



**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 Executive Officer, VMA-211, 3d Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward) [3d MAW(FWD)]**

1. The investigation team conducted a recorded interview with (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C), former Executive Officer, VMA-211, 3d MAW(FWD) on 12 July 2013 at Quantico, VA 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) 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?**

(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 Executive Officer of the squadron and actually was taking a Det back to (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)c. With the drawdown, we were taking 2 airplanes back, reducing our footprint on the ground so the day of the attack I was in Qatar with the Det flying home.**

**Q: When did you arrive in Afghanistan with VMA-211 and when did you depart?**

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

**Q: What were your specific responsibilities as the XO for VMA-211?**

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

**A: I ran the staff, helped set-up, when we were in Kandahar we were the site commander for the marine operations, then we transitioned to Bastion, so we helped set-up what we had there at Bastion and also flying combat operations.**

**Q: Did this include any oversight of AT/FP for your Squadron?**

**A: Yes, Sir. I owned the Intel guys. For AT/FP, our trained Marine was from the Intel Department and it was (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) was the S2 Officer. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)**

**(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) was the VMA211 Operations Officer. Since we gave the AT/FP mission to the Intel guys, I ran them, not the S3.**

**Q: I understand that you were the first Harrier Squadron at Camp Bastion.**

**A: Yes Sir.**

**Q: Do you feel that your Squadron was provided adequate information about AT/FP vulnerabilities which may have existed?**

**A: The initial assessment is that it is a much safer place than Kandahar. Kandahar had mortar and rocket attacks, and at that time Bastion had had nothing. I can't recall off the top of my head if we had an AT/FP Brief, but when we got there we did our AT/FP assessment and sent that forward after we arrived.**

**Q: Considering that the flight line was on the Camp Bastion side of the BLS Complex, how did you integrate with the UK personnel who were overall responsible for AT/FP on Camp Bastion? Describe that relationship.**

**A: The Brits manned the perimeter, then we showed up and the Cobra guys had been there for quite a long time and they were actually compounded...surrounded by a compound. We asked to get that, and we were told "no it wasn't available and it wasn't theQ: Where are you currently assigned?**

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**A: The Brits manned the perimeter, then we showed up and the Cobra guys had been there for quite a long time and they were actually compounded...surrounded by a compound. We asked to get that, and we were told "no it wasn't available and it wasn't the assessed threat." Barbwire and ditches were what was told that was needed for that.**

**Q: Who did you ask?**

**A: I believe it was in our AT/FP report; I believe we talked to** (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) **about getting that stuff (walls). We didn't get it and we were told it was the cost, the Alaska Barrier cost production. On our flight line, we were exposed completely around this way and it would have required walling in the whole thing.**

**Q: So you asked the Wing for that?**

**A: Yes Sir, the Wing. We requested it from our higher headquarters.**

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

**Q: Did it concern you that your Squadron was on a Camp not secured by Marines?**

**A: More so, it was concern about being observed and we had reported that; just the fact we didn't have any hardened defense was a concern for the CO and myself.**

**Q: Any concerns about the Brits and their ability to protect you guys?**

**A: No sir, you know we knew that the gates weren't all manned. We used to run the flight line sir, with the Tongan soldiers, they used to sunbathe. But, I think you get conditioned after being in a place for so long, that you assume you are safe and you assume that they are doing their job.**

**Q: What was your understanding of the primary threats to the BLS Complex prior to the 14 September attack?**

**A: Our initial concern when leaving Kandahar, we had the rocket attacks there, and that was the only threat there. When we came to Bastion, we felt it was low threat. We had our areas of vulnerability on the flight line; we knew that you could access the flight line, easy access for a vehicle to be able to drive right onto the flight line and up to the jets. That was a big concern to stop and get that fixed. There was also a VMR Det that flew people, and it was tough controlling people and Third Country Nationals getting off or not using the PAX terminal, and having direct access to our flight line. So that was one of our big concerns that we worked on. That was our main concern; people having direct access to our flight lines.**

**Q: Many interviewees have expressed that the BLS Complex's location "out in the middle of the desert" made them believe that a ground attack was unlikely. Was that your impression as well?**

**A: Yes Sir.**

**Q: Did you inspect the perimeter of the Camp Bastion? If so, please describe your impressions.**

**A: We would run from the squadron along the perimeter fence; that's where a lot of the Marines would run. So you would see the towers and what was going on. That is when you would see quite a few Afghans that would be up against the towers with their camels or sheep or on their bikes. I don't think we saw it as standoff, but we knew we were being observed and we had reported it in our SITREPS. We were on a draw and you could look straight down the draw onto our position; cars would break down all the time on the road and be broken down right at a vantage point on our lines. Based on my experience with the MARSOC guys, you could tell when you were being observed. We could tell there was observation going on.**

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

Q: Did you send those reports up to the Wing?

A: I believe we put them in our SITREP a couple of times, if not, I know the (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) had talked to people about it; I believe the CO talked to (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) and it was definitely something we talked about afterwards.

Q: Did you have concerns about the insider threat posed by LN and TCN contractors on the BLS Complex?

