative inquiry into the facts and circumstances surrounding the attack on the Bastion Leatherneck Shorabak (BLS) complex, specifically the Camp Bastion airfield, on 14 Sep 12. The JRB's assessment indicates that this attack was well coordinated, planned, and executed by trained and well equipped men. It resulted in the deaths of two coalition forces (CF) personnel and considerable damage to mission critical CF equipment. CF reaction to the attack was swift and effective, neutralizing the threat while preventing further casualties and damage to infrastructure. Good discipline and tactical patience were executed by all CF involved, which prevented potential fratricide. The BLS command and control (C2) arrangements at the tactical level and operational level worked well. Although multiple corrective force protection (FP) measures have been implemented in the immediate aftermath of this incident, a more comprehensive review of command relationships, policy, procedures and infrastructure is being conducted and its recommendations implemented.

BACKGROUND

~~(S//REL TO ISAF, NATO)~~ Camps Bastion, Leatherneck, and Shorabak (BLS) are situated in a relatively isolated area of Helmand province. The area surrounding BLS is designated as AO Belleau Wood. (Annex A). Very few INS initiated attacks have been directed towards BLS: IDF is rare. Metal scrapping activity occurs regularly around the perimeter fence line as a result of the large scrapping economy operating out of BOLDAK and NAWABAD. The population of local NAWABAD and SHEIKABAD villages

are largely supportive of CF presence. Most INS initiated attacks have occurred to the south of the Belleau Wood AO around SHOWAL and HABIBABAD. No specific intelligence indicating an imminent threat against BLS was received before the 14 Sep 12 attack.

The eastern edge of the Bastion airfield contains a significant amount of undulating terrain both within and outside it's the perimeter fence. The villages of SHEIKABAD and NAWABAD are located several hundred meters to the East of the perimeter fence. The main North-to-South road runs through a wadi which is approximately 1km from the perimeter and presents the full range of pattern of life activity. The perimeter line is composed of a single row of concertina wire, a ditch and berm obstacle, and a boundary chain link fence. The fence line is approximately 400 meters from the Juliet and Lima Ramps of the Bastion airfield. Guard towers are set at intervals around BLS to include concrete sangers along the eastern perimeter of the Bastion airfield. (Annex A).

On 14 Sep 12, at an unknown time, fifteen (15) Insurgents (INS) infiltrated the BLS eastern perimeter by cutting the chain link fence. (Annexes A, B, and C). The INS commenced a three pronged attack on the Juliet and Lima Ramps of the flight line at 142209D*SEP12. The beginning of the INS attack was reported to the BLS Combined Joint Operations Center (CJOC) by the Automated Sense and Warn (AS&W) detachment and Marines from Marine Attack Squadron-211 (VMA-211, USMC AV-8B Harrier). The INS used SAF, RPGs, and hand grenades to target CFs, USMC AV-8Bs, and flight line infrastructure. (Annex D). The attack resulted in CF casualties, fires and significant damage to CF aircraft. (Annex E).

Based on early reports of SAF and a fire on the flight line, the CJOC tasked the Bastion (internal) Quick Reaction Force (QRF), (b)(1)1.4g with escorting the fire section and the AO BELLEAU WOOD QRF (b)(1)1.4g with responding to the SAF. Upon arrival, both QRFs received SAF from INS positions inside the perimeter, preventing the fire section from fully containing the fires. The fire section then withdrew west of the runway to await further orders. At this time, the CJOC began to implement Force protection (FP) procedures across BLS in order to restrict all non- essential movement.

US and UK attack helicopter Close Air Support (CAS), under the control of the CJOC's Joint Terminal Attack Controller (JTAC), arrived on station to support the ground C/S Marines and Airmen from the UK Resident Field Squadron (RFS), engaged the INS with small arms fire for a protracted period. The first reports of UK and US casualties were received shortly into this engagement.

Within approximately four hours of the initial INS attack, the RFS, Marines, and CAS assets had neutralized the enemy positions. The INS at Juliet Ramp were neutralized by 142338D*SEP12 and the INS at Lima Ramp were neutralized by 150208D*SEP12. At first light on 15 Sep 12, Coalition Forces (CF) callsigns swept the area, ensuring that the airfield was clear of all INS. The airfield was never closed: helicopter movements were conducted during and after the attack. A shortened runway opened to fixed wing aircraft at 151530D*SEP12. Full operating capability was restored at 161725D*SEP12.

