Interview with MG Jeffrey Schloesser
5 August 2009

Garnet (b)(6) This is (b)(6) Garnet from the Combat Studies Institute. Today's date is 5 August 2009 and I'm interviewing Major General Jeffrey Schloesser (JS) who just completed a successful command as the commanding general of the 101st Airborne Division. Sitting in with me is Mr. (b)(6) is also from CSI. We'll be talking about MG Schloesser's experiences in Afghanistan, particularly as they relate to the engagement at Wanat on July 13th. General, I have your biography in front of me but I'll ask if there were any assignments or positions that you felt really prepared you and made you ready to go to Afghanistan. Rodeo

JS: I will speak from my perspective and memories, and so will use the word "I" throughout our conversation rather than "we."

It was probably a couple of things. I was privileged to lead three platoons early on in my career and then had a company for 18 months in Korea. I commanded two separate battalions in the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment. Those required me to be pretty darn flexible, and one included a deployment to Haiti as part of a joint task force (JTF). A little more about that in a second. I did a number of deployments with that one so I developed a certain amount of flexibility while in command. Then brigade command had the privilege, or historically I'm not sure if it's a privilege to be part of Task Force Hawk in Albania during the Kosovo air war. Immediately thereafter it was tasked to do the initial air assaults and initial peace enforcement in Kosovo with my brigade. I had a multi-functional brigade so it wasn't just aviation. A good build-up in command and then during Iraq in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) I, I served under General Petraeus. I did go to school on him as far as counterinsurgency and how we were trying to apply that in a very different theater there in Iraq versus Afghanistan. My background, I would say in counterterrorism and the War on Terrorism overall, from more of a staff perspective was very helpful. I helped stand up two different organizations. One was the War on Terrorism Strategic Planning Cell on the Joint Staff immediately after 9/11 and I led that for almost two years. Then just prior to taking command, I had the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) deputy position for strategic and operational planning and started that. The national-level experience I think was very useful and brought me back to when I was a captain working in the State Department at the Near East desk there. Again, both very useful as I went into Afghanistan, and also by then I had a great deal of contacts in the counterterrorism field but also in the counterinsurgency field, the overall War on Terrorism field, State, FBI, NCTC and the National Security Agency (NSA). Not enough from the Department of Agriculture, I can tell you that. All that was helpful as far as the troop or staff experience. As you know, I was also a Middle East foreign area officer so I've got a grand total of 52 months either in combat, peace enforcement or training assignments in the Middle East or in Afghanistan. I'm the only guy I know of at this level that's served in Afghanistan, Iraq, Kuwait and Jordan on separate deployments. That all helped me mentally for what I already knew was going to be an Afghanistan deployment for the division as a JTF.

Garnet (b)(6) That was one thing I wanted to clarify. When you took command of the division, did you know from the beginning that you were going to Afghanistan?

JS: Yes. I took command in November 2006. I already knew then that the headquarters would act as a JTF and replace the 82nd Airborne Division. I knew that four of the brigades we had – one brigade combat team (BCT), two combat aviation brigades and one sustainment brigade – would all serve underneath us in Afghanistan. I also knew on the other side as a trainer and the division commander that I had three BCTs I had to prepare during that timeframe to go to Iraq. I split my time initially doing that while at the same time trying to get the division staff prepared as a JTF as well as changing our focus,

which was really Iraq-centric to Afghanistan. But we had plenty of time. After the change of command, we had about 16 months.

Garnet (b)(6) So you had a lot of train-up time then. I was with the 10th Mountain Division and I remember we sent a number of our officers to meet with your staff and brief them on the deployment once we returned. Was that helpful? Did it help your preparations?

JS: Yes. There was no doubt that bringing in the previous deployers … truthfully, I visited 3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division (3/10) twice. Well, actually once and then the 173rd was there later. I did two personal predeployment site surveys (PDSSs), one in the spring of 2007 and one in the fall of 2007. Allium During the spring, I visited (b)(3), (b)(6) and (b)(3), (b)(6) who was an old friend of mine. We had Hawk worked together for a few years on the Joint Staff. I was able to understand what they were trying to accomplish and inserted it back into our campaign plan, which we wrote. It's available at the Secret level. There are a lot of unclassified briefing versions of that thing. But by bringing the team in, it was most useful. We didn't have a high number of Afghan hands there in the division. We were very much Iraq-focused. We took all that stuff up like a sponge.

Garnet (b)(6) As a historian, I always ask this question. Were there any books or reference materials that you exclusively used or found really useful for your officers and yourself?

JS: I knew from the summer of 2006 that I was going to go to Afghanistan. I had never been there and I knew I really wanted to work hard. Between the combination of our general officer orientation course for Afghanistan, which is a one-week, intensive orientation in the language and politics of eastern Afghanistan. … (*dropped call due to weather*) … The basic books were Dupree's *Afghanistan*, the *Bear Went Over the Mountain*, Yousef's *Bear Trap*, and then Ahmed Rashid, almost anything he writes is usually pretty good. *The Taliban* was a seminal work, but again all these were basics, anything I would regard for anyone getting ready to go to Afghanistan to the lowest level possible, platoon and squad leader level, although they wouldn't get through Dupree's book on Afghanistan.[1] The second level, and again we were working this before we ever got there, was Khattak's book on the Pathan Odyssey. There's a book that I don't remember who wrote it, *Reaping the Whirlwind: The Taliban Movement in Afghanistan*. I think that's it; it's a loose paraphrase. Then Giustozzi's book, *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop*, was published about two months before we were getting ready to go. Milley bought books for all of us.[2] He was so enamored by him, and we eventually brought him to the division. I can't remember if we actually brought him into Afghanistan but we may have done that as well. That's the whole discussion of what is the new Taliban and what is that like. We were living that in the eastern part of Afghanistan. Then for real lovers of specifics, any of the Hussain books that were written and published at the University of Peshawar. I had three that I used a lot. "Pashtun tribes" is the term he uses. Another book that comes to mind is *Frontline Pakistan*, which is one of his, and there's another one about Pakistan.[3] At

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[1] Louis Dupree, *Afghanistan* (various editions, Paperback Edition Oxford University Press, 2002); Colonel Lester W. Grau, Editor, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan* (Reprint Edition Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press); Brigadier General Mohammad Yousaf and Mark Adkin, *Afghanistan – The Bear Trap* (Havertown, Pennsylvania: Casemate Publishers, 2001); and Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* (2001; reprint various editions).

