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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
US NATIONAL COMMAND ELEMENT  
REGIONAL COMMAND - SOUTH  
KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, AFGHANISTAN  
APO AE 09355

UNCLASSIFIED

NCE-XO

12 Apr 2006

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Notes on visit, discussion, and interviews at FOB Robinson, 5 April 2006.

1. I visited FOB Robinson, Sangin District, Helmand Province, Afghanistan on 5 April 2006, to assist my Brigade Commander, COL (b)(6); (7)(c) with his AR15-6 investigation into the enemy contact and friendly casualties which occurred there on the night of 28 – 29 March 2006. My task was to gather information about the base cluster defensive plan and fire control measures in effect on the occasion in question. My visit consisted of four primary elements: discussion with SFC (7)(c) discussion with CPT (b)(6); discussion with SFC (b)(6); and visual inspection of the site. During planning for the fact gathering mission, and upon arrival, I had intended to also interview MAJ from the ETT element; however, I was unable to do so because of our limited time available on site, and requirements for MAJ to participate in the fact gathering with the Afghan Army elements.

2. Shortly after arrival on site, MAJ (b)(6); my BDE SJA, who had previously visited the site, was orienting me to the site, when we were approached by a Soldier later identified as SFC (b)(6); (7)(c) the second weapons sergeant on ODA 2062. CPT (b)(6); the ODA Commander was engaged in an operational discussion with his Battalion Commander, LTC (7)(c) at the time, so I had decided to postpone my discussion with him in favor of the site orientation, to make best use of the available time. SFC (7)(c) approached MAJ (b)(6); and I, he asked if we were with the investigating team. We told him that we were, and introduced ourselves; SFC identified himself as, "(b)(6);" He stated that he had spent the majority of his civilian career in Law Enforcement, and expressed concern over the legal sufficiency of the investigation. We assured SFC that ours was not a criminal investigation, but a command directed informal investigation, and that expectations of criminal court standards were unrealistic. I used the opportunity of our discussion to inquire about several topics.

a. I asked SFC to summarize the general defensive plan for the base cluster. He explained that internal to the ODA compound, when contact was made, it was SOP to man the armament vehicles and be prepared to maneuver on the enemy, or move the vehicles to pre-determined firing positions on the HESCO barrier wall to counter attack by fire. He stated that both the ETT and ODA compounds kept their respective towers manned 24/7. The ETT element had responsibility for observation and fire to the north of the base cluster, the ODA from NNE to SSW, and the ANA essentially west. There is an ASF element that guards the gates in the outer concertina wire, which positions forward of the wire in daylight, and withdraws to inside the wire at night. SFC stated that on the night in question the ASF had been pulled off the gates and as far as he knew stayed in their tent the whole night. The Canadian QRF element had

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been placed on the gates, and there were two ETT armament carrier vehicles positioned between the three gates on the east side of the base cluster.

b. I asked how the plan was disseminated. SFC [REDACTED] stated that, "(7)(c)" (later determined to be SFC (7)(c)) showed the Canadians where to go, and told ISG [REDACTED] from the ETT, who had been on site previously, where to position the armament vehicles. When I asked how the ODA members were informed, SFC [REDACTED] responded, "We all knew where everybody was." I tried to get him to be more specific about how he or anyone else knew, but he only repeated that everyone knew where everyone else was.

c. I asked who established the fighting positions and sectors of fire. SFC [REDACTED] responded, "(7)(c) does that."

d. I asked where he was during the enemy contact. SFC [REDACTED] stated that he was manning the 81mm mortar with SFC (b)(6);

e. I asked if he knew whether any of the positions had a copy of the ODA compound sector sketch or base cluster fire plan, or if any of the positions prepared range cards. SFC [REDACTED] replied, "We're all senior sergeants, we don't do any of that Infantry stuff."

f. I asked how sectors of fire were marked at the fighting positions. SFC [REDACTED] stated, "I can't say what anybody else did, but what I do is make sure I check it out in daylight so I know what's out there." I asked about aiming or limiting stakes, he stated that chem lights on top of the HESCO wall were used to indicate limits of fire.

g. I asked if the team used any optics or aiming devices, specifically lasers, on their crew served weapons. SFC [REDACTED] stated that they, "had some of that stuff, but we don't have the rails to mount it." Later investigation revealed this statement to not be fully accurate. M240B machine guns do have mounting rails, but thermal sights are used in the hand held mode, AN/PEQ-2s are installed on individual M4 carbines, and other lasers on hand are used to designate targets for CAS.

