



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES ARMY FORCES COMMAND
4700 KNOX STREET
FORT BRAGG, NC 28310-5000

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

AFDC

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: AR 15-6 Interview with Major General (MajGen) Gregg A. Sturdevant, former Commanding General, 3d Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward) [3d MAW(FWD)]

1. The investigation team conducted a recorded interview with MajGen Gregg A. Sturdevant, former Commanding General, 3d MAW (FWD), on 10 July 2013 via Secret Video Tele Conference (SVTC) as part of the AR 15-6 investigation into the 14-15 September 2012 attack on the Camps Bastion-Leatherneck-Shorabak Complex in Helmand Province, Afghanistan. The investigation team provided MajGen Sturdevant a transcription of the interview on a Department of the Army (DA) Form 2823, Sworn Statement, for his signature. (b)(5)

(b)(5)

(b)(5) The investigative team certifies that the dialogue transcribed in this memorandum is an accurate account of MajGen Sturdevant's interview. The investigative team reviewed and considered both the recorded interview (b)(5)

(b)(5)

Q: Please provide a synopsis of your background in the Marine Corps?

A: I've been in the Marine Corps for 38 years. I enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1975, and I was enlisted for four years. I got out and went to school on the GI Bill. I went to school year-round for three years, and I was commissioned in 1982. My primary job as a young officer was as a CH-46 pilot. I've been in and out of the fleet over the years, either in an operational billet or a staff billet. I have three tours at the Pentagon, once on the Marine Corps staff, and twice in the Joint Staff J-3. I've been a Squadron Commander, as an O-6 I was a Marine Expeditionary Unit commander, and then in Afghanistan from February 2012 to February 2013, I was the commander of 3d Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward).

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SUBJECT: AR 15-6 Interview with MajGen Gregg A. Sturdevant

Q: When did you take command of 3d MAW (FWD)? When did you relinquish command?

A: I checked in to 3d MAW in July 2011, and I spent about 7 months or so building the team, bringing them on gradually as we got closer to the deployment. I was really the Deputy Commander for 3d MAW, but we started building the team for 3d MAW (FWD) after 1 September 2011. We landed in Afghanistan on 25 February 2012, and I took command of 3d MAW (FWD) on 29 February 2012. I relinquished command to “Lurch” Thomas on 16 February 2013.

Q: How would you characterize the RIP/TOA that you and your staff had with your predecessors?

A: It was very good. During the course of the work-up in the fall of 2011, there were exercises that the Marine Corps put us through that helped the staffs gel. There were also people forward who came back to San Diego to help us get ready to go forward. I took about ten people over in October 2011 for a PDSS, and I sent my Chief of Staff over early with an advanced party to help integrate and ease the transition. I came in four days ahead of the change of command, because I had already done battlefield circulation during the PDSS. That gave me time to get accustomed to the battle rhythm without having two CGs on the ground for a long period of time.

Q: Please describe any discussions that your predecessor had with you regarding Anti Terrorism/Force Protection (AT/FP).

A: Yes, Sir. One thing I always did was go brief my new units coming into Afghanistan during their RSO&I. I asked my predecessor, MajGen Walters, to walk me through what he would tell to incoming units. The AT/FP piece focused on three types of threats – the threat outside the wire, the threat inside the wire, and the threat we posed to each other, like blue-on-blue or even things like doing something stupid in the barracks that gets people hurt. The outside the wire piece was pretty self-explanatory. We spent a lot of time on the threat inside the wire, because of the thousands of contractors on the BLS Complex. We had the incident not long after we arrived where a third country national who had been working for the Brits for I think two years stole a car, came speeding down the ramp, and almost ran over MajGen Gurganus, Brigadier Skeates, and (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) as they waited for the Secretary of Defense to land at the airfield. They ended up chasing him, and he ran into a ditch and set himself on fire. It was bizarre. This was someone who had worked for the Brits for two years, so that incident really reinforced the insider threat for us. If you look at the BLS Complex, it was in the location it was in for a reason; to get it away from populated areas. We were isolated, and we had good standoff for awhile. But then you had these cottage industries growing outside of the wire, encroaching on the BLS Complex. (b)(1)1.4c

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AFDC

SUBJECT: AR 15-6 Interview with MajGen Gregg A. Sturdevant

(b)(1)1.4c

When this was brought to MajGen Gurganus' attention, he leaned forward on getting it fixed. He eventually moved the soak lot on the northern side of the base further away, and there was a pop-up kind of slum that went with it that we also moved further away. The other threat that we were looking at was the encroachment on the southeast side of the base with the poppy farmers. We literally had poppy growing right up against the perimeter fence. That was another thing that MajGen Gurganus tried to take action on, but he wasn't able to accomplish that. It was because the Afghans had to do it. We weren't allowed to. The biggest external threat to the base came from there, and TF Belleau Wood (TFBW) was down there running patrols every single day. That was something I keyed off, because TFBW's success meant our safety. We also went through some significant force structure changes during our time there. RC(SW) had over 20,000 Marines in December 2011, it was down to 18,000 when MajGen Gurganus came in, and we were below 8,000 by the end of September 2012. We spent a lot of time talking and discussing the risk management piece. You are going to get to a point where you can't project power, that all you can do is guard the base, so we discussed this quite a bit. When I got there to Afghanistan, I had a 507-man Marine Wing Support Squadron, kind of the CSS slice of the Aircraft Wing. By September, we were down to about 107. One of the things that went away with those numbers was my MPs. And one of the things they did was man a vehicle checkpoint by the airfield that controlled access. They were finding a lot of things on the TCNs, illicit material, like SIM cards between their toes. We were in a period of transition in July, and as uniformed guys were going home, we started to bring on private security contractors, Triple Canopy. So you really had three entities providing security on BLS. You had the Brits, who primarily secured the Bastion side and airfield. You had TFBW doing patrols off the base, and then you had IMCOM which had the Triple Canopy folks. I had some issues where I thought I was going to get Triple Canopy guys to replace my guys securing my compound on Leatherneck, but they started getting stripped off to go guard the perimeter fence because there weren't enough of them. The ROE piece is an interesting one. MajGen Gurganus wanted a general officer in charge of the entire BLS Complex after the attack, and I took over that role on 1 December. As I discussed ROE with the Brits, we realized that there were some very, very different interpretations of ROE and self-defense.