[2] Mohammad Aslam Khan Khattak, A Pathan Odyssey (Oxford University Press, 2005); Michael Griffin, Reaping the Whirlwind: The Taliban Movement in Afghanistan (Pluto Press, 2001); and Antonio Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop, The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

[3] Zahid Iftikhar Hussain, *Some Major Pukhtoon Tribes Along the Pak-Afghan Border* (Area Study Centre Peshawar and Hanns Seidel Foundation, 2000); *Frontline Pakistan: The Struggle With Militant Islam* (Columbia University Press, 2007); and *Pakistan and the Emergence of Islamic Militancy in Afghanistan* (Ashgate Publishing, 2005).

that level, if you don't understand what's happened in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and the Northwest Frontier Province, you're not going to understand what's happening, especially in Kunar and Nuristan. Those I discovered in my mind too late. I was already in Afghanistan when I started reading those. At the time, I was extremely frustrated by the lack of government work on the tribes that we were working with in eastern Afghanistan, especially in a couple different areas. One of them was in the Kunar, Nuristan and Laghman area. Then finally, this is going to sound funny, but historical fiction of the type … and again I went from primary down to the second level and then the most difficult level. I did a long study before I left about Alexander's invasion and there's a great book that's a synopsis on it by Holt called something like *Into the Land of Bones*.[4] I would definitely recommend that to anybody to get them started in the thought process. Then you can get into a much more detailed look at Alexander. Alexander had a lot to do with the Kunar area and he chose to go through the Nawa Pass himself when he sent the rest of his troops through the Khyber Pass and things haven't changed dramatically since 332 BC or so. That's a real fast look at the books. I tried to push a bunch of those onto the staff. We bought a number of these for the staff through the system and a number of folks read pretty widely.

Garnet

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(b)(6)

Fantastic. We'll move along here. How did your relief in place (RIP) with the 82nd go? What were your campaign objectives in northeastern Afghanistan? I'll make sure I get a copy of your unclassified campaign plan briefing.

(b)(3), (b)(6) Allium (b)(3), (b)(6) Hawk

JS: We did the campaign plan, trying not to do it in any kind of vacuum. I came back from a meeting with [illegible] and group, wanting to embrace what they had adapted, which was a far more sophisticated and relevant version of clear-hold-build essentially and much more into separating the enemy and insurgents from the people, then transform the environment as best you can given the remarkable poverty and lack of anything in some cases in Afghanistan. Then try to link them to some sort of a governmental organization, whether it would be the military or the police and then certainly the district and province. Then at the same time, you can still do all that and lose big time if you fumbled in the strategic communications (STRATCOM) or information operations (IO) field. We were going to do all four of those things. What we wanted to do was actually implement all our Campaign Plan in Eastern Afghanistan during the time of our deployment, rather than sequentially. Generally you didn't normally see the IO piece when [illegible] was there and [illegible] but they learned the lessons pretty rapidly and we borrowed all that. I bounced all that off and we brought in Ron Neumann, Freakley and Kamiya. Ron Neumann and I had quite a bit of an exchange for quite a while even after he came to visit us at Campbell.[5] We bounced all that off the desk officers. We spent a lot of time going to Washington and going down to NSA Georgia to make sure we weren't way separate. General Eikenberry was very helpful as well with me personally. What we wanted to do was actually implemented. Instead of talking about it, we were going to try to implement it throughout eastern Afghanistan, which was remarkably difficult given its huge size: 46,000 square miles. Those were the four tenets. For people at the cursory level, we would say security, government, development and then IO or strategic communications. Normally at the unclassified level, you would see it as STRATCOM. For example, security, we wanted to radically increase the size and effectiveness of the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the Afghan Border Police (ABP), and then to partner with them. When we left, we had partnered with all 30 of the ANA kandaks in eastern Afghanistan as well as all 13 kandaks of the ABP. We worked really hard in trying to be the leader in professionalizing the ABP after there wasn't much emphasis. A lot of the US and others were going to try to work on the police and the truth is, and I don't know how to put it any other way but to be very frank: the police were so far behind that I didn't think we would be able to achieve as much as we absolutely had to. In the development stage, we basically tripled the amount of Commander's Emergency

Allium (b)(3), (b)(6) (b)(3), (b)(6) Hawk

[4] Frank Holt, *Into the Land of Bones, Alexander the Great in Afghanistan* (Berkeley : University of California Press, 2005).

[5] Mr. Ron Neumann was the United States Ambassador to Afghanistan from 2005-2007.

Response Program (CERP) funds available from 2006 to 2008. As we left, we added another $200 million, so it was basically went from $489 million or so in 2007 to $680 million or so in 2009. That development surge went about 60 percent into roads and then into a number of other different projects based on a province's needs. What I wanted to do was to work through the Provincial Planning Councils to use that money for the things they thought were necessary. Then try to ensure that they played a huge role, as well as the governors, so it wasn't just Uncle Sam paying for all the stuff. The government surge in many cases was very challenging, to be quite frank. I had 14 provincial governors and 152 district sub-governors. I met with them three times or so, all 14 of the governors, and in some cases, like Nuristan, that was three separate governors because we went through three different ones during my 15 months in command. That was a challenge at my level. I think there was a little bit more success at the lower levels with the sub-governors, working through that. Kunar has a great governor, Wahidi, who was there throughout the entire time.[6] For STRATCOM, we would try to be faster than the enemy and always be factual with what we knew. When we left, I remember thinking we'd made great improvements from the initial parts when there was a lot of tossing and turning between, was this International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) or Joint Force Command (JFC) Brunssum. I think we were doing a lot better but there were still huge areas for us to improve in. Then, I had a really good IO shop. We don't fully understand as well as we should the dynamics of both Pakistan and the Taliban, how they have worked through the elders and then eliminated many of the elders, so we found ourselves usually playing second fiddle to an awful lot of IO, to be quite frank with you. That was the overall campaign plan. What was the first part of the question?

(b)(6) How effective was the RIP with the 82nd?[7]

Garnet

JS: About as good as you can possibly get. The truth is, they can always be better, but it was as good as we could make it. In many cases, my folks came in a little too early. Some of them came in in February for the communications piece. Most of them were there for about 30 days prior to the actual transfer of authority (TOA). I came in at about 10 days prior based upon what Dave Rodriguez thought was best.[8] I felt about as good as I possibly could, I suppose, but there was always a lot more to learn. Within the first few days of April, it seemed like all hell broke loose and we ended up having a very kinetic April, May and June. I said publicly that by the end of June we'd had a 40 percent increase from 2007 to 2008, between January and June. What is not well know is that I made my mind up then to go to General McKiernan on day one of his visit to Regional Command (RC) East for the first time and ask for more troops.[9] We also discussed more intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) and basically a need for resources overall. While the RIP was good, it was immediately followed by some really challenging times.

Garnet

(b)(6) I specifically remember reading your interview about that timeframe. You said you'd visited the Spartans from 3rd of the 10th. Where had you gone up to in the northeastern region, particularly in Nuristan and Kunar. How many places did you have the chance to visit?