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The attack resulted in 14 x INS KIA and 1 x WIA (detained). CF suffered 2 x USMC KIA, 8 RFS WIA, 8 x USMC WIA, and 1 x Civ WIA.

ANALYSIS OF SPECIFIED AREAS

1. (~~S//REL TO ISAF, NATO~~) COMMAND AND CONTROL

Overall command and control (C2) of the incident was effective and well coordinated. Once reported to the CJOC, an effective, efficient, and rapid response was mounted. The CJOC was well prepared and well equipped to command and control the incident. CJOC personnel employed real time ISR feeds and reporting from multiple responding forces via the communication suite. The CJOC effectively maintained situational awareness and employed all required resources.

Op CONGO was initiated by the CJOC commanders at 142250D*SEP 12. Op CONGO is an RC(SW)-endorsed combined, joint US/UK CONPLAN initiated to execute crisis and consequence management to major incidents within BLS and/or AO Belleau Wood, should the in-place security and emergency response teams, coordinated by the CJOC, be overmatched. (Annex F). The Op CONGO's specified mission is to '*conduct crisis management to contain and neutralize threats in order to prevent loss of life and disruption to the support of operations; and be prepared to conduct consequence management to recover BSN/LNK to its pre-incident state*'. The CONPLAN outlines a phased approach and details the required LNOs to be present within CONGO under the coordination of COM BSN and CO MHG, highlighting that these individuals shall assume the Supported/Supporting roles depending on where the incident occurs (AO Belleau Wood, LNK or BSN). (Annex H).

As a mechanism to determine supporting and supported command relationships, Op CONGO was acceptable, although it does not clearly address seams between the two commanders' areas of responsibility. Op CONGO makes clear geographic delineations when determining supported and supporting command relationships, stating that commands will be exercised via battle space ownership. Battle space ownership of Bastion and Leatherneck are clear, as is ownership of AOBW. Op CONGO envisions a simple supported and supporting relationship based on this geographic location, either Leatherneck or Bastion, but has an apparent lack of clearly defined relationship when the incident spans a seam, and fails to take into consideration AO Belleau Wood ownership and responsibilities.

Per Op CONGO, BSN is the supported command for all incidents within Bastion and TFBW is the supported command for all incidents within Leatherneck and/or AOBW, however, the 14 Sep attack clearly spanned this seam. Although the overall defensive response was very effective, there was no clear distinction for which commander should have been the overall supported vice supporting commander. Fortunately, this issue did not have a negative impact during the attack, as CO TFBW was located in the

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CJOC and CO Bastion was located in the CONGO cell. However, when asked, both CO TFBW and CO BSN indicated that they had joint C2 of the attack. This indicates that the organization of Op CONGO C2 architecture is not fully supportive of command and control of a crisis or USMC reporting requirements. Additionally, Op CONGO would likely be ineffective if a crisis spanned both camps.

2. ~~(S//REL TO ISAF, NATO)~~ INTELLIGENCE

This was a significant, well planned and well executed attack, conducted at night with no moon. (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4d

(b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4d

An intelligence review found no specific reporting to indicate the possibility of an attack on Bastion or Leatherneck prior to this incident. (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4d

(b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4d

Intel reporting following the attack suggests multiple local insurgent leaders were responsible for the 14 Sep BLS attack. (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4d

(b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4d

3. ~~(S//REL TO ISAF, NATO)~~ FORCE PROTECTION

The terrain outside the BLS perimeter fence varies widely from flat open areas to broken terrain and small hills. The eastern perimeter of BLS is protected by ditch and berm obstacles, a single chain-link wire fence, concertina wire, and security towers. Based on previous threat reporting and manning limitations, the Bastion security towers were not all manned at any given time. (See Section 5). There is an additional double strand of concertina wire and a ditch abutting the road which parallels the flight line. Op Molehill is a daily security patrol that surveys the inside of the perimeter fence every day in order to find and repair any breaches. The area outside the perimeter fence is patrolled daily by TFBW with support from the 215th ANA Corps.