Q: Upon assuming command of 3d MAW(FWD), what were your primary concerns regarding AT/FP of your Wing?

A: To be truthful with you, Sir, I was on the airfield 3-4 times per week. It was easy to get out there once they finished the hardball road around the perimeter. I was satisfied where we were based on the turnover I received from MajGen Walters, and when we looked at the historical threat to Bastion-Leatherneck. The biggest thing we were seeing was scrappers on the ranges. I was concerned with

AFDC

SUBJECT: AR 15-6 Interview with MajGen Gregg A. Sturdevant

the scrappers right by the fence line. In my mind, I was thinking they were surveillance guys or they were trying to test the reaction of the base. Also at the time, we did not yet have people living over on the Bastion side. We all lived on Leatherneck. The HMLA, the Cobra-Huey Squadron, had Hescoes along the hardball road there. The V-22s had some Hescoes, but not nearly as significant as the HMLA Skid Squadron. It was more to define the boundaries of the Squadron spaces. And then when you went by the HMLA on the way up to the Harrier Squadron, you had a contractor compound which was eventually moved after the attack because of the potential threat it presented. But to answer your question, based on what we were seeing with the threat, I thought we were doing all right. I beat the drum hard with all my units in the Aviation Combat Element (ACE) on the internal threat. That was my main focus. The next piece was making sure I could provide the aviation combat power to the Division and to the Combat Logistics Regiment from the supporting to the supported commands. The other thing from a security perspective was some of the things we had going on at the other FOBs. We also had a pretty robust FOB at a place called Edinburgh, which was up by Musa Qala. We had a number of Medevac aircraft up there and we always had two sections of the Skid Squadron on strip alert up there 24/7, and we had the same thing at FOB Dwyer. FOB Dwyer was a real victim of the drawdown, and I lost sleep at night about what would happen if it was attacked with so few people to secure it. I kept going to my Force Protection guy to tell him that we had to have an integrated plan at Dwyer. So based on what I was seeing, I was more concerned with the outlying areas than I was with Bastion-Leatherneck. We weren't getting rocket attacks, and the I&W piece was really focused on VBIEDs.

Q: Did you specifically delegate authority for AT/FP to your AT/FP Officer, (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) followed by (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)? If so, was this delegation in writing or was it verbal? What was the scope of this delegation?

A: I don't remember if it was in writing or verbal. Both of those guys did a good job. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) was a (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) at the time, which made it challenging. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) primarily reported to (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) the G-3 but he was in the staff briefings with us. I directed (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) to go out and assess from an AT/FP perspective and let the Squadrons know what they needed to do, and to report back to me, or actually to (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) primarily. I also told him not to get his head down if the Squadrons didn't do everything he thought needed to be done. They had to prioritize on all the things he thought needed to be done. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) came up with a lot of ideas in the Spring of 2012 to make improvements to the security of the airfield, and he would take them to the Executive Steering Group (ESG). After the 14 September attack, I said show me in writing where you submitted improvement projects, and he couldn't show me. Most of it was done verbally at the meetings, but I know he was submitting plans. It should have been a more formal request. One of the things we wanted to do was put up a chain link fence around the airfield, but that

AFDC

SUBJECT: AR 15-6 Interview with MajGen Gregg A. Sturdevant

was denied. So instead we put out some concertina wire to channelize traffic. I think the fence was denied because of money, and because nobody knew what the future of the airfield was. The ESG was struggling with that, not knowing how much money to put into Bastion-Leatherneck if it wasn't going to be an enduring base. I could never get an answer from the CFACC or from IJC, and I think that was one of the biggest obstacles. The other thing was that the threat stream wasn't there to justify the need for some of these projects. We could do some things ourselves in the ACE. I told you about the Skid Squadron, who had their own Hesco barriers. That was a Squadron Commander working on his own to ask the MWSS how they could help him with his security. But, as I mentioned, we lost 80% of that MWSS and they were busy all over the RC. We were eventually de-militarizing FOB Edinburgh and Delaram II. And there was another place called FOB Shukvani near Sangin. That place grew rapidly between 1 July and 1 September. From an aviation safety perspective, it was a real concern, so we had a significant MWSS and engineering effort there to make it safer. That was the focus of the MWSS.

Q: Did you direct any AT/FP assessments upon taking command of 3d MAW (FWD)? Please describe.

A: (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) did that, whether I directed him to or not. I can't remember if I did. We made some improvements to my compound on the Leatherneck side. We had a sector over there that we were responsible for. It was really an industrial complex over there, and I had a lot of support people responsible for my response force. I know the Wing AT/FP order addressed AT/FP assessments, and I know (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) was doing them.