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[6] Hajji Sayed Fazlullah Wahidi, has worked in the humanitarian relief and assistance fields in Afghanistan for over 25 years. He assumed office as Governor of Kunar Province on November 18, 2007.

[7] CTJT-82 performed the TOA with CJTF-101 on 10 April 2008; and CJTF-101 performed the next TOA with CJTF-82 on 3 June 2009.

[8] MG David Rodriguez, former commander of 82nd Airborne Division, and commander of CJTF-82 in Afghanistan from 2007 to 2008.

[9] General David D. McKiernan, served in Afghanistan as Commander, International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) from June 3, 2008 to June 15, 2009. He served concurrently as Commander, U.S. Forces Afghanistan (USFOR-A) from October 6, 2008 to June 15, 2009.

JS: I went on the first PDSS with them in the spring of 2007. I specifically went into Blessing and the Korengal combat outpost (COP). I went to Ranch House, which was Aranas, and then to Bella. I overflew where they eventually wanted to put in what became COP Kahler or Wanat, just to see where that location was and how close it was to the Pech River Valley and to Blessing. I had been to all those. I'd been up to Ranch House and frankly found it incredible. This was before the attack. Even then, there was still snow on the upper parts of it when I was there. We were still using ropes to get up and down the mountainside there at Ranch House. Of course both Bella and Ranch House were helicopter-only. Even by then, I'm sure they probably identified that this was something that was at a really long line of communication and very difficult to resupply. We didn't have enough troops at the time to adequately be able to protect either of those. As time went on, we could see that both in the attack on the Ranch House as well as the ambush there at Aranas and over time with Bella as well.

Garnet (b)(6) When you arrived, Task Force Bayonet and Task Force Rock were already working the development of an operations order to go into Wanat. Were you aware that that was a decision that was being implemented?

JS: At the time of the PDSS, they were still trying to think it through. This is going to seem like Monday morning quarterbacking, but I'm going to have to give it to you through my viewpoint and over time. In my opinion, the line of communication was too far and helicopters-only made it extremely difficult to get into these areas when the weather was bad, which of course was during much of the winter.

Garnet (b)(6) My personal experience, I got stuck at what's now Forward Operating Base (FOB) Monti in Naray for about 10 days because of weather.

JS: Yes, I've been there, too. I understand exactly. So, I think they were going through what is the relative cost and benefits of maintaining a presence that far north. I know that the ambush and the Ranch House, because he was in command, affected General Rodriguez greatly. He was deeply concerned that Bella itself might suffer some sort of overwhelming attack or we'd have a large helicopter shot down there. I know in his mind he was looking pretty hard to consolidate the line of communication. What is not very commonly known is that throughout the years, the 173rd was working in Kunar, Nuristan and Laghman, and this is what happened. 3rd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division (3/1), their follow-on, was coming with significantly less troops. I don't remember the exact numbers, but it was probably about 100 or so few soldiers for the BCT AO. It was going to be a real difficult thing for us to maintain the same FOBs, COPs and observation posts (OPs) even if we had found them all to be incredibly useful. During every rotation, what we have normally tried to do, and what I tried to encourage during the multiple rotations that occurred in what became five brigade areas in eastern Afghanistan over time for us, I tried to encourage a fresh look and a relook at, "Are we actually having an impact on the people? Are there enough people to actually impact, which is an issue in Waygul? Is it worth the cost in terms of benefits of, if you're there you're not someplace else?" Rodriguez fully understood that and I do believe (b)(3), (b)(6) and his team were Delta trying to execute that throughout entire time. But it was extraordinary difficult to be able to pull out of these areas once you're in there and you're up there working it. You become almost fixed. In most of these cases, it was very difficult to do very far dismounted patrols. They were really not able to be extraordinarily effective. Once the enemy identified where they were, they could just bypass them. Two, there wasn't a lot of population anywhere near Ranch House or near Bella.

Garnet (b)(6) Brutal terrain, especially with the body armor and what we're putting on these young soldiers now.

JS: Absolutely incredible. Brutal is the right word

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

(b)(3); (b)(6)

Garnet

(b)(6) I know 10th Mountain and some of my good friends came back with knees and backs destroyed from working in that terrain. General Milley was eventually briefed and they were going to do Contingency Operation (CONOP) Rock Move. At the combined joint task force (CJTF) level, what was your viewpoint on setting up this new COP and the second piece, of pulling out of Bella?

JS: As we were doing all this, the context must be remembered for the CJTF. It was extraordinarily busy and I can talk about what we were all concerned about throughout eastern Afghanistan. But as this thing was going on, my biggest fear, having been there not only during the PDSS but multiple times thereafter up at Bella … Aranas was already closed by the time we actually deployed in there. Bella was one of those areas where I was concerned that the enemy would choose a time when the weather would close us out from being able to put in those things that allow me to be uncomfortably decentralized as a commander for counterinsurgency. Those are ISR and close air support within 10 or 11 minutes from most places in eastern Afghanistan, after a troops in contact (TIC) is actually declared. Finally, probably the biggest killer of insurgents, which are the Apaches or in lower places the Kiowa Warriors. I was concerned because where Bella was … also during the summer, the storms would come in. They would be very localized but you couldn't get there. I was concerned, to be quite frank, first and foremost about Bella. It's where we had the indicators that there was some massing of insurgents. Again, you can look at a map and see how Waygul kind of forms a funnel coming out of Pakistan in the northern Nuristan area. It's very remote and difficult terrain but an area where massing is quite possible. Some of this is being able to review backwards again, so I would take it with a grain of salt. By early July, we'd had significant attacks around Bella that had caused friendly casualties and we had killed a number of insurgents. We had a very difficult attack on the 4th of July. I know what we were able to intercept. Let me just say that we did intercept insurgent signals intelligence so we knew we had killed some of the mortar men firing indirect fire attacks into the camp on the 3rd and the 4th. I also believe that we did kill some civilians there with the Apaches. There was a 15-6 that had to get done after that but it was essentially not very conclusive. Tamim Nuristani was the governor at that time and was adamant that they were all civilians. We knew better, but we didn't know the numbers. Without getting into the details and this isn't a look at that fight, but there were two vehicles involved in that. One of them could have been mainly civilians, but it's unclear. In the 15-6, it was unclear. There's no doubt, though, that it had my attention so I was very much focused on Bella and ensuring that as we were doing that, we didn't get so widely dispersed that we were not going to be able to adequately pull from there and then get into Wanat. In truth, in the south, we had a prison break-out in Kandahar. I had an aviation task force down there that played a huge role in helping to round up those 400 Taliban and 1,000 prisoners.