A: One of the threats when we went to the CO's meeting, the CoS had briefed was (b)( ) c so that was a big concern for us too; to not let unauthorized access onto our flight line.

Q: What mechanisms were in place to ensure unity of effort between US and UK counterparts, particularly in mixed areas like the Camp Bastion flight line?

A: We had very little interaction, when we got there I was the lead and I had just done the exchange tour in England, so we went over and did the meet and greets. We met the Station Commander, so we had interactions like that. We did training with them for certain missions; but we didn't interact with base security.

Q: Nothing on the force protection side?

A: No sir.

Q: What was your assessment of the UK forces' ability to protect Camp Bastion?

A: Unknown, Sir.

Q: UK forces conducted a "daily security patrol that surveys the inside of the perimeter fence every day in order to find and repair any breaches." Were you aware of them? We were informed that this patrol had identified 3-4 breaches in the wire in the 3-4 months prior to the attack. Were these breaches reported to you? If so, were they investigated?

A: No Sir. After the attack, (b)(3), (b)(6) was doing a NIPR search and actually found video footage of a breach, running and touching the (b)( ) running back out thru the same. I don't know if you guys have seen that, but we have it at the squadron still and it is camera footage from one of the towers; I believe it is tower 14 and they breached the wire, come in and touch the compound and run back out of the wire.

Q: You said the squadron still has it?

A: Yes Sir. Again that was found after the attack and it would have raised a lot more concern if we had been informed of that.

Q: How did you find it again?

A: (b)(3), (b)(6) was doing NIPR search for a video and there was one titled "Tower 14", I believe, so he opened it up and saw that, I believe it's July 23/24 timeframe.

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

**Q: Are you aware of any changes to the force protection posture on Camp Bastion prior to the attack?**

**A: The ditch was being dug around the flight line. They triple stranded it. One of our big concerns was there was a Triple Canopy post that was kind of in low lying area here in-between two hills, there is a road with direct access to the flight line. Initially there was nothing, so the answer was triple strad concertina along the far side of the road. Again our concern was people having direct access in a vehicle onto the flight line, which at that time was unsecure.**

**Q: Had the UK reduced its manpower or patrolling along the perimeter of Camp Bastion? Please explain.**

**A: Sir, we had very little exposure to it, you saw the British in their cougar vehicles every once in a while and on the road.**

**Q: How about Belleau Wood, did you have any contact with them?**

**A: No sir.**

**Q: Did 3d MAW (FWD) or any subordinate Marine units such as VMA-211 who were present on the airfield have AT/FP responsibilities on the flight line?**

**A: Sir, at Kandahar we had an established a QRF and an MRAP, but when we got to Bastion we were not given that type of assignment.**

**Q: Did VMA-211 employ any local security prior to the attack?**

**A: No sir.**

**Q: Did you conduct patrolling? Man ECPs? Provide guards?**

**A: No Sir**

**Q: Any reason why you would not have done that in retrospect?**

**A: Our flight line was too big and open to do that, plus we didn't have enough Marines because of the flight hours we were doing. Again we were the last group here and it was completely all the way around you could get access to us. (Points out where VMA211 is located) We were LIMA ramp, yes sir.**

**Q: Are you aware of any conversations between the 3d MAW (FWD) AT/FPO and your squadron leadership regarding his assessment that you were exposed and recommendations to make AT/FP improvements to your ramp?**

**A: We had talked to (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) and (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) before him, and these were things we had identified and brought it up to (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) If you looked at the hardened position down the road and then you looked at us, we were attempting to set it up to make it continually better for the next group.**

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

Q: What was that relationship like between your team and (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) and the guys up at the MAW?

A: With (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) for him, he was trying to tie into a big plan that eventually came together after the attack; initially our requests were far more than they were willing to serve us, which is my opinion, but I would believe that the (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) and CO would have said the same thing.

Q: Can you be a little bit more specific on that? What kind of requests did you have?

A: For basically hardening our facility more, we had the rocket shelters and stuff like that but our position was exposed. At one point in time, we had some of the Alaska barriers in front of our road, but they took those and used them at another portion of the base or FOB.

Q: Did you squadron commander ever raise that as an issue with MajGen Sturdevant?

A: I would like to say he did, Sir, but it's been a year. If he did, it would have been in our weekly reports that we sent up to him.

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. Although this was CO Bastion's area of responsibility, were you aware of this vulnerability? Did you coordinate with CO Bastion to address it or mitigate it? What did you do to mitigate it? Did you feel that there was an integrated, layered, defense-in-depth on Camp Bastion?

A: I don't know who was working on that dead space, and then there was a Turkish compound, which again was a huge concern for us with the observation. We also sent up to the S2, one of the light poles had Arabic writing on it and picture of airplane on one of the tall poles, and we sent that forward to get analyzed and we really didn't hear back on that. Initially when we got there the (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) and I thought wow this is some kind of observation thing, this is a good tie in thing.

A: We know they had a chain length fence out there, but in your view was there an integrated layered in-depth defence on Camp Bastion?

A: No Sir. Again, shepherds could walk right up to the fence, and to me that is not layered.

