

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

Major General Votel: First of all, thank you for giving us a call back. Let me just say right up front here, well, first off, all the same folks that I introduced you to this morning are in here at this time and all the same provisos here in terms of cautions and otherwise that we highlighted the other day and then again this morning are all still in place. If I could just ask you to kind of acknowledge that please.

WIT: Understand all, sir.

Major General Votel: Okay, thanks. Again, I recognize there may be a certain amount of anxiety and question asking here by you and others here about the method we are working through here for the investigative process but if I could just kind of describe for you what essentially we are doing. Obviously the interviews we had with the 15 of you over the weekend were very useful to us and what we are essentially doing now is we are kind of working through our information gap areas to make sure that we are kind of being as thorough as we can. So, I apologize that we keep coming back to you and others here and asking you questions and et cetera. What we are trying to do is make sure we are as thorough as we can be here so that we kind of answer all - when we do provide the answer back here to General Mattis or the report back to General Mattis we are as complete as possible. So, that is what we are doing. I apologize for kind of the way that it just plays out here. So, I appreciate your tolerance as we kind of work through this.

WIT: Yes, sir, certainly no apology necessary. I appreciate the explanation and I totally understand.

Major General Votel: There are three information gap areas we kind of want to talk with you here this evening. We will kind of take them one at a time here. We want to talk a little bit about risk assessment. I want to talk a little bit about contingencies for this particular operation. I want to talk about the transition, if you will, the TTP transitions from (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(2)High to hostage rescue. Obviously I recognize based on your experience and position here you are perhaps the subject matter expert here to ensure we have the right view on that. Then at the end of it I just want to talk about a couple (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(2)High aspects with one (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(2)High here to kind of gain your perspective here.

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Let me start back with the first one there in terms of kind of risk and let's just start there and then we'll get into a little discussion of contingencies here. I'm very interested in your perspective of how the discussion, kind of how the consensus was built through the planning process between kind of the enlisted leadership at the (b)(1), (1.4a), (b)(2) High level, yourself, and Task Force CDR and the (b)(1), (1.4a), (b)(2) High Commander. Can you kind of talk us through the different ways that you guys went through it, the discussion of the risk that is being accepted for this particular operation?

WIT:

Well, I think as this one unfolded we look at where the target is, what is around the target. We look at the terrain and then we look at the intelligence. On something that has a hostage involved I talk to the guys up front to make sure that I need to get them into a mindset of that there may very well be accepting more risk than they are used to on a (b)(1), (1.4a), (b)(2) High mission. I did that on the (b)(1), (1.4a), (b)(2) High series just to make sure that, you know, they have kind of got their heads in the right place as they are starting to plan because a lot of times you end up having to come up with COAs that are more risky because there is a hostage involved. So, as the guys are looking at all those factors we start to look at different COAs for how we can get to the target. On something like this, the goal, the first goal that the guys are going to want to have is to be able to arrive with surprise especially due to the intelligence that we were reading about how the guy was kind of getting fed up and he was going to kill her and throw her out in the street and be done with it because it seemed like he was getting frustrated. So, as we look at, obviously we went through the offset was what we wanted to get to. So the guys were trying to find routes and trying to find ways in so that we could achieve surprise. In the end when they don't find those things they have to start creeping in and I have to get them to start creeping in based on the timeline, how much time we had. In this case we had a complete cycle to work on the plan we were able to get a RECCE guy up on two different flights to confirm that we were really - we weren't going to be able to do the offset which was what we preferred. Then we start talking about the, okay, if we are going to go to the X, how are we going to

mitigate some risk. In this case what we ended up doing was the (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(2)High in the COMS, (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(2)High (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(2)High and that was not a full bird so we had some ACL left to give. It had to do with splitting the force evenly in case a helicopter got shot down or if terrain or anything stopped one of the other teams from being able to get there. We tried to minimize the (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(2)High time so the exposure to the helicopter would be as minimal as possible. So, we talked through all these things as the planning process is going on and I'm talking to the (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(2)High Chief and the (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(2)High Commander. The (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(2)High Commander will occasionally come over and he and TF CDR would have discussions. I keep TF CDR updated on, you know, where the guys are with the COAs, you know, what we like. Once a COA gets scrapped for some reason in this case that we couldn't do an offset, just physically the terrain was too steep, you know, then I just started talking him through. Okay, as we are coming into the X, you know, starting to look at (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(2)High sites, you know, the risk is starting to go up and just try to communicate that to him throughout the entire process as we are coming up with which COA we are going to use. I pause for a second, sir.

