[The testimony began at 1247 hours, 19 November 2009.]

LtGen Natonski: Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta, I am Lieutenant General Richard F. Natonski, United States Marine Corps. I have been appointed by the Commander of U. S. Central Command to conduct an investigation into the facts and circumstances surrounding the combat action at Wanat, Afghanistan during July 2008. Major General David Perkins, United States Army, has been assigned as the deputy investigating officer. Lieutenant Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) Beta and Lieutenant Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) Sigma are judge advocates assigned to the investigation team.

The testimony you provide today will be recorded, transcribed, and included in our report of the investigation. Based on your testimony we may also prepare a separate written statement for your review and signature.

Prior to coming on the record today, you signed a privacy act statement; is that correct?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: That's correct, sir.

LtGen Natonski: Ok. Your testimony will be made under oath. You will now be sworn.

[The witness was sworn.]

LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6) Beta: Sir, if you could please state your full name spelling your last.

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta.

LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6) Beta: Sir, you are currently a Colonel in the U. S. Army?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: That's correct.

LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6) Beta: What is your current unit, sir?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I am assigned to the J3 DDRO as the JA chief.

LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6) Beta: At the Pentagon?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: At the Pentagon.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): In July of 2008, sir, what was your unit and that units location?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I was the commander of the 173d Airborne Brigade.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): In Afghanistan, sir?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: In Afghanistan, Task Force Bayonet.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): Where was your headquarters, sir?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Headquarters was in Jalalabad.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): Sir, prior to coming on the record today, I know you had an opportunity to review two documents from the related Combat Studies Institute and you requested some additional time to review those before you make any annotations. We'd ask, sir, afterwards that you go through that and then I'll ask you to adopt those as part of your testimony today.

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Okay.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): Sir, when did you arrive in Afghanistan?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I arrived in Afghanistan between the 20th and 21st of May 2007.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): Sir, before you came in, did you get a chance to do a site survey?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I did. I actually got a chance to spend a few days on the ground as my unit was moving and conducting the rehearsal exercise up in Hoenfels, Germany. I took my commanders to--and some key folks to Afghanistan for a very short PDSS.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): Sir, when was the first time that you had an opportunity to visit or see COP Bella or the Ranch House?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I don't know the specific dates when I went there. I went there numerous times. One of my first orders of business when I took command of that area was to visit all the different FOBs and COPs and walk the perimeters, check on the living conditions, check on the force protection as one of my priorities.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): Do you recall, sir, when you were up at either Bella or Ranch house, do you recall what your perception of those locations were?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Yeah. Bella was a very, very difficult place to get into; very steep canyons. I remember very difficult flying. There was--as you flew up the valley from Blessing and the Pesh River Valley through the valley the hills raise above. So, you know, the enemy can look down on you. It was a very steep, tough bank for the pilots to make going in. Then, when you got to actually--got to fly into Bella--you actually had to pass it and do a tight pedal turn and approach straight down with really no momentum and you landed in a river bed; which was the only HLZ around. Again, very tough place dominated by major hills all around; very sheer, rocky area.

As far as Aranus or the Ranch House, it was up on a ridge overlooking the town of Aranus. Again, small outpost--combat outpost kind of tiered up the ridge line; a little bit more open and of course the town is there with some amount of population. I don't remember how many people lived there.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): Sir, your estimate for those locations regarding the tactical location of those particular emplacements and then it's relation to COIN through it?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Our COIN strategy was adopted really from 310 who I thought had it right and it was separate insurgents from the population; connect with the people and then transform the environment. So, when I took over as--in the process of the RIP TOA I was discussing with General Nicholson, then Colonel Nicholson who was the out going 310 Commander about the strategy and how we selected these positions. This area had--was very, very immature in that there had never been brigade up in this area until 310 had moved up there late in their tour. They kind of got extended; they had already done a RIP TOA with the 82d Brigade in their main area in Cassabol area, Solearno. So, they just finished moving up there and had established several bases and COPs up there. Really, the area was very nascent, very under developed. There had never really been that substantial amount of force there. There had been forces in Jalalabad.

Asadabad was really the front line from my previous tour and then there was a, I believe, an OGA outpost further up in Nurray. So, it was a very immature area. I don't know if I answered your question.

Beta

LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6): Sir, at some point did you determine that being at Bella--Ranch House with Bella was not good for your unit?

COI (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Yeah, I initially--my initial assessment coming in was that my brigade was fixed. We were stretched out in numerous COPs and positions and we really didn't have the ability to maneuver. As you know, you have to defend your FOB and so 50 percent of your force is, you know, some amount of force is committed guarding your position and your equipment and everything. Then, only a certain fraction can get outside the wire. So, we had a lot of positions to guard that we inherited.

Obviously, a unit coming in has less strength coming in then the out going unit. I think we were at 94 percent, 95 percent deployable, somewhere in that range. The unit--the out going unit is usually of greater strength. So, I believe my brigade was fixed and we came in right in one of the worse times you can come in and do a TOA because it was June. The fighting season was on. We had combat from day one. We were fighting hard throughout the summer and as I toured around and made my assessments I assessed that we had to reduce the amount of positions that we held; keep the key ones so we could stay with the population.

It's kind of a classic decision. If you go up high you have tactical advantage in putting a FOB up high, and I had five positions or FOBs that were up high that were air only. You had to fly in you couldn't drive to them. The other choice was to stay down low with the people which was a preferred option in our strategy in that we want to separate the insurgents from the population, build time and space for the ANSF to build capacity, and connect the people with their government as well as the ANSF. Then, have sort of a transformation where the people say this is

best option for the future we're going to go with the government and not support the insurgents.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): Sir, I think at some point--sir, was it in 2007 that you initially considered closing down the COPs up in the Waygal?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: It was--I don't know exactly when we had discussed it because we had discussed all the positions and closing down. I remember I think the first position that we decided--I decided to close down was the Narang Valley because it was a very difficult position to defend. We also closed two positions along the Pesh River Valley. California and Florida, I think, were the names of the two FOBs because we had already established larger, more defendable bases along the Pesh and these were some what redundant. They had really started off as just vehicle patrol bases. Several HESCOs where you could drive in, hold up at night, sleep in your vehicles, have a guard force protecting you, and then drive away and there's nothing else--no infrastructure inside these vehicle patrol bases other than HESCOs. So, we closed those two down.

As far as Bella and Aranus, I want to say late summer early fall as we started to understand our battle space better and had been fighting for a couple of months the Korengal Valley which is south of Blessing and south of Wanat was, in my opinion, the hardest pressed and most contentious area we had. Aranus was the only platoon I had that had not shot a round in anger at the enemy in the first 90 days. So, I said well we need to focus; we need to concentrate, and mass our forces on the enemy and make sure that they tie to our development and government strategy that, you know, we were going with the main effort. Aranus was one of those logical places to close down and move further south and continue the development, governance, and the security operations that we were doing in the Pesh River Valley and the Korengal. So, we--I decided, yep, we're going to close this one down. What happened--and this I hope gives context to the Bella piece and the Wanat piece; the--as we were closing it down and about to start preparations to move it, it was severely attacked and pressed by enemy force. Later on what we determined based on some

captured footage was that a former Afghan security guard commander at Bella had given up--had been fired and had planned--he was basically an insurgent and planned this operation. We had film of him with--almost in a ranger school type training model and map of the FOB. We suspect that a lot of the people in Aranus knew it was coming, they let him in, they asked the soldiers if the paratroopers were up and alert because they knew something was up, but they were looking up hill. They came in the back gate and I don't know if that ASG position was part of--in collusion with the assault or not, but it was quickly--the back gate was quickly opened.

Our first redundant position was attacked and overwhelmed with massed RPG volley fire. It was a close run attack. They got very close to the CP and the Lieutenant called for fire on his own position and broke the enemy's back and we reestablished security in that position. Well, we still wanted to again--to move out of Aranus--again, to focus our energy and the progress that we were making. We didn't want to try to solve all the problems of all four provinces simultaneously. It was just too much given the forces that we had and the type and nature of terrain that we had. So, we delayed the departure and closing of Aranus, the Ranch House for I want to say 30 to 60 days and worked on the IO pieces to make sure that we didn't give a quick, easy IO victory like the enemy had kicked us out. We always wanted to retain the ground to make sure that the enemy, you know, couldn't say hey we kicked the coalition out of there.

So, eventually we closed it down and relocated and reapportioned some of those forces. Then, the discussion focused on Bella which again was tested throughout the summer--somewhat died off in the winter time--and we had talked about that really is not the correct spot for us. The seat of government is in Wanat.

The ANP station is in Wanat. The bulk of the population for that particular area was in Wanat. It is a crossroads; it is an area where it is a little bit more open; it's kind of at the mouth; it's blocking a major thoroughfare route for the enemy to come in and attack Blessing which was the main

battalion base there as well as Namglame which is the town right outside the base and effect the progress that we were making on the Pesh River Valley. We did not at that time through the winter--I did not decide to change it then as we were late in the season and it was very, you know, cold and we didn't have the time to prep to do this properly.

Coming back into the spring the next year I don't remember--recall exactly when we discussed this again, but it was a lot easier. The chain of command, my staff initially discussing what are we going to do with Bella? We need to make a decision here because we got the Third Brigade, 1st Infantry Division coming in, Task Force Duke. At that time, I said well we cannot let Task Force Duke coming in under strength compared to us, just newly formed, going through all the growing pains that we had gone through prior to deploying; put them in a very, very difficult tough to defend position. I had several times gone to Bella and had discussions with Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) and staff Diamond about how we could better secure Bella. After numerous attempts we really could not figure out a suitable way to protect that FOB. It was defended and the keys were the positions up top. If you lost one of those it would be a very difficult thing because it's very hard to defend from the bottom of the valley.

Those were some of the factors that were going through my mind when I made the decision and the call to say okay we need to get out of Bella, we need to relocate to Wanat where, again, the seat of the government is. That's where the district governor is. That's where the people were. It was a crossroads; it had another valley shooting off to the right which led to the Watah Pur which is to the east of Wanat which was a fairly significant enemy threat from our experience of doing some operations in that valley. It was--I had already decided to fund the paving of that road from Blessing to Wanat to really dissuade any of the IED threats. We had been very successful in reducing and really preventing many of the IEDs that other units had suffered for themselves. Most of our contacts were of course direct fire and indirect fire. Paving the road as an example--when we paved the road from Jalalabad to Asadabad--there is a 2 1/2

mile stretch of road that we had 13 IEDs on before we paved it; this going back to my previous tour. So, we were going to pave this road. It was well within support range of FOB Blessing--the main base there--Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) headquarters for 2-503, and it was only eight kilometers away. It essentially plugged the route that the enemy would use to come down and affect the Pesh River Valley and affect Blessing.

LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6): Did you consider at all, sir, not putting anything at Wanat--just coming out of BELLA?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I did not and the reason is if we didn't have something looking up that valley I knew that the enemy would eventually use that valley to stage attacks on Blessing and really affect the town of Namglame and the progress that we had achieved on the Pesh River Valley. We needed something to plug that major infiltration route, major route for the enemy. This was a logical choice for the other reasons I said. It fit with our COIN strategy of separating the insurgents from the population, being with the people, protecting the people, and really connecting with them and transforming the environment. So, this was a logical choice in my mind. Anything further south was much more open and didn't have the ability to keep the enemy at bay, if you will.

LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6): When you made the decision to set up something at Wanat, sir, do you recall the time frame that you said lets move? Was the 82d the higher, sir?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: No. Well, let me try to be clear on this point. We had talked about that area several times in the late summer, fall. Based on what happened at the Ranch House we decided that we we're going to have to hold up the move because we don't want to make it look like the enemy's gaining ground in this particular area and then come into attacking Pesh and Blessing. So, we're going to hold here because contact is going down for the winter, we have, you know, the facilities there to house our soldiers through the winter. The focus was again still on the Korengal which was a very difficult place. It was attacked probably an average 5 times a day whether it was contact from one sporadic round on the FOB--shot at the FOB to some major contacts. So, we had some operations going to Rock

Avalanche was the name of it to really try to beat back the enemy with the strategy of lets really take the fight to the enemy in October and knock him back because he normally moves out of that area, goes back to Pakistan, gets refinanced, gets reset for the next fighting season. So, we wanted to again have the piece where we say hey, you know, we kicked the enemy out of here. They're gone and we're still here with the people, we're still building schools, we're still working the governance piece. So, that's what we were attempting to do. So, again, we had talked about that whole piece up there in the Waygal Valley, but because of what happened at the Ranch House, because of the IO, because of all the other actions that we were doing in higher priority areas I put that on hold. I want to say late spring, early summer, May, June we said okay we've got to, you know, it's time to make this decision. Again, with really the focus on helping Task Force Duke come in and making sure that the enemy didn't jump on them right away. You know, buying them time and space and a better position and for all the other reasons that I alluded to with the COIN strategy of connecting with the people. I remember we developed a--continued to refine the plans. Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) had done several recons to Diamond pick the position. We had talked about it and then we had brought it up to the chain of command and eventually in a CONOP that we finally had.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): Sir, did--

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: --And, you know, in those days we had to wrestle with the illume cycle which was very important to us because again it's a--it was a two phased piece there. I think a lot of people don't understand. First phase was just getting out of Bella and moving all that stuff out of Bella in high risk air assaults at night because it's the only time we're going to get in there without getting helicopters fired up. As a matter of fact, as I recall we had a helicopter shot down right there at Bella several weeks before. It wasn't catastrophic, but it was shot up and it had to land back down at Bella. My assessment is that they're going to get us here flying into this thing if we keep going because there's only one way in and one way out. The terrain--and they have too many advantages with the terrain--in this particular case.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): Is that the contract aircraft, sir?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Yeah.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): Okay.

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Where was I?

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): Sir, it appears you signed a letter out around the 1st of May requesting funds up to the --

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: --May, June is when I remember us trying to plan on this. It, you know, may have started late April. I think I took leave in April and had just gotten back. Okay, we were getting set up for the--the next fighting season as well as RIP TOA. I remember mostly the discussions happening in May, if we signed this on the 1st then we probably had discussions leading up to that and, you know, detailed planning to get there, to get the funds, to work the land issues that we had that were problematic. We were dealing with quite a tough political problem in that many of the FOBs that we had were leased land. Of course, the people would come to us and go, you know, where's our rent? Why aren't we getting paid? We're prohibited from paying them for our thing. The government of Afghanistan needs to pay them. We had, you know, sent numerous requests put through the Afghan channels as well as through U. S. channels to get the Afghan government to come out there and help us solve this problem because, you know, to us we were losing faith with the people and part of the COIN strategy. If we can't make good on this then we're in trouble. They did send out a, I think, it was a Brigadier General in the ANA to start working these issues.

But, unfortunately, the government in Afghanistan was very slow and inept in dealing with this. So, we were also dealing with the problems of making sure that we were doing the right thing by getting the right piece of terrain that was defendable, that was connected with the people to again follow through with our COIN strategy and not create additional problems.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): That might have been caused by seizing the land, sir? It might have been caused by seizing the land?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Yeah, by occupation by force would have, you know, would not be the way to go. And those--in that particular time as I remember we really were--I don't remember any prohibitions specifically from doing that, but we were working on land stuff and we were trying to do the right things and, you know, follow the right policies to make sure that our--establishing our footprint there did not go against our COIN strategy and effect, you know, was a negative instead of a positive.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): Sir, when you signed the letter on the 1st of May requesting funds and essentially supplies to build the COP in Wanat; you knew you had a pending RIP TOA coming later in the summer, what did you envision being done by the time of your RIP TOA? When you signed that letter, did you actually--did you envision that you might actually have the COP fully established?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: No, I didn't think we would have a fully functional, billets, you know, all the latrines and everything else built. What I expected was more than a vehicle patrol base but less than a COP. I thought we would have a defendable position able to hand off to our in coming unit, 3d Brigade 1st Infantry, in a much better position, connected to the people, connected with not only the ANA that was with us, but also the police that were there and the governor and his support and the people and their support. So, I did not envision that we would have this thing completely built out by the time we left. And, you know, truth be told, there were a lot of FOBs, in my mind, that still needed a lot of work even after 15 months. At the 15 month point we still had almost 15 hundred troops still in tents. You know, even in Jalalabad, our main base, that was probably the most mature and oldest base that we had we were still building, and improving, and as they say the defense is never done.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): So, it's fair to say, sir, at least back in May you had planned to hand over to the in coming unit a HESCO area?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Right.

LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6) Beta: Like with towers up?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Right.

LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6): Sir, the location--as you get closer to the RIP TOA with Operation Rock Move--the understanding is that Rock Move didn't go when initially scheduled but slid to the right?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Well, that's correct. Assets--I'm sure we'll talk about assets. CONOPs really kind of drove the ISR and other assets because, quite frankly, there wasn't enough to go around between sister brigades further south, my brigade, and all the other, you know, CJSOFT and all the other competing priorities. So, again, we had to plan and schedule things not necessarily when we thought we could accomplish them, but when the assets were available. We obviously looked at weather very carefully because it's an air assault. We looked at the illume cycle because it--of risks to pilots--you know, LZs or selecting LZs is one of the most difficult, challenging things in that area. We also had to get the aviation assets because it was CH-47 intensive just to pull out of Bella and it was going to take several lifts and turns to get all the equipment and soldiers out of there. Those are what I would recall the reasons why it slipped and that was not unusual. It was not unusual at all to have a plan slip based on assets availability and we really looked hard before we, you know, again--trying to set the conditions before we did anything. The conditions weren't set at the time where we would have liked to have gone and done this. So, we waited until the conditions were set and then went.

LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6): Were you concerned, sir, at all that as you moved to the right that you were getting closer to the RIP TOA? Specifically, for the Battalion Task Force Rock, did any concerns come up at all from that, sir?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: You know I knew we were all tired. A 15 month tour--14 months, but I had absolute faith and confidence in those paratroopers and Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) Diamond (b)(3), (b)(6) Diamond and, you know, we followed the principle of hey we're fighting until the day we leave. We are not giving an inch, you know, we're not going sit in our FOB and just do a high five with these guys. We're

going do our utmost best to set up this unit for success. Especially, knowing the circumstances of what they had been through and the challenges they faced with manning and training. I had sent 19 of my NCOs and officers back for their MRE back in--I think they went to NTC to do a reverse PDSS to help them train to get ready to come and certainly the discussions with their commander Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) Gemini. You know, we talked about the challenges many of the same ones I had faced in forming the 173d into a transformed brigade. On top of that, it's probably the worst time that you could possible do a RIP TOA in Afghanistan. I mean it's the height of the summer; you got Ramadan coming right after that and usually you have tremendous spikes in enemy contact. We had already been--had significant pressure, enemy pressure against Bella several attacks. I said okay we've got to get this done for them. We've got to set them up for success and we are the right guys to do it. We have the most experience, the most SA on the ground. This is the right thing to do to set up our brothers for success and that was the overriding logic in my mind at the time.

LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6) Beta: Sir, the actual site that was selected, did you play any role in selecting it?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I--I had over flown it and I talked to--several times on my way to Bella--and--I knew the area very well and I had talked to Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6). I had talked to him about--hey can we put this one up a little bit higher and he said yeah it would take three months for us to put that there. Plus, we've got the governor's house and the police station right there and we're right next to the people. We can have great interaction with them and they're all happy that we're coming there at least that was the report at the time. He said, "I've got this piece of terrain"; they said this is a good area to go. If you go anywhere else you're going to impact the farming and the agriculture in that area and if you go up high it's very rocky and we would just take major, major engineer efforts and several months to try to carve a position out of this rocky area. Diamond

LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6): Sir, Lieutenant Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) Echo was your XO towards the end?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Yes, towards the end he was.

LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6) Beta: Did he ever discuss, sir, when he was the S-3 down at the 1-503 any COPs--buildings of the COPs they did that he had claimed for? Margoll or Malikashay, sir?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I don't know if we had any detailed discussions. I don't necessarily recall. He came in as my XO very late in the fight when my other XO had some medical issues and left. I don't--honestly, I don't recall any specifics. If he said that we did discuss anything I just don't remember any specifics if we did. I know we talked--obviously, you talk to your Brigade XO about numerous things all the time.

LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6) Beta: Sir, you mentioned that you asked Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) Diamond about high ground, something to the southeast of the position actually selected, is that where you were considering, sir?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I believe that's the area we're talking about just southeast. That would be the area that I had said looks a little bit better from my vantage points, but Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) Diamond had been on the ground and done at least two recons that I remember. He might have done more of that area.

LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6) Beta: Was that--did the area that you looked at, sir, was that for observation reasons?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Yeah, you know, one of the things that you learn fighting in the mountains is you never want to get caught in the middle ground. That's really killing ground. You either have to stay at the bottom and protect yourself the best you can and knowing that you really have two directions to look at. You've got the high ground on either side of the ridge lines looking down at you that you've got to again plan and be able to target and affect and or have positions up there to defend. Or you could get up top and usually the enemy is not going to try and mess with you up there because again you've got a very defendable position. Unfortunately, in that particular area, you know, the top just kept going. I mean, you know, how do you get to the top? Then, you're out of position to control the valley--the mouth of the valley leading down into