Q: How often did you interact with the CO of Task Force Belleau Wood (TFBW), regarding security operations on the BLS Complex and on Camp Bastion specifically?

A: Early on, not much. Later on, when I took command of the BLS Complex, much more. He was a part of MajGen Gurganus's staff and was part of their daily Ops and Intell meetings. I was running my own Ops and Intell, so we didn't get pulled into those other daily meetings. From what I understood at the time though, TFBW's main focus was external, on the patrolling and the gates. We had three COs of TFBW during my time there. I didn't have a lot of interaction with them. They were feeding the RC(SW) O&I.

Q: How often did you interact with MajGen Gurganus? How was your relationship with him? How often did you discuss AT/FP matters?

A: I met him for the first time in September 2011. I knew him by reputation, but I had not worked with him. I saw him a fair amount during the work-ups. During the deployment, I probably saw him 3-4 times a week. He was out a lot. His guidance at first was that we were going to push really hard for the first 90 days.

AFDC

SUBJECT: AR 15-6 Interview with MajGen Gregg A. Sturdevant

We were going down from seven maneuver battalions to one, so we had to set the conditions now to set the security piece over to the Afghans. One of the things that we did almost every week was what we called GOLF, General Officer Leadership Forum, where we met with MajGen Gurganus. And the TF Helmand commander, the Brit one-star general, would come to. We would definitely have conversations about AT/FP matters, and we spoke about the tipping point where we couldn't project power and protect the base at the same time as we drew down. We had the same conversations about FOB Dwyer and other bases too. We used to talk about the importance of Quick Reaction Forces, and that is one of the things that went well on 14 September 2012. The fact that we had two QRFs and we had no blue-on-blue during a very chaotic situation was pretty amazing. The Brit QRF did a great job, but the Brits looked at static security differently than we did. To them it was more about technology, cameras, sensors, and that sort of thing. To me, that is obviously part of it, but not the focus. One of the other things I learned was the challenge of coalition operations, and the need to negotiate things that we normally took for granted in US joint operations.

Q: Did it concern you that your Squadrons were on a Camp not secured by Marines? Did you understand the doctrine, standards, and procedures that the UK utilized to conduct AT/FP on Camp Bastion?

A: Sir, I will tell you that anytime you turn security over to someone else it makes you a little nervous. I'm sure you would rather have a Soldier standing guard, and likewise, I would feel most comfortable with a Marine standing guard. But the Brits are considered on equal footing with US forces. IJC would make that very clear that the Brits were considered US equivalents. I did not really understand how different their ROE was until I took over the command of BLS, and I don't think that was made real clear to me beforehand. And I knew TF Helmand was out there tearing it up in Lashkar Gah, so I didn't realize that things might be different with their security forces. I think they take it almost more like a police function. A lot of this only came to light after 14-15 September when you started to pull the thread on this. The reliance on technology and the different ROE was a bit of an eye-opener.

Q: What was the local security posture of your Squadrons on the flight line? We have been informed that two of the Squadrons had local security, but the rest did not. Is this accurate? Did VMA-211 have local security?

A: The Skid Squadron did, and the CV-22 did to a lesser extent. That was more of a Squadron Commander's call. I was counting on the three organizations, the Brits, TFBW, and IMCOM to do their job, which was the security mission. I had to focus on providing combat power and CSS support with moving people and equipment. (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4d

(b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4d They were getting after it too. Our focus was more on making sure I had aircraft up and ready to go, and qualified aircrews to go out and do the

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SUBJECT: AR 15-6 Interview with MajGen Gregg A. Sturdevant

missions. Like I said, I thought that between the Brits, TFBW, and IMCOM that they were taking care of the wire.

Q: How often did you get out to the flight line to visit the Squadrons? Did you provide guidance on AT/FP based on that circulation?

A: Sir, I got out there at least 4 times a week early on, if not more. By the end of the deployment, it was more like three. We had fewer Squadrons for one. When I would go over there, I would visit with the Squadrons. I would always check in with the senior leader present. From what I saw, everything was working. We had towers manned; we had ECPs at either end of the flight line. But for the last part of your question, I did not direct a lot of changes for the AT/FP piece. I'm sure the Marines going back and forth from the LSA to the flight line, they had their kit with them; they had their weapons in case something was to happen. When they would get to work, they would ground their gear, pick up their tool box and get to work. Environmentally, Afghanistan is a tough place to work. Iraq was probably more difficult, but we had challenges in Afghanistan keeping aircraft up. We were increasing man hours trying to keep aircraft up in the harsh conditions. I go back to a goal that I set for the SQDN commanders for the mission I was trying to get them to meet. I was really more focused on trying to get them to meet mission for the ACE, with the understanding that we had other people responsible for security. Does that mean that you aren't paying attention to what's going on, no Sir, that's not what I mean. The focus was more on what our role was as the ACE. After the attack, my guys had lost trust in the UK to secure them and you saw .50 cal's pointing out from the flight line towards the perimeter. That obviously wasn't the right answer either. There's a huge tower near the LSA that I call Castle Grayskull that our guys set up a rotation for after the attack. My guys said they would provide their own early warning because of the ineffectiveness on the night of 14-15 September 2012.

Q: Did you ever get the chance to get out and inspect the perimeter of the Camp Bastion? If so, please describe your impressions.

