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

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

CJTF-82 13 November 2009

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Interview with (b)(3), (b)(6) Regarding Operations in the Ganjgal Valley on 8 September 2009

1. On 12 November 2009 an interview was conducted with (b)(3), (b)(6) in the CJ7 conference room at the CJTF-82 Joint Operations Center. The interview was conducted by COL (b)(3), (b)(6) USA. and Col (b)(3), (b)(6) USMC. The legal advisor to the investigation, CPT (b)(3), (b)(6) was also present during the interview.

2. During the interview (b)(3), (b)(6) was able to access and refer to a map of the FOB Joyce and Ganjgal Valley area.

3. The substance of (b)(3), (b)(6) statement is summarized below:

a. (b)(3), (b)(6) call sign during the mission was (b)(2)High

b. The mission into Gangjal Village on 8 September 2009 was preceded by a mission to Dam Darya on 3 September 2009. During the mission to Dam Darya, the Marine Embedded Training Team (ETT) was partnered with Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan Border Police (ABP) elements. There were no issues during the Key Leader Engagement (KLE) with village elders. The ANA was able to search the village, and take photos. On the withdrawal from the village the unit took small arms fire from Anti-Afghanistan Forces (AAF). Despite taking fire, the unit was invited back to the area and the village elders publically voiced support/cooperation with coalition forces. The village elders broadcast a radio message with the theme of cooperation with the ANA and ABP in the days preceding the 8 September 2009 mission.

c. The mission planning and execution was led by ANA and ABP forces. The planning for the mission was conducted jointly with the ETT. (b)(3), (b)(6) Advisor to the ABP, assisted in planning. CPT (b)(3), (b)(6) Assistant S-2 for Task Force Chosin, and CPT (b)(3), (b)(6) S-2 for Task Force Chosin, represented Task Force Chosin in the planning leading up to the mission. There were at least five orders briefed for this mission. (b)(3), (b)(6) helped the ANA construct a terrain model and issued maps to them the evening prior to the mission. Fire support representatives from Task Force Chosin were absent from all planning meetings.

d. The only field grade officer present for Task Force Chosin in the mission planning for the first mission to Dam Darya was MAJ (b)(3), (b)(6)

EXHIBIT III – 3 C.1

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e. The intent of the partnership between the ETT, ANA and ABP was to conduct frequent KLEs in the local villages to eventually establish the legitimacy to stand up an ANA OP which would help facilitate patrols in the volatile valley. (b)(3), (b)(6) stated they usually tried to conduct KLEs every week.

f. The Task Force Chosin Department Of State representative had contact with the local village elders and discussed recent attacks on coalition forces and efforts to cooperate.

g. Task Force Chosin was briefed on the mission and agreed to provide one platoon and sniper team for support. To commit troops to this mission required Battalion Commander approval. (b)(3), (b)(6) stated that the participating platoon (3/D/1-32) was tasked to establish an attack by fire position oriented to the northeast, up the Bargay valley, to prevent enemy movement across the high ground into the Ganjgal valley. The platoon was mounted in two MRAPs, an M1151, and an ASV. (b)(3), (b)(6) further stated that the platoon originally designated to perform this mission was replaced prior to the mission. He is unsure to what extent the new platoon was briefed about the mission.

h. The ANA and ABP specifically asked for a scout sniper team for the mission to overwatch the village from a high ground position.

i. On the mission were approximately 68 ANA soldiers who were led by MAJ (b)(6) ANA, and advised by (b)(3), (b)(6) Officer-In-Charge. There were also approximately 30 ABP personnel present led by the ABP S3 and advised by (b)(3), (b)(6) , USA.

j. It was planned that the primary fire support for the mission would be 120mm mortars from nearby FOB Joyce.

k. (b)(3), (b)(6) related that (b)(3), (b)(6) and MAJ (b)(3), (b)(6) (acting Task Force Chosin commander) met to discuss the mission, but he was not present for the meeting.

l. On the previous mission into the same area on 3 September 2009 communications worked well. The communications that day were not good on retransmission but they were good and effective on a relay. It is widely understood in the area that communications are largely dependent on location. Based on the successful communications on 3 September 2009, the mission into Gangjal planned to use the same type of communications set-up. The ETT was equipped with (b)(2)High

m. (b)(3), (b)(6) stated that TF Chosin determined the level of the CONOP and he was not aware of the process for this particular mission or if it was briefed or to whom it was briefed. He stated that he was surprised to later learn that the BDE level Task Force did not know of the mission.

n. The mission was briefed that a scout weapons teams would not be dedicated to the mission but would be available in 5 minutes if needed. The unavailability of direct SWT support was not a go/no-go factor for the mission. A go/no-go factor for the mission would have been fire support.

o. (b)(3), (b)(6) noted that a local elder had been attacked prior to the mission by suspected AAF and it was felt that it was imperative to get out to the village to show coalition strength and support in the face of such an act.

