



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 (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)c former
Sergeant Major, I Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward)

1. The investigation team conducted a recorded interview with (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)c (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)c I Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) on 19 June 2013 at Camp Pendleton, CA 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. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)c (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)c has subsequently retired from the US Marine Corps, and he is currently unavailable to sign and return a sworn statement. The purpose of this memorandum is to certify that the dialogue transcribed below is an accurate account of the interview with (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)c. The recorded interview is on file with the investigative team.

Q: Where are you currently assigned and what is your current duty position?

A: I am currently assigned to Camp Pendleton, California, I MEF(FWD), I MEF(FWD) (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)c

Q: What is your background in the Marine Corps?

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)c

Q: What was your duty position at the time of the 14-15 September 2012 attack on the Camps Bastion-Leatherneck-Shorabak (BLS) Complex?

A: I was the Regional Command South West (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)c during the 14-15 September 2012 attack on the Camps Bastion-Leatherneck-Shorabak (BLS) Complex.

Q: When did you arrive and depart Afghanistan as (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)c of RC(SW)?

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)c

Q: What was RC(SW)'s mission?

AFDC

SUBJECT: AR 15-6 Interview with (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)c

A: The RC SW's mission was a two-fold mission; obviously to train Afghan National Security Forces and also to aid in economic and government improvement.

Q: What did you feel were your primary responsibilities as Sergeant Major of RC(SW)?

A: My primary responsibility as (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)c of RC(SW) was to be the commander's eyes and ears as far as enlisted matters; and not just enlisted matters, all matters pertaining to the morale and welfare of the service members of Regional Command South West.

Q: Were you headquartered at Camp Leatherneck the entire time?

A: I was headquartered at Camp Leatherneck the entire time.

Q: How was your relationship with MajGen Gurganus? How often did you interact? On what matters did you typically interact?

A: The boss and I interacted daily. We talked about everything from A to Z pertaining to RC(SW).

Q: How often did you interact with the two CSMs at IJC who spanned your time in Afghanistan? On what matters did you generally interact?

A: At least once a month we were on the net with each other. They tried to make it around the battle space at least once a month.

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

A: During the attack on 14-15 September 2012 I was right at the CP, forward Camp Leatherneck.

Q: Based on your experience of living and working on the BLS Complex, what were your initial thoughts?

A: I found it difficult to believe that someone had penetrated the wire. We thought we had good measures in place to prevent anyone from penetrating the wire. Again, it was difficult to believe.

Q: What actions did you take during the attack?

A: I was in the COC the entire time of the attack; interacting with the boss, the Chief of Staff, the C-3, just being in there, keeping situational awareness on exactly what was happening. When the smoke cleared, if you will, the boss, myself, and the DCOM went over to the CJOC to see what exactly was transpiring with Task Force Belleau Wood (TFBW).

Q: Prior to the attack, what was your assessment of Force Protection on the BLS Complex? Did you ever express any concerns to MajGen Gurganus regarding

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SUBJECT: AR 15-6 Interview with (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)c

AT/FP on the BLS Complex? If so, what were those concerns? What was his response?

A: I thought it was adequate, I thought it was reasonable. I never expressed concerns to anyone.

Q: Did you ever express concerns regarding AT/FP to your counterpart at IJC? If so, please describe any conversations you had.

A: No, sir. Again, you think you have the situation well at hand. You hear bits and pieces of information but we thought we had good force protection in place.

Q: How involved were you with the (b)(3), (b)(6) of TF Belleau Wood (TFBW) and their performance of FP responsibilities? Please describe that relationship and any concerns you may have shared.

A: We interacted daily. The TFBW (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)c and I would troop the line. We would go from post to post to see some of the deficiencies he thought were lapses in security. He and his boss, the CO of TFBW, would adjust fire from that moment on. His name was (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)c.

Q: Were you a participant in any AT/FP related Working Groups or other Boards? If so, please explain.

A: I sat in a couple, but usually I was out and about seeing other areas that we needed to focus on.

Q: Who in the RC(SW) chain of command was primarily responsible for reporting to MajGen Gurganus on Force Protection matters? CO, TFBW? His C-3 AT/FP Officer?

A: I think it was a combination of both, but primarily the CO TFBW.

Were you a part of that reporting mechanism? If so, please describe how often or under what circumstances you would receive information or concerns about AT/FP on the BLS Complex.

A: I sat in on a couple of them but there isn't anything that I recall.

Q: Did you have concerns about the insider threat posed by LN and TCN contractors? If so, please describe any actions you took regarding your concerns.

A: We always remediated amongst the (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)c the situational awareness. We were like, look, just because we are aboard Camp Leatherneck or Bastion it doesn't mean that we should take things for granted. We are in just as much danger aboard this complex as the warriors who are outside of the wire on a daily basis. We must make sure that every Marine, Sailor, Soldier, Airman or Allied Force doesn't walk around with his or her head in the clouds.

