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DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
HEADQUARTERS, COMBINED/JOINT TASK FORCE (CJTF)-82
BAGRAM AIRFIELD, AFGHANISTAN
APO AE 09354

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

CJTF-82

25 November 2009

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: AR 15-6 Report of Investigation into Operations in the Ganjgal Valley, Konar Province, Afghanistan, 8 September 2009 (EXECUTIVE SUMMARY)

1. Appointment. I was appointed on 4 November, 2009 by MG Scaparrotti, Commanding General, CJTF82, to investigate the events of 8 September 2009 in the Ganjgal Valley, Konar Province, Afghanistan, which resulted in the deaths of First Lieutenant Michael E. Johnson USMC, Gunnery Sergeant Edwin W. Johnson USMC, Staff Sergeant Aaron M. Kenefick USMC, Petty Officer Third Class James R. Layton USN, Sergeant First Class Kenneth W. Westbrook USA and (b)(2)High Afghan soldiers. (b)(3), (b)(6) USMC assisted in the investigation. Our findings and recommendations are found below, with specific directed questions highlighted. All times are local.

2. You will examine the involvement of Task Force (b)(2)High (b)(2)High **and Embedded Training Team (ETT) leadership in the planning and execution of this operation. To what extent were these leaders involved in or aware of the operation? Describe the pre-mission planning and coordination conducted for this operation. What information was known by the primary planners for this operation and what information was briefed to the leadership prior to execution? Were the actions of the leadership at each level appropriate?**

A. Planning. The Acting Commander of (b)(2)High, (b)(3), (b)(6) and the Acting Battalion S3 (b)(2)High, (b)(3), (b)(6) were not involved in pre-mission planning or coordination. Although one slide with details of the projected operation was provided to the (b)(2)High (b)(2)High on 7 September 2009 (b)(2)High staff officers were not involved in planning. Key leaders at battalion and brigade level were generally aware of the pending operation. Pre-mission planning and coordination was conducted by company grade officers from (b)(2)High and the ETTs. No fire support personnel participated. The intelligence assessment was for light harassing fire upon withdrawal by up to ten insurgents. A general overview of the operation was briefed to (b)(3), (b)(6) on 7 September 2009, using the same slide provided to brigade. It described a Key Leader Engagement (KLE) into Ganjgal village for 8 September 2009, conducted by approximately (b)(2)High ANA and (b)(2)High ABP with embedded U.S. advisors and supported by (b)(2)High (b)(2)High

B. Execution During mission execution on 8 September 2009, the actions of key leaders at the battalion level were inadequate and ineffective, contributing directly to the loss of life which ensued. From 0530 (the first report of contact) until 0810 (first report of a mass casualty event), the Commander, S3, S3 NCOIC, FSO, FSNCOIC, and S2 were not continuously present in the

operations center. The absence of senior leaders in the operations center with troops in contact in the (b)(2)High battlespace, and their consequent lack of situational awareness and decisive action, was the key failure in the events of 8 September 2009.

C. Leader Actions. The actions of (b)(2)High senior leaders were clearly negligent. Once aware of the gravity of the tactical situation, the (b)(2)High Commander and staff reacted appropriately. (b)(3), (b)(6) the (b)(2)High ETT OIC, (b)(3), (b)(6) (the ABP advisor) and their subordinates performed capably and courageously.

3. You will examine the CONOPS approval process regarding this operation. What process was required and was it properly followed? If not, why?

Standing CJTF guidance required that all (b)(2)High (b)(2)High clearly met the criteria established for a (b)(2)High Although a slide was provided to (b)(2)High on 7 September 2009, the operation was not briefed to the brigade commander, although he did have general knowledge.

4. You will examine the performance of personnel in the (b)(2)High , to include battle captains, during this operation. Did they perform to the standards expected of Soldiers in their position? Were they adequately experienced, qualified and trained for the responsibilities they held?