A: Sir, not by surface. Only by air. I'll tell you what worked in our favor. Mostly on the west side of Leatherneck there were a lot of ranges, and they would go all night, all hours of the day and night. So there was a natural barrier out there except for the scrapper piece. It was flat out there with good fields of fire. I told you earlier about the slum to the north. When we got there, that was a bad deal. An easy place for bad people to hide. I routinely saw the eastern side of the airfield as we were coming back in. Of course the pilots are focused on looking forward and landing, but what I told the aircrews to look out for was when to look for something that looked odd. If you saw something that didn't look right out there, say something, we'll hit "mark," we'll report that to RC(SW), and they'll send TFBW out to investigate. So like I said, I never did a surface movement to check the perimeter, but we kept a watch on it from the air. Especially on the east

AFDC

SUBJECT: AR 15-6 Interview with MajGen Gregg A. Sturdevant

and southeast side, I mean TFBW used to have frequent contact down there in Naw-abad.

Q: Were you aware that approximately every other tower was manned on Camp Bastion? Did you have any concerns regarding the tower manning? If so, who did you discuss your concerns with?

A: Sir, I tell you until the night of the attack, I didn't know that they were manned at 50%. And I don't think they were always manned at 50%. We would drive by and we saw that they were manned. It seemed more reasonable on the Leatherneck side where we knew they were 50% manned. You had the ranges there, and the fields of fire were excellent. And you had a camera in the ones that weren't manned that could slew either way to monitor. Not so on the eastern side with the undulating terrain. Again, I couldn't tell you for certain but I don't think they were always manned over there at 50%. But I can't tell you when they went from 100% to 50%, when or why.

Q: Just days after MajGen Gurganus took command of RC(SW), you experienced the 14 March 2012 local national interpreter's incursion onto the flight line that happened to coincide with a visit from the Secretary of Defense (often referred to as the "burning man incident"). Some members of the RC(SW) staff told us that this incident exposed the bifurcated Command and Control (C2) structure between the US on Camp Leatherneck and the UK on Camp Bastion. Did you know about the C2 structure prior to the "burning man incident?"

A: No Sir, and that comes as somewhat of a surprise because they had a CJOC in place and I'm pretty sure that was in place before the "burning man incident." We had Marines on the watch floor, so that statement that you made to me is news to me. That comes as a surprise to me.

Q: Were you aware of the 2011 CENTCOM-UK PJHQ Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which apparently led to this C2 arrangement?

A: No, Sir.

Q: Were you concerned with the C2 arrangement? Were you aware of Gen Mattis' 5-3-5 Card that was (and still is) prevalent combat leadership guidance in the Marine Corps? Is Unity of Command from the 5-3-5 card consistent with other Marine Corps doctrine? Did you take any action to address the C2 issue? Did you discuss it with MajGen Gurganus?

A: No, Sir. I did not. Again, I was not aware of the issue. When you looked outside the wire, we had unity of command with TF Helmand and TF Leatherneck, so this is not something that I looked at inside the wire.

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SUBJECT: AR 15-6 Interview with MajGen Gregg A. Sturdevant

Q: Some of the people we talked to described a situation where they weren't sure who was securing the 3d MAW flight line because of the C2 arrangement. Did you share this view?

A: Again, that is a bit surprising to me. Like I said, I was counting on the people who were tasked with providing the perimeter security to do their job, to do allow me to do my job. They had been doing that for a number of years, and that may have been a part of the problem. The Marines fell in on a UK base when we got this thing established, so maybe we fell in on some existing TTPs.

Q: Did you sense pressure from the UK regarding the C2 arrangement on the BLS Complex. Please describe. Did it force you to accept a C2 structure that you knew was flawed or was not doctrinal?

A: I think that is a fair characterization. I think that because they are our closest allies, we might not have pushed on them as hard as we might normally do. We would probably push harder between US Army and US Marines than maybe we did with the UK.

Q: (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) CO TFBW, informed us that the C2 arrangement prevented him from inspecting the Camp Bastion guard towers and security procedures. Were you aware of that? If so, were you nonetheless comfortable with the perimeter security on Camp Bastion? Why or why not?

A: I wasn't aware of that. I realized later that we did business different than they did. They had to get high level approval to do anything, even to test fire weapons.

Q: Although there was no unity of command over AT/FP for the entire BLS Complex, what mechanisms were in place to ensure unity of effort with your UK counterparts? If you identified an area of concern, did you have adequate means of expressing those concerns and rectifying the situation with your counterparts?

A: There was a process. The RC(SW) COS chaired the board, and either my COS or G3 would go to it. I know that the chain link fence discussed earlier went before that board. I will say that I'm not sure how much awareness MajGen Gurganus had on that board. I love (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) to death, and I've deployed with him before, but if you've ever seen his office, you would see the stacks and stacks of paperwork spread throughout the whole office...across his desk, across the floor, across a three-person couch. I love him to death, but you are not serving the commander. I know for a fact that he was responsible for slowing down actions. He was a bit of a roadblock, and I don't know what impact he had on MajGen Gurganus' visibility.

Q: Did 3d MAW (FWD) have a part in the crisis response plan if an incident occurred over on Camp Bastion?

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SUBJECT: AR 15-6 Interview with MajGen Gregg A. Sturdevant

A: To the best of my knowledge, we didn't have any responsibilities over there. My responsibilities were over on Camp Leatherneck with the sector defense. The only unit I had that could respond was the MWSS. Even when they were down to 107 people, they had MRAPs. Other than that, and it played out on the night of the 14th, the MV22 Squadron had M240G that they used in the back of the aircraft for air-to-ground defense, but they took them out and used them for defensive weapons the night of the 14th.