Major General Votel:

Okay, thanks. I think that is pretty clear. I'm interested in, clearly we understand the risks associate and accepted with the infiltration, what about other risks inherent in the operation? Once you get through the infiltration, did you or the enlisted leadership there - what is the next riskiest thing you are concerned about?

WIT:

Well, once the force gets in on the ground, once they are established, you know, obviously we are worried about is this is a (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(2)High site. Does it provide us the advantage that we are hoping for so, as the guys study the (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(2)High sites we are concerned with, am I going to hit the ground and be at an immediate disadvantage if somebody comes out of the target right away. We knew that that second (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(2)High site was going to be down a little bit lower so that was definitely a concern. It is a concern of what are we going to do if we get wounded on the target because of the terrain and the extra time it was going to take to be able to get somebody out based on what the fight was going to be and then, as well the terrain

that surrounds the target. So, if we didn't pick up somebody that had high ground on us, somebody that was in a fighting position or something like that, if we didn't pick them up on our end the risk that that would present us once we were on the ground.

Major General Votel: Okay. Good. Hey, listen you know you mentioned kind of making sure the guys were in the right frame mindset here. What is your assessment? Were they, by the time this was - they took off from (b)(1), (1.4a, (b)(2) High], did you have a good feeling about that, that they kind of understood the mindset associated with the risks being accepted here and what they were being asked to do?

WIT: Yes, I do, sir. You know as we were going through the planning process and the guys start to, like I said as they start to get in closer to these riskier COAs I'm talking to the team leaders and the (b)(1), (1.4a, (b)(2) High Chief is talking to the team leaders, you know, we are kind of getting them in that frame of mind so to speak. Once the - in this case once we did the brief, TF CDR actually got up and spoke to the guys when the whole thing was done and really did a good job of explaining what they were about to go do, even though, even if we might have been at a 50/50 whether she was going to be there or not. So, he really hammered home the hostage rescue part of it. Everybody knew that there was a remain over date possibility but the words were, "get all that out of your mind. The first thing that you are going to do is you are going to (b)(1), (1.4a, (b)(2) High on this target and we are going to see if she is there and you guys are going to clear it and hopefully if she is there we are going to save her." So, I feel like we did a lot of extra stuff to get the guys into the right mindset on this one. So, I do feel comfortable with where they were, sir.

Major General Votel: How much, was there, frankly was there any disagreement about the amount of risk that was being accepted here between the (b)(1), (1.4a, (b)(2) High and TF level?

WIT: Between (b)(1), (1.4a, (b)(2) High and TF level, no, there was not. Between (b)(1), (1.4a, (b)(2) High and team leader level, I don't think there was. Beyond that, you know, I didn't, I obviously didn't go around and poll the guys on what they thought about the risk that they were about to take. You know how that is. I'm sure it ran kind of

hot and cold but that's where the extra effort comes in to try to - if I've got a guy out there that really feels like, wow, I'm taking a whole lot of risk here. Try to get his head into the right place, like this is what we are getting paid to do at this level. We are going to do it and you guys can pull it off. You guys can be successful.

Major General Votel: Thanks. Brigadier?

Brigadier Nitsch: Nothing, sir.

Major General Votel: UK SME?

UK SME: Yeah, just one (b)(1), (1.4a), (b)(2) High when you were talking about your consideration of risk, you clearly articulated the risks to the assault force both on the INFIL and on the (b)(1), (1.4a), (b)(2) High site, certainly if you were in a position of disadvantage and you talked about the enemy. Did you consider the risk to Ms. Norgrove as the hostage during those deliberations?