p. (b)(3), (b)(6) stated he was not provided with any new intelligence prior to the mission. He said they knew of 20-40 AAF in the area and the most dangerous course of action would be a complex attack from 20-40 AAF. The planners of the mission did not think they would be attacked from the village, nor did they think the locals would want a fight in the vicinity of the village because of the damage it could inflict on the village. The mission planners believed the biggest threat they faced was during withdrawal from the village. (b)(3), (b)(6) is adamant that they did not receive intelligence that Taliban leaders had met in the village the day prior and that they planned a massive ambush on coalition forces conducting a mission in the village.(b)(3), (b)(6) (b)(3), (b)(6)says that had he – or anyone involved in leading or planning the mission –known of this intelligence they would not have conducted the mission.

q. (b)(3), (b)(6) stated that the mission was mounted until they formed an Objective Rally Point (ORP) and then dismounted. Only three ABP vehicles followed them to the village. The sniper team took their over-watch position (b)(2)High and the dedicated platoon from Task Force Chosin set up their attack by fire position prior to the mission. An ETT/ANA weapons section also took an over-watch position. CPT(b)(3), (b)(6)and Cpl(b)(3), (b)(6)also were together and split off to spot and conduct Fire Support type duties. All positions reported nothing unusual as the ETT/ANA/ABP moved in a dismounted fashion towards the village.

r. (b)(3), (b)(6) stated that contact started off lightly and immediate suppressive fire on a KE behind the village using mortars from FOB Joyce was effective. However, the suppressive indirect fire was only brief and (b)(3), (b)(6) believed that enemy contact picked up and became more regular and heavier due to the lack of response from coalition forces. (b)(3), (b)(6) stated he knew the engagement was serious and more than a routine troops in contact (TIC) after the first 30 minutes of the fight. After two fire missions failed to suppress the enemy, (b)(3), (b)(6) knew that the lead element was in danger and that they needed to execute a tactical withdraw out of the kill zone.

s. (b)(3), (b)(6) and (b)(2)High, (b)(3), (b)(6) movement but were surprised to know that only (b)(2)High was available. When it was fired it did not provide the concealment they needed or hoped for. The forward element also relayed grids where they felt fires were coming from but the Task Force Chosin TOC refused to fire on them as the targets were in the village or too close to the village.

t. (b)(3), (b)(6) stated that specific times are difficult to recall but he is able to associate events sequences. He said he was fairly sure the lead element of Marines was still alive beyond the (b)(2)High probably two hours into the fight. In fact. ANA members with the lead element were able to bound back (although wounded) to (b)(3), (b)(6) position. (b)(3), (b)(6) believes one of the Marines was hit while moving back and the rest stopped to render aid. He speculated that the four man U.S. element did not realize they were being flanked, and that they were engaged and killed from an unexpected direction, as the high terrace wall shielded them from direct fire from the village to the east. However, he did not see this part of the action and is unsure of the time this occurred.

u. (b)(3), (b)(6) remembers hearing the Task Force Chosin TOC ask numerous times whether the U.S. service member wounded in action (WIA) was "Army or Marine".

v. (b)(3), (b)(6) recalled OH-58s on site trying to assist in the fight. He believed they did not control the fight, the enemy was too well dug in, and that additional helicopters (especially AH-64s) would have made a difference in the fight. (b)(3), (b)(6) was unaware that the OH-58 team declined additional support and reported they had the fight under control. He remarked several times that, although the two aircrews he could see "did their best", their effects were limited.

w. (b)(3), (b)(6) recalled the ANA quick reaction force (QRF) arriving on scene and assisting in a timely manner. He also recalled a distant ABP (2nd Kandak) element arriving to provide support. (b)(3), (b)(6) was confused regarding why the Task Force Chosin platoon that had moved onto the scene (after their ASV rolled over) did not support their efforts to go into the village and recover U.S. and Afghan personnel. He was told repeatedly that platoon would provide support. They never followed despite their apparent ability to do so.

x. (b)(3), (b)(6) encouraged the investigators to get statements from the sniper team and the mortar team at FOB Joyce.

y. (b)(3), (b)(6) requested that the following points be included in this report:

(1) The intelligence in the area of the 8 September 2009 operation is poor and needs to be improved.

(2) Fire support during the 8 September 2009 operation was poor. The commander on the ground should be able be given deference in his judgments and calls for fire. In (b)(3), (b)(6) opinion, decision makers in the TF Chosin TOC may have felt constrained by the COMISAF Tactical Directive from approving fires.

(3) The Task Force Chosin battle captains did not pass along Equipment Density Lists (EDL) that would have helped in the medical evacuation (MEDEVAC) process. Names, ranks,

and duty positions were provided to them the night before, but were not available during the action, which slowed response times as the TOC repeatedly requested administrative information from leaders in contact. This information was not passed from one battle captain to the next at the 0800 shift change.

(4) An ETT LNO in the Task Force/Battalion TOC would have been helpful. However, (b)(3), (b)(6) emphasized that an ETT representative should not have been necessary to ensure timely support for U.S. Forces.

4. The points of contact for this memorandum are the undersigned.

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

COL, USA

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

(b)(3), (b)(6)
COL, USMC