AFDC

SUBJECT: AR 15-6 Interview with (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)c

Q: Was TFBW responsible for vetting and security of all contractors, or was it split among the various Camps? If the latter, how did you coordinate vetting and security with your UK and Afghan counterparts?

I'm not sure on that one. Q: If you are aware of it, please describe the vetting process for contractors.

A: I can't answer that.

Q: Describe the security measures in place for contractors to get onto the BLS Complex once they were vetted and hired. What control measures, if any, were in place for contractors once they were inside the compound? Once inside, could they walk around the BLS Complex freely?

A: Again, I can't comment on that sir. I will say this, entering the ECP, absolutely not, absolutely not. If you didn't have your credentials you were not entering in the ECP as far as walking in the MEF compound; that didn't happen, period. The MEF compound was protected. Also those who were manning the entry control point. We went out there constantly. We saw their measures in place and it was difficult to get aboard.

Q: Did you have concerns about the AT/FP posture on the Camp Bastion side of the BLS Complex, including the flight line? If so, what were they and what were they based upon? Did you ever express those to anyone? Did you ever discuss them with MajGen Gurganus or anyone else at HQ RC(SW)? If so, please describe the conversation(s) and the parties involved.

A: No sir, I didn't. Again, the way the MAGTF operates and the way we think, we think we have everything contained, if you will. On that side we think that we have things contained as well. You see the towers whether it was Tongans or UK individuals in the towers, you don't give it a second thought because they have a commander and you think that everything is going along. TFBW CO was trooping the lines to ensure that GEN Gurganus' backside was covered on it as well.

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 had no concerns about the Tongans in the watchtowers.

Q: There have been reports in the media that the Tongan soldiers slept in their guard towers. However, we have learned from some interviews that there were lower levels in the towers where the Tongans slept when they were off-duty, and that they had never been caught sleeping in the towers while on-duty. Can you confirm or deny either version of events?

A: That is correct.

AFDC

SUBJECT: AR 15-6 Interview with (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)c

Q: All reports indicate that Camp Bastion manned approximately 50% of their towers. Was this also common in Camps Leatherneck and Shorabak? Why was manning roughly 50% of the towers deemed sufficient? We have been told that it was partially because there were primary, secondary, and alternate towers. Is this your understanding as well?

A: As far as Shorabak, I can't comment on that. But I will tell you, Camp Leatherneck, if there was a tower, we had people in them. Once we got our augment of Triple Canopy individuals, the rotation was set up, again, once we got our augment of contract security guards, yes.

Q: One interviewee expressed a concern that prior to the attack, only half of the guard towers were manned, yet there seemed to be an excess of Marines in MWR facilities and coffee shops that could have otherwise been performing guard duty. Did you share this concern?

A: I do not, because those Marines were performing their regular duties. In order for us to take those Marines off of their regular duties; some of those Marines were standing guard they weren't standing guard in those towers but they were standing guard in other areas. And those Marines were just coming off shift and their commanders allowed those Marines to get a little R&R.

Q: Did you have concerns about the split C2 structure for force protection between Camp Leatherneck and Camp Bastion? If so, how did you mitigate this?

A: No, sir. I mean, one of the main things the boss did was eliminate friction points. The boss was not going to allow any friction points to stand in the way of making sure that everybody was well protected.

Q: Please describe your relationship with your UK counterparts on Camp Bastion. Did you discuss AT/FP concerns? Please describe the nature of those conversations and any outcomes or solutions, if applicable.

A: Not so much aboard Camp Bastion but within the RC we had a phenomenal relationship. We only had the normal dialogue; we did not have anything out of the ordinary in terms of AT/FP vulnerabilities.

Q: Considering that there were Marine personnel and aircraft on the flight line away from Camp Leatherneck, did you pay special attention to Force Protection of the 3d MAW?

A: I would say that during our (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)c meetings that all components of the MAGTF were represented; (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)c 3d MAW(FWD) was present. We always voiced our concerns about everything; not specifically just the Air Wing side but the total MAGTF in itself.

AFDC

SUBJECT: AR 15-6 Interview with (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)c

Q: Please describe the arrangement between 3d MAW and the UK forces considering that UK forces were responsible for AT/FP of the flight line. Was the 3d MAW (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)c satisfied with his arrangement?

A: I'm not sure if he was or not, I can't comment on that one. His name was (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)c

Q: How much do you know about the local national interpreter's incursion onto the flight line in March 2012 while Secretary Panetta was present on BLS (aka the "burning man incident)? Were you involved at all with any mitigation of risk to the flight line after that incident? If so, please describe. Based on the known and expected threat of attack prior to the 14 September attack, do you feel that the attempted mitigation measures were adequate?

