

~~SECRET//REL TO USA, GBR~~

Major General Votel: (b)(3), (b)(6), you know who I am here and I've been appointed by General Mattis to investigate the relevant facts and circumstance surrounding the hostage rescue operation, Objective (b)(1), (b)(2) High here. We invited you in here because we are trying to fill in some information gaps. I think you can help us in one specific area that I'll talk about in just a moment. We won't be talking about the operation broadly. I have a specific information requirement that I want to talk with you about.

During the course of this interview I may ask you to furnish information about yourself. The Privacy Act of 1974 requires that I inform you of the authority for this requirement that basically I can ask these questions as a part of this. The statement which I'm now handing to you serves this purpose. I would ask that you please review, print, and sign that; today being the 21st of October. I know you understand what the Privacy Act statements are.

WIT: Yes, sir.

[The witness did as directed.]

Major General Votel: Okay, (b)(3), (b)(6), we are recording this digitally here and then we'll transcribe it into a written portion so it will be a part of the overall report to be given to General Mattis. Please answer every question verbally here. Everything is on the record while we are in here. 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. At this point this will constitute a sworn statement.

[The witness was sworn.]

Major General Votel: Thank you very much. You are not suspected of any offense under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, Federal or local law, therefore you are not authorized to have legal counsel present and I'm not advising you of your Article 31 rights. You must answer all the questions that we pose to you today except those that may incriminate you.

Okay. Hey, (b)(3), (b)(6), here's the area I want to focus in on. I want to focus in the development of the initial storyboard here that is done. I just want to get your impressions of how that process went

and I'm hoping you can kind of characterize for us the discussions that are going back and forth between you and (a)(b)(2) OPS with Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) and anybody else, General Thomas and anybody else who kind of enters the scene in that process. Let me just paint the picture here as I kind of understand the timing in general here. I understand that the initial storyboard comes to you from Task Force (a)(b)(2) High 1.4(a)(b)(2) High; is that about right?

WIT: Right it was about (a)(b)(2) High, sir.

Major General Votel: And then the storyboard that actually goes forward to ISAF goes around (a)(b)(2) High so?

WIT: Yes, sir.

Major General Votel: Roughly 3 hours plus or minus a few minutes later. Is that timing all matches what you recollect?

WIT: Absolutely, and I've got email records to show too.

Major General Votel: Okay. Thank you. I think we've actually got all that enough that I can recall those specific timings there.

WIT: Can I ask you to kind of talk about how the development, kind of what the facts are, if you had any particular concerns, how you kind of developed the storyboard that ultimately got submitted there at 1.4(a)(b)(2) High

WIT: Yes, sir. The email that (a)(b)(2) OPS sent me with the original storyboard was a 1-slider, pretty basic storyboard that laid out the big pieces. It had a backdrop and it showed some of the locations of the enemy KIA and then where Linda Norgrove was found. Once I got that storyboard, I called (a)(b)(2) OPS and he kind of talked me through what he knew at that point in time. I think simultaneous to that they started pumping the pictures back from the Strike Force of the EKIA, of Linda Norgrove, so those started trickling in as the Task Force (a)(b)(2) High Headquarters got those. So, what I did is I threw on a second slide there at the end because I wanted to imbed some of the pictures of particularly the one EKIA with the arm blown off and then wanted to depict how Linda was laying relative to him there. So, I built that second slide. I built a foundation for it. Yeah, that was the foundation for it (reviewing

Exhibit 32), but my version was a little bit different. It didn't have the building numbers on it. We didn't have this one it yet but it did have this picture on it there and we didn't depict her yet. So, I built that second slide then I set it up to Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6). I went up into his office and then we started tweaking it some more. He started adding the pieces he wanted to adjust to it. Sometime during that iteration he called down to the TF CDR, talked to him about what we knew there and that's kind of where we did a lot of the talking through on what could have been there to cause the explosion. I know there is quite a bit of conversation, certainly between Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) and I on, hey, you know, the original call from the target was enemy grenade. But when we looked at the wound on him we both, well, I certainly didn't think a grenade could do that just based on that one picture that we saw with his arm totally off. Now there is a different picture that we saw kind of later on where the arm was still kind of on or looked to be a little bit on.