Blessing and the Pesh River Valley. So, this was the best I could come up with given the terrain that I saw and that's what I had talked to him about, but I was going to let him pick it because he again had walked the ground. He was doing negotiations and talking to one of his governors, the district governor there, and again the MP were stationed there as well. So, you know, with that type of force there granted, you know, looks like to me at the end they either were complicit in the attack or at least turned the blind eye and didn't participate on this side of the government.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): Before Operation Rock Move, sir, when you were getting briefed on the CONOP for Rock Move, what was your understanding of how the COP was going to be established? Was it going to be specifically soldier labor? Was it going to be civilian contractors?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: There was a contracting piece absolutely in there. There was, I believe, a good chunk of that because we didn't have a lot of engineers to begin with. Obviously, troop labor as well. Any soldier is going to prepare his positions and help build his position. So, a combination but I would say there was a significant of contract work that was coming in; hence the funding of that.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): And it was your understanding, sir, that it would be essentially the troops arriving along with the construction equipment and supplies to build immediately?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Yeah, that was the intent. It was to get this thing going and get it built for obvious reasons.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): Somewhere around the first couple of days of July, sir, were you aware of any issues with the contract for the heavy engineer equipment that was supposed to go over?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I've--I'm now since aware of it obviously in the aftermath. Honestly, I don't recall what the issues-- I'm confident that Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) had relayed to me Diamond some of the challenges that he was working on trying to get the contractors and the people up there. I don't remember any specifics there. I'm sure it was briefed in one of the numerous briefings that we had

and updates about this position, but again, Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) Diamond had control of this piece and he didn't ask for anything specifically that I recall that said, "I've got to have this now or we're in trouble". I don't remember anything like that, but I do and certainly afterwards, I knew, the contractors for numerous reasons that he can best describe and his staff did not meet their obligations and did not get up there in a timely manner--in essentially the four days we're talking about between the time we first arrived and the time the battle took place.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): Prior to the execution of the Wanat portion of Rock Move, sir, were you aware that Task Force Rock knew that the civilian construction company wouldn't get up there until the 13th and that in order to mitigate that it added a bobcat to the load plan?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I'm trying to recall what the plan is. I honestly don't recall right now what the time frame was. I knew they were having challenges. They were having challenges getting the equipment and the contractors up there and I struggle right now between what was talked and discussed about prior to and then knowing the aftermath. I'm kind of lost in my time horizon here as to who said what to--when to me and what the challenges are, but I would say that yeah there was challenges that were enumerated. I don't remember specifics about the dates and the delays. I know Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) would have briefed that to me. Diamond So, I'm going to say, yes, I knew about some of the challenges that he was facing with the contractors and the specific challenges I do not recall in detail and would have to rely on what he says and what his staff says.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): Sir--putting it hypothetical to you, sir. Assuming you knew on the 7th of July that the heavy engineer equipment to establish Wanat would not arrive until the 13th, would it be an acceptable risk in your mind to allow the execution of the Wanat portion knowing that for five days they would not have heavy engineer equipment?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: You know I really don't want to delve into hypotheticals because you have to be--you have to have the context of the moment and what else was going on.

The--again, the way we were attempting to establish this position was essentially first and foremost a vehicle patrol base because it's all we could get initially. I remember now that you've jogged my memory some discussion about a bobcat to fill up HESCOs in order to establish that. I think that was on track to do that. So, again, we went up there with vehicles because we could drive unlike Bella where you could not drive to. We were going to; again, establish a vehicle patrol base with HESCO barriers and wire. You know, again, a very nascent position just like we had in other sectors that we had eventually established into full COPs. That's really all I can say. I mean to talk about hypothetic is very difficult. I know where you're going, but I can't do better than that.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): Understood, sir.

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I--based on the information I had at the time those were the decisions that I made and I'm sure Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) Diamond will say the same on his end.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): Sir, what was your understanding of the threat in the Waygal during Operation Rock Move--the day prior to Operation Rock Move?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: The threat as I recall it was centered around Bella. It was well up the valley there at Bella and we had numerous contacts that; again, you can look at the record and see the context and the actions that took place in and around Bella. We knew that Bella was being pressed and threatened and we knew that; again, it would be a risky endeavor but acceptable risk to go in there and that's why we had detailed air assault planning to pull out all of the different aspects that we had to pull from Bella. I've racked my brain to remember what--any specific threats to Wanat because I know this is a topic of discussion and I don't remember any specific numbers or that there was some, you know, overwhelming force coming--going to come down into Wanat. I think after four tours of combat and 14 1/2 months that if somebody told me that hey there's a mass force coming ready to, you know, ready to pounce on you in Wanat we certainly would have changed the plan. The only specific numbers I can ever recall on a particular operation was a threat

in Touragawa where 3,000 insurgents were coming down the mountains and, you know, I thought that was very excessive that anybody would have the ability to mass 3,000 people in the Touragawa Mountains. I've really racked my brain and I don't have any of the INTSUMs or anything like that in front of me to review, to jog my memory, but it kind of gets clouded with all the different battles that took place and all the Intel everyday that you get talking about different enemy threats. So, I can't specifically recall anything about Wanat, but I know that Bella was certainly under threat and had significant enemy activity in and around the Bella area focused on that.

LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6) Beta: And by significant--what do you mean?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Well, again, I can't recall specific numbers. I just know that there was contacts and--

LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6) Beta: --There was a 4th of July incident, sir, with--

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: --Yeah, with the one solider--let me try to remember his name--who was wounded. Then, we had to evac out of there.

LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6) Beta: There was then, sir, the Hilux trucks that were strafed.

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Oh, and the Hilux trucks and the other actions. I mean there were numerous actions in that time frame as I remember it. I want to say May to July that Bella was under repeated attack or threat. Again, you know, certain positions in the Brigade AO were pressed more than others and you certainly could tell. Hey, what's going on with Bella? Why are they getting hit so much? So, you focus energy and, you know, resources to try to knock the enemy back, buy time and space to continue the work and the progress.

LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6) Beta: Sir, you said that you saw a threat at Bella, but not necessarily a threat at Wanat. For those of us that haven't been to the Waygal if you look at the map it's not that far away. Why wouldn't they just walk down and attack Wanat, could you explain your reasoning?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Well, there's certainly--the enemy has the ability to move anywhere in the area. You really have to experience it to understand, you know, he has the advantage in the fact that he knows the terrain so well and has lived there and is pretty adapted going up and down those hills. There--one of the main areas of--I think as I recall it of enemy concentration was in the Watah Pur which was several miles away to the east; that when we had done previous operations in there it was almost like the call to the Jihad. I suspect that in the end that was a very ideologically based insurgency where other insurgent actions were of multicolor somewhat economically based say hey you've got to pay for your family so I've got to go fight the coalition. I deem it as kind of war of valleys. Every valley was unique and had its own particular problem sets and enemy focus. I think a lot of it was based on some historical things. I think the Korengal was more of a proxy type war where outside influences mainly coming in from Pakistan were stirring it up based on my conversation with the Korengali elders. They had had enough. They just wanted peace. So, I think that continued to bubble as a proxy war. I only highlight all of this to show you that it was a war of valleys is probably the best way I can put it. It was unique and different in every valley. Aranus certainly had been an area where again we had suffered some contact and there was certainly enemy there. Further up the valley from Bella and Aranus is the town Waygal which is a, you know, for Nuristan standards is a fairly major population center that, insurgents lived at. So, as far as distance and direction and timing and everything else it was a very difficult thing to gauge when they were going to come down into a particular point. They certainly, you know, were going to come down and test Wanat. I was certain of that.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): Why is that, sir?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Well, I mean they, you know, where else do they have to focus? They focus on, you know, our elements either driving and/or in the FOBs. One of the things we learned is, you know, you can't let the enemy get on top of your FOB because, you know, early on we had taken casualties right there in the FOB. So, you have to build that space that security zone if you will.

You have to do active RNS patrolling to buy security for the FOB to give you the breathing room just to get out. Just to go do the other things that are important in COIN like connecting with the people, running logistics, things like that.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): Sir, what was your assessment or what were you briefed as being the risks during the Wanat portion of Operation Rock Move when the unit first went up there? And the follow on question, sir, is do you recall any steps that were taken to mitigate the particular risks?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: The ones that come to mind without reviewing the CONOP--

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): Sir, if you care to take a look--

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Yeah, if I--sorry, my memory is not what--I certainly remember a lot of attention and focus on the air assault piece of it because any time we air assaulted that was, you know, risky business and had to be mitigated and dealt with. That part I remember distinctly. I don't remember and I don't see anything that clues me into any specific risk other than normal risks doing an operation like this where again you have--you're always under the threat of some sort of enemy action. Again, in my experience, it had--it can be anything from a single sniper or an odd angry shot fired at you from, you know, a mountain side to indirect fire lobbing some mortar rounds at you or 107mm rockets to major contact.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): Do you recall the Battalion Commander saying, sir, I've got this risk, I need this asset in order to mitigate it and I don't have it?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I honestly don't. If it were--no, too many operations that I remember and I can't speak for sure what the detailed risks were and how we mitigated them. I honestly just can't recall what it was. I mean if you have that from Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) Diamond thing, I will be happy to talk about it and try to remember, but I don't remember if he specifically pointed out something to me and asked me for or asked the division for it as we, you know, briefed this to the division for resourcing and approval. General Milley--if there

was anything in there it's not--I don't see anything annotated here. Of course, the original copy that I may have taken notes on I no longer have.

LtGen Natonski: You have two enemy courses of action. You had the most likely which resembled that and the most dangerous course of action which was essentially a full on assault--

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: --Full on assault and I think that really is the major piece. Once you establish the FOB, I think you have to add the part about ECP and vehicle bombs and things like that and then IEDs because you set a pattern going up the road. Those would eventually be risks that you would have to mitigate which we had already, in my mind, started to mitigate by getting that road paved; which in my experience had been very effective in keeping the IED threat to a minimum. We still had them, but that was certainly one future mitigation that we had already put in place.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): Sir, your headquarters at this point in early July--was the RIP underway already?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Yes, I think it was. As far as brigade headquarters to brigade headquarters I'm fairly certain it was.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): Sir, the ultimate question; your staff's focus during early July was it on the RIP, sir? Was that your priority of effort?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: No, again, as I stated earlier we were going to continue to fight throughout our tour. We were not going to let up on the enemy. We had made--I had made a decision that hey we have got to knock the enemy back and buy time and space for these guys to come in because we had suffered the same thing when we had come in June. Now, they are coming in at the height of the combat season and I believe July, historically if you look back, is one of the highest causality months in Afghanistan. So, I was bound and determined to continue to fight and set these guys up for success. I don't perceive any drop in efficiency in the talents of the staff or the commanders trying to worry about getting home as opposed to continue the fight. I think we had well established that we were

going to do this and, you know, all the paratroopers are doing exactly what they were told to do; which was continue to fight until you get home.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): Sir, the air assault piece of this you said was planned against the every four day Pesh resupply aircraft--the ring route that were coming up. We understand that the RIP was underway taking some aircraft--some lift capability in the area, did you consider at all asking for additional aircraft to support this particular--this move?

Well, what kind of stands out, sir, is the planning of a deliberate operation around a normal logistics run versus getting air specifically tasked to support.

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I don't recall this as a normal logistics run not for the initial air assault out. I do not recall that as--these were ring route birds. Maybe, subsequent to the, you know, because the air assault as I recall was over a split period where they, you know, they were going to come out with some of the stuff. Then, wait a period and then come in and get the rest. Is that what you're talking about? Maybe I'm not understanding the--

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): --Yes, sir. From the folks we've spoken to as the, you know, they used--they planned against the Pesh resupply route instead of having it run resupply else where; it was used to do the air assault portion. Is that normal, sir--

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: --No.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): --or is that something that is not the norm?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Well, I guess I would say this. Again, my opinion is we certainly did not have enough helicopters to do everything. It had gotten better than it was previously when we had I think we started off with only seven helicopters at Jalalabad; some of those being MEDEVAC helicopters. Once we got the CAV unit in April; it might have been a little bit earlier than that assigned we had more helicopters. As a matter of fact, I recall a--excuse me, a proposal and that was accepted by the division to trade--excuse me,

six Kiowa warriors that were brand new to this area and to get two Apaches because in my particular fight the Apache was really the aircraft that we needed because there was some altitude and some range limitations with the Kiowa. I would have to rely on the scheduling of this if these were--in fact; I know that helicopters, you know, do multiple things in multiple days. Sometimes they're air assaulting, sometimes they're doing logistics. If this is what this is saying then obviously I'm not going to dispute that. So, I know we always had discussions all the time when we did CONOPs and the prep for the CONOP about resources. I mean that was always one of the things that my staff in my headquarters always dealt with was the resourcing of the fight and making sure that we always got the right resources to set the conditions. We had the help of, you know, obviously we were successful in pulling out of Bella on our timelines based on the available aircraft at the time which I assume is this page here.