Garnet

(b)(6) I remember hearing about that.

JS: The capital had been bombed on the 7th of July, the Indian Embassy. There were a large number of deaths, over 40, and 140 or so were wounded. RC-Capital was not my responsibility but all the approaches to that were. So, I felt a sense of personal responsibility for that and we were doing what we could to try and interdict any further follow-on suicide attacks of that nature. Then there was a major thing in Bayonet's area. On the 6th of July, there was what's called "the wedding party." This was a close air support attack of what was thought to have been a pretty significant insurgent group that involved our special operations forces. There, the governor and eventually the president himself claimed that some 25 or more civilians were killed. That investigation is pretty highly classified, but that caused a lot of assets in many cases to be pulled off, as far as human intelligence assets, I think, would probably be the biggest thing. Other assets, too, that I did not control at my level anyway. That has all taken place and it was a very, very busy time for us and elsewhere as well in other provinces. There was a lot of fighting along the border in Bermel, cross-border attacks. By then, I had gone on record saying, "We are firing back in self defense," citing our own rules of engagement. My bosses fully backed me on that, but it was quite significant. There was a lot of fighting in Khowst by then, a lot of fighting in Paktika and some in Kapisa. We had a lot of things ongoing and we were trying to do all of them. I had a great staff, a very large staff

as you know, and was pretty much able to do that as long as you continued to work through BCTs and trusted battalions and companies in spite of everything. We had more than one Wanat in the sense that we lost a number of great soldiers fighting heroically and killed a number of other insurgents. It may not have had any impact at all during those fights on the people, which was not, again, what we were trying to accomplish. Those things happen, not with frequency but with some regularity, in eastern Afghanistan because of the nature of the fight there. It's just very difficult. I kind of wandered there.

Garnet (b)(6) No, that's good, because one of the things I wanted to make sure I understood was, we know this did not take place in a vacuum, we know you had a lot of operations, and I wanted to make sure I had a good comprehension and grasp of that. That's definitely going to be put into my work as I progress here. I wanted to confirm one thing. At this time, you still had RC-South, is that correct?

JS: So you're well aware that I was both the National Command Element as well as the National Support Element, yes. We were doing Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) operations throughout all of Afghanistan. Then I was also the RC-East commander for ISAF forces. Are you clear about the difference?

Garnet (b)(6) Yes, I am.

(b)(3);(b)(6)

JS: Okay. So the answer is yes. We don't turn that over for some months to come as US Forces Afghanistan stands up. But at that point in time, it was really only a thought and was going to be a very small headquarters in the July timeframe of 2008.

Garnet (b)(6) Also at this time, I want to clarify that Task Force Duke, 3rd BCT of the 1st Infantry Division, they were doing their RIP into the Task Force Bayonet area.

JS: That's correct. The actual TOA ceremony itself in Jalalabad between Duke and Bayonet was like the 2nd of August. Throughout July and immediately thereafter, the actual battle there at the COP, we had to do TF Duke's RIP, which was a two-week RIP/TOA. I can explain why we continued to try to do that rather than put a new and what was going to be a very smaller force into there. It essentially gets down to the 173rd was the best prepared unit at that point, my most experienced unit in Afghanistan, and there was no one who know Kunar and Nuristan like them. We did that fully knowing that soon thereafter we would have to do the RIP, which was a two-week RIP even at the lowest levels, and we would try to have it be maintained that way. I'm smart enough to know that that's not always how it worked out in remote areas.

Garnet (b)(6) It's interesting, as I've talked with folks and my experience with 10th Mountain, it seems like higher staff officers and higher officers really get into the nuances, but at the squad level, it's often, "Yes, there are bad guys out there. Be careful. We're out of here."

JS: Like I said, I would routinely get out with the platoons and sometimes take battalion commanders out there because I was the guy who actually had two helicopters. In some cases, you needed two Black Hawks plus Apaches to get into some of the tougher areas up there, including Bella throughout the time. I spent enough time talking to the Malstroms (*ph*) and the Ferraras to understand what reality was like on the ground.[10] I know that that TOA briefs well but wasn't done as well as anyone would have wished at

[10] 1LT Erik Malmstrom served as a Platoon Leader with 1-32 Infantry, 3d BCT, 10th Mountain Division in the Waigal Valley from 2006-2007. He subsequently authored the journal article: "Losing the Waigul Valley." *The Pennsylvania Gazette* (November/December 2008), 42-47. 1LT Matthew C. Ferrara was Platoon Leader of 1st Platoon, Chosen Few, 2-503rd Airborne Infantry. He was KIA in the Waigal Valley on November 9, 2008.

the lower levels. I do know they control their own destiny in some cases by saying, "I don't even have enough people. I can't sleep this many people on this mountainside."

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

General Milley, I know, was briefed on CONOP Rock Move on July 7th, by Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) Did you get any feedback or input from General Milley on how the briefing had gone and how this operation was going to be implemented? Diamond

JS: This was a level-one CONOP. That required a brief to the deputy commanding general for operations and I usually received a backbrief every night from General Milley and then my chief of operations (CHOPS) staff as I checked out of the joint operations center (JOC) in the evening with a rundown of this is what the CONOP entails and this is when it will be executed. They're required on a CONOP-1 to put an intel estimate, a scheme of maneuver, a fire support plan and a risk assessment. I was already reasonably familiar with some of the basics. This involved an operational move that Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) and (b)(3), (b)(6) Diamond both had to talk with me about and that I was aware of for some time, as I said. None of it was surprise to me as far as the basics of it. I don't know what my notes say because they're en route to Germany right now, but I don't have any sense of anything unusual after that briefing on the 7th of July. Delta (b)(3), (b)(6)

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

It sounds like you had a pretty good grasp and conception of what was going on in the Waygul Valley, Wanat and Bella. It sounds like you're really pretty familiar with operations and how the populace was perceiving things.