Major General Votel: Right.

WIT: So, it looked like some kind of a longer charge that could do that sort of thing. In my mind I didn't think a grenade could have caused that wound. So, we talked a lot about that. Now, Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) I do know, looking at the ISR feed the explosion didn't look as intense as most SVEST detonations that we both have seen before on ISR. So, there was discussion of that piece of it. At the end of the day we both thought, hey, this was most likely some kind of SBELT or SVEST or a pipe bomb type explosive which was found on the target, at least, you know, there is a picture in the SSE. There's a picture of a suspected pipe bomb. So, that's where we kind of generated the most likely cause of the explosion would have been some kind of SBELT, SVEST, IED type system.

Major General Votel: So, in other words the explanation that is kind of coming up from Task Force (b)(2) High (a), (b)(2) High about this kind of detonation of a suicide something or other or, you know, the initiation of something that might be on this guy's chest rack is viewed as plausible by you guys?

WIT: It was. We did not hear that from (a), (b)(2) High r. We kind of came up with that, Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) and I first. Then we discussed it with, we presented that to TF CDR and he agreed. In fact there is an email - the email that had the EKIA photo with his arm off, TF CDR even wrote, 'hey, not a grenade.' So, they were thinking the same thing. I don't know where in time, it must have been before we were actually discussing it where he thought the same thing.

Major General Votel: That it was some kind of suicide?

WIT: That's right, sir. Now, also at some time during that - during the back and forth and I think it was multiple phone calls made from Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) down to TF CDR just rechecking things. I know Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) he did ask, 'hey, are we sure none of our guys threw anything?' I was only hearing this side of the conversation but according to Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) the answer was, 'yeah, nobody threw anything.' So, that's why we kind of went forward with the most plausible story here is it's some kind of a SVEST, SBELT IED that he had, you know, across his shoulder somehow, on his body to cause that kind of explosion. Once we kind of got the storyboard where Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) wanted it, he sent it down, I know I've got an email record of this, and he sent it down to TF CDR for their check off. I think this was about 1.4(a), (b)(2) High Then, we talked to him immediately and said, 'yeah, I think everything on there looks accurate. Then he sent it off. The boss sent it off about 1.4(a), (b)(2) High Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) did about 1.4(a), (b)(2) High out to our LNOs, I think Admiral McRaven was on there as well and General Thomas.

So, that's the general evolution of how the storyboard went. I know later on the next morning we kind of cleaned it up. I know there are some rough areas there.

Major General Votel: Yeah, I guess that's my question here. US SOF SME, I do want to make sure we - this one is marked 1.4(a), (b)(2) High OCT.

WIT: Yes, sir, that was the updated version the following day. We cleaned up those arrows.

Major General Votel: So, there is an initial one that went before this and then this is kind of again, we continue to do refinement on it.

WIT: That's right, that's right, sir. In fact, I think this first slide, I can't remember if that was part of the original one that went, I can check easily on my emails or whether we added that the following day; that lead slide, lay out the Intel.

Major General Votel: Okay. Well we will determine that.

WIT: But that one that went out the next day with the cleaned up arrows that was, I believe that was the last one we sent out before we saw that cleaned up ISR feed and figured out that one of our guys threw something.

Major General Votel: Okay.

WIT: Does that help, sir?

Major General Votel: Question from anyone?

Brigadier Nitsch: Nothing from me, thank you, General.

Major General Votel: US SOF SME?

US SOF SME: No, sir.

Major General Votel: All right. Do we have all the email records just referred to here?

Lieutenant Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6): We do, yes, sir.

Major General Votel: All right. So, there's really no, I feel compelled to ask this just to make I'm clear here. Okay?

WIT: Yes, sir.

Major General Votel: So, there is no significant discussion or really any discussion of one of our (b)(3), (b)(6) Members employing a grenade? You didn't ask (b)(3), (b)(6) that specifically?

