

(U) 14 September 2012 Attack on the Bastion, Leatherneck, Shorabak Complex

(S//REL TO USA, FVEY) Executive Summary:

- **Overview**

At approximately 2200 on 14 September 2012, 15 heavily-armed insurgents breached the eastern perimeter of the Bastion, Leatherneck, Shorabak (BLS) Complex. The ensuing gun battle lasted over four hours and resulted in 2 FKIA, 17 FWIA, 14 EKIA, and 1 EWIA.

- **Strategic level: The role played by TBSL and external actors**

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

- **Spurious motivations in the media: Why did they do it?**

(b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4d, (b)(6), (b)(7)c

- **Intelligence collection on base: Likely insider involvement?**

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

- **Command and Control: The importance of Shah Pushta, Washer**

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

- **The Nad 'Ali insurgency: Required cross-boundary coordination**

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

- **Preparing for the attack: The threat posed by population clusters east of the BLS**

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

- **Indications and Warnings: Were there signs prior to the attack?**

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

- **Actions on the objective: Execution of the attack**

Three teams of five fighters conducted a covert breach of the perimeter fence. Fighters were

on base for an unknown amount of time before they initiated contact at 2209 on the 14th. The ensuing engagement lasted until approximately 0220 on 15 September.

- **Lasting impact? Future effects on the RC(SW) AO**

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

**(U) Overview**

~~(S//REL TO USA, ISAF, NATO)~~ At approximately 2200 on 14 September 2012, 15 heavily-armed insurgents, dressed in ACUs and tennis shoes, breached the eastern perimeter of the Bastion, Leatherneck, Shorabak (BLS) Complex. Insurgents destroyed six AV-8B Harriers, ignited three fuel bladders, and caused significant damage to the flight line infrastructure before they were subdued. In total, the engagement lasted over four hours and resulted in 2 FKIA, 17 FWIA, 14 EKIA, and 1 EWIA.

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**(U) Strategic level: The role played by TBSL and external actors**

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

(U) Spurious motivations in the media: Why did they do it?

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

(U) Intelligence collection on base: Insider involvement?

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(U) Command and Control: Importance of Shah Pushta, Washer

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**(U) The Nad 'Ali insurgency: Required cross-boundary coordination**

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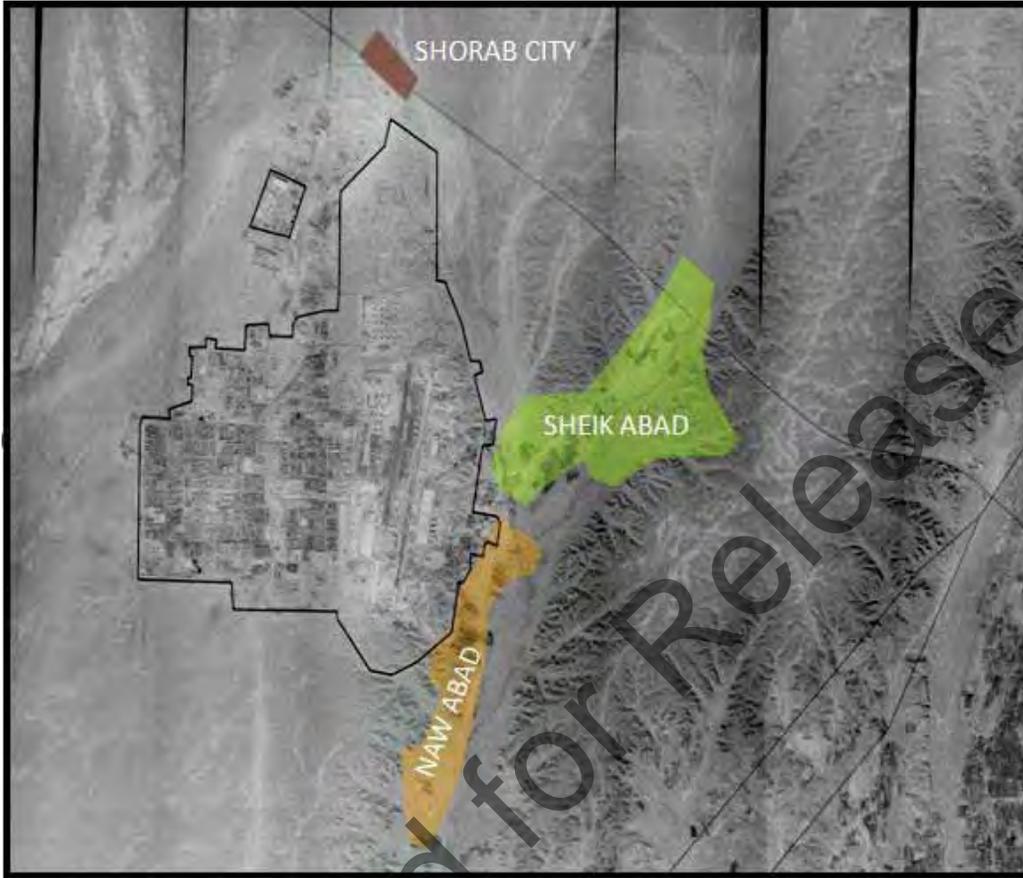
**(U) Preparing for the attack: The threat posed by population clusters east of the BLS**