Q: All reports indicate that Camp Bastion manned approximately 50% of their towers. Do you know why manning roughly 50% of the towers was deemed sufficient? Did you ever inspect or assess the guard towers? Do you know how often they adjusted their pattern for manning the towers?

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**A:** Again from running around the perimeter there in our area, 50% would probably be a broad spectrum of it. It's probably every third tower, but again I don't know what they manned. They had the cameras in them, but they were manned again for the threat we were given, which was the vehicle threat. It probably would have been sufficient for that.

**Q:** The JRB Supplemental Review identifies that a UK request for a "Full UK Specification Airside Segregation," which provided for full vehicle and pedestrian access control, was denied by both the UK chain of command and by the BLS Executive Steering Group (ESG). Were you involved in the UK survey and option study for different mitigation techniques?

**A:** No, sir

**Q:** Did you feel that this access control was necessary?

**A:** Yes sir, again, people could come right onto our flight line.

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

**A:** Yes, sir. We felt that was being built because of the vehicle threat.

**Q:** Please describe the process in place in 3d MAW (FWD) to seek AT/FP improvements. Did you have a role in this process?

**A:** No Sir.

**Q:** Was this process responsive?

**A:** I can't tell you exactly what the trail of our AT/FP assessment was because our e-mails are gone now. Our assessment went to (b)(3), (b)(6), it came back, and it went back again for what we thought were our vulnerable points. Those ended up being the avenues of approach used against us. What the Wing did with it I am not sure. We were told "the ditch and the barbwire is going to keep you safe."

**Q:** Was that coming from (b)(3), (b)(6) or somebody else?

**A:** (b)(3), (b)(6) and (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C), was just trying to reinforce us. And they did some things to address some of our concerns. FOD was a big concern for our Harrier, so we were working on a lot of projects in that area.

**Q:** Do you feel that the 3d MAW (FWD) chain of command provided you the support you needed to improve your AT/FP posture? Please describe.

**A:** We didn't get the requested assets we wanted.

**Q:** Do you feel they tried though?

**A:** No sir, I think we were told there was no funding, or it's too hard.

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Q: Was that at their level?

A: I don't know if they took it higher, but I know (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) told me no. We can't do it.

Q: Did (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) tell you why?

A: He said money, it came down to time and money and a lot to the expansive space we had.

Q: Were you aware of the Joint Staff Integrated Vulnerability Assessment (JSIVA) conducted on the BLS Complex in June 2012?

A: Just to backtrack a little, even after the attack we found HESCO barriers, but the bureaucracy to get dirt to fill the barriers was very difficult. The Brits or the MWSS wouldn't let us get the dirt. We got dirt but it was unbelievably hard even after the attack to get dirt to put in the HESCO barriers. In the desert.

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?

A: Yes sir, everybody keeps mentioning isolated, but there were compounds encroaching all the way up to us. I did a ground tour walking around there, and I didn't feel isolated or like it was safe. There was a big hill and shepherds right by us. When I did ground patrols in my last deployment, shepherds were kids, and these were not kids, they were grown up shepherds. It was suspicious. The answer we would get back is that they are just shepherds, that's normal activity. The day before the attack, the CO and I had talked about it, but it was kind of like, "umm, what do you do?" Again our job isn't the security of the base, our job is to fly and fix airplanes.

Q: A week after the attack, 3d MAW (FWD) 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?

A: Yes sir

Q: And why do you say that?

A: I arrived the morning after the attack, I got back and went to our side of the base. Every squadron was doing their own thing; there were 50 cal's pointed at the berthing area. There were a bunch of scared people with big guns and there was no tied in plan; it was kind of every man for himself. There was no plan or rehearsals.

Q: Did you identify any complacency or lack of discipline regarding Force Protection by US personnel prior to the attack?

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A: I wouldn't say it was a lack of discipline, I think it was more everybody trusting the big base, nobody's going to mess with us, nobody has done anything to this big base and the complacency.

Q: How long were you in Kandahar?

A: July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend we moved. 1<sup>st</sup> of May had been our TOA, so 2 and ½ months.

Q: What is your mind-set on you as a tenant on Camp Bastion? There is somebody there who it's their job to provide security for your squadron, and as you say, your squadron's job is mainly to fix and fly airplanes. But if you see that it's open and you are not secure, what was you guys thinking about, we are vulnerable here, something has to be done about it. Our higher headquarters isn't responding to us. Did you ever say, "Screw it," we are going to just put out our own people on security? Or did you think "we can't afford to do that?" What was your mindset there?

A: We were lulled into feeling that we were safe; that would probably be the best assessment of that. We knew it, we reported it, and we were told that everything is ok. Over many deployments and tours in both Afghanistan and Iraq, I think we got used to somebody else providing our security. At other bases, I didn't know who was securing us, but I knew somebody was doing it. I think it was 10 years of bad habits in the making maybe. I don't know if we were integrated into the base defense plans before either.

Q: The weekly reports you mentioned, do you know if VMA might still have them?

A: I might have saved copies on the SIPR share drive in Afghanistan, we will call (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) and see if he has them on our hard drive.

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



WILLIAM B. GARRETT III  
LTG, USA  
Investigating Officer