Q: The JRB Supplemental Review identifies that a request for a perimeter fence around the airfield was denied by both the UK chain of command and by the BLS Executive Steering Group (ESG). Are you aware of the deliberations behind the ESG's decision to deny funding for the fence?

A: I think it was a funding issue, and it goes back to the future of Bastion-Leatherneck. When I got there, Day 1, the Brits said at some point we are going home and somebody has to take control of this airfield. This was a reoccurring issue. I think that played heavily in the decision making process on how much to spend on Bastion-Leatherneck.

Q: Were the improvements adopted, e.g. a ditch and berm system, responsive to the threat identified by the "burning man incident?"

A: It was a compromise. The ditch and berm did a couple things. The ditch was pretty deep, and the berm was pretty high. I actually liked to be able to see across the airfield before they built the berm. To be honest, I questioned how effective it was. But it was cost effective, and they could do it in a relatively short period of time. But that was clearly a reaction to the "burning man incident," which questioned how you could stop a small vehicle from accessing the flight line.

Q: Did you direct anything to your staff in response to the "burning man incident" to correct the access to the flight line?

A: No, Sir. I didn't and I'll tell you why. The Brits were controlling access to their side of the flight line, and we were controlling access to our side. I don't really agree with the finding that the flight line had unfettered access, because we were controlling the flow. Before you got to the airfield, we had people controlling access and doing inspections. I'm really scratching my head on what else I would have done. I had long discussions with the MWSS commander on what he was finding on these TCNs as they tried to get access to the flight line. We were pretty aggressive. I don't know what the Brits were doing, because as we discussed earlier, they were operating under a different chain of command.

Q: The JRB Supplemental Review addressed a 3d MAW request to emplace concertina wire to secure vulnerable areas around the flight line and to channelize pedestrian traffic to ECPs, which was approved and completed prior

AFDC

SUBJECT: AR 15-6 Interview with MajGen Gregg A. Sturdevant

to the attack. There is also an exhibit in the Supplemental Review of a 3d MAW flight line barrier plan request submitted at the same time (11 May 2012) to emplace over (b)(1)1.4a

to protect the flight line. The request stated, "Without these improvements, the flight line equipment and personnel will remain vulnerable to enemy attack at multiple access points, including numerous high speed avenues of approach." This project was eventually approved after the attack. Do you recall why this request was not approved after the "burning man incident"? Do you know whether the request made it to a decision-making body like the ESG? Did you discuss this request with MajGen Gurganus?

A: No, Sir. As far as I know, that went up to the ESG. We always seemed to get some sort of compromise that was a lower cost initiative.

Q: We've been informed by IJC, ISAF, and MARCENT that they could have supplied RC(SW) with AT/FP resources if RC(SW) had expressed the need. From your perspective, was the process for requesting AT/FP resources responsive to your needs at 3d MAW (FWD)? What were your primary avenues for requesting resources? Were you ever denied AT/FP resources that you requested from a higher command?

A: We needed eyeballs and trigger pullers, and we could not get more manpower.

Q: The "burning man incident" also highlighted the insider threat on Camp Bastion. What threats were you primarily concerned with? Threats from the ANA? Threats from local national (LN) and third country national (TCN) contractors?

A: That incident kind of had the effect of narrowing our focus on the insider threat. It really wasn't the ANA, especially at first. My main focus was on the contractors, and the general officers wanted to know what was going on in their compounds. MajGen Gurganus did a good job of cleaning those up compounds with inspections. My biggest fear was with a TCN walking into a DFAC and blowing himself up.

Q: What did you direct during your tenure in 3d MAW (FWD) to address the insider threat?

A: Members of my staff guarded the DFAC. We were sure that we had one person inspecting and a guardian angel. We picked experienced people to do that.

Q: Did 3d MAW (FWD) have any responsibility for vetting and security of contractors? Did you do anything to coordinate with the UK on vetting and security of contractors on Camp Bastion?

A: Not to my knowledge, Sir.

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SUBJECT: AR 15-6 Interview with MajGen Gregg A. Sturdevant

Q: Did you direct any enhanced security control measures for contractors around the flight line?

A: Up until the 1st of September, we only had American contractors. They worked for a company (b)(1)1.4a and they worked on the helicopters. We had no issues with them, and they had a specific work area. Then we got some TCN fuel contractors after 1 September that worked the fuel pits.

Q: Were you comfortable with the counter-intelligence efforts aboard Camp Bastion?

A: No, Sir. I didn't have any knowledge of it.

(b)(1)1.4c

A: No, Sir. I was not.

(b)(1)1.4c

A: Not until after the attack when my duties shifted to security matters. I learned from (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) that there was a safe haven out there, because there was a natural terrain feature that the Brits didn't go west of.

Q: Do you feel that the 14 September 2012 attack on Camp Bastion displayed the characteristics of insider intelligence collection?

A: Sir, I honestly don't know. There were some areas outside the fence line where there was high ground. You could sit out there and observe. I didn't see any signs that there was insider assistance, particularly insider assistance to gain access that night. What was interesting was that I saw an article in the Stars and Stripes a few weeks after the attack discussing that the Taliban had developed a special operations capability. (b)(1)1.4c

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Q: CO TFBW mentioned that he felt the BLS Complex was increasingly being probed. The RC(SW) C-3 also mentioned that the BLS Complex was always being probed. Did you share this concern? Was it brought to your attention?

A: Yes, Sir. It was a concern, and it was discussed. And this was briefed during the O&I that MajGen Gurganus was aware of. I'm sure that the scrappers had a

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SUBJECT: AR 15-6 Interview with MajGen Gregg A. Sturdevant

dual purpose. My concern was that the scrappers were coming near the base and gathering intelligence on us, and I did raise that concern.

