

Major General Votel: Yes, good morning. 1.4(a), (b)(2) High are you there?

WIT: Yes, sir, I'm here, sir.

Major General Votel: Hey 1.4(a), (b)(2) High General Votel here. Good to talk to you and thank you very much for calling this morning.

WIT: My pleasure, sir.

Major General Votel: Hey listen, I'm here at Bagram Airfield and I'm joined by Brigadier Nitsch who you met the other day. We also have a UK SME here. He is part of the investigation team but was only able to join us on Sunday for a portion of the interview so you didn't meet him and then of course I have a US SOF SME and and Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) who you met the other day in here.

WIT: Okay.

Major General Votel: I've got a couple of questions here for you on fairly specific stuff. Some of it is on some fairly specific information about a particular team member and then frankly I think we have some questions, I know that I do, just that I would really kind of to probe your mind and get kind of your thoughts on kind of some Master Chief level, Senior Enlisted Advisor aspects about the organization that I think would be helpful for us. So, that's the area which I want to talk with you about this morning.

I want to remind you, that we are recording this scenario here and the oath that I read to you the other day or that we took the other day still applies. Can you acknowledge that, please?

WIT: Yes, sir, I understand all.

Major General Votel: Okay, thanks. Hey, listen, what we became aware of yesterday, we got a report and it involves TM5, and we got a report that on a previous objective, Objective 1.4(a), (b)(2) High, which was executed a couple before 1.4(a), (b)(2) High and I don't have the exact date but it was really the last time that Alpha Team was involved in an operation. Essentially what the information was is that TM5 threw a grenade over a wall without identifying the other side then threw a 1.4(a), (b)(2) High grenade into a small structure that didn't require that level of force. He had not identified who was in the structure which ultimately collapsed. TM5 was verbally counseled for his

actions. Obviously, my responsibility as the investigating officer in possession of this information in light of what happened on 1.4(a), (b)(2)High is to make sure that we've kind of reconciled what happened previously with what happened on 1.4(a), (b)(2)High here. So, that's kind of the nature of the questions here principally this morning.

So, what I would like to do is just kind of toss it over to you there and I don't know what you know about that particular incident if you were at the hotwash that night, if you were aware that the 1.4(a), (b)(2)High chief informed you of this; I just wonder if you could give us your perspective on that previous incident with (b)(2)High Objective 1.4(a), (b)(2)High?

WIT:

Certainly, sir. I did not go on the mission. I was present at the debrief. It was the entire 1.4(a), (b)(2)High there debriefing the entire mission as per the SOP that the 1.4(a), (b)(2)High chief, normally does. I did not - I wasn't aware of at this point that the 1.4(a), (b)(2)High chief was going to bring up prior to getting to the hotwash so I just listened to the entire hotwash. When the 1.4(a), (b)(2)High chief got to that part of the mission the way I understood it was that the other TF who had a blocking position on the high ground had already engaged the 20 series or so, at least Alpha Team thought that that is where the other TF had engaged and that's why the grenade, the initial grenade had gone over the wall. When Alpha Team pressed on to the 10 series and they had that last building that had the people shooting at them from inside of that and they escalated to the point where they ended up throwing in the 1.4(a), (b)(2)High. When I listened to the 1.4(a), (b)(2)High chief go over the points, although it was TM5 that the focus of the conversation was on, the way it struck me was, you know, the initial grenade may or may not - it didn't seem like it was a really bad move. What I felt like was that the 1.4(a), (b)(2)High chief was trying to use that opportunity to highlight to everybody that we've always got to be careful when we are throwing grenades. His point was not only friendly forces but it's also who's inside of the compound as well. So, when I talked to the 1.4(a), (b)(2)High Chief about the use of grenades, I mean, we are always talking about making sure that we are not causing any more collateral damage than we need to. We talk a lot about closing with the enemy and

actually being sure, especially if we've got containment. So, it didn't, while I think it comes up with relevance to this, it kind of sounds like it's TM 5 specific, but I thought that the (a), (b)(2) High Chief at the hotwash was really trying to use it to illustrate something to everybody so that he could take the opportunity to kind of reach at the entire (a), (b)(2) High Chief just in case anybody was not thinking about grenades in the right way. It wasn't an individual counseling per se, because it was brought up in the group debrief and I didn't personally see it as, you know, that we were on to something with TM 5 necessarily, or else obviously I would have insisted that the (a), (b)(2) High Chief go on to an individual counseling, verbal one-on-one, or some sort of a written counseling. So, I think that from other perspectives those two grenades, for members of the team from what they saw, could have been good decisions, you know, from where they were. The (a), (b)(2) High Chief, like I said, he's responsible for keeping an eye on not only what gets executed on the target that's right in front of him but how anything we do impacts the (a), (b)(2) High Chief as a whole and how the (a), (b)(2) High Chief is going to move forward and how they are doing business. I'll stop there, sir.