JS: As much as any of us can understand what's going on. Fifty percent of what happens in that part of Afghanistan, my guess is that even if it's explained to you in a language you perfectly understand, it will probably be something we don't understand. There are many things happening that are below the surface, but I did know probably more than many because of my background and because I started so early there. As we were departing after 15 months, I felt I knew eastern Afghanistan pretty well. I spent over a 1,000 hours in the back of a Black Hawk getting to combat outposts. We had probably 119 at the time of this thing in eastern Afghanistan, as well as I was still going to RC-South to visit those who were in my responsibility. I also spent a lot of time with the young soldiers, so I had a good feel. You're probably well aware there was an ethnic divide there. It was actually a political divide that the government had never quite figured out. Some people claim this is Kunar and others call it the District Center for Nuristan. Nuristan itself is a very disjointed and geographically separated province. I think as well as any, I understood the dynamics from a political viewpoint. I think essentially we had not been and were not wanted in many cases by the local people. It was less that they were supporting insurgents and more that they were xenophobic. They didn't call this area "Kaffir Land" for nothing and they were the last to be forcefully brought into the Muslim religion, just a couple hundred years ago. The dynamic between what were essentially Nuristanis and the southern Pashtun ethnicity and tribes was dramatic. We said we understood it but I'm not sure we fully understood what the implications were as we were trying to work inside there. We kept thinking we were making small successes, but I'm not so sure that we were and, again, the population was extraordinarily small. Economically, we were having almost no success, in my opinion, in that area. Again, these are subsistence farmers and pastoral goat herders and they were just trying to survive. It was a barter economy at that point and we were not having the impact that we knew we could elsewhere. We were trying to achieve in the Pech River Valley, basically mimicking what had been accomplished with 3/10 as they pushed the road from Jalalabad and surfaced it all the way up to Asadabad, which was an extraordinary success. We were trying to do the same thing into the Pech Valley and then out past Blessing towards Chow Kay. As you work your way into the two valleys, the Waterpor to the north and the Waygul, we frankly just didn't have enough forces to be able to do what we wanted to do. Also, the people were extraordinarily unsupportive, but we really didn't know that until after the battle. We knew that upfront from the Korengal, but because of the Korengal's operational significance, where it is and as it connects down into Seray and then back into the Pech River Valley, the people were

really very difficult, very xenophobic. It was extraordinarily difficult to give them anything good. We stayed in Korengal, against a lot of wishes. I had a lot of sub-commanders who did not want to stay in the Korengal and did not think we were making much progress there, that it wasn't worth the lives we were giving up. But when you look at a map, there's just no way to get around it, unlike Waygul, in my viewpoint.

Garnet
(b)(6) So we get out of Bella safely on 8 July, no contact. Then on the evening of 8 July we move 2nd Platoon into Wanat and start trying to set up a combat outpost. How much visibility or flow of information was making its way through Task Force Rock and Bayonet to you at division? What feeling did you have as far as that occupation was going?

JS: I was getting essentially nightly reports verbally from (b)(3), (b)(6) by phone, sometimes off of Delta Tannenberg. I don't know if I visited there personally within about the previous couple days. I know I was not out at Wanat. I know that for a fact. I also wasn't at Bella within the preceding week. A lot of things were ongoing in the previous couple days, the 6th and the 7th, that were really focusing my attention elsewhere. I did think that things were ongoing okay. Later on I would find out that there had been a delay with construction equipment. I was not aware of that. As you well know, I initiated a 15-6 as I would on any significant act where there was loss of US or coalition lives. I do know that there was a Task Force Rock intelligence summary (INTSUM) that apparently didn't go much higher, that was talking about Mullah Osman plus 20 were planning on attacking the COP. I do realize that there has been in the public .. (b)(3), (b)(6) has gone on record that this was a vehicle patrol base (VPB). While he's Delta absolutely right at the time, all along the planning and what I was being briefed, what I was planning to do, as we did elsewhere, we established many COPs and we'd often start with a few vehicles and some construction equipment – very similar to what you saw here – with some Afghans usually to help, a platoon or so of ANA. This is a concept that's proven to be pretty effective in Afghanistan. I'm not sure if 3/10 came up with that, but it was in progress when I got there, essentially just using crew-served Humvees as mobile pillboxes while the base is build up enough to be a real outpost. Anyway, I was familiar that we had gotten in there, that the work was ongoing. I do recall, we expected a standard – and I hate to say it this way, but almost a routine way for the enemy to measure what we were doing in any new established outpost or vehicle patrol base, for them to usually use indirect fires and maybe some potshots, really badly aimed direct fires, to try to understand what our tactics, techniques and procedures were going to be, and assess us for about a week or two before actually trying to pressure that respective outpost. That's exactly what I believed we were going to see there at Wanat, and I know that's what (b)(3), (b)(6) Oscar (b)(3), (b)(6) Oscar thought, and (b)(3), (b)(6) because that was translated to me from the BCT commander (b)(3), (b)(6) Diamond, Delta That overall was the assessment that my intel shop had. Have you managed to talk to (b)(3), (b)(6) Alpha

Garnet
(b)(6) Yes, I have. I spoke to him in June.

JS: Was that useful for you?

Garnet
(b)(6) It was extremely useful. It was a very valuable interview. He was forthcoming and helped me a great deal.

JS: So anyway, I won't put words in his mouth. I think that's probably what most of us thought was going to happen, and that's completely different from what I thought was happening at Bella. What I thought was happening at Bella was, there was going to be a massing of forces. I thought we had seen part of that during 4 July, although I was very cautious after that point. We had to be very cautious about creating civilian casualties. At Bella, though, we felt and could see massing of forces there, to try to claim an IO victory, essentially, which occurred elsewhere inside of Afghanistan for sure.

Garnet
(b)(6) I've seen the famous jihad video where they kind of fake an attack on Ranch House and show them occupying Ranch House, even though it's obvious from the footage that it's been totally abandoned.

JS: Right. They're very, very effective at that, as you well know.

Garnet
(b)(6) (b)(3), (b)(6) Alpha
(b)(3), (b)(6)
(b)(3), (b)(6)
(b)(3), (b)(6)
has basically said that at the G2 level he made the decision to withdraw the ISR available from above Wanat on the evening of July 12th. Obviously I'm sure you were aware of where ISRs were going. Were you familiar with that? How did that usually work?

JS: Every night there was a reallocation or an allocation process done for ISR. They would aim out 72 hours in advance and they would re-plan, including that night, what they had based upon what was either given to us or taken away from us by higher headquarters. We had one system called the Warrior-A that worked directly for the CJTF and Shadow systems that worked directly for the BCT. We also controlled a signals intercept platform called the Red Ridge, and with different effectiveness the Guard Rail system. I am totally surprised (b)(3), (b)(6) said that he knowingly took … we only had one Predator, hence part of my campaign to get more ISR that I began, like I said, as soon I as met with General McKiernan in June. As far as I know, or I thought I knew, we were in the middle of 100 days of the 40-knot winds at Bagram. I thought there was a weather challenge to the Warrior and also to the Red Ridge for 24 hours prior to the attack. The Predator was also limited. At this classification level, I can't tell you where it launches from, but it's way out of the sector. So, the limitations on the weather, and I know we had to respond in writing on that to one of the questions that came to us from one of the senators. I know I personally looked at that, and so I'm frankly very surprised when you say that he said he knowingly pulled it away. I am. Is he referring to the 24 hours prior to the start of this thing? Alpha

(b)(3), (b)(6) Garnet
(b)(6) No. The ISR was withdrawn on the evening … I don't have the specificity of times, but the evening of July 12th. The challenge was, as you've said, there are only a limited number of platforms and, apparently, it was moved to support another named operation south of Jalalabad, and that other named operation generated a TIC, so the ISR was moved there. Because of signal issues, they couldn't get the Shadow or Hunter much north of Camp Blessing.