Q: Were there any non-lethal munitions in place for scrappers?

A: Not to my knowledge, Sir. I agree that those would have been the right answer for scrappers.

Q: Were you aware in advance that a Joint Staff Integrated Vulnerability Assessment (JSIVA) team (led by Marine (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)) would be conducting an assessment of parts of the BLS Complex?

A: Sir, I honestly don't remember if I was made aware of it beforehand.

Q: Did you get briefed on the JSIVA's results?

A: I do remember being debriefed on it, but I don't remember the specific results.

Q: The report states that a "vulnerability" is "a situation or circumstance that if left unchanged may result in the loss of life or damage to mission-essential resources." Did you get briefed on the vulnerability of the flight line and of Camp Bastion's East Gate?

A: Sir, I honestly don't remember. I assume that I did. The East Gate is not ringing a bell.

Q: Did you receive guidance from RC(SW) regarding the vulnerabilities of the flight line and the East Gate?

A: Not that I recall, Sir.

Q: Did you discuss the JSIVA with the UK personnel on Camp Bastion considering that two vulnerabilities (East Gate ECP and flight line) were on Camp Bastion?

A: I can't remember, Sir.

Q: The JSIVA report describes the flight line access at BLS Complex as an "exploitable" vulnerability and "thus, personnel and equipment are largely exposed." The primary AT/FP improvement recommended after the "burning man incident," namely the airfield perimeter fence, was denied. Did you feel that your Squadrons were exposed?

A: No, Sir. I did not. I go back to the entry control point (ECP). It wasn't anywhere near the flight line at that time. It was on the other side of the airfield. As you enter the airfield itself, there was a berm running north and south, and you made a hard right. That's where the MWSS vehicle ECP was. So the vehicles were being looked at on the western side of the airfield. So every vehicle that entered the airfield that went across to our side of the airfield went through that ECP. That ECP was very thorough, so I did not feel exposed.

AFDC

SUBJECT: AR 15-6 Interview with MajGen Gregg A. Sturdevant

Q: The JSIVA included pictures of the flight line showing unimpeded access across a pretty wide area of the airfield to aircraft parked out on the ramp. It described this access as an exploitable vulnerability. Any thoughts on that?

A: Sir, I would agree with that, but you have to gain access to the flight line somewhere. So yes, once you gain access to the flight line, it's wide open and I understand that. If you send someone out there with a critical eye, they are going to identify things like that. Then it all comes down to managing risk. How do you stop the access? You build a ditch and barriers, and some of those things were addressed. Others were not. You could do all sorts of things, but realistically you don't put cement walls up and have a helicopter land in the middle. It's not going to happen. So, I hear what that study said. I think some measures were taken. I had my MWSS MPs on the far side of the runway monitoring the access to the flight line. I got it that once you were inside, it was a high speed approach. You basically had a highway running down the middle of the base. You dig ditches, you put in berms, and you go from there.

Q: RC(SW) stated that they did not use the JSIVA as new justification to seek flight line improvements, because they felt that the ditch and berm project, which didn't get started until 7 September, mitigated the threat. Were you aware of this? Do you agree with that assessment based on what you knew and perceived at the time? Did 3d MAW (FWD) request any new improvements after the JSIVA?

A: I honestly thought that ditch and berm were in place before that. Those projects take a long time to get coordinated and approved. So it doesn't surprise me that the project wasn't started until then even though it was identified much earlier. It goes back to the financial piece and the future of the base. It's also what we were seeing on the I&W with a VBIED at the gates. Not so much the "burning man incident," although that did highlight the fact that if you got out on the flight line, you could go a long way. I don't remember if we went back after the JSIVA and asked for additional improvements to be made. I still think the ECPs, the concertina wire, and the ditches and berms were a satisfactory solution to the threat we were seeing on the ground.

Q: Do you think you were able to mitigate the identified vulnerabilities?

A: Sir, I would not say fully mitigate, but it goes back to how we could address it with the means we had available. That's not to say that we couldn't go outside for help. Although we didn't get everything that we wanted, we were given something to address the vulnerabilities. And getting back to the threat, we just weren't seeing the kind of threats that would justify some of the requests.

Q: From the documents we've reviewed and based on some of the interviews, it does not appear that there was a defense-in-depth, a layered defense to protect

AFDC

SUBJECT: AR 15-6 Interview with MajGen Gregg A. Sturdevant

such a large, important base. Did you discuss increasing the local security posture of 3d MAW Squadrons (additional ECPs, guards, patrols, lighting)?

A: No, Sir. I go back to the fact that I felt relatively safe there. I've been to Kandahar with the rocket attacks. Up until the time they started to grow the poppy up against the fence line at Bastion, we were out in the middle of nowhere. Right or wrong, the focus of effort was projecting combat power through TF Leatherneck and TF Helmand. We were clearly surprised on the night of the 14th. We just weren't expecting that. Not in my wildest imagination could I ever envision that. So no Sir, I did not direct that. It wasn't that we didn't have the bodies. I could have stripped some people off of the flight line to set up some sort of rotational guard, but I thought we were protected by the people who were supposed to protect us.

Q: (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) your ATFPO at the time of the attack, informed us that when he tried to get all of the Squadrons to man ECPs and guards, they pushed back that they didn't have enough personnel. Were you aware of (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) efforts? Did you feel that the Squadrons had enough personnel to both complete their mission and provide their own local security?