Major General Votel: Thank you. That's clear. In other words, just to summarize here what I think I just heard you say is that the fact that there had been this discussion during the hotwash on (a), (b)(2) High Chief about employment of grenades, didn't give you any particular concern or pause about TM5 in particular or about the force in general and there employment of the grenades. That it was, from your point, simply viewed as kind of a point of instruction based on something that had happened on an objective?

WIT: Yes, sir. I think that, you know, it is not that I didn't think about it. I'm like, okay, who's the actual guy that does it and I did think through the exactly what I had heard and I thought through where the (a), (b)(2) High Chief was coming from as well. So, that is correct. That is where I ended up with it although I didn't just bypass it completely. I did think it through, sir.

Major General Votel: Among the, again, I'm asking you to speculate a little bit here, but among you and the (a), (b)(2) High Chiefs, the Senior Enlisted of the organization here, do you

talk about specific areas of concern or areas that you want folks to watch for in After Action Reviews or in hotwashes that you want to pay particular attention to? For example, again, I know I'm harping on the grenades here but the employment of grenades or individuals who are involved in multiple object 5, are there any things that kind of key you or any of the other (a), (b)(2) High chiefs or senior enlisted advisors there to kind of focus on in your post-operation discussions and hotwashes?

WIT:

Well, certainly. Anything that, and again a lot of times I'm not present. A lot of times the (a), (b)(2) High chiefs are not really right there on the scene but I think what we look for is as I hear something described to me I think to myself, would I have handled it the exact same way and then I try to put myself in the shooter's shoes as well and make sure that I'm not coming at him with something where he is the guy who's actually in the problem would look at me and think that I've lost my mind because I can't seem to understand what it was like to actually be there. I look for repeated, you know, if I see a guy get into the same situation a couple of times I would definitely be looking for that. Sometimes it's just one single situation comes up and if I think it's worth bringing up then I harp on it - I harp on it with the entire (a), (b)(2) High if it's in that audience. Some of the things that I might see or want to address are better delivered by the (a), (b)(2) High chiefs. Some of the stuff is better delivered by the team leader depending on exactly what it is that we are trying to do. So, sometimes I'll package it up and give it to the (a), (b)(2) High chief and say, hey, this needs to come from you. It shouldn't come from me because of, you know, I think it's going to take better if it comes from you. Subsequently sometimes there's things that I talk to the team leaders about, like, hey, you guys need to carry this mail on this one because I think you guys get your point across better because of the level of leadership you are at.

Major General Votel:

Good. Thanks. One additional question and then I'll open it to the others here. In your experience either as the (a), (b)(2) High, you know, as an extensively experienced and senior enlisted in the organization there, have you had instances over the course of all your deployments, where you have observed a junior

member of one of the teams or ~~1.4(a), (b)(2)High~~ who has demonstrated some habitual activities that caused you or one of your subordinate leaders to basically pull him out of the line for either a period of time or perhaps longer because he was exhibiting bad habits that you kind of thought were contrary. Again, I'm not looking for specific names. I'm just kind of asking if that's happened in your experience.

WIT: In my experience, I haven't had anybody that got onto a trend that ever brought me to bring them offline or put them into a pause or I haven't had anybody who got into a tactical trend where they were making tactical mistakes that built up to where I actually let them go for that alone.

Major General Votel: Thank you. I want to move into another area here and really kind of unrelated to this discussion of TM5 and ~~1.4(a), (b)(2)High~~ but before I do, let me offer the Brigadier an opportunity to ask any questions.

Brigadier Nitsch: Good morning. In this area, I've just got one question which given your enormous length of service with the Task Force, have you - are you aware of many examples of the questionable use of grenades?

WIT: No, I'm not, sir.

Brigadier Nitsch: Okay.

WIT: I have not had - I haven't had really anything like what we've got on ~~1.4(a), (b)(2)High~~ here. I've never seen that happen since I've been here.

Brigadier Nitsch: Thank you very much, that's very clear.

WIT: Yes, sir.

Major General Votel: Anything else?

Brigadier Nitsch: No, thank you.

Major General Votel: And?

UK SME: No, thank you, general.