JS: Right, never. Those were totally…

Garnet
(b)(6) So they couldn't get them up to Wanat.

JS: (b)(6) those were never available up there. Again, we're talking the Hindu Kush. In my opinion, and what you have to frame for anybody who's going to read your report, they have to envision a more mountainous area that almost any American has ever possibly tried to work in, much less fight in. So, those were never available up there and could not be used, so very much limited in what the BCT could use out of their own assets. I chopped the Hunter, along with one heck of a lot of other assets, to Task Force Bayonet prior to this, but I knew they could not use that up there. The idea would be to try to use what you could lower and then take your assets and use them, the couple that could be really effective in that area. There's really only very few, to be quite frank, that we controlled at either ISAF level or the CJTF level. What I'd ask you to do, I think you really need to look hard at that. There were plenty of things ongoing. I did not mention to you that we had several ongoing operations, not just responding to the stuff I mentioned, but that we were doing. The operation in Tangi Valley was extraordinarily important for us and had begun on the 26th of June when three US and one interpreter were killed, but one was actually missing for a period of time, 24 hours, and was mutilated badly. We basically did the first brigade-level operation with the Afghan Army for over two weeks and we gave a lot of priority of

ISR to that operation. We worked all the way through the Tangi Valley there south of Saydebad.[11] Anyway, as I said, I would double-check all that and would definitely ask General Milley how he saw it that night. That's an important enough point that you ought to be requesting the records to in fact show that. I do know that what we responded to directly … I think that was a Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) area of interest that went through a senator.[12] We responded from the theater on that, so the guys were there, they had the records in front of them, and that is an important one as far as what actually occurred the 24 hours prior to that, as far as how and why the one line basically did not fly for them. Blue

See comments on the record

Garnet (b)(6) I will resume that with General Milley, and I might go back to Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) if I need to clarify that. I'll certainly do that. Alpha

JS: Okay.

Garnet (b)(6) When did you get situational awareness that a pretty major TIC was going on at Wanat?

JS: It had to be between 0445 and about 0515. I got a call, I was already in my physical training (PT) clothes. The reason I remember this is that it was very infrequent that I would do this … I went immediately there because of what sounded to me was an ongoing action. I got a call from CHOPS, Milley called me and then (b)(3), (b)(6) called me, all in the space of about two minutes before I actually left my hooch and went to the JOC. Delta

Garnet (b)(6) I'm fortunate enough that I actually watched a major action go down from the JOC at Bagram. What was your sense of what was going on? I'm going to talk to Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) We're trying to set up a time to do that. Bronco

JS: Yes, he was the CHOPS.

Garnet (b)(6) What was your sense of the engagement, from your perspective in the JOC?

JS: I immediately knew it was very serious. I knew (b)(3), (b)(6) very well for a period of time and I'd seen him earlier on before. He was under my command for about three or four months, and in that level of constant conflict and constant trying to do things, you get to know someone pretty well. I knew from his voice as much as from the initial reports … you asked me how I got here, well, it's because I commanded troops a hell of a long time, including three platoons. I know, generally speaking, that the first reports are usually wrong, and that platoons don't have enough time because they're working their butts off, trying to stay alive. But, I thought it was pretty darn serious. I can't say I did anything extraordinarily specific. I had a well-trained team by then and they were already doing the things I checked on. We knew we had a number of casualties. I don't know if we knew at that time that they were killed. Looking backwards, the vast majority were killed very rapidly. Delta

Garnet (b)(6) Right, within the first hour, certainly.

JS: So, I was concerned that we had potentially a massive casualty (MASCAL) situation and we wouldn't have enough MEDEVAC. Not only did they stand up the first and send it, but then second and third

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[11] The Tangi Valley was in Wardak Province, and is significant because the Kandahar to Kabul National "Ring Road" runs directly through the valley.

[12] Combined Joint Task Force-101, "US Army Response to US Congressman Neal Abercrombie, January 26, 2009" (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Legislative Liaison).

MEDEVACs were being stood up, including those getting stood up at Bagram to be able to backfill. I knew we already had a B-1 up over and that we had already returned fires, according to our fire support plan, from the 155s there at Blessing. The CHOPS told me that, besides the B-1s, they were going to move in both F-15s and A-10s, and they did do that over the course of the morning. They were also moving the Apaches. This thing happened right smack in the middle of what normally is a pretty good turnover time for what we'd called quick reaction forces that the BCT actually controlled. As an aside, when we came in, being the air assault division, we were very much used to chopping aviation, so I took an aviation task force and actually put it direct support at Jalalabad. That was (b)(3), (b)(6) He did not have Delta to ask me to send MEDEVAC. Actually, we had to approve it because I think it was high-risk. But it wasn't done at my level; it was done at the lowest possible level, and that did not hold up anything. He didn't have to get anybody's approval to send the Apaches up there. I think eventually, between them and the close air support, those were the things that actually turned the tide and made it so more soldiers weren't killed. Anyway, so obviously I'm reporting higher because that was my own direct responsibility. We then moved every bit of ISR that we could get from ISAF and also from national assets to try and be helpful then. Obviously, it was after the fact, it was early in the morning … again, the winds usually are not a problem early in the morning in both locations that were critical for that. I know that both full-motion video as well as the signals intelligence were very helpful. As you know, the fight went on for another two and a half days, for the enemy, I mean. We tried to pursue them through the mountains and did so with fires and in some cases with the commandos. We had two days of priority for ISR with ISAF.

Garnet
(b)(6) Obviously one of the major decisions that comes out of this is the decision to pull out of Wanat. Why don't you talk me through your thought process and what information you were getting from the guys on the ground, from the lower elements, as to what the future of Wanat needed to be?

JS: First, let me say before that, that our counterinsurgency in Afghanistan has really never been oriented on terrain. It's been oriented by design on the people, not only the Afghan people but in some cases the Pakistanis, and also on the security forc (b)(3), (b)(6) (b)(3), (b)(6) the one who probably said it best, that when you find Hawk yourself being terrain-oriented – I'm just loosely paraphrasing – the counterinsurgency we were pursuing was not terrain-oriented, and I was often having to make very difficult choices of this nature, trying to weigh if this makes sense in a cost-benefit way. On the day of the attack, I probably didn't have a very thorough understanding that the people had just essentially walked off, out of the village completely. It took most of that day, the evening and the commandos actually going into the ANP station that evening, the night of the 13th, and finding huge numbers of weapons, over 100 weapons. Of course, the weapons had been recently fired too.