WIT: Well we considered the risk to her but as far as what we could do to mitigate risks to her. The biggest thing we could do was try to get the clearance done faster. So, as the clearance went, we talked a lot about, 'hey, make sure that as the buildings go down get us the call out real quick so we can know what buildings are clear and you don't have (b)(1), (1.4a), (b)(2) High, so on and so forth. So, the biggest thing that we were trying to do to mitigate risks for her was speed of the clearance.

UK SME: Okay. That makes sense. That is perfect (b)(1), (1.4a), (b)(2) High Just one other one, you said right at the beginning that you spoke to the guys out front so that they knew that they had to accept more risk on this operation and I think you absolutely hit the nail on the head with that. That's what hostage rescue is all about as we all know. My question is though, that conversation, was that just between you and the leadership within the (b)(1), (1.4a), (b)(2) High or did that conversation extend all the way down to the assaulters, in particular, obviously to (b)(1), (1.4a), (b)(2) High

WIT: In this case, sir, it was between myself and the (b)(1), (1.4a), (b)(2) High Chief and the team leaders. Typically when the briefs go down for the missions that we have done, sometimes the commander comes out there and, I don't know that I remember him really ever making any

comments. He listens. Sometimes I'll make some comments. In this case TF CDR made the comments to the whole group. So, as I listened to what he said, I felt like the best thing to do was to leave it on his words and not speak after the CO on this one. So, my conversations about that risk were confined to the team leader level, sir.

UK SME:

Okay. I've got that, and that's what I thought, (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(2)High but since you raised the issue of TF CDR's sort of final brief before the guys got on the helicopters which is obviously sort of really important and well delivered piece of leadership. In your recollection, did he specify that the guys going on the ground were each, individually were going to have to accept a greater degree of personal risk because of the nature of the operation that they were about to undertake?

WIT:

I don't recall him saying that each individual guy, I don't recall him actually framing it exactly like that but I do remember that the things he said got that point across to everybody.

UK SME:

Okay. That's really useful to me (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(2)High Thank you, very much.

Major General Votel:

Okay. Thanks (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(2)High Let's transition to, kind of what we've been talking among ourselves here and with some of your guys here, this transition from (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(2)High or the combat clearance technique goes along with that to hostage rescue. I wonder if you can talk, I mean I have heard others mention, kind of a hybrid TTP that kind of might, which you might be able to talk to us a little bit about here. Kind of how that transition goes and just kind of what your thoughts are on that and in this particular situation or really in the other situations the environment that we kind of find ourselves here.

WIT:

On this one I think that it - to try to illustrate it, it comes down to the difference between how fast you are going to get the rooms clear and how much exposure you are going to allow for yourself in between rooms or in between spaces where you can establish a good firing position where you've got good cover. So, the amount of time that two guys would spend pieing a room starts to go way down. They are going to do it faster and then they are going to commit to those corners a lot quicker.

Depending on how the stack or how the team has arrived at the target, guys might have to actually pan almost the whole room by themselves. Guys will use windows to get some of it panned before they get to the door. So, in between those spots if it doesn't, if I can pick up speed by staying exposed for an extra 3 seconds so we can get the next room cleared then that's going to be worth the exposure to me because I keep the clearance going faster and I keep the coverage. So, on a ~~(b)(1), (b)(2) High~~ mission I've got really all day if we did a call out. Hopefully there's nobody in there and I've got all the time in the world to make sure I keep myself at the greatest level of cover that I can give myself. So, that's really at the individual level as guys going through and trying to speed up a combat clearance to make it look a little bit more like a hostage rescue without, you know, completely storming it swat team style. That's what the individual is thinking about, my exposure and the speed with which we are clearing rooms. So, if I give up a little bit and we get two rooms cleared faster that was worth the exposure and then I'm looking for the next place where I can set up and have a better position where I might have a little bit of cover.

