

Major General Votel: Petty Officer, I'm Major General Votel. I'm normally the Chief of Staff down at US SOCOM at Tampa but in this capacity, I've been assigned by General Mattis, the CENTCOM commander to conduct an investigation into the facts and circumstances surrounding the hostage rescue operation up in Konar here aimed at recovering Ms. Norgrove that you participated in about 10 days ago or so.

This is an official investigation. I'm obliged to take you through some information up front here. If you'd just bear with me, it will sound a little bit administrative and legalistic but it's designed - it's just the way the investigation goes. During the course of today's interview, I'm going to ask you to furnish information about yourself. The Privacy Act of 1974 requires that I inform you my authority to ask those types of questions. The statement which I'm going to put in front of you right now is a privacy act statement probably similar to those you've seen in the past. It basically says that I have the authority to ask for this information and to include it in the reports that I am producing. It also lets you know that those who look at the reports may have access to that information about you. What I'd like to ask you to do is review that and then please print, sign, and date that you acknowledge that. It's the 17th today.

[The witness did as directed.]

Major General Votel: The testimony today is being digitally recorded here. We'll make a transcript of that and that will become part of the official investigation file. I would ask you to answer the question verbally here. I've got a reference here for you. This kind of matches the building schematics that you guys use. They are probably familiar to you. We've got a big imagery here. And with you, I'm going to actually show you some full motion video here. So you may hear us adding some clarifying administrative comments just to make sure it's clear for the record here. If you're talking about buildings and things if you'd just kind of use the building numbering sequence that you're familiar with from this objective that would be great. All your statements are on the record here today.

Before we continue, I want to remind you how important it is to give truthful testimony. It is a violation of Federal law to knowingly make a false statement under oath and this will constitute a sworn statement for you. What I'd like to ask you to do is please stand, raise your right hand.

[The witness was sworn.]

Major General Votel: The time is now 1709 Zulu on the 17th of October. I've introduced you to everybody in the room and we are located here at Jalalabad Air Field.

Major General Votel: TM 4, you are not suspected in any offense under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, Federal, or local law. Therefore, I am not advising you of your Article 31 rights and you are not authorized to have legal counsel with you for this interview. You must answer all the questions that I pose to you except those which you feel may incriminate you in some manner.

I'd invite you to please relax. We'll do this very conversational. I'll start off asking you some questions and the other officers will join in at the appropriate point and ask some questions. As I mentioned to you in the hallway, my specific focus with you is I we want to understand where you were on the objective and try to help us in a little more amplifying and clarifying information on where everybody else was and what they were essentially doing.

If I could, just start off, again, we've got a lot of information on the intelligence build up to this. If I could just take you to the point where you are mounting the rope here in the helicopter and fast roping in. If you could just tell us what the plan was and your physical role on the objective that night; if you could tell us what the plan was for you?

WIT: As part of Alpha team, our primary movement was going to be towards the 10 series. Bravo's inserting down further towards the south in the valley and moving their way up towards the 20 series. That was pretty much it as far as our movement. Basically once we cleared the 10 series, we were going to then wait to

see where Bravo was at with the 20 and then move down and assist as needed for de-confliction. Obviously, I'm sure you guys because of their hike it didn't really work out that way. When we ~~(b)(1), 4a, (b)(2) High~~ in, made movement - the way the terrace is laid out, some of our team was already online with the 20 series. Myself and two members of Charlie team and my team leader as well broke upwards toward the 10 series. TM 1 took the roof top of the 20 series and myself, TM 9, and TM 11 kept moving up towards the 10 series as planned and cleared the 10 series. I was pretty much engaged with the SSE the whole time after that.

Major General Votel: And then you principally stayed up on buildings 11 and 12 in that vicinity?

WIT: Yes, sir.

Major General Votel: And the sequence of your movement in there, you generally had the team leaders out in front of you. TM 9 and TM 11 were in and around you either in front or behind you as you guys kind of moved across the top portions of 21, 22, and 23 heading up there. Is that about right?