Garnet
(b)(6) For like a 20-man police force.

JS: Yes. That's what they were. Of course they'd been recently fired, too. The commandos were called in, along with the AC-130s, when I send General Milley … within an hour I said, "Milley, get on a Delta helicopter, go see (b)(3), (b)(6) and you both go see (b)(3), (b)(6)" Milley did that and spent all day, essentially Diamond went to Jalalabad, then went to COP Blessing, then we were just out of aircraft. He gave his command Diamond helicopter and the backup to (b)(3), (b)(6) and that's how (b)(3), (b)(6) was able to get up into Wanat. Milley, from Diamond Blessing, called me and said we needed more help of the Afghan type. He's the one who actually coordinated the arrival of the commandos that night – 100 commandos and … do you know the story, the 27 Special Forces?

Garnet
(b)(6) Yes, I'm generally familiar with that. I'm not going to put much of that in my study because I typically don't address Special Forces operations for reasons that you obviously understand. But I've seen the gun tapes of them actually landing at Wanat that evening.

JS: Okay. They basically disarmed the police and then re-armed them to a very small amount. They were the ones who really helped us understand … it was either collusion, intimidation or both of not only the people in Wanat but in many of the surrounding areas as well. So, after about 24 hours, I understood that what I had at Wanat was not what I thought I had on the 8th, which was people that were extraordinarily xenophobic, didn't like outsiders, but were willing to give us a chance, to live among them, try to provide some economic incentives, and try to help them link up with what turned out to be a corrupt district sub-governor and police chief. I did not know that on the 8th. We did find that out by the night of the 13th and the early morning of the 14th. So, I gave a warning order verbally and personally, then through my staff after that, for (b)(3), (b)(6) to come up with recommendations about what we could do in that area. What it really boiled down to was, do we stay there and commit further resources, and where would they come from, to be able to continue in that valley. If so, we would obviously have to reinforce Wanat to an extraordinary level, but probably that area was no longer a viable combat outpost, much less a vehicle patrol base, given the lack of support from the people and their support of the insurgency. So, for (b)(3), (b)(6) to lay out for me what his recommendations, as well as (b)(3), (b)(6) and also (b)(3), (b)(6) recommendations there as the company commander. Something I didn't tell you that you need to know is that normally, late in the evenings, I would go with my sergeant major over to the hospital at Bagram, and I met with the survivors of Wanat that night and talked to them. I felt like when I walked out of there that night that I had a pretty darn good that they felt like they had been, not abandoned by the people, but they had never had a chance with the people, but no one really knew that. I also had a good feel for the heroism that took place on the ground. Anyway, by the 14th I'd given a warning order to give me recommendations for whether we stay in there, where are we going to get these resources from within this BCT that's swapping in – 3/1 for the 173rd. Or what would be the next option. I said such as reinforcing with the forces that were going to be in Wanat, reinforce at Blessing and continue the line of operation from there. I gave that order and the responsibility was totally mine. I briefed General McKiernan and said, "Sir, this is what I'm doing." I never asked General McKiernan in any of the cases, of any of the COPs that I closed in 15 months, or his predecessor, McNeill – I was under his command for three months. I never asked permission. I realized that that was my responsibility as a senior tactical commander and also a lower-level operational commander, and as the US National Command Element of US forces. It's not that I didn't consult, but the responsibility was totally mine in that case. The next day, the 14th, I had a staff recommendation from my staff at the CJTF level. When (b)(3), (b)(6) briefed me, he has (b)(3), (b)(6) as well as Captain (b)(3), (b)(6) recommendations, and they were all to evacuate. Let me read this to you because this is actually in the one document that I actually do have. This is (b)(3), (b)(6) recommendation to me: "After 13 July, the tactical problem set reference geography and human terrain changed. The land is no longer technically tenable. We need more defensible land which would displace the population and require a much larger force to hold and build. The population proved corrupted or intimidated. The land and human terrain are no longer tenable." He states it tactically but operationally, when I took that thought process – and again (b)(3), (b)(6) felt the same way, so did (b)(3), (b)(6). They weighed it against what we were actually able to achieve with the people there in the Waygul Valley and it didn't make good tactical or operational sense to maintain that presence. The truth is, I also did not have the resources to be able to go in and do what I knew was necessary, which was to relocate to higher ground. In other words, we would be moving away from the people so we could have enough force there that we could not only defend the base, which would be required, but also so we could be dismounted and be able to patrol – and through those patrols actually influence the people. So, I made the choice, and I made the choice probably late on the 14th. I transmitted it either late on the night of the 14th or early on the 15th. Frankly, my staff was divided. The ops, I believe, was basically of the same mind that we did not have the resources and it didn't make a cost-benefit ratio, didn't make sense for counterinsurgency. We were not going to achieve the effects we needed. We were obviously not separating the people from the enemy. We were not achieving any transformational types of things with the economy, nor was there much promise. We could not link the people to a totally corrupt ANP, and the ANA were not wanted there. They were outsiders just like we were. My intel guys, quite frankly, wanted us to stay in that area. They felt we would have a better

Delta
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success of keeping the insurgents from using the Waygul Valley to transit down south into the Pech River and then eventually into Chow Kay or back towards the Korengal. Again, I withheld the decision and the decision was mine, and we did it that way.

(b)(3), (b)(6) Garnet (b)(6) I understand that the reduced strength to Task Force Duke available, that had a direct influence on your decision?

JS: It had an influence, because I knew that at all costs, with that force I was given, I had to hold what we were able to achieve in Nangarhar, which was very significant for counterinsurgency. We were busily into Nangarhar, Incorporated, and a large amount of great progress there. We'd achieved very significant progress build upon the 173rd and 3/10's work in Kunar, all along the Kunar River Valley. Eventually we increased that with two other COPs. We needed more forces in the Kunar River, and when 3-10 Mountain returned to eastern Afghanistan in January 2009 they went into Wardak and Logar, but we chopped one of their Battalions to 3-1 to use east of the Kunar River. We had to have that because Asadabad was the provincial capital and we were achieving great success, building on others. The Pech River Valley was my line of communication where I knew I could hold that and I could hold south of that in the Korengal, and felt that those were operationally significant. The force, as we looked at it, just would not allow a significant increase beyond a US platoon and an ANA platoon up in the Waygul Valley. So, yes, it played a role. There's no doubt about it.

Garnet (b)(6) I know you got a human terrain team (HTT) in country in April. I actually knew a couple guys on that team. How did that facilitate or help your operations? Was it having any effect by June or July?