h. I asked SFC [REDACTED] how many times before 28 March 2006 the team had enemy contact on their Fire Base. He reported that contacts had been numerous, every night, or every other night, for the majority of the time they were in that location.

i. I asked SFC [REDACTED] about his role in the fight on the night in question, and what he had seen. He stated that he was in the mortar pit the entire time and had seen none of the action outside the HESCO wall. This lead into a discussion of the team's TTPs for mortar employment and how many rounds of what type had been fired during this particular contact. SFC [REDACTED] was certain they had only fired the 81mm mortar, and that they only fired illumination rounds. He was not certain of the number of rounds fired, and indicated that they did not keep a written record of rounds fired by type.

3. After the discussion with SFC [REDACTED] CPT (b)(6); and LTC [REDACTED] passed near the location where SFC (7)(c) MAJ (b)(6); and I, were standing. I introduced myself and MAJ (b)(6); to CPT (b)(6); LTC [REDACTED] was present throughout my discussion with CPT (b)(6); MAJ (b)(6); Canadian Forces, the TF Aegis SJA Officer, had joined us and was also present.

a. I asked CPT (b)(6); about the base cluster defense plan. His explanation was consistent with SFC (b)(6); with the added detail that his position was atop the watchtower, with the team JTAC, at the center of the ODA compound.

b. I asked how the plan was disseminated and he told me that all of his personnel already knew the plan, and that SFC (7)(c) had emplaced the additional elements present that night.

c. I asked CPT (b)(6); what the C2 plan was for the base cluster and he told me they use (b)(6); b(6); b(7)(c) set to (b)(6); b(7)(c)

d. I asked who established element fighting positions and sectors of fire. CPT (b)(6); indicated that SFC (7)(c) did that.

e. I asked if he had a sector sketch or illustration of his defensive fire plan. CPT (b)(6); stated that he had started one previously, but had not finished it, and that he would have to look for it in his CP. I asked CPT (b)(6); to look for, and show to me any drawing of his position that he had. He later stated that he could not find his draft sector sketch.

f. I asked CPT (b)(6); about optics or aiming devices for his crew served weapons; he stated that they, "don't have enough for that."

g. I asked about signals for the defense, CPT (b)(6); said that a red star cluster was the signal to initiate the react to attack drill. I asked if there was a cease fire signal, and he said that there was not one.

h. I asked how long the team had been in this location, and how often they had enemy contact there. CPT (b)(6); told me that he and the team had been there for a month and a half, since just after the conclusion of OPERATION CARPE DIEM. He went on to say that enemy contact was a common occurrence, and that they received some form of enemy fire almost every other night.

i. I asked CPT (b)(6); how the night in question had been different from previous contacts at that location. He relayed that this particular contact was the most violent since their arrival. Also, they had been monitoring the complex enemy contact which the ETT convoy had on its way to FOB Robinson, and that his JTAC had supported that contact with CAS. CPT (b)(6); explained that the ETT convoy finally arrived at the FOB late in the evening and did not close until after dark. The QRF, made up of Canadian Infantry from TF Aegis also arrived after

dark and were integrated into the defense after dark. CPT (b)(6); explanation of the positioning of forces was consistent with what SFC (7)(c) had told me.

4. Following my conversation with CPT (b)(6); MAJ (7)(c) and I sought out SFC (7)(c) the team senior weapons sergeant. SFC (7)(c) was still engaged in discussion with a representative of the Canadian NIS, so MAJ (b)(6); and I went to find MAJ the ETT on site commander. Enroute we continued our site orientation. Notes on observations from examining the site are in paragraph 5 below. MAJ was departing, to accompany COL (b)(6); to the ANA compound, so we completed our site orientation in the ETT compound, and returned to the ODA compound to speak with SFC (7)(c)

a. I asked SFC (7)(c) about the general defensive plan. What he explained to me was consistent with SFC and CPT (b)(6); explanations.

b. I asked how the plan was disseminated. SFC (7)(c) stated that he had emplaced and briefed the additional elements on the FOB that night, and that the ODA members knew the plan because e they had been in the location since its initial establishment.

c. I asked about the C2 plan for FOB defense, and SFC (b)(6); said that internal communication was maintained on (b)(6);(7)(c) set to (b)(6);(7)(c).

d. I asked who established the element locations and sectors of fire, and SFC (7)(c) stated that he did.