Major General Votel:

Okay. Thanks, that's really good. Just again, I'm just probing here just a little bit more. From your experience what would be the indicators that would - I mean, would there be any specific indicators on the objectives that would cause you as the operator, the assaulter to make the decision, okay, now I have to move quicker. I have to accept more risks and press forward?

WIT:

As far as what the, there might be something that the enemy does that makes you speed up or slow down. The, what am I trying to say here, in this case, you know, you had shooters, just starting to come out so the guys had seen the third shooter, you know, after the third guy coming up and nobody has really seen Ms. Norgrove in the shot picture yet, you know, the guys might start thinking, hey, we need to get a little bit of cover and take just a second here. A lot of it is driven by who I've got with me. So, if I feel like I'm getting thin, if I keep pressing pretty soon I'm going to be on my own. So, after I see three shooters come up and three different guys

get dropped I might expect the guys to pause for a second like they ended up doing. But you can't pause for very long, obviously, you know, you have got to keep going. I think it is a combination of what the enemy presents you and how many people you've got in your terrain or in the immediate vicinity to keep the flow going.

Major General Votel: Okay. Thanks. Thanks. ~~(b)(1), 1.4a, (b)(2) High~~ Let me just see if Brigadier has any questions regarding that aspect there.

Brigadier Nitsch: ~~(b)(1), 1.4a, (b)(2) High~~ I've got one, which is sort of very loosely related. As I understand it, you do a 2-week training package as part of your preparation, don't you?

WIT: Are you talking about right before the deployment starts?

Brigadier Nitsch: I think he's referring to the ~~(b)(1), 1.4a, (b)(2) High~~

Brigadier Nitsch: Yeah.

WIT: All right, sir, yes.

Brigadier Nitsch: And I just noticed it's done in an ~~(b)(1), 1.4a, (b)(2) High~~ environment. Do you feel that a more ~~(b)(1), 1.4a, (b)(2) High~~ circumstance would be better preparation for deployment to Afghanistan?

WIT: I'm sorry, sir, I couldn't understand the question.

Brigadier Nitsch: I noticed that - my understanding is you do the ~~(b)(1), 1.4a, (b)(2) High~~ in a very much, what I would call an ~~(b)(1), 1.4a, (b)(2) High~~ environment so you perhaps look at ~~(b)(1), 1.4a, (b)(2) High~~ ~~(b)(1), 1.4a, (b)(2) High~~, uhm, you look at a ~~(b)(1), 1.4a, (b)(2) High~~ and various other aspects. Do you feel that it would help preparation for operations here in Afghanistan if it was based in a more ~~(b)(1), 1.4a, (b)(2) High~~ environment?

WIT: Yes, sir, the ~~(b)(1), 1.4a, (b)(2) High~~ provides us with, what the ~~(b)(1), 1.4a, (b)(2) High~~ really provides us with is new floor plans for the guys. So, we don't train on knowing the floor plan because vary rarely do we get it. We do ~~(b)(1), 1.4a, (b)(2) High~~ blocks occasionally. We try to get one into every cycle where we are getting the terrain that we are looking for but the target selection starts to go down when you get into the terrain because, you know, obviously there is not a whole lot of places that have been built with compounds in them. So, we have

some places where we go and we get the terrain but we do the 1.4a, (b)(2) High get the different types of floor plans because the floor plan is what really creates that guy who can think on his. A guy who can recognize the patterns of how the place is built, kind of have a little bit of an idea, hey, I think I've got a closet here, keep track of where the external walls are, so on and so forth. I don't think we would stop doing the 1.4a, (b)(2) High package. Certainly based on what's happened to us out here on this, you know, we would probably throw some different looks in it that maybe we hadn't been throwing in before. Then as well when we get into the, if we go out to U 1.4a, (b)(2) High where we get the terrain we are looking for but the target that the facility has might not be all that challenging. I think we would apply these lessons learned here to those scenarios as well.