On the eastern perimeter, near Tower 17, hills and wadis, as well as darkness, allowed the INS to move unobserved within 20 meters of the perimeter on 14 Sep 12(Annex C). Although Tower 17 was manned and had visibility of the fence line breach, the guard force did not observe the INS cut the chain link fence or enter BLS. Once the INS maneuvered inside the perimeter wire, they were able to use the cover of darkness and

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the terrain east of the flight line to conceal their movements and their position. Since the tower guards generally focus outwards, there was no guard force assigned to monitor the dead space between the flight line and the security towers. This defensive gap aided the INS. Once the INS initiated the kinetic attack, the QRF mobilized quickly in response and effectively isolated the INS, preventing further movement before eliminating the threat. The ability to quickly mobilize air assets was also integral to eliminating the INS.

The Force Protection operations implemented across BLS during the attack (Op Lockdown and Wide Awake) were not universally understood or properly executed, particularly by some Third Country Nationals and transient CF visitors, although most BLS personnel did effectively respond.

The QRF and some of the others who responded to the attack wore the appropriate PPE. The nature of the injuries to UK QRF from SAF and RPGs unequivocally demonstrates that the PPE was effective in reducing injuries in number and scope. Other personnel, to include Marines located on the flight line who engaged the INS did not have their PPE on hand during the attack.

4. ~~(S//REL TO ISAF, NATO)~~ MANNING

BLS security towers are manned based on an assessment of the security situation, availability of manpower and the prioritization of force protection assets. Perimeter security manpower aboard Bastion is comprised of fifty personnel. Twenty-four (24) personnel are provided by the Tongans and Twenty-six (26) are provided by "Camp Tax" (personnel drawn from units within Camp Bastion). Prior to the attack, 12 of 25 towers were manned, six by permanent personnel and six by "Camp Tax." The selection of which towers are manned is based upon their fields of view/fire, the ability to achieve interlocking arcs with neighboring positions, and the external terrain. During Aug12, an additional Bastion tower was manned, bolstering the part of the fence line where the breach occurred. Additionally, prior to 14 Sep 12, the primary threat along the eastern perimeter was assessed to have been from a VBIED, not a direct INS attack. (Annex H).

Personnel in the guard towers are equipped with rifles, semi-automatic weapons, a hand held spot light, night vision goggles, and communication equipment. They do not have illumination assets beyond their hand held spot light.

Despite the fact that tower 16 (which has line of site to the breach point) was unmanned, tower 17 could have seen the INS breach the perimeter.

Manning in the CJOC is adequate to monitor the information flowing in and out of the CJOC and to execute effective C2. The addition of new assets, such as the GBOSS towers currently being emplaced along the perimeter, will require additional, trained, personnel to effectively monitor and use these assets. The manning of Op CONGO in a separate cell pulls manpower away from the CJOC.

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Further, as coalition forces redeploy, BLS manpower risk assessments will change and will require regular review and adjustments.

5. ~~(S//REL TO ISAF, NATO)~~ COMMUNICATIONS

Communication with the CJOC following the attack functioned well. Tower 17 and MAW ECP 2 were able to report SAF at 142209D*SEP12 (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4g (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4g Further, the Marines at Lima Ramp were able to report the commencement of the attack.

As the QRF mobilized and responded, they successfully established and maintained communication with the CJOC. As CAS assets became available, the CJOC was able to direct their fires and communicate with other personnel on the ground to move from the area in order to support an Air attack.

Major unit (SEC FOR and RFS) reporting was relatively quick, but a number of personnel on the ground reacted without coordination from the CJOC on a self-defense basis. These personnel had no communications equipment on them at the time, which made passage of information difficult, but did not inhibit their ability to defend against the INS.

(b)(1)1.4g

Initial reporting did not effectively communicate whether the attack involved a breach or an IDF (RAM) event.

The Giant Voice/WAVES systems were not heard throughout BLS and were sometimes difficult to understand when they were heard. Specifically, the audio quality of the system was muddled and echoes washed out some of the communications.