A: I was not aware that that was an issue. The manning of the Squadrons was always a bit of a contentious issue. We came over lighter in the Squadrons than we should have been, but it was governed by the manning document. Obviously we were capable of doing both the mission and guarding the flight line, because we did it after the fact. Before the attack though, the threat wasn't driving us to that. So, we could man ECPs, but beyond that we just couldn't do it given the mission we were told to accomplish. If they wanted to shift us into a security posture, then I would have gone to the boss to tell him what he was giving up, what we wouldn't be able to do anymore. I think the reaction that you saw on the 14th was exactly what you would expect out of the Aviation Combat Element, which is "every Marine is a rifleman." That's exactly what happened that night. The Marines put down their wrenches, and picked up their rifles and flak jackets and got on line. I think that is what should be expected of the ACE. We were tenants on that base, we had responsibilities to keep our eyes and ears open, and if something bad happens, you have to be ready to fight. And we demonstrated that we were able to do that on the 14th. The defense in depth wasn't much more than the British Quick Reaction Force that we talked about earlier. And the US Quick Reaction Force, although I think they were more geared towards a response at one of the gates or something, not towards a perimeter breach like we experienced.

Q: Were you aware of any conversations (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) had with the leadership of VMA-211 warning them that they were exposed and should emplace barriers and local security?

A: No Sir, I was not.

AFDC

SUBJECT: AR 15-6 Interview with MajGen Gregg A. Sturdevant

Q: The JRB Report mentioned that there was no guard force assigned to monitor the dead space between the perimeter guard towers and the flight line. Based on the unfettered access to the flight line and the dead space between it and the perimeter fence, some personnel have described the perimeter fence as a “single point of failure.” Were you aware of this vulnerability? Did you feel that Camp Bastion had an integrated, layered, defense-in-depth? Did you ever raise concerns to MajGen Gurganus?

A: Sure, I guess. Basically, that fence was the only thing between the outside of the base and the inside of the base. I mean, if you look at where the fence was and where the LSA was, I was concerned about the LSA. I was concerned about a rocket attack though, not somebody coming through the fence. I go back to the fact that the Brits were responsible for the fence. Some of the things we did after the attack, we had to clear out the areas by the fence, and get a berm up like we had on the west side so that you had some standoff and didn't have to rely on the fence alone to stop bad guys. I did not raise a concern with MajGen Gurganus about not having a layered defense. But that wasn't just the Bastion side. It was the whole base, given the size of it. To properly secure it, it was about manning all the towers and having more manpower. To properly secure it, we needed double what we had in the SECFOR. I learned that later when I took over security.

Q: The RC(SW) ATFPO, (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) assessed the UK forces as professional, but under-resourced and under-manned. Did you share this assessment? Did you share it with MajGen Gurganus?

A: The answer to that question is no to both. He was over there leading the Force Protection effort for the higher headquarters, and he never brought that forward to the group. I was not aware of that.

Q: Did you have any specific concerns about the Tongan soldiers manning guard towers on Camp Bastion? If so, what were your concerns and who did you address them to?

A: I didn't have a lot of visibility of what they were doing in the towers. I saw the Bahrainis and the Jordanians more. I didn't see much out of the Tongans.

Q: Did the UK personnel on Camp Bastion ever express to you that the UK did not have enough forces to adequately protect Camp Bastion? Were you aware of any such shortage of manpower?

A: No, Sir.

Q: OP MOLEHILL was a daily security patrol that surveyed the inside of the perimeter fence every day in order to find and repair any breaches. UK forces conducted these patrols. Were you aware of them? Were you aware that OP MOLEHILL had had identified multiple breaches in the wire in the 3-4 months

AFDC

SUBJECT: AR 15-6 Interview with MajGen Gregg A. Sturdevant

prior to the attack? The RC(SW) J2X even told us that they had a video of an individual who breached the fence at night and looked around inside an empty guard tower. If you received these reports, what was your response to them? The UK personnel apparently characterized the breaches as scrapping activity. Should this have been investigated more thoroughly, or was it reasonable at the time to assume this was scrapping activity?

A: I did see them working the perimeter fence quite frequently. There was a gravel road running by the fence, and I used to see them working that all the time. I had heard that there were breaches in the fence, but I was not aware of the video.

Q: TFBW with support from the 215th ANA Corps patrolled daily outside the perimeter fence. What was your knowledge of these patrols?

A: I knew that they were patrolling. There was a lot going on in their AO. There were a lot of IEDs, so we would provide support for them.

Q: Were you aware that the SECFOR numbers had been reduced, which also reduced the number of external patrols they could conduct?

A: I was not. I remember that MajGen Gurganus got approval to bring 1st Battalion, 1st Marines over to act as a bridging force as we drew down from 7 battalions to 1 battalion in the AO. And we were able to keep some of those Marines, and I thought the purpose was to shore up TFBW. I probably took that company and plugged them in after the attack to the SECFOR piece.

Q: We've also been told that these external patrols had reduced their visibility to the local populace in the days preceding the attack due to the anti-Islam YouTube video that had sparked violence in the Middle East in the days leading up to the attack. Were you aware of this? Was there any increase in FPCON or other posture on the BLS Complex due to the video?