Brigadier Nitsch: Thanks 1.4a, (b)(2) High

Major General Votel: Okay, UK SME?

UK SME: No, thank you.

Major General Votel: Let me just move on to kind of the last one. Listen, I want to take you back to the Sunday when the full motion video is finally reviewed here. I think you - are you present when the 1.4a, (b)(2) High Chief went down and kind of talked to the team leader and others?

WIT: No, sir.

Major General Votel: Are you aware of any of the stuff that, kind of the 1.4a, (b)(2) High Chief mentioned after the Team Leader kind of confirmed that in fact a grenade had been thrown kind of with respect with some of the other team members there had been involved in that event?

WIT: Yes, sir. When we finished watching the video, TF CDR and I stayed over there in our hooches and continued to talk. He started - he was making phone calls back and forth to Colonel 1.4a, (b)(2) High The 1.4a, (b)(2) High Chief and the 1.4a, (b)(2) High Commander said, 'hey, we are going to go get the guys together.' I was like, 'okay'. So TF CDR and I were still dealing with the initial phone calls and whatnot. Later on that night I talked to 1.4a, (b)(2) High and he kind of told me, 'hey, we got the guys together. When I told them, everybody was really frustrated.' The initial shock was that they had failed a mission and it could have been because

of this grenade (b)(1)(1.4a, (b)(2) High) told me that he told (b)(1)(1.4a, (b)(2) High) to
turn in his stuff and kind of cranked down on him
pretty hard. I was a little, personally I was
disappointed, you know, that the guys had let the
emotions get the best of them but I didn't really
communicate that to the (b)(1)(1.4a, (b)(2) High) Chief because I was
pretty concerned about what I knew we were getting
ready to do. I knew an investigation was going to be
coming and I didn't want to hammer him for letting
his emotions get the best of him but I did get the
(b)(1)(1.4a, (b)(2) High) together that night and then the next night as
well.

Major General Votel: I think you kind of answered my question there so, I appreciate that.

WIT: One more comment on that particular topic. When I got the (b)(1)(1.4a, (b)(2) High) back together, I think some people might have this vision of, hey, a guy in the assault team is messing something up. He just sort of goes up in a puff of smoke and flies away or something like that. When I got the (b)(1)(1.4a, (b)(2) High) back together, I told them, 'hey, look, we are not going to do that. We have a long way to go. Whatever happens, there is going to be a process to it.' I ensured everybody that that process was going to take place and we were all in this together until the whole thing was over and made sure everyone understood that and then I met with the team leaders specifically after I talk d to (b)(1)(1.4a, (b)(2) High) and specifically told them that, 'hey, (b)(1)(1.4a, (b)(2) High) is not leaving this camp and I am not moving him out to a jail cell or anything like that.' I specifically told the team leaders, 'hey, you go back and tell your guys that everybody is still eve ybody and that they are not to completely banish (b)(1)(1.4a, (b)(2) High) just because he made this mistake. We've got quite a few mistakes here and we are going to sort through all of them.' I just wanted to make that clear as well, sir.

Major General Votel: Anything else on that topic there, Brigadier?

Brigadier Nitsch: No, sir.

Major General Votel: US SOF SME, anything to follow up with here?

US SOF SME: No, sir.

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

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

Major General Votel: Hey ~~(b)(1), (1.4a), (b)(2), High~~ thanks. I think that's good. Again, I appreciate your time here and appreciate you kind of taking us through that. Between you and earlier discussions with TF CDR it has been pretty useful for us here. I appreciate it. If anything more comes up that you think might be relevant here to any of these things we have been talking about, please let me know and we'll make a quick arrangement to talk.

WIT: Yes, sir.

Major General Votel: Thanks ~~(b)(1), (1.4a), (b)(2), High~~ I appreciate it. Again, all the same cautions here that we talked about this morning apply here so I think you recognize those here. I appreciate your time.

WIT: All right. Thanks again, sir.

Major General Votel: Good night.

WIT: Good night.