There were no CENTRIX computers or phone lines in the OP CONGO cell for communication with RC (SW) COC or TFBW COC. Because there was no CENTRIX to communicate information, coordination with RC (SW) COC was slow but did not affect the QRF from stopping the INS.

IMMEDIATE CHANGES TO FORCE PROTECTION

~~(S//REL TO USA, ISAF, NATO)~~ The following improvements to the Force Protection posture of BLS have already been implemented:

1. A comprehensive review of all BLS Force Protection vulnerabilities, policies, training, projects and threats has been initiated, to include the establishment of a standing BLS Force Protection operational planning team that will report to DCOM RC(SW) .

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2. Limit access to Flight line: Construction of additional ditch and berm obstacles around airfield to prevent off-road vehicular access to airfield is being conducted. The estimated completion date is 1 Oct 12.

3. Perimeter manning: 100% manning of all Bastion sangers.

4. Security Force manning: Additional Marines assigned to TFBW SECFOR.

5. Sensors: Installed and activated 5 additional GBOSS towers along eastern perimeter.

6. Visibility: STAP and engineer site survey of Bastion has been completed.

7. (b)(1)1.4a

(b)(1)1.4a

8. Regular and continuous threat assessments, tailored for BLS, will be conducted. These assessments will support the BLS Counter-Threat Working Group chaired by DCOM RC(SW).

9. An analysis of the WAVES system is being performed.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. ~~(S//REL TO ISAF, NATO)~~ COMMAND AND CONTROL

RA 1 – Review the purpose and necessity of Op CONGO in order to determine if it enhances the ability to command during a crisis.

RA 2 - This Op CONGO review should be conducted within the overall context of a command and control study.

RA 3 - Consider the requirement for a centralized, singular C2 relationship, responsible for base security, operations and support functions. This may require a revision of the existing PJHQ/CENTCOM Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

2. ~~(S//REL TO ISAF, NATO)~~ FORCE PROTECTION

RA 1- Review all perimeter defenses in light of current and future threats.

RA 2 - Evaluate all tower positioning and manning. Conduct periodic reviews of terrain inside and outside of the perimeter as there can be significant changes in time due to rain, wind, and encroachment by local national dwellings or agricultural cultivation.

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RA 3 - Conduct regular FP exercises and reviews to ensure all units understand and comply. This plan should include an integrated sector defense plan and immediate action policies and drills.

RA 4 - Review and improve as required the BLS warning system. The system must include all areas of the base and alarm and clear voice capability.

(b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4g

RA 6 – Establish a standing FP Working Group to regularly update and reassess force protection risks in a changing operational environment.

RA 7 – Coordinate with ISAF HQ to discuss potential changes to the force structure of base security forces.

RA 8 – The recommendations set forth in the BLS Joint Staff Integrated Vulnerability Assessment (JSIVA), 10-14 June 12 will be reviewed and implemented where practical. (Annex H).

RA 9 – An evaluation will be conducted to determine if the CJOC must have direct access to TS Intelligence reporting or if current threat warning reports are adequate.

RA 10 – RC(SW) C2X will continue to exploit physical evidence and human intelligence in order to protect BLS and to produce lessons learned for other IJC bases.

3. ~~(S//REL TO ISAF, NATO)~~ PROCEDURES

(b)(1)1.4a

4. ~~(S//REL TO ISAF, NATO)~~ MANNING

RA 1 - Manpower requirements for BLS force protection will be reviewed and adjusted immediately and at regular intervals thereafter.

5 ~~(S//REL TO ISAF, NATO)~~ COMMUNICATIONS

RA 1 – All FP communications between manned posts will be reviewed and improved as necessary.

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RA 2 - A communications plan for units under attack to coordinate with the CJOC will be implemented.

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Annexes:

A. Task Force Belleau Wood Area Of Operations
B. Chronology of Events on 14 Sep 12
C. INS Movements on 14 Sep 12
D. INS Equipment on 14 Sep 12
E. Loss of Personnel and Equipment
F. Operation Congo CONPLAN
G. TFBW Task Organization
H. Joint Staff Integrated Vulnerability Assessment (JSIVA), 10-14 June 12

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