Beta

LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6): This is the Wanat portion. Yes, sir, for the movement up there. Is it fair to say, sir, that no one came to you and said we need additional aircraft in order to execute this CONOP?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Yeah, if they had said that we can't do it without additional aircraft then we, you know, wouldn't have been able to it.

Beta

LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6): What would you have done if they had come to you, sir, and said we need something beyond the Pesh resupply?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Well, we would have looked for what other resources and other mitigating things we could have done. Can we drive up there? Can we, you know, can we prioritize the loads? What really needs to get up there first? Second? Third? What other assets can we pull from other areas? Standard--I think standard, you know, evaluations of what assets we had available.

Beta

LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6): Sir, before the operation kicked off, did anyone on your staff or did Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) report that the Diamond supplies need to establish the COP were marshaled and ready to go?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I believe he did. I believe I recall asking that question. Do we have what I call the FOB kit ready to go? You know which is the--again, misnamed perhaps--more vehicle patrol base kit ready to go, pre-stocked, prepositioned, ready to go up there.

LtGen Natonski: What was the purpose of the mission? Establish a vehicle patrol base or a COP?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Sir, it was initially a vehicle patrol base that would develop into a COP. In other words, we would--

LtGen Natonski: --So, you only staged enough gear to establish a vehicle patrol base?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I would have to look at the specifics of what he had staged; if it was HESCOs, wire. It certainly isn't building material for building barracks or things like that. That would be contracted out and built over time if that answers your question, sir. It's more about the basic defensive pieces of HESCO, sandbags, Class IV if you will.

LtGen Natonski: But there was never any thought that this was a temporary location?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: No, sir. Obviously, I knew it was going to progress from a, you know, nascent position of defense to, you know, what I would eventually would hand over to and my replacement would build into a full up combat outpost.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): Sir, while we're on that topic--sir, there is--in the CONOP and through discussing with soldiers that were up there--the use of the term COP Kahler--COP Wanat--the intent stated in here is to establish a COP.

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Yeah.

LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6) Beta: In here, occasionally, there's a VPB listed and then after the battle, sir, and especially with the 15-6 done by your DCO, sir, there's a lockstep use of the term vehicle patrol base and exclusion of COP.

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Yeah, I'll be very clear on this. The end state, sir, was absolutely to have a COP. But, at the point

that we were at there's no way we were going to call that position a COP. It was going to start as a vehicle patrol base and then build up; just like we had built other positions that have to start in a nascent defensive position that I'm calling a vehicle patrol base. That's why we sent up armored humvees--

LtGen Natonski: --Doctrinally, what do you consider a vehicle patrol base?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: HESCOs, wire, fighting positions, sir.

LtGen Natonski: Is it temporary?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Well, it can be temporary, sir, but--

LtGen Natonski: --Can you pick it up and leave?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: No.

LtGen Natonski: A vehicle patrol, in your mind, because it isn't a doctrinal term--

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: --No, it isn't, sir. You're right--

LtGen Natonski: --But, what you're saying is a vehicle patrol base is more than just the people and the vehicles that those people reside in.

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Yeah, I saw it as an evolutionary building process that--what I would call a vehicle patrol base based on my experiences and what other positions in the vehicle patrol bases were--HESCOs and wire outside the HESCOs--and some fighting positions protecting it and the vehicles are in there in some configuration able to engage the enemy if he so chooses to attack.

LtGen Natonski: And should that position desire to move they get in their vehicles and leave?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Yeah, they could just leave and, you know, drive away and leave the HESCOs and the wire and the sandbags if they wanted to, but that was not the intent. The intent was, okay, now take this initial defensive position and flush it out and then over time, you know, we'll build--get barracks and showers

and mess halls and all the other things that go into it. TOC's and things like that.

LtGen Natonski: The question comes on the 8th when they went up there with their vehicles; that was a vehicle patrol base. The next day on the 9th they flew in additional assets and a platoon, HESCOs--

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: --yes, sir--

LtGen Natonski: --and a bobcat and the like; does that still meet the definition of a vehicle patrol base? Could they have picked up and driven away at that point?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Yes, sir. I mean--

LtGen Natonski: --what happens then to the ANA Platoon and the additional soldiers that flew up?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Well, you'd still--

LtGen Natonski: --if you have five vehicles and now you have 45 people I think.

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Yeah, you'd still have to move them back under-- either fly them back or patrol--where you have mutually supporting pieces if you were hypothetically going to move them out of there.

LtGen Natonski: But is it still a vehicle patrol base? There's been a lot of questions with respect to when does it stop becoming a vehicle patrol base and become a COP or a COP under construction--

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: --yeah.

LtGen Natonski: --if you consider a vehicle a patrol base as something you set down, put up 360; maybe reinforce the position with some engineering type materials, but everyone that we've talked to thus far has pretty much indicated that a vehicle patrol base is something then that if you have to leave you pack up and depart. Which can--kind of--takes it's temporary--should it have to move. Once you got all those additional assets on the 9th you no longer have the ability to pack up those five humvees and leave with everyone that was presently at the site.

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I think I see your point is, sir. Let me see if I can clarify this. I'm using the term vehicle patrol base and what always leaps into my mind is, for instance, vehicle patrol base Florida which was right tucked into the side of the hill that had enough HESCOs that were the height of the vehicle gun so the gun could fire freely. It had wire around it and then different positions with a very, you know, small ECP if you will. It actually had two entrances and exits so you could get your vehicles in and out. That wasn't the initial thought of some protective, defensive position that's initially established to protect the soldiers more than just sitting in the vehicle and certainly I think people would say, you know, okay, vehicles just sitting in a normal--like bradleys or tanks or anything else quartered off is a vehicle patrol base. I don't, you know, disagree with that, but my vision was taking that and then from the initial occupation where you put your vehicles out and your OPs out and, you know, start walking and tracing--start doing your defensive planning progresses to HESCOs, sandbags, wire, and then eventually, you know, buildings and TOCs and bunkers and guard towers and continues on. In my experience the defense is never done. So, that's what I'm talking about in kind of an evolutionary defensive improvement starting what I call a vehicle patrol base moving all the way to a fully functional COP which in again my terms is never fully done. You can always add improvements, you can always fix things, you can always make it better.

LtGen Natonski: And I understand all of what you're saying, but, you know, there was never an intent to leave Wanat--

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: --No, sir--

LtGen Natonski: --that was right from the get go if you read the CONOPs it was going to be COP established at Wanat. It started with a vehicle patrol base, but then evolved as additional forces came in. I guess what was and I think you did some interviews after the battle and you referred to it as a vehicle patrol base. Not to be blunt were you trying to deceive individuals that this was just a temporary measure--

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: --No, sir. No, sir--

LtGen Natonski: --because we have to explain why this term was used so extensively in the aftermath of the battle when in effect if you'd look at the common definition and there is no specific definition, but everyone perceives a vehicle patrol base is something, okay, you stop, put up your defenses, but then you can leave and it ceased being that on the 9th when there was still only five vehicles and there were at least probably another 30 troops, including Afghan troops, and a lot of construction materials. Granted you could you leave the construction materials, but those additional people could not leave in the five vehicles you had remaining.

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Right. They would have to either be picked back up by helicopter--

LtGen Natonski: --but then it's not a vehicle patrol base, is it?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Again, and I--it's when does it magically, you know, when do you determine it changes over. I see your point. One, just to clear the record, sir; it was always intended to be a permanent position. A fully functional combat outpost established in Wanat. Probably--it's unfortunate that we started out using that term vehicle patrol base and essentially not having okay this is when it changes over to a COP. At the time it didn't seem to matter when--what you--when that transition was from the stand point of lexicon. Of just, you know, what are you calling it, but I'll be clear it was always intended to be a permanent position not something you would drive away from and never come back to. Number two, I think the point you're making about the post battle comments that I may have made. What I was trying to do was clarify because they were saying that a COP is being--was overrun like it was a COP that was well established and built and that just wasn't the case. Yeah, the materials were there and there was some construction going on and there was wire out and there was sandbags out. But, I wouldn't call that a COP. So, I would not say it was a COP. I said it was still a vehicle patrol base that was hit because it's not a point of maturity in development that you can even call it a

COP yet. I know it sounds like we're dancing around the Lexicon here, but in my mind that's what I was trying to get across is that, hey, we were just getting there and we were just building this position. Does that make sense to you, sir?

LtGen Natonski: Well, it's how people perceive the use of--

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: --Yes, sir.

LtGen Natonski: --the term vehicle patrol base.

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Yes, sir, I understand.

LtGen Natonski: Was this just a few vehicles sent up to establish a COP with no additional assets?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: No, sir.

LtGen Natonski: And was this going to be taken down so that when sufficient went up there--I guess the bottom line on the--the way I perceive this is that it was more than a vehicle patrol base.

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Ok, sir.

LtGen Natonski: It was a--that's me speaking, but it was a COP under construction. It wasn't--and as you said--the defense is continuous; so, a year from--a year after that time that it had still been there they would still have been improving the defenses.

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Yes, sir.

LtGen Natonski: I don't know if we have a magic criteria for--this is now a COP. But then again we don't have the doctrinal--the definition of what a vehicle patrol base is.

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Yes, sir.

LtGen Natonski: It's really why did it come out as a vehicle patrol base because people have questions--well everyone said it was going to be a COP. Why are you now changing the terminology--

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta --I see.

LtGen Natonski: --and that's one of the questions that we've been asked to try and clarify as part of this investigation and it all seems to reside at the brigade level.

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Yes, sir. Let me be unequivocal and it may be the fact that I've used that term and in my mind--

LtGen Natonski: --well the 15-6--

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: --uses it as well?

LtGen Natonski: --uses it consistently.

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: It was going to be a COP. It was going to be a permanent position in which to continue the COIN fight in Wanat. So, I want to clear that up right now. Number two, the perception was--the way I articulated--again, whether you agreed or not is a evolutionary building process like any defense has to go. Even, you know, you've been there, sir. I'm not telling you anything different. You start out building your defense and I called the initial phase of that if you will a vehicle patrol base. I really haven't because there is no doctrine and it never crossed my mind to say, when does it cross over into being a COP? I didn't at the time, you know; really think that it was a doctrinal issue that I had to wrestle with. I'm more interested in building a defense. I absolutely want to make sure it's clear that I am not trying to hide anything--or slight of hand--or get anyone's misperception that this was a temporary thing. It was temporary in nature in that it was a nascent position that I'm sure was going to be adjusted and they were, you know, trying to figure out how to, you know, build this thing. But, I can unequivocally say it was going to be a permanent position. So, if there's any clarification that needs to be done on that I'll be happy to do it, but it was going to be a permanent position.

LtGen Natonski: Did you anticipate it being--I guess a COP by the time the RIP TOA took place?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I--again, I get hung up on what exactly when does it cross from a temporary position to a COP. I

thought it would be--my expectations would be that HESCO, perimeter wire, protective wire, fighting positions, sandbag, OPs and, you know, soldiers sleeping in vehicles or in tents or, you know, whatever shelter that was right there. A CP with full comps that's what I had expected to hand off to that. At some point in that type of development that would be my expectations, sir. And, I would say, okay, that's a brand new COP. That is a brand new position; it still needs a lot of work.