A: No, sir. We were there awaiting the SECDEF arrival. We saw the incident unfold in front of our eyes but other than that, nothing. Based on that attack, I feel the mitigation measures put in place later were sufficient.

Q: Did you have any conversations with MajGen Gurganus after that incident? If so, please describe.

A: I wouldn't say that we specifically drilled down on that one, it was overall security. If this can happen right here, what are other vulnerable points that individuals can penetrate. MajGen Gurganus frequently referred to that incident as something we needed to protect from in the future.

Q: Were you aware of the Joint Staff Integrated Vulnerability Assessment (JSIVA), which reviewed the BLS AT/FP Program 10-14 June? Are you aware of the results of that JSIVA? Were the results shared throughout the leadership of RC(SW)? If so, how were they shared and in what manner?

A: I am aware of the results of the JSIVA. They were briefed to the staff; I was focusing my attention on other things, but I sat in on the brief. I know they were there but I can't comment on them.

Q: Did you take any actions after the JSIVA? Did you have any conversations with MajGen Gurganus regarding the results of the JSIVA? If so, please describe.

A: We took action to correct the vulnerabilities, we ran frequent drills, improved the bunkers, tightened down on the FP measures. I did not have any conversations with MajGen Gurganus following the JSIVA.

Q: Did you or anyone in the RC(SW) chain of command ever seek assistance from IJC as a result of the JSIVA? If so, what assistance did you seek and what was the result?

A: I can't comment on that one sir.

AFDC

SUBJECT: AR 15-6 Interview with (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)c

Q: What was your assessment of the threat of attack to the BLS Complex prior to 14 September 2012?

A: There were no indications of an attack.

Q: Did you ever observe complacency on the part of US personnel providing Force Protection for the BLS Complex? If so, what do you attribute this to?

A: I did not observe complacency on the part of US or UK personnel providing Force Protection to the BLS Complex.

Q: One interviewee informed us that the attitude of personnel on the BLS Complex might have been that it was “too big to fail.” Do you agree? Do you believe that TFBW or other US personnel displayed this attitude?

A: I don't agree with the comment, “too big to fail.” Again, it was one team, one fight there. Unless you were actually there; it's hard to shoot on someone's target if you're not there. For the amount of space they had I think they did one hell of a damn job, sir; hell of a job. Considering that at any point in time individuals could have penetrated the wire, hell of a job.

Q: Did you have adequate manpower to conduct your mission in RC(SW), including force protection? Did you ever express concerns regarding a manpower shortage to MajGen Gurganus or to IJC? If so, describe those conversations and the parties involved? What was the resolution, if any?

A: I think so. You always want more but you do with what you have; and I think we did a heck of a job with what we had on hand.

Q: Did you have any conversations with MajGen Gurganus after the attack regarding the vulnerabilities previously identified during the “burning man incident” and the JSIVA, and whether RC(SW) had addressed the vulnerabilities appropriately prior to the attack? If so, please describe those conversations.

A: No, sir.

Q: To get an idea of MajGen Gurganus' involvement in the FP, I imagine you're with him a lot of time. Where would he go, what would he do, one of the past interviewees mentioned that the general went up in a helicopter to take a look at the outside to make adjustments that he was on the ground. Was that your experience as well?

A: Absolutely, I will say this to the Generals, when the boss and I would touch down someplace the first thing the boss would do is grab the commanders and say, let's walk the perimeter, let's troop the lines and see what dead spaces are here, what avenues of approach can the enemy take. I know the boss did that frequently because I was with him. He made an effort to constantly say “hey, you know what, I need to take care of my own people here too.” Even though we used

AFDC

SUBJECT: AR 15-6 Interview with (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)c

to go out three or four times a week to check on the warriors outside the wire, he never forgot what was happening on the BLS, never.

Q: One of the questions the General asked about was what you thought of the security there at the BLS. You used the word “adequate.” To me “adequate” has a bit of a mediocre tone. Is that your intention?

A: That was not. If I misled the generals, I apologize for that. Adequate was the wrong terminology used. Again, for the amount of space that they were covering they did a heck of a dag-gone job, a heck of a job. At a time when the President of the United States says “hey, we’re going to start withdrawing,” General Allen said, “hey, make it happen.” We made it happen. The forces that we had on deck, whether US or UK, we took care of business. It was unfortunate that happened. Sometimes you have to say job well done; but I will tell you this, fourteen of those individuals are no longer on this damn Earth and the fifteenth one, he’s up to here missing something. As Marine’s always say, we run to the sounds of the guns and our ACE component definitely ran to the sounds of the guns and did what they needed to do and nothing else happened. Nothing.

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

A: No, sir, none whatsoever. Generals, again, the forces that General Gurganus had under his charge not at one time did he neglect anybody or anything. Taking care of his service members, protecting them was his number one priority. I saw the man stay up 24 hours a day. We talk about the burden of command that you gentlemen know, I saw it on his face daily.

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



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