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*Population centers on the BLS perimeter*



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**(U) Indications and Warnings: Were there signs prior to the attack?**

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

**(U) Actions on the objective: Execution of the Attack**

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

~~(S//REL TO USA, ISAF, NATO)~~ From the rally point, insurgents used a drainage ditch to ingress toward Tower 16; when the drainage ended, they low-crawled the last 100m over open terrain to the fence line. Insurgents cut a vertical slit in the perimeter fence using a pair of bolt cutters, and gained access to the interior of the base, unobserved by Tower 15 or Tower 17. Upon accessing the interior of the base, insurgents broke into three groups of five fighters. One group split north towards the Lima Flight Line, where 8 Harriers were staged. Two additional assault elements of 5 personnel continued west toward the cryogenics plant and Juliet Flight Line.

~~(S//REL TO USA, ISAF, NATO)~~ Ground sign and gear left adrift indicates the assault element exploited micro terrain to take a least one tactical pause inside the fence line, likely coordinating their movement via ICOM radios. Because they were unobserved or unchallenged during ingress, insurgents were able to initiate the attack at the time of their choosing. The base (b)(1)1.4 , (b)(1)1.4 first detected RPG fire at 2209, when all three teams likely began to engage friendly positions.

~~(S//REL TO USA, ISAF, NATO)~~ The northern insurgent team worked their way along the Lima Flight Line, igniting the fueled Harriers with hand grenades and RPG rounds, before they were subdued at approximated 0220. The two five- man teams near the Juliet Flight Line experienced less success, both in terms of damage to infrastructure and longevity. One team ignited three of six fuel bladders near the Juliet Ramp before attempting to establish a strongpoint defense inside an IDF bunker in the (b)(1)1.4 , (b)(1)1.4 this element was killed by air-to-surface fires and HE prior to 0000. The southern-most team engaged the Rotary AGADG prior and damaged several helicopters prior to becoming overwhelmed by ground forces. The sole surviving assailant was apprehended from the southern-most team.

~~(S//REL TO USA, ISAF, NATO)~~ An investigation into a possible second breach near Tower 19 revealed no credible evidence of an insurgent activity; however, during the engagement, direct fire was reported east of the flight line, indicating the possible use of a support by fire position.

~~(S//REL TO USA, ISAF, NATO)~~ Sensitive site exploitation following the engagement showed all members of the assault force were almost identically equipped with AK-variants, RPGs, one PKM and Army ACUs. Each team carried an ICOM radio, multiple grenades, over 12 magazines per fighter and spare RPG and rifle rounds.

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Northern team route

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Breach

Southern team route

~~(S//REL TO USA, ISAF, NATO)~~ Total Friendly BDA<sup>77</sup>

- 2 ISAF KIA
- 17 ISAF WIA
- Six AV-8Bs destroyed
- Two AV-8Bs significantly damaged
- 1 C-130 significantly damaged
- 1 C-12 damaged
- 3 MV-22s minor damage
- 1 SKASaCs platform minor damage
- Three fuel bladders destroyed
- 2 UK Jackals significant damage
- Numerous infrastructure destroyed (cryogenics containers, generators, sunshades)

**(U) Lasting impact? Future effects on the RC(SW) AO**

~~(S//REL TO USA, FVEY)~~ While insurgent capability to mount an attack of similar scope—likely taking months to prepare—in the near term is doubtful, the BLS attack had an appreciable effect on insurgent morale. (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4d

of the attack also generated Iranian interest, possibly accelerating their support to Taliban operations in Helmand and Nimroz

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