LtGen Natonski: Well, with the winterizing I think that was part of the sleeping quarters, the heat--and I would say that's probably a pretty good definition of what the expectations were.

LTC Sigma (b)(3), (b)(6) Your concern though, sir. I think if I understand you correctly was that there was a characterization that a hardened structure --

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: --yeah, I--

LTC Sigma (b)(3), (b)(6) --had been overrun by the enemy and you were concerned about--

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: --that's exactly right. I was like wait a minute, you know--

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): --Did your division PAO, sir, put out a release perhaps 24 hours after that you were reacting to?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Yeah, I mean it was, you know, it was a pretty tumultuous time and obviously very emotional for me because I've known Jonathan Bostrom since he was a pup and it was a tough time. I did not want a misperception by the press or anyone else, enemy or the population or anyone else to construe this as some fixed, well established position that had been overrun or, you know, defeated our position because none of our positions had been overrun. They were very close to being overrun at Ranch House and I'd give you nothing but praise for those paratroopers who fought back and retook part of their position. They never lost the position that was my intent. I hope I am clearing this up because I don't want anyone to come back and say, you know, you're tying to pull the wool over our eyes or you're tying to use words to deflect

this. I'm not I called it a vehicle patrol base. I still do. I don't think it was at a point where I would call that a COP. I don't have any doctrine to fall back on to say here is the transition point between a vehicle patrol base and a COP. I just use my military judgment and to me you have to have a perimeter established, wire, fighting positions, C2, and the abilities to defend your position. Then, I would call it a COP. A very immature COP, but I'd call it a COP at that point.

LtGen Natonski: I would just say that pretty much what you just said is what they had and they were able to defend that position primarily because of all the work they had done--

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: --yes, sir.

LtGen Natonski: --with the wire and the HESCOs, but like you said we haven't defined in the armed forces the transition between a non doctrinal term of a vehicle patrol base and a combat outpost--

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: --yes, sir.

LtGen Natonski: --but, we had been asked to try to get to the bottom of the discrepancy of what the CONOPs said and what the end state was supposed to be and why this position was then referred to as a vehicle patrol base.

MG Perkins: Would it be fair to say that you were trying to more accurately describe what it is--

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta --absolutely.

MG Perkins: --you're not trying to--

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: --absolutely.

MG Perkins: --you're trying to be as accurate as possible. So, when you use the word COP or vehicle patrol base in you mind that was the most accurate word that you could use at the time to put it in perspective as compared to something else. Then, when the adjective of temporary comes up in your mind the status was temporary. In other words, that was not the end

state. So, its' status is in a temporary status because it's going to move, but its' end state in location is not temporary. So, the temporary nature is the status of it not the location of it in that we're going to move.

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Exactly.

MG Perkins: So, the definition of temporary is accurate, but it should be applied to the status of the construction being in a temporary state not the end state in location.

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Thank you, sir. That's exactly what I'm trying to say and what I meant at the time. That is exactly--

MG Perkins: --you see because some people have taken the word temporary to mean that we're going to leave. But, you meant temporary meaning a current status.

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: And I--again, I will state that on the record there was no intent to make--to pull out of that position just going up there for a period of time. The intent was to build a full up combat outpost. Okay. Sir, would you mind if I run to the latrine --

[The testimony recessed at 1410 hours, on 19 November 2009.]

[The testimony was reopened at 1423 hours, on 19 November 2009.]

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): All right, Gentlemen, any issue or questions on the vehicle patrol base or VPB? EPB?

LtGen Natonski: No. Thank you.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): All right, sir, pre -- when you were getting briefed, sir, on CONOP rock move, did you address the issue of engineer support or did you review the issue of engineer support or engineer equipment that was to be used in support of the operation?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I recall we talked about some engineer equipment to mainly fill HESCOs and, you know, do some work with defense positions -- I don't know any -- I don't

remember, specifically, but yeah, It was -- part of the plan was to have engineer equipment come up there and -- we needed something to fill all of the HESCOs.

Beta
LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6): And as far as, you mentioned earlier, sir, that Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) had briefed you that he had the Diamond supplies that he needed up at Camp Blessing?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: and I -- I don't know, specifically, amounts of -- but, you know, we kept a supply of HESCOs and, you know, if they needed something, my BSB would get it up to them. HESCOs wire and sandbags, they had those items. Now, quantities I will leave to him to enumerate exactly what he had ready to push forward on his HLZ and or vehicles, but he did have -- from my remembering, he did have those materials.

Beta
LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6): Before the operation kicked off, sir, were you comfortable with the -- based on your understanding of the situation on the ground -- with the level of the logistics that were lined up for the operation or did you have any concerns, sir?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Yeah, I don't remember logistics being an overwhelming concern, I mean, there is, obviously, concern but I -- as I remember it, we said, yeah, we got the nascent package--small package ready to go up there, whatever that equates to, I don't remember ever talking in specifics of hey, how many HESCOs do you have of each type.

I don't remember any other logistical challenges that were brought out as a result of this brief. If there's -- I just don't recall there was any major logistical things. We had contractors that were going to come up there, engineer equipment that was going to come up there and, you know, a FOB kit or vehicle patrol based kit or whatever you want to call it, that Class IV material ready to go up.

Beta
LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6): Sir, after the platoon went up to Wanat and before the battle, were you made aware of any issues they had with supplies whether it was water ---

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I heard that afterwards. No, I did not know they were short on water, I mean, I did not -- I did not know that part to the battle and I found out

afterwards and some of the discussions in the fifteen-six and other discussions and that they were short on water.

Beta
LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6): And, sir, is it fair to say that you were not aware that the ground convoy that was to bring up a lot of the Class IV supplies never made it up there?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I don't recall that. When -- when was that? You will have to refresh my memory.

Beta
LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6): There was a part of the air assault portion and there was a ground combat portion ---

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Right.

LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6) Beta: -- were you aware that the ground convoy portion never went to Wanat?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I thought it was in a delay but it went up there -- I mean, there were HESCOs and things on the ground, wire on the ground when I showed up after the battle that I saw in various states of, you know, preparation.

I don't recall when that push was going to be made by ground ---

Beta
LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6): But you weren't aware of any issues with that, sir. Like it was delayed or ---

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: -- I can't recall if that was briefed that it was delayed or not. I am sorry, I am drawing a blank. I don't remember that, specifically.

Beta
LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6): Sir, with the ISR coverage for the -- for operation rock move, do you recall any issues -- I know you had a chance to read some reports afterwards -- but at the time, sir, any concerns expressed to you by your two or to the battalion commander?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Well, it was throughout our tour, ISR was always problematic. As I recall, there was only five Pred lines and there were 29 in Iraq and we had five -- and it was a five Pred lines. You know, OGA got one. One of the other task forces -- special ops task forces got another, NATO had one, one down south, and there

was kind of one left over for the division to help the two brigades. So ISR was always problematic.

When we are talking about full motion video ISR, specifically, what I -- what I have learned is that in that particular mountain area, Red Ridge was better than the Guard Rail for picking up things that -- half of my brigade area could not be covered by my organic shadow platoon -- we flew the wings off what we could. You know, I am sure we broke all sorts of records flying our shadow because we really worked hard to keep it up all of the time. And then of course having a full motion video platform absolutely is essential, especially, in the air assault part and any other contacts because that is how you really get a jump on the enemy.

So ISR was always a challenge for us and I am sure it was the same for my brother brigade commander further south. And what -- what we really worked on to develop was the skills to -- to really take all ISR -- and I am not just saying full motion video but everything from the eyeball up to the satellite. And how you cross-que and how you use those in combination with each other to get the effect, that's really where I think the emphasis has to be.

The normal way things worked out is, we had sessions where we, you know, we talked about ISR at the division level with all of the commanders and talked about allocations and upcoming operations and trying to de-conflict and parcel out the small amounts that we had, as well as, maximize the use of all of the other types of ISR we had. And because again we were so limited, at a certain point, you knew that, you know, you were not going to get coverage 24/7 for a long period of time. It just wasn't going to happen. There were other priorities that were going to take precedence. The other brigade has operations it's conducting, and oh by the way, it is the main effort brigade because of the determination of the Batika Couse area 143112.

So at certain points, we knew we were going to lose some of the support that, you know, we would have initially getting the critical air assault pieces in and, you know, the initial moves and we were going to

slowly lose different pieces. And I am sure that you've got the charts showing, you know, when those things were chopped back and forth, I can't recall the specific dates, times, and flight hours but that's all of the knowledge that's I'm sure is readily available from the division records but, yeah, at certain point we knew we were going to lose -- just like we had done in countless other operations. We weren't going to have the complete support package that we would have liked to have.

Beta

LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6): Do you recall (b)(3), (b)(6) Peach coming to you, sir, at all regarding Wanat saying, hey, we -- lost the Pred coverage?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: He did. He did come to me and say, you know, again, not unheard of, not something that was unusual. I know he was always fighting to retain that because I used to be in his office and he would be on the phone and, you know, very adamant that, you know, we get this coverage and he did an excellent job fighting for those assets and supporting it.

And I do remember him saying that we lost the Pred coverage.

Beta

LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6): Do you recall, sir, did you take any action after you learned that, as far as, did you call higher headquarters and say, we need it or did you just receive the briefs?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I don't recall calling higher headquarters and discussing that in any specific detail. I don't think I did. I don't remember.

Beta

LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6): Were there other occasions, sir, where you did call?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Yeah, I mean, there was always -- my running dialog about ISR about the challenges and the fact of how it was allocated and everything else and, you know, we had tried -- higher headquarters had tried numerous other ways of allocating it. We had a focus on trying to use it to kill and capture some of their IED makers and key leaders. And that would strip it away for whatever -- I was and advocate -- hey, you have got to support the CONOPs and, obviously, the

techs because, you know, those are the two things and, you know, let's use the CONOP process to help de-conflict and allocate the very scarce resources.

And I recall in this operation, that's what we were doing and that was always one of the big discussion points in here in the CONOP process with General Milley. And I know he's coming in to talk about it, and he is absolutely the right guy because he has a daily or nightly ISR scrub to reallocate as necessary and he will be able to speak to the circumstances leading up to that particular piece.

Beta

LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6): And on those calls, when you called higher, sir, did you ever get an asset?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Yeah, I mean, for certain things, I think we convinced them on the merits on what we were doing -- I wouldn't say we won more than we lost -- and, you know, I knew that at times the other brigade needed to have those assets and needed the priority. What, again, was difficult in my area was the fact that my internal assets, my shadow assets didn't -- weren't able to fly and cover all of my pieces -- which I think was different from the other brigade where they had more of an ability to fly their shadow platoon in support, you know, as needed.

Beta

LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6): Where there were times, sir, when Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) Diamond would call you and say specifically on ISR, saying I have to have this item?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Yeah, I mean, for the air assault piece, yeah. Absolutely, we got to have eyes on for this and that and as far as how long it was going to, you know like; hey, we need it for two months until this FOB is actually established, no. But certainly for, you know, the beginning of the operation and the air assault pieces and the initial establishment, you know ---

Beta

LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6): You recall (b)(3), (b)(6) Peach coming and letting you know that, sir, did Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) call you regarding Diamond the loss of the Predator on the 12th?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I don't recall if he called me. We may -- he may not have called me -- we may -- I don't know -- I

don't remember, you know in our BUB or CUB if it was brought up as an issue at that time, I mean, I don't have any notes to go off of anymore so I -- I don't know if he brought that up as a normal part of the battlefield update. I don't remember if he got me on the phone the night of the 12th and said hey, I have got an issue. I don't recall that, I think I would remember that.