Major General Votel: Hey, let me just explore one other area here with you and really I'm kind of hoping to draw on your vast experience here. I'm interested in your expectations for, you know, kind of as the ~~1.4(a), (b)(2)High~~ some of the subordinate leaders that are down in the ~~1.4(a), (b)(2)High~~ and

teams and in particular, I'm interested in how you view the role of assistant team leaders, in particular how they perform their duties as the number two's in the teams, on objectTM 5, in post-operation activities, and in training and in being a more senior experience operator below the level of a team leader and kind of the role they have with the three, four, five other members of the team. I wonder if you could just kind of comment on that.

WIT:

Certainly, sir. The 2IC typically is somebody that we're probably looking at to be a team leader. It's not necessary that just because a guy gets a number two slot that we've already chosen him. It's sort of an opportunity for us to get him a little bit closer to the team leader to be able to learn some of the other things that he might not get visibility on as a newer guy. (b)(2)High,

(b)(2)High

of stuff post mission or in training scenarios and stuff like that. A little bit of that is left up to the team leader. I think the primary goal with that position is to try to expose him to the things that the team leader does, while he won't get all of it but enough of it so the team leader can then, you know, come to me and say, hey, I'm sold on this guy and I think he looks good for a team.

Major General Votel:

Okay. Very good. That really answers my question there and gave me a good perspective that I, frankly, did not have going into this especially the focus on development of the assistant team leader. Because of my Army experience, I think I would have - I think I would have viewed some of that a little differently but I appreciate your perspective. That's helped clarify for me.

One additional area here where, again, I'm not fishing but I'm really interested in your view here;

how, again on your experience, what is the interaction of the (a), (b)(2) High your view that - the proper interaction of the (a), (b)(2) High commander and the (a), (b)(2) High chief in addressing the performance and actions of individual (a), (b)(2) High and team members? What's the balance there between the officer side and the senior enlisted side there, and how do you best see that working in your organization or really in the Task Force as a whole here or based on your experience?

WIT:

Well I think that the - as we talk about tactics, how an operator carries himself, how he presents himself, all those things that we look for in a good operator from tactics on up really - the effort or the responsibility falls on the senior enlisted guys. So if I can't get the right tactics on target or if I can't get, you know, a guy to develop at the right pace, then in my mind it's an enlisted issue while the officers are ultimately responsible for it, I think it's kind of similar to what I was talking about with when sometimes I give the (a), (b)(2) High chiefs my point and say, "hey, you deliver this and you don't need to say that it comes from me; it needs to come from you because of the different point of view that the guy has with the (a), (b)(2) High chief's giving it to him."

I think that we have similar there with the (a), (b)(2) High commander as well. The (a), (b)(2) High commander is going to keep an eye on tactics as well. He's going to keep an eye on presentation, communication, and all those things we look for in an operator. And he's going to bring up to the (a), (b)(2) High chief if he's got concerns. The TF Commander and I do the same thing just on a larger scale. And if the TF Commander has concerns, he's going to bring them up to me even if it's something that would be a quote, unquote, enlisted leadership issue; he's going to tell me about it if he has concerns. And then more times than not, he wants me to be the guy that deals with it because I think we all feel that we want the senior enlisted to try to take ownership of that part of it. But like I said, the officers are ultimately responsible so they certainly weigh in with any of the concerns that they have.

Major General Votel: Okay. Thanks. I appreciate that. Any follow ups? Anything?

US SOF SME: No, sir.

Major General Votel: And (b)(3), (b)(6) anything?

LTC (b)(3), (b)(6) No, sir.

Major General Votel: Hey, I really appreciate you taking some time here this morning. I know this is - we kind of keep coming back to you here and I really appreciate it. I think you do appreciate that I have an obligation to make sure when information pops up, that we run it down, try to rationalize it, understand what it is, and so we can ensure that it's put in the proper perspective and discussing it with you is really really helps us. In particular, I appreciate your last couple comments here because that is helping me understand more and more about the organization and how you conduct your business so that I can reflect in the overall assessment so thanks very much for that.

Is there anything else that you think might be of some value for us? Any other information or tidbits out there you might have thought of since we last chatted?

WIT: No, sir.

Major General Votel: All right, thanks. Listen, again, thank you. I want to remind you as I did the last time, please don't discuss this testimony with anybody it's a Chaplain or your lawyer if you had one there unless you kind of clear it through me. I really appreciate it, and thanks for your time this morning.

WIT: Understand all, sir. Thank you.

Major General Votel: Thank you.

[The call was terminated.]