JS: At that point in time, I think it was a little too early for us to maximize the use and effectiveness. They proved to be extraordinarily useful later on, but they were really getting their feet on the ground at that point. At that time, based on the remoteness of Nuristan and northern Kunar, there was extraordinarily little written about the tribal makeup of that area. I was extraordinarily frustrated, and you can find evidence of that throughout the civilian agencies that were really taken to task by me personally, resulting in the agency putting together a series of very useful reports on the tribal makeup of Nuristan and Kunar months after this actually occurred. Personally briefing us at the CJTF level, being pushed to the BCTs and then cross-pollinating by us forcing them to stay down there and talk to the soldiers that were on the ground, to check what they were getting. But, that was a huge gap. I'm a large believer in human terrain teams as well as agri-business development teams (ADTs) and things of that nature. We do everything we possibly can to bring in more, but at that point in time it was still really nascent.

Garnet (b)(6) That's kind of what I expected. As an aside, the HTT, right about that timeframe, I was still at Fort Drum and we did a bunch of searching for info and had almost nothing that we could help them with. As a result of your request for information, that ended up coming to me at Fort Drum as one of the people. It was frustrating. I did a bunch of work and there was just nothing in that area. For the rest of your time in Afghanistan, were you able to get any operations underway in the Waygul Valley? Were you able to push any troops up in there?

JS: When I gave the withdrawal from COP Kahler, or VPB Kahler, the instructions that I gave to then Task Force Duke – (b)(3), (b)(6) and his team – were to continue to try and influence the area vis-à-vis the Sunset insurgents, to watch very carefully the people.[13] If they would demonstrate that they had a change in which they would actually support coalition and ANA forces, that we would change what was basically an exclusion campaign. After the 13th of July, which was very different prior where we were doing full-up counterinsurgency; but after that I personally explained to Governor Nuristani and then the minister of

[13] Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) Sunset Commander of TF Duke of the 1st Infantry Division.

defense, as well as the minister of interior, whom I had very good relationships with, that I was not willing to put any more money into that area where the people were basically going to stab us in the back. What I wanted instead was, I needed the government to be helpful, I needed them to clear up part of their corrupt ANP there as well as the sub-governor, and essentially what we needed to see was a significant change in the receptiveness of the people for our operations. It was not going to be worth putting more forces up in that area for a counterinsurgency benefit, in my mind, unless the people were willing to be at least sitting on the fence, if not supportive. In a counterinsurgency, if the people are against you and you can't convince them to come back, using even the Afghans themselves, then you've got a real difficult time. Also, there are too many other areas that are just as important, or maybe even more important, in this huge area. Again, that's 46,000 square miles that I had in RC-East. So, that was the analysis. I personally explained it to them and I'm sure I was quoted in the press, but occurred after the 13th of July and should in no way be considered my counterinsurgency strategy for RC-East or for anyplace else. It was, in a sense, trying to isolate Waygul just as we were trying to isolate Waterpor. You've seen the gun tapes and others. You know that as we physically put forces in there from time to time, there were really only a couple places to land. Bella was there because you could actually land a helicopter there, believe it or not. Wanat was there because you could reasonably put a helicopter, a Chinook, on the ground and actually unload people. There were very, very few places like that up there; and I do remember that in some of the operations where we were trying to push the Afghans up into that area, predominantly commandos, by the way, we had huge limitations. Again, back to that extraordinarily remote, tough, brutal terrain, which did limit our capability to do what I felt like we could do, quite frankly, post 13 July. I thought we could track some parts of the insurgency as they would come into the area and then try to use ground forces and clearly air to try to influence them, or in some cases try to destroy small groups. That was much harder than it sounded, though, for the ground piece based upon the type of terrain.

Garnet

(b)(6) I'm looking at my watch and I've now taken up much more of your time than I had told you that I would. I apologize for that. I'll let you have the last word, and if there's anything you want to make sure that I do or that I incorporate, please let me know.

JS: I wasn't there on the ground with that platoon, nor the ANA platoon that was fighting next to them, but I did talk to almost every U.S. survivor. As you know, I did the 15-6 under my name and I've read the statements. There's no doubt in my mind that there was incredible heroism there. The Army is helping on some of that. Task Force Rock actually has a very significant number of very high medals for heroism, (b)(3), (b)(6) some of which may still be under consideration. In trying to understand what happened on the ground, one, you should never second-guess the platoon that was on the ground, but it does go back to … if someone ever does a Battle of Duffer's Drift and took a look at the terrain and all that kind of stuff, it'd be a very interesting study. Now, I don't recommend that you try to do that, but when you take a look at the terrain, where OP Topside was placed, I'm sure you know that that was the subject of huge discussion Oscar betwee(b)(3), (b)(6)d the platoon sergeant. I never talked to Jon Brostrom about it because he didn't survive it, but I did talk to the other two, and those guys will live with certain feelings of guilt because they felt that was in the wrong spot. I just ask that when you're doing this, you know, those guys all fought hard and they ought to be considered heroes. When you get into all that, I think you're going to find … I don't know at the end of the day if the position they chose led to more or less casualties, but it wasn't in the best position, in my opinion. Again, totally Monday morning quarterbacking, because as a division commander, even two levels down I wouldn't be picking platoon-level points. But, that was a difficult position and it played a big role in this. There were other things that played a big role, too. Operationally, let me just say that it is extraordinarily difficult to close a combat outpost or a line of communication once your predecessors have established it. At my level, I do believe that – looking harder and harder at the Waygul, and I've thought about it over time … I had 178 people killed and 810 wounded in my 15 months, and every one of those is personal to me. I've been to Walter Reed multiple times and they're all personal. My choice probably would have been, I wish I would have acted sooner rather than at the time I

did, to consolidate that line of communication. In hindsight, as proven through Ranch House, Aranas, Bella, then Wanat, it was a line of communication too far, and I'd do it earlier.

Garnet (b)(6): Sir, I want to thank you very much for taking time out of your leave to talk with me. I'm very appreciative of your contributions. We'll have this transcribed and I'll send it to you. If I need any clarification, I'll of course be in touch.

Garnet (b)(6): Okay. I'm operating strictly off of BlackBerry as I'm here on leave, but I can download that way as well as check and answer any questions you have. (b)(6)

Garnet (b)(6): Fantastic. Where are you going now? What's your next assignment?

JS: I don't know. My stuff's en route to Germany or is already in Germany, and I'm kind of being held here while we wait, probably the results of a further investigation, I guess.

Garnet (b)(6): I certainly hope you get another great assignment and, again, I very much appreciate you helping me out and contributing to this. Thank you, we'll close on that, and I hope at some point I'll have a chance meet you in person, sir.

JS: All right (b)(6). Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed by (b)(6)