I remember (b)(3), (b)(6) Peach telling me that we lost it, I clearly remember that. But again, I dint -- it wasn't anything different than what we had experienced for fourteen months and in every operation. At a certain point we always, you know, that asset would be pulled for higher priorities as determined by the division so to me it was not unusual for this to happen.

Beta

LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6): Sir, we've got your JFUB 143718 package that you submitted that got the approval for particular supplies and equipment and we have the Rock move CONOP, sir, that deals with 8 to 10 July; a three-day period.

Was there another planning document, sir, that would pick up on the 11th of July?

This CONOP deals with the movement of forces -- the initial movement of forces. What we have not yet discovered are is any detailed planning that on 15 July, you know, this piece of equipment or this supply arrives, this is built, the detailed logistical planning, sir. Are you familiar with any of that, sir?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I am not familiar with anything at the brigade level other than the CONOP and obviously the numerous discussion both in person and -- and via briefings and phone conversations and such a development of Wanat. And again, you know, we had been talking about Wanat for quite a while, I mean, it wasn't a new problem set that we were unfamiliar with, I mean, we have had numerous discussions about this at all levels in different planning.

Now, as far as recalling a specific document with a CONOP name like CONOP Wanat or something like that, I don't recall. And I don't recall that -- that we had

one a at a brigade level. I'll let Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) Diamond speak for his level of planning if he had CONOP Wanat or whatever he called it.

LtGen Natonski: Do you expect your subordinate commanders to do detailed planning on combat operations; operations planning?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Yes, sir.

LtGen Natonski: Continuing actions on the objective, plans for the RIP TOA, future engagement with people, I mean, this was briefed because it took assets external to even -- I think the brigade in -- hence it required approval at the CJTF level. And that just encompassed the period when all those external assets were required -- but after the 10th -- which is all that takes you through -- there had to be some plan or an OPS Order or something at the company or battalion level; were there not?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Yes, sir.

LtGen Natonski: This was the main effort for the ---

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Yes, sir.

LtGen Natonski: -- the battalion, was it the main effort for the brigade at the time?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Yes, sir.

LtGen Natonski: Okay.

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta As I recall, it was the main effort for our brigade. And again, we had we had numerous discussions over time about the operation and the building of the COP and the governance space and ANP training, you know, all multifaceted about ---

LtGen Natonski: The types of things you would expect in an OP order in which you were then going to turn over to an incoming unit in a couple of weeks.

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta Yeah, and we were going to leave -- obviously, we were going to leave all of our historical data so the next unit -- all they got to do is change the moniker

from the 173rd to task force two. So they have all that information there. As a matter of fact what we had asked them to do was forward deploy a couple of their planners early so that they could embed and they could understand some of the context without coming in cold and not knowing what was going on and having some rational --

LtGen Natonski: At the brigade level.

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta At the Brigade level. Yes, sir.

LtGen Natonski: In terms of having material available for the incoming battalion and the company and platoon. It didn't reach your level at the brigade.

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta Yes, sir. The specific detailed planning of, you know, this widget moving at this time at the battalion level.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): You would expect that to have taken place, sir?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Absolutely.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): Sir, on the day of the battle, on the 13th, sir, were you at Jalalabad?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I was, I recall being awakened -- not awakened -- I was just coming out of the shower or PT, I don't recall which but I was -- I was not dressed yet. And they said we had a -- we were involved in a major troops in contact at Wanat and that we had -- as reported to me -- we had just wounded. And so I threw my pants on and my boots and ran to the TOC which is, you know, several meters away from my hooch, and got in there and got briefed.

We had pushed the staff -- the Battle Captain, (b)(3), (b)(6) Kilo (b)(3), (b)(6) Kilo, Lieutenant Colonel Doneski -- I think Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) Kilo now -- pulled -- had pushed -- No, it is Kilo Lieutenant Colonal (b)(3), (b)(6) -- excuse me -- had already worked the battle just like he had done countless times before getting assets in there and getting the reports. And I went to the normal battle rhythm of calling my commander and finding out and getting statuses on things, pushing assets and starting in my mind what else can I do to affect this

battle and support that commander on the ground.

Beta

LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6): Do you recall any issues, sir, with aviation reaction time?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Okay, that -- this one -- this is a tough one because all of the aircraft were parked down in Jalalabad and no matter what you do you still have that flight time from Jalalabad to -- to wherever the battle is and it's a very difficult thing to overcome, as a matter of fact, we were very, you know -- it was a challenge just because of the time distance factor that you can't overcome the physics of it.

If you have something flying that passes by -- and we have had this on numerous occasions where an escort of whatever is flying be diverted off we moved the passenger part and landed in a FOB and then we strip out the AH64s. Well in this case, nothing was in that particular area at this particular time so it takes some time to spin up -- get at least the initial briefs to the crews and get in a helicopter and fly all the way up there and check in and start the action. I don't really recall the exact precision -- what the response time -- I guess it's somewhere in the neighborhood of 40 minutes, which was between 30 and 40 minutes depending on the location is about what it takes to fly up there. I just got to say, the helicopter pilots and the aviation units that we had were excellent. They were absolutely first rate; absolutely no complaints from my standpoint. Some of the bravest people I've ever met and in the MEDEVAC world and in the attack and lift world. So I was never displeased with their performance in responding.

LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6): In looking -- after the battle, sir, when you looked at the response time -- were you comfortable with their particular response time for the QRF?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: The -- I believe CAS was on station very quickly; like it normally is. I think they probably go to afterburners and get over there. I think the aviation got up as fast as it possibly could. I don't remember anybody saying we are held up or we can't fly or anything like that. I think there is a time distance physics factor that you can't overcome, that you have got to, you know, fly up from -- all the way from

Jalalabad to -- to that area and it's just going to take time.

I don't know what the QRF times were, I know we reinforced a couple of times and I'll let Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) Diamond speak for his quick reaction force -- the initial one that went in -- and how fast it actually moved from Blessing; its only eight kilometers away. Strait shot up the road -- and to reinforce.

I don't know if that answers the question.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): Sir, the decision to withdraw from Wanat; at some point after the battle, did you go up to Wanat, sir.

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I did, I immediately flew up to Wanat ---

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): Was that the 13th, sir?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Yeah. I actually borrowed Colonel -- General Milley's aircraft. General Milley had a scheduled visit with us and was there on the ground in Jalalabad with me during -- shortly after the most intense part of the battle and I don't remember how -- but hey, let's go up there and -- and can I use your -- can we use your helicopter and of course he said, yes, and I think he was told that -- I don't want to put words in his mouth -- you stay at Blessing and give me the helicopter to go from Blessing to Wanat and I did that.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): When you arrived there, sir, was that your first time on the ground up there?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: On the ground; yeah. But of course I have flown across that piece of terrain several numerous times.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): When you were on the ground, sir, what were your initial thoughts of the location?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Well, it wasn't the best ground in the world and I looked up at that area that I had thought was a better position -- potentially a better position. I didn't understand when they said, you know, I kept saying, okay take me over to the OP. And we went over to the OP and granted it's an OP that protects. There like a river stream cut, you know, there that it over

watches ---

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): -- to the North and East, sir?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Yeah. And the one thing that quickly came out to me is where is the position up high helping -- giving mutual support to this because fighting in the mountains you got to have something up high to give you that advantage. And again as I told you earlier, you don't want to be caught in the middle and if you are caught on the bottom you want to have something up high to -- to help over watch and give you early warning and, you know, help you defend.

And that caught -- that I'd have to admit caught me by surprise is that -- okay, were is the up high position that would in mutually supporting distance that would really help defend that and ---

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): It was your understanding that that was to have been in place, sir?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Yeah, I mean, I may have made a wrong assumption there but I thought that that was clearly -- that we were going to have something up top looking, you know, because we had learned that. In every one of our positions we -- I can't say every one of our positions -- in our development of our positions, we always factored in can we get something up high in an OP type setting where, you know, we have some type of setting where we have some advantage.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): Between the 8th and 12th, sir, what -- what information, if any, were you getting on the status of the build-up at Wanat.

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I think we have covered most of that that the initial element is in there, they have got their vehicles; that they have got at least some Class IV, obviously, we have talked about the delay and the engineers and the delay I guess in that one convoy that had additional assets going up there; that they got the Bobcat and those types of things. I never heard anything about, hey, we are short on water or anything like that. That's what I recall.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): But on the 13th, sir. When did the first

discussions first come about possibly pulling out of Wanat?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: That did not take place until I want to say one to two days later. And I want to say two days later but it kind of merges into one big long period but it was not an initial thought. As a matter of fact, I spent a lot of my time walking the ground to see -- okay, if this position here is not the right position, then you know, I'm going to walk up several hills and around not only getting the sights and the sounds of the battle and what happened but we need to fix this, you know, we can't do this and I pointed out several OP's up high that I recommended that they take a look over there, over there, and over there and had talked to one of the company commanders on the ground about, you know, this one right here and this one have to be the first two and then if you can get that one that was further across the valley to the North ---

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): Just let me pull out a map right quick, sir.

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: What I initially had -- I had walked back up into this terrain ---

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): For the record, is that to the East, Southeast?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: If that's north, yes.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): Yes, sir.

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: And all in here looking at the positions that would be more suitable. This cut in here was problematic. The police station and the government was over there -- district governor piece was over there. What I had said is hey, we really need something like right up here, maybe further on this side and this would be the west -- Northwest. And that we needed to look at something possibly over here that would also give us visibility on the road and the rout coming up.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): That's on the Southeast, sir.

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: That would be the Southeast. And then there's terraces and then there is another bridge just to the Northeast here that I said that one would be a great

early warning one for funneling, you know, as they tried to come down on you. You know, but it is separated and it would have to be, you know we'd have really taken a look at it because it was a good distance away. Where this is, you know, fairly on top and some of the positions up here are close enough distance wise to be mutually supporting because I did not want to put anyone out there alone ---

LtGen Natonski: How many would you put in some of these positions?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta Sir, initially just -- initially two. I don't argue that you had to have something watching this. I thought when I saw the ground here and somewhere up her, sir, I'm ---

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6) To the Northwest ---

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: North, yeah, this was fairly sheer and -- it would be tough to establish a large OP but you could put an OP up here that would dominate the primary road coming down from Bella. It would give you great view of this are and even looking all the way back down South on the route.

And it would certainly give early warning and a position of advantage that you could be shooting down if anyone came in and around your FOB. And in the other position, I -- I don't know if I pin pointed it but I said somewhere up here would be another ideal position, kind of watching -- what I would call the approach from the Watah Pur area -- coming in this way which is another valley that goes off and it gives you kind of that essay on the road back to -- you could almost see -- you can see Blessing, it's just on the reverse slope of -- you can see blessing's backside and the road coming all the way up I believe depending on where you put it.

LtGen Natonski: When you were there on the 13th, did you actually go to OP topside?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I walked all around this area, sir.