A. The officer on duty as battle captain in the (b)(2)High from the start of the action until 0800 was (b)(3), (b)(6) He was not adequately experienced, qualified and trained. He was replaced at 0800 by (b)(3), (b)(6) a more experienced officer. (b)(3), (b)(6) did not play a significant role after assuming battle captain duties. (b)(5)

(b)(5)

B. (b)(3), (b)(6) (S3), (b)(3), (b)(6) (S2), (b)(3), (b)(6) (FSO), (b)(3), (b)(6) (S3 NCOIC) and (b)(3), (b)(6) (Fire Support NCOIC) were not present in the (b)(2)High during the early phases of the action and according to their own statements did not play any significant role. (The battalion operations sergeant major position was vacant on 8 September 2009) (b)(3), (b)(6) the fire support NCO on duty when the action began, took action to provide immediate support to the units in the Ganjgal valley early in the engagement. The USAF JTAC, (b)(3), (b)(6) acted similarly. However, both were overruled by higher echelons. Both should be commended for their attempts to generate effective and timely action.

5. What were the actions and reactions of the command posts involved in the operation? Were they appropriate?

A. Command post actions at the CJTF and brigade levels were appropriate given the information available. At the battalion level, the absence of key leaders in the TOC, the poor performance of the commissioned officers who were present, an atmosphere of complacency in the command

post, and a poor standard of training contributed to the overall failure of the (b)(2)High TOC to competently track the battle and synchronize effects in support of troops in contact. This failure also prevented higher headquarters from intervening and taking effective action in time to prevent loss of life. The absence of an experienced field grade officer and senior noncommissioned officer in the battalion command post during combat operations contributed directly to mission failure.

6. Did the command and support relationships between the ETT and battlespace owner adversely affect the planning and execution of this operation?

The existing command and support relationships between the ETT and (b)(2)High played a contributing but not decisive role in this event. The lack of (b)(2)High command emphasis and involvement in both planning and execution was not principally due to lack of clarity with respect to command or support relationships. Rather, it reflected an apparent lack of commitment to support partner units with the same focus and emphasis as organic units. This dynamic was not based on service differences; the units in the Ganjgal valley on 8 September 2009 included ANA, ABP, USMC and U.S. Army elements. Command and command post failures, not confusion about command and support relationships, were the proximate cause of failures in planning and execution.

7. You will examine the perception held by some U.S. participants that the Quick Reaction Force and other responding (b)(2)High elements did not adequately support the mission. Were these perceptions accurate?

The perception by USMC and U.S. Army leaders engaged in the Ganjgal valley on 8 September 2009 that (b)(2)High elements did not adequately support the mission is accurate. Timely aviation and indirect fire support was not provided. Repeated requests to employ an on-call QRF were not supported.

8. Were air-to-ground and indirect fires employed consistent with the ISAF Tactical Directive, dated 1 July 2009?

Our investigation did not reveal any violations of the ISAF Tactical Directive. (b)(3), (b)(6) stated he did not feel constrained by the Tactical Directive in employing indirect fires. However, that perception clearly existed in the minds of ETT leaders during and after the battle.

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9. What recommendations concerning coalition force tactics, techniques and procedures will help avoid similar incidents in the future?

We recommend:

A. (b)(2)High

(b)(2)High

B. (b)(2)High

(b)(2)High

C. (b)(2)High

(b)(2)High

D. Other recommendations are found in the AR 15-6 Report of Investigation.

10. Any other matters pertaining to this incident that you deem relevant.

A. The presence, actions and decisions of the commander are critical in combat situations. Where absent, the success of the mission is always in doubt.

B. The events of 8 September 2009 also reinforce the principle that when in doubt, our bias must be to support troops in contact. Our command philosophy and standard operating procedures must give subordinates freedom of action within the framework of commander's intent.

C. The actions of (b)(3), (b)(6) and (b)(3), (b)(6) on 8 September 2009 stand out as extraordinary examples of heroism worthy of the highest recognition.

D. We recommend that (b)(2)High, (b)(3), (b)(5), (b)(6) (b)(2)High receive a General Officer Memorandum of Reprimand (b)(5)

(b)(2)High, (b)(5)

E. We recommend that (b)(3), , (b)(5), (b)(6) (b)(5) receive a General Officer Memorandum of Reprimand (b)(5)

(b)(5)

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F. We recommend that (b)(3), , (b)(5), (b)(6)
General Officer Memorandum of Reprimand (b)(5)

(b)(3), (b)(5), (b)(6)

(b)(3), (b)(6)

(b)(3), (b)(6) U.S. Army (b)(3), (b)(6) U.S. Marine Corps