A: Yes, Sir. That was true across the AO. The guidance was to minimize our exposure until this blew over. I don't remember if we increased FPCON. One of the things that we were tracking was Prince Harry showing up on 8 September. Because he was an aviator, it kind of fell under my area. He kept a very low profile. He was what he was supposed to be. He was a Lieutenant and he was doing his thing as a co-pilot. There was no change in security specifically for him. The only thing special we did for him was we had a place identified as a safe house in case the base came under attack. The night of the attack, he slept through the entire thing. We didn't do anything special for him. He came and went, and you never would have known he was there.

AFDC

SUBJECT: AR 15-6 Interview with MajGen Gregg A. Sturdevant

Q: Did you have any reason to believe that TFBW did not have enough personnel to conduct its assigned mission both inside the perimeter and outside in AO Belleau Wood?

A: No, Sir. I had no reason to believe that.

Q: Where were you during the attack on 14-15 September 2012?

A: I was in my office on the Leatherneck side. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) the Squadron Commander of HMLA-469, called me just after 2200 and told me that he saw an AV-8 blow up and that he thought we were under attack. He had to get off the phone to respond, and I ran to the watch floor.

Q: Please describe what actions you took throughout the engagement.

A: I went to the watch floor and we called every Squadron. I wanted to go across to the airfield, but all I had was soft-skinned SUV. I pulled up the ISR feed on SIPR and watched what was going on with ISR overhead. We sounded the alarm.

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) launched a section right away, and it was eventually Cobras and Hueys who neutralized the threat, along with British Apaches who happened to be coming back from a mission. I would get feedback from the Squadrons, and pass it on to MajGen Gurganus. I notified him when Otis Raible was killed. I notified him when Sgt Atwell was killed. I gave him casualty updates. We used the VM-22 flight line as a casualty collection point. The doctors and corpsmen did a great job, and we brought the wounded over to the Role III hospital. I kept giving updates until the fighting stopped between 0230-0300. MajGen Gurganus and I went over around 0600 and surveyed the flight line.

Q: Did you get any specific information regarding how the guards in Towers 15 and 17 missed the infiltration and breach? Did you learn afterwards that only Tower 17 had direct line of sight to the breach point?

A: It was days after the attack until I found out there were unmanned towers out there. The information flow was slow. The Brits were embarrassed. It was an emotional event. Anytime you lose Marines, and a Squadron Commander no less, it was a very emotional event. Bits and pieces of the story began to come out that just weren't making sense. It took awhile for the real story to come out, and some of my folks are still pretty pissed off about that. It was unfortunate, and it was not a pretty story. For the tower to be unmanned with the terrain out there, I questioned that. Something has to be there to cover terrain in defilade, something has to be there to watch that space. I'll leave it at that.

Q: Did you receive any indications and warnings (I&W) prior to the attack? In your post-attack analysis, did you discover a failure in dissemination of I&W? Did you identify a collection gap that led to a lack of I&W?

A: No, Sir. Nothing specific at all. Again, it was all VBIED and insider threat at that time. We were reacting to the perceived threat. We made DFACs US-only

AFDC

SUBJECT: AR 15-6 Interview with MajGen Gregg A. Sturdevant

instead of having them integrated with TCN contractors. We were working on the gates.

Q: Do you think RC(SW) underestimated the enemy to conduct this type of attack?

A: Sir, we all did. It's not just RC(SW). It goes across the board. Based on the geographical location of the base, and the fact that we hadn't seen it before, and the lack of I&W, we all underestimated the threat.

Q: A week after the attack, you published a Force Protection/Incident Response Plan that included a barrier plan and an integrated defense of the flight line. Should this plan have been in place prior to the attack? Why or why not? Why didn't you feel that it was necessary after the warnings of flight line vulnerability provided by the "burning man incident" and the JSIVA?

A: If you back up, I will tell you, I couldn't do it in the ACE at the time. We had improvements to the flight line racked and stacked on our priority list, but it was not top priority. Either demilitarizing or expanding outer FOBs was the priority. FOB Shuqvani was a big project that finished up 1 September. Based on the threat, the flight line did not go to the top of the list. Hindsight being 20/20, we should have had something in place, but at the time we had a lot of higher priority projects going on and limited MWSS capacity.

Q: After the attack in December, RC(SW) released a FRAGO unifying the C2 structure and making you the Camp BLS CO. Did the UK agree with this change? Had the attack changed the environment such that this change was now tenable, or did MajGen Gurganus simply decide that it had to be done regardless?

A: The Brits didn't like the proposal initially, and I got involved with the negotiations. The Brits desperately wanted to be in charge of security, but I told them that we were no longer willing to accept not being in charge of overall security. The attack definitely changed the environment. They knew that they had screwed up.

Q: Do you have anything to add that would be relevant to this investigation?

A: It breaks my heart that two Marines were killed on my watch. I go back to where we were in the Spring of 2012 and what we were trying to accomplish in RC(SW). The fact that we were going down from seven maneuver battalions to one, and trying to balance projecting combat power with protecting the BLS Complex. I hit rewind several times. We were prepared for the threat we thought we were facing. We made improvements to all the gates, we tried to get rid of the poppy fields. I think our focus was on where it needed to be based on the VBIED threat being the much higher probability of attack. The actual perimeter penetration was much lower on the probability, and obviously we weren't very well prepared for it. Some things that worked well that night were with the responses of (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) and his Squadron, the reaction of the Squadrons to

AFDC

SUBJECT: AR 15-6 Interview with MajGen Gregg A. Sturdevant

set up a perimeter and guard that access road, and the Quick Reaction Forces. I really do think the CJOC was a more capable platform than people give it credit for. That's it, Sir.

2. Point of contact for this memorandum is my legal advisor, (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) at (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)



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