LtGen Natonski: On OP topside there were the boulders that they used to bring into their defensive position, but could

you see down in here?

Were there blind areas that they could not see from that position?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I did not lay down and look at it from a perspective of laying down, I kind of walked all around throughout the battle space. I would have to say there were certainly blind spots because of the vegetation and the terracing that you see here that would, you know, you could certainly work your way ---

LtGen Natonski: -- Close to the position.

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Closer to the position which I think in fact happened, sir, I mean ---

LtGen Natonski: And that was the questioning as to why -- part of the reason was that it was mutually supporting. And the distance, they didn't want to put them out too far but ---

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta They needed to protect this piece because it was an infiltration, you know what I mean, it kind of -- it kind of goes in like this, you know, it's like a little stream -- well, it's more than a stream -- there was -- I don't think there was like a lot of water in there -- but, you know, there was definitely an erosion line, if you will, that you needed to do and it was heavily vegetated here as you see and a little more sparsely vegetated here and then of course it gets again, very thick on the back side as well.

LtCol Bligh: And that is the stream that comes in from the East, sir, and runs north of the position.

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Yes, sir.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): Sir, you talked about having these OP's out; could you do that with a platoon, sir?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: It was more that a platoon, remember. It was a reinforced platoon over 45. It was an ANA platoon with them and again, depending on, you know, where -- how many -- how much you need, you'd have to come back and say I don't have enough or I do have enough. The ease of which we can operate within the town is, you

know, you are co-located and you have got the governors house which is right here. You have the police right there so, I mean, you don't have to necessarily put together a large patrol to go anywhere and you can still defend your FOB so I think that was the analysis that would probably have to happen after you finally found the positions that you wanted and decided whether you were going to go all the way across or not.

And I, you know, I wasn't completely sold on it. I said, you know, it's ideal to have that up there but what you really need is at least this and something up high over here if you can get it but certainly one position up high, and an OP that would effectively prevent them from just coming in here.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): Sir, as a side issue with artillery, were there portions in your battle space that the artillery couldn't hit or hit accurately because of elevations?

And if there were, were there particular types of rounds that could be used to mitigate that?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I am sure there are places where rounds -- HE rounds can't be used and, you know, we learned early on that in mountain warfare when you shoot with a flat trajectory artillery piece that you could have a range error by just missing the top of a hill and it slides down and you're seven hundred meters off. Mortars are king here, I mean, this is classic mortar country.

LtCol Beta (b)(3), (b)(6): Sir, getting back to the -- the decision to withdraw, did you -- was that your decision, sir. Did you provide input to somebody?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Yes. I provided input to a meeting that I had with General Schloesser, General Milley, I don't recall who else was in the room. It was more than just the three of us, but certainly those two. And we had long discussions about, you know, what options did we have. I laid out some of the options and ---

LtGen Natonski: What were they?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Well, option one was to -- to, you know, you can go back and finish the COP, sir, and you know,

put -- keep another security element out there and, you know, finish what we started. Option two was to see if we could relocate it to a different piece of ground and get maybe something that wasn't necessarily right there with the people and the government but in a better position and, you know, that would take again, more reconnaissance and again much more time. And then the third option -- and that could be anywhere in that area -- and the third option was to -- and I got this one from Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) -- which was Diamond to go ahead and establish something on the back side of Blessing. If -- if this is Blessing, there is a large hill like this that Blessing is tucked into facing to the south. On the North side, is the road that goes around the hill and up to Wanat just eight kilometer away. What we talked about was, okay lets -- we've got some OP's on top of Blessing, lets reinforce those and put more robust things -- to watch the approach in.

Now, it's not ideal for the defense of Blessing but it would certainly give you some early warning that, you know, potentially, you could catch them trying to come in. It wasn't the best course of action but based on all of the factors, General Schloesser made the final call after all of our discussions.

Beta

LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6): Your recommendation was what, sir?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: At the time, I went ahead and recommended that we -- we go with this option in putting something on the backside of the hill based on the timing that we had left and everything else that was going on I said for now we have to do this.

Now, we also talked about hey, we are not just going to just give up on this whole valley. Not that we were going to go all the way up to the Waygal which in my predecessors time, you know, he wanted to keep leap frogging up. But we were not going to necessarily just abandon Wanat and this valley because of this one action. We were going to -- and he directed Cetra Solda to conduct operations in there and knock back the enemy as well as Task Force Duke. He said, hey, I want you to continue to operate in this area and keep after these guys and keep the pressure on them. That was another piece of the guidance as I remember it.

1 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6) Do you recall Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) recommendation, Diamond
2 sir, whether to stay or pull out of Wanat?
3
4 **COL** (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I don't -- I -- I am not sure, I want to say he
5 agreed with this option but I need to let him speak for himself.
6 If I had to be pressed to state it, I think he was okay with
7 this option but I'll let him speak for his -- how he recalls it.
8 Beta
9 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6): What about your sergeant major, sir, did he have
10 an opinion?
11
12 **COL** (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I don't remember if he did.
13
14 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6): Thank you, sir.
15 Beta
16 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6): Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) Sigma
17 Beta
18 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6) Sigma Sir, with regard to your -- kind of your daily
19 battle rhythm -- did you have conference calls or a
20 commanders update with your battalion commanders daily
21 or did you informally speak to them by other means?
22
23 **COL** (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I am trying to remember our battle rhythm now.
24 We didn't have one every single day, because it takes
25 a lot of time. I can't remember how many days a week
26 we did this. And you know, obviously, the normal
27 calls and tandbergs and e-mail and flying there and
28 everything else. Normal commander business, if you
29 will. We -- I was very comfortable being a commander
30 who could see to -- distributed -- because that the
31 way my brigade was in Germany and Italy. As you know,
32 my brigade is a split brigade. Four of my battalions
33 live in two bases up in Germany at Schweinfurt and
34 Bamberg, and then I have two battalions down with me
35 in Italy. And so flying back and forth and you have
36 to do a lot of business. It's not like a brigade here
37 that you know, hey; call all the battalion commanders
38 in my office in ten minutes. It's not one of those
39 things so we definitely had to adopt to a distributed
40 fighting which actually paid dividends, I think,
41 because that's the nature of the fight in Afghanistan,
42 you are not together.
43
44 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6) Sigma: But was there a daily BUB or CUB or something
45 where you kind of got ---
46
47 **COL** (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I -- I had a morning one -- not with my commanders

-- but with my staff, if that's what you asking?

LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6) Sigma: And you were briefed on logistics on -- one, two three, four, issues etc?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Yeah, I mean, the highlights.

LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6) Sigma: Do you recall, sir, after the Wanat operation began on the 8th whether or not you received daily updates regarding the progress or the status of the build or the operation itself probably, initially, they would be the movement and then hey, we are -- here we are at X percent complete?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I remember ---

LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6) Sigma: -- how were you tracking the progress?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Yeah, periodic updates like hey, the force is in at Wanat or this is scheduled to go in and those types of pieces. You know, daily commander business, I mean --

LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6) Sigma: Sure.

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I got updates on a myriad of things constantly throughout the day.

LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6) Sigma: And you were comfortable, obviously with the -- with kind of the troop to task analysis that they had done that this force was sufficient to do what it needed to do to secure itself and to construct the --

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I though he made the right calls with respect to adding the TOW vehicle and the mortars and, you know, that was more that what we normally operated with. Normally, it was just a regular infantry platoon and ANA. We always moved with ANA, I mean, we never went out on operations without them. So essentially, two platoons you know as much as the ANA can -- has the capability to fight. And you know, that ANA group that he had wasn't too bad but again I'll let him speak for that particular platoon that went up with them as to how affective and efficient they were in their task.

LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6) Sigma: So the extra combat power that he had with regard

to TOW vehicle LRAS mortar systems etc., that was -- that was more than most of the COP's or VPB's of that size would have?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Most of my, you know, we were in platoon size COP's everywhere, I think we had thirty-five positions that we manned. And, you know, we have -- that's without one battalion, I had one battalion chopped away as you know down south. And so I thought that was prudent planning on his part, you know, mitigation to any risk because he has his own organic indirect. He's got a TOW missile in case -- the most likely course of action which is kind of an odd ---

LtCol Sigma (b)(3), (b)(6): Right.

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: The concern was sniper harassing fire from afar. He's got the TOW we used the TOW very effectively; I think we fired over 99 maybe a 100 TOW's to defeat and kill those types of threats. And LRAS was absolutely a critical piece for us because the LRAS really gave you that standoff and that early warning and, you know, you can see from afar. And as a matter of fact, we had, you know, they weren't organic to 2nd Battalion, though we had asked for I want to say 15 or 13, somewhere in that neighborhood LRAS's to be added to my equipment list and we received those and parceled them out to both of the battalions. I had initially taken some of the 2nd -- CAV LRAS's and moved -- I think it was one initially and then we needed more so we requested more and we got them and we plused up 2nd battalion and they made a significant difference in their ability, again, the whole ISR picture of cross cueing and using all of the assets that you have to really -- to fight.

LtCol Sigma (b)(3), (b)(6): If you recall, sir, did you have kind of a timeframe that you had planned on visiting the COP assuming the battle hadn't happened. Was it your intent to get down -- to get out there at some point?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Yeah, I mean, I -- I -- absolutely, I mean, I was going to visit positions and depending on, you know, what was going on to prioritize where I needed to go and I was certainly going to go up there and see the progress and add to what I could add to that position.

Sigma

LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6) Okay.

Sir?

LtGen Natonski: Did you ever establish a COP in any other area other than the one at Wanat?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Yes, sir.

LtGen Natonski: How many?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I want to say, three ---

LtGen Natonski: Three.

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: -- I built -- we built -- I directed one to be built in Nangahar to affect a border area that my STB built and was out kind of in the flats, it wasn't a whole lot of mountains like this area so it was a little bit easier to ---

LtGen Natonski: Did they have engineer assets?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: He actually was an engineer. In that platoon -- or that element I think was made up of some engineers and he did, you know, we had gotten some of the assets. Now, again, I wouldn't call it a vehicle Patrol base -- sorry to go back to that -- I -- I would call -- that was intended as a permanent FOB as well and he had a HESCO perimeter but nothing really inside.

LtGen Natonski: So was there a template for an establishment of COPs in terms of the forces it required; right?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: It --

LtGen Natonski: Engineers obviously --

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Sir, it depended on the circumstances. Where it was going to be built, what, you know else was going on, what assets we had available. I mean, it was a myriad of factors that went into it.

LtGen Natonski: So every COP would be based on the risk, the threat, the terrain --

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Yes, sir. I mean, it was a pretty complex multivariable problem. Some are obviously easier to build than others. The other two were up high on mountain sides up in the CAB area. And those were very challenging to build --

LtGen Natonski: Could they drive to them?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: No. No, sir, you had to fly to them and so everything had to be brought in by air. And those were built very rapidly with a lot of hard soldier labor -- digging.

LtGen Natonski: A lot of troops involved; more than a platoon?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6): No. Less, I mean, each one of those was probably a very small platoon because it's the CAF, which has -- in our organization had less soldiers assigned in a platoon because it's a mounted platoon but they were fighting dismounted --

LtGen Natonski: I guess the question is, while you were building your COP, who provides the force protection if everyone's digging holes?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Just like we build any defensive position a certain percentage is on security and a certain percentage, you know, following the priorities of work, sir.