WIT: I did not, sir. I did not ask him that, sir. I know Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) asked the question to the (b)(3), (b)(6) while I was standing in his office, "hey, are we sure nobody", it was something along the lines of, "are we sure none of our guys threw anything?"

Major General Votel: Okay. Is there any - I know there was an incident a few days before or whatever with this 1.4(a), (b)(2)High was there a discussion of that as well?

WIT: In relation to this objective, no, sir. No, sir. Are you talking about the accident up in 1.4(a), (b)(2)High

Major General Votel: Yeah, I think so.

WIT: No, not in relation to this, sir. That particular weapon system was, yeah, that was, as far as I understood it at that time, that was primarily used by the 1.4(a), (b)(2)High based on the mission set that they were going to do.

Major General Votel: Okay. Any further questions or comments here regarding this thing?

[Negative response.]

Major General Votel: Is this - Given the strategic significance of this operation and the death of Ms. Norgrove which, of course was known at the time you are preparing all this, what's the level that goes into this one compared to the other 8 that you were submitting that evening?

WIT: Oh, this is - there was more work and discussion and vetting of this storyboard, sir, that I've seen certainly in the 5 months or so I've been doing this job. You know, the storyboard thing as you know, the special storyboard thing is something we do pretty regularly and it is always a balance between getting the perfect picture of what happened and getting the information out that everybody is screaming for, leadership, not just the folks that don't matter. So, there is always a balance there and whenever you pull the trigger on a special storyboard, you always accept a little bit of risk because you know not having the perfect picture, you know. We reviewed the feeds that we had immediate access to which is the PET feeds at the time, certainly not from every ball that we had out there but from the best views we did and obviously we didn't weigh on the hard drives from the aircraft but, you know, this is the most rigger that I've seen put in a special storyboard.

Major General Votel: Do you guys pull the hard drives for all operations or only on ----

WIT: No, sir. Just on the important ones or the ones we have a little bit of a question on and don't have the greatest view on. It is a unique thing to pull that hard drive feeds and review them.

Major General Votel: Okay. Anything else from anybody else?

Brigadier Nitsch: So, just from that statement you just made, you said, "it's a unique thing." Do you mean it is a very rare thing or is this every time you have the feed?

WIT: No, it is rare.

Brigadier Nitsch: Okay. That's fine. It was just that one. Thanks
(b)(3), (b)(6)

Major General Votel: US SOF SME, anything?

US SOF SME: No, sir.

Major General Votel: (b)(3), (b)(6)

Lieutenant Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) No, sir.

Major General Votel: All right, (b)(3), (b)(6) thanks. I don't think I have any follow-on questions here. I just want to remind you here that this is an official investigation. It is protected in that this will go into a report that will be made to General Mattis for his use as deemed appropriate. I am ordering you not to divulge the nature of this investigation or the questions, answers, or discussions included in this interview this evening with anyone except for the Chaplain or your counsel if you have one until case closure or unless approved by me an Inspector General, or the appointing authority. If anyone should approach you regarding your testimony or the matters discussed here, you are required to report it to myself or General Mattis immediately. I am prohibited from providing a copy of your testimony to you. You may submit a request in writing for the report or any part thereof to the appointing authority or the Freedom of Information Act Office. The release authority will evaluate your request under both the Freedom of Information Act and the Privacy Act and provide the releasable information to you. If anything comes of - you start to think of anything here after we end this and think you might have some information that might be useful to us, please let us know and we'll immediately reconvene and discuss it.

WIT: Yes, sir.

Major General Votel: Are there any other matters that we haven't covered with you or that you know about this particular objective that might be important to our investigation?

WIT: No, sir, I can't think of any.

Major General Votel: Is there anybody else you think we ought to talk to? We've talked to quite a wide variety of folks.

WIT: No, sir, I think you are hitting everybody, sir.

Major General Votel: Do you have any questions?

WIT: No, sir.

Major General Votel: Okay. Thank you. The time is 2334 Zulu and this interview is concluded.

[The witness departed the room.]