e. I asked if there were a sector sketch or fire plan for the defense. SFC (7)(c) stated that he believed CPT (b)(6); had been working on one.

f. I asked how sectors of fire were marked; SFC (7)(c) said that chem lights on top of the HESCO wall were used.

g. I asked about aiming devices or optics on the machine guns. SFC (7)(c) told me that they did have some but that had not been installed, and were not used on the crew served weapons.

h. From the armament vehicle position, which the ODA identifies as position #2, SFC (7)(c) indicated the sector of fire for the position. He indicated that the left limit of fire was the corner of the mud wall beyond and to the right of the ETT compound, and that the right limit of fire was just to the left of the HESCO barrier wall around the ODA compound itself.

i. I asked if there was a cease fire signal and SFC (7)(c) stated that there was not.

j. I asked how long the team had been in this location and how frequent enemy contact had been at this location. SFC (7)(c) said they had been there for about six weeks, and that when

they had arrived there was no infrastructure whatsoever on the ODA compound site; everything present was constructed or placed by the team after its arrival. He stated that enemy contact had been frequent, more nights than not.

k. I asked how the circumstances on the night in question differed from the most recent enemy contact prior to that night. SFC (7)(c) explained that they had monitored the protracted contact with the ETT convoy, and then a large, approximately 80 vehicle, convoy had arrived, not closing until after dark. He stated that it was very dark that night, 0% illumination. He said that he had coordinated with 1SG (7)(c) who had been to the location previously, for the positioning of ETT armament vehicles on the east side of the perimeter, and that he, SFC (b)(6); had emplaced the Canadian elements at the gates in the concertina wire outer fence. SFC (b)(6); also stated that this enemy contact was the largest and most significant they had up to that point. He said that he had been manning the mortar, mostly firing illumination, and only found out that there had been casualties when medical aid and evacuation were called for.

5. As stated in previous paragraphs above, throughout the visit to FOB Robinson, MAJ (b)(6); oriented me to the site, and I was able to examine several parts of it. Below are observations pertinent to the investigation.

a. Armament vehicle position #2 is a dirt ramp pushed up into northeast corner of the HESCO barrier wall around the ODA compound. There was an expended chem light on top of the north HESCO wall, roughly on line with the left limit of fire indicated by SFC (b)(6); With neither a vehicle, nor weapon, in the position at the time, the chem light's exact orientation could not be determined. Both MAJ (b)(6); and SFC (b)(6); informed me that a second course of HESCO bastions had been added to the wall since the night in question. On the day of my visit, there were no alignment stakes or other physical reference to ensure consistent orientation of a vehicle in that position.

b. Position #2 afforded good fields of observation from the North by Northwest, around to South by Southeast. The location where Canadian casualties occurred had been significantly altered. The dirt berm that they occupied had subsequently been used to fill HESCO barrier sections which on the night of 28 – 29 March had been empty. The location where the berm had been was in clear view of position #2, without obstructions along the line of sight. From position #2 there was unobstructed observation of a white skid mounted generator, a row of MILVANS behind the ETT compound, one end and the roof of a GP medium tent, the upper third of the ETT compound wall, and the roof of the ETT compound.

c. From position #2, automatic weapons fire would have been plunging fire out to the base of the mud brick wall that marked the left limit of fire, at a range of approx. 300m. Fire across the top of the ETT compound would have been grazing to climbing. Available fields of grazing fire were extremely limited from position #2, most available engagements from position #2, would have been with plunging fire.

d. Between the ODA compound and the ETT compound, the generator, the MILVANS,

the tent, and the upper wall of the ETT compound all had holes consistent with being struck by a .308 cal. or 7.62mm bullet. The angle of entry for the holes in the metal objects, the generator and the MILVANS, seems to suggest a point of origin to the south of the object's location. The pock marks in the ETT compound wall appear near perpendicular to the surface of the wall. MAJ (b)(6); and I walked the entire perimeter of the ETT building and found only one pock mark, low on the north facing wall, which appeared to be a bullet strike. The age of the pock mark was indeterminable. It is my opinion, that the pattern of apparent bullet strikes is consistent with, and most likely indicative of, a long burst of machine gun fire being, "walked," onto a target. The pattern of these holes traces a straight line between position #2, and the low mud wall fragment on the roof of the ETT compound.

6. POC for this memorandum is the undersigned at DSN (b)(2)

(b)(6); (7)(c)

LTC, IN  
Executive Officer