WIT: Yes, sir. We came up onto the roof of 21 and 22. I think that was the east side along the hill. There was a little break somewhat between 22 and 23 heading up towards the 10 series and that's where TM 9 - I followed TM 9 and TM 11 was behind me. TM 1 proceeded all the way over to the southern, southeastern corner of the 23 building.

Major General Votel: During the course of your movement, did you hear any exchange of fire or explosions?

WIT: Right on the roof top, as we were starting to make movement up this hill from the 20 series up towards the 10, I heard some small arms fire and that was about it. That was off to my right side.

Major General Votel: Did you hear at any time an explosion take place?

WIT: That was little bit after the engagements between 22 and 23. As we're making our way up the hill, there was a loud explosion and TM 9 and I just stopped and looked at each other. We weren't sure what had happened.

Major General Votel: Did you observe anybody else who was up along the eastern edge of the 21, 22, and 23 employ their weapons? Did you happen to see the team leader or anybody else?

WIT: No. I had seen my team leader on the roof of 23 but I don't know if he had engaged anybody or not. I had moved up at that point.

Major General Votel: Have you seen this high resolution video here. I just want to confirm here. I think we're pretty clear. I think you're probably within this group here --

WIT: Yes.

Major General Votel: -- that is moving up. There is an engagement that takes place. One enemy is killed right after he throws or shoots here. So there's an engagement. Did you hear multiple engagements or just -

WIT: I just heard several sporadic small arms fire throughout.

Major General Votel: In a moment here, you'll see folks starting to move up across, this is 22 and 23. I assess this is probably your team leader leading the way and then there is person behind him. I think that is TM 9; would that seem about right? And then I think you are probably coming up about here. Does that seem about right to you?

WIT: Yes. We start making our way up that little path.

Major General Votel: And then he starts to move up that path. There's still continuing contact over here and in a moment, you'll see the explosion take place. I don't know if you're on a knee here but this would be TM 11 joining you?

WIT: Yes.

Major General Votel: And you all are moving over here to the juncture you mentioned.

WIT: That's right. I went up the - that's TM 9 in front of me.

Major General Votel: Right about the time the explosion occurs?

WIT: Yes, sir.

Major General Votel: Did you have any other occasion to come down from buildings 11 and 12 down through the area between buildings 23 and 25 and see any of the enemy or Ms. Norgrove that was located down there?

WIT: By the time I made it down between 23 and 25, Ms. Norgrove had already been hoisted away. I did see the EKIAs afterwards while we were waiting for EXFIL basically.

Major General Votel: I don't think I have anything else for you. I just want to remind you, TM 4, that this is an official investigation. It is protected in the sense that this report will be made to General Mattis and he'll take some action as he deems appropriate. I am ordering you not to divulge the nature of this investigation or the questions, answers, and discussion included in this interview with anybody except a Chaplain, your counsel, or unless it's approved by me or the appointing authority.

If anyone should approach you regarding your testimony or the matters discussed here, you are required to report it immediately to me. I am prohibited from giving you a copy of the testimony you made here today. You may submit a request in writing to the Freedom of Information Act Office and they'll evaluate that and make a determination of what should be releasable to you.

If you think of anything else that might be relevant to us in the remaining time that we're here which is probably the next day or so, I'd appreciate it if you'd please let us know and we'll reconvene and discuss any other additional information.

Are there any other matters that we haven't covered that you believe would be important to the investigation?

WIT: Not that I'm aware of, no, sir.

Major General Votel: Do you know of anyone who might be able to provide any other information? We're talking, obviously, to a variety of people here. Anybody else we ought to think about talking to?

WIT: Other than who you already planned to? We have our list on the board so I think you guys got it pretty well covered.

Major General Votel: Thanks. Do you have any questions?

WIT: No, sir.

Major General Votel: I want to first of all, thank you for your service and what you do every day and then thank you again for coming in and visiting with us today. I'm noting the time is 1718 Zulu and this concludes the interview.

[The witness exited the room.]