LtGen Natonski: So you would anticipate that as part of a defensive build of a COP, that there would be security -- the normal patrolling and COP's --

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Absolutely --RANOS patrols -- I mean, this part is doctrinally based. You have, you know, you look at our defensive manuals and it pretty clearly articulates the steps needed to build an effective defense.

Now, I will say that, obviously, our doctrine is about digging in -- which I did on my first tour in Afghanistan -- the Lazy W -- modified DePuy fighting positions and all that. HESCO defense is a little bit different but the principles are the same and that is what you have to hone in on, it's the principles. You

have got to have early warning OPs. You've got to have R AND S patrols and you have to have a certain percentage there. Everyone's got to keep their kit near. There has got to be a priority of work established and a rest plan and the normal defensive preparations.

LtGen Natonski: But you're asking to do a lot with a limited amount of people if you are only talking about a platoon with a TOW and a mortar; aren't you; and an ANA platoon?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Sir, a 45 man element, plus the Afghans -- I expect them to pull their weight as well -- essentially, its two platoons, they had the exact numbers -- again they are probably in there but, you know it is over 50 people which is bigger that any platoons I had as a, you know, a young lieutenant coming up building a defense.

LtGen Natonski: So they all should have been involved in everything from fortifying the position to conducting the force protection measures that go along with that?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta Yes, sir.

LtGen Natonski: If you have read the 15-6, you know that there were some indications and a warning on the position that the platoon identified the fact that the women and children had left the village. There had been a Shura that was not -- Lieutenant Brostrom had not been -- the American senior had not been invited but it had gone down and one had heard about it. I think it was a group of five seen on a hill on the 12th. They were military aged males observing pretty closely the construction of the COP. Did any of that information filter up to you?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I don't remember any of that specific information. I do remember that that company commander had a Shura or a dinner with the district governor the night before. He was up there ---

LtGen Natonski: Did you know that the night of the 12th, or did you find out afterwards?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta Honestly, I don't recall if I knew that ---

LtGen Natonski: You didn't get a call from ---

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: No.

LtGen Natonski: -- the company, Captain (b)(3), (b)(6) would have called Oscar his battalion commander and you never heard ---

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I don't recall ---

LtGen Natonski: You never received a -- we need a Predator or a Red Ridge because we think there is an impending attack.

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: No, sir.

LtGen Natonski: Okay.

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I don't recall that ever being stated to me.

LtGen Natonski: And the same goes with respect to any shortages of water during the build?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Sir, I only heard that after the fact that from -- I think Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6) had mentioned that in something I read later on that they were short on water and I'm going okay -- somewhat surprised but, okay.

LtGen Natonski: What was your feeling when the decision was made that Wanat needed to be evacuated?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Like I said, sir, it was a very emotional time, I don't know if you know but I am personal friends with (b)(6) and (b)(6) Blue and knew Jonathan as a boy and was in Hawaii with him and, you know, obviously the loss of someone you know -- not to say that the losses of all those other great paratroopers is diminished one bit, but it -- it -- it was a tough -- a tough time. And then on top -- to know that one of my friends had lost his son under my command -- you know, it's still tough today to deal with it, I mean, he stayed with my (b)(6) in Italy before he deployed. He's like an older brother to my (b)(6) and (b)(6). And then, it goes against the grain for me to give up any battle space, especially, sacred ground that we lost there with the price we paid for that ground.

We had been in numerous battles where, you know. A commander had requested, hey, do you want to pull out and I said, hell no. You aren't pulling out until the fight is over with. We don't give up ground to the enemy. We stay and finish the fight and we win. And I know it feels like, you know, we were defeated. And it sticks in my craw.

It's still the right decision given the circumstances at the time. I certainly would not be opposed to another commander going in there and putting in that FOB because I still to this day believe that it is the right decision and the right place to be to fight the COIN strategy.

And it's -- I still believe in my heart it is a necessary piece to that particular tactical problem to prevent the enemy from using that valley and affecting the progress that we made, again, hard fought progress that we made in the Pech River Valley and also the potential of having Blessing get hit. Because one of the things that I had been really trying to get the aviation to do was put two Kiowa Warriors there at Blessing to try to see if they would do that. And it's -- I won't go into great detail but, you know, it's a maintenance challenge of the security, you know, with thinks like that but I said, this is what is ideal -- to be able to have two Kiowa's there to respond to -- to things there so we cut down that response time; and we had talked about that. So, yeah, it sticks into my craw, sir, to have to give up ground to the enemy.

LtGen Natonski: Do you think the fact that you were in the midst of a RIP TOA made it harder to decide to stay. You had a unit that was obviously more inexperienced -- and smaller from what ---

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta Sir, that was probably the main reason that we -- that I recommended what I did because it is not in my nature to say, hey, we are going to pull back. That just doesn't happen, sir, and I would have said, oh, we are going to reinforce and we are going to build this damn thing and we are going to take it to them like we had every other time.

But, then again, I, you know, speaking from just my personal observation and my assessment of the situation given this new unit coming in and where I -- my opinion of where they were in preparations to take on this fight, I think it was the right decision. I -- and there is nothing to say that three or four months later, after he had gotten his feet wet and his boys were ready to really take it to them that they couldn't go back up there and, you know, and make the same decisions that we made.

LtGen Natonski: Did the factor that the atmospherics -- at least within the village that the people had either been intimidated to leave or were in collusion with the insurgents who attacked the position -- why expend assets and time on people who -- who obviously were not favorably disposed towards the Americans; why waste the effort on them -- did you think that was a good reason as well to --

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta Sir, I -- you know, again I admit that it was an emotional time because of the loss of that many paratroopers and Jonathan Brostrom, but I am a commander and I am not going to let emotions sway a tactical decision like this. It's too important. And so, yeah, you know, a certain part of you say, you know, you want to get after those guys and you know those people don't deserve it but in the end that is why we are there. It is to get those people protected and to turn them over to the side of the government so they don't support the insurgency so we can go home and stop deploying.

And so, no, that to me is not the overriding factor. The one piece that I would say is, you know, if there are people in there that are in collusion with the enemy, that does change the dynamic and there was certainly enough evidence that there were people that were absolutely on the side of the insurgents based on findings of weapons and different things in the houses.

You know, that has to play into the factor. Now, we did not know that and this is after the fact, you know, it certainly would have changed our calculus if we knew that, you know, we had major insurgent players in that town, and that the ANA was going to sky off

and I don't know if they were duplicit or no. And we found a hell of a lot more weapons in their armory, arms room, than there were policeman by a factor of -- I don't remember -- but there was a lot of weapons for a small MP station, ANP station.

And certainly the governor; whether he was, you know, duplicit, or just trying to survive using his survival techniques; well, I can't go against the insurgents, I I'll be killed tonight.

You know, it certainly factors in and we had discussions with the provincial governors going hey, get this guy out of here. He either doesn't have a spin or was not on the team or he is absolutely working with the insurgents. I don't know exactly what happened in the long run but I'll leave it there, sir.

LtGen Natonski: Last question. Small arms reliability, I know there had been some reports after the battle that weapons malfunctioned and we have also been told that a lot of those weapons were combat damaged. In the course of your 15 months as a brigade commander, did you see any trends where the small arms of the infantry units were unreliable or ---

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta No, sir, I don't recall any trends that would indicate that -- you are talking about the M4 rifle --

LtGen Natonski: M4, SAW, M240 ---

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: No, sir. I don't recall anybody ---

LtGen Natonski: You never had a problem anywhere?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Systematically, no. I am sure individual problems arose, but I don't recall anybody bringing -- and I am sure they would have brought that up as a major issue saying -- you know, and clearly you understand, sir, certain weapons and, you know, you think work better than others and given the nature of this fight, there are certain weapons that are of greater utility, you know, like Barret's -- sniper rifles -- and long range things -- LRAS - Thermals. Things like that that really gives you and edge that are absolutely critical but as far as the regular paratrooper with his M4 Carbine and such, I had not

heard of any things, I mean, you got to clean the weapon just like we have always been taught.

LtGen Natonski: Okay. Thank you.

MG Perkins: You spent quite a bit of time in Afghanistan and you are very familiar with the terrain, based on what you know of the enemy situation as briefed prior to this in the Waygal and the terrain -- was it then -- is it your conclusion that the United States Army infantry platoon should be able to defend itself with just organic assets using the basis of the defense that we talked about. I mean, even if they are going on patrol and stop and spend the night or something if they put out security and all of that. Do you know what I am saying?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta Sir, we absolutely proved that for 15 months of combat. Now, obviously, none of us woke up that day and wanted something like this to happen; we didn't want this outcome but we operated at a platoon level with the ANA routinely all over the mountains and fought hard. Sometimes we took losses, sometimes we cleaned their clocks. And it just depended on the terrain, the circumstances and everything else so yes, my platoons, absolutely, could handle that ---

MG Perkins: That was the expectation that they -- the expectation that even just, again, basics -- you talk about the principals of defense and all of that. That a platoon should, basically, go anywhere in the Waygal -- in that area of operation -- if they are going to be stationed there for any amount of time can defend themselves even without HESCO and concertina wire and all that stuff, I mean, they just use basic infantry techniques?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Yes, sir. It's a combat platoon, absolutely.

MG Perkins: So, actually, for a platoon to operate in the Waygal, from your point of view, if you want to say go or no go, contractors HESCOs concertinas. That's all great but it's not the determining criteria whether or not they should be able to operate.

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta Yes, sir. I mean, I think a platoon has the combat power to defend itself and engage and with all

the other assets that we eventually pile on and the fact that we have -- we fight with fire, that we don't operate outside our artillery and mortar range. If we did that, to me denotes a higher risk for an operation. So we want it to always stay within our artillery or indirect fire range which, you know, would really turn the tide in a battle quickly and of course CAS was -- at least at this period of time -- was very, I thought, responsive. When we tracked those numbers and what that response times for them; now, the helicopters was, you know, problematic. If there was something flying, it was pretty responsive. If there was nothing all the way up there then it took a while.

MG Perkins: In accordance with this sort of doctrinal expectation of what the capability of an infantry platoon is, incumbent upon that, is it your assumption that as part of the principals of defense they conduct continuous R and S patrolling etc. Like that, I mean, that's integral to that?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta Yes, sir. I mean, it's -- I mean, I think it's standard doctrine -- defensive doctrine based efforts priority work, security, security, security ---

MG Perkins: As you were briefed during the CONOP or as you talked to the battalion commander and others, then was it your assumption that the force that was sent to Wanat would be building the COP as well as conducting R and S and maintaining their own security, in other words, that force would be doing all of those things in accordance with the priority work.

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta As well, the contractors coming up there and other assets coming up there and, you know, if he needed something else, obviously, the battalion would try to resource it and if not come back to us and see if there was other things ---

MG Perkins: -- following up on that, did the battalion ever come -- were you getting daily updates from the battalion commander, specifically, about Wanat or did you get periodic updates; from the 8th on?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta I'll say periodic, sir. I don't remember ---

MG Perkins: Okay. But did you talk to him personally from the 8th on; do you remember?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta I can't recall if there was a specific conversation. I got to ---

MG Perkins: But you were getting your staff updates and ---

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I talked to commanders and I know my staff -- the staff were talking ---

MG Perkins: Do you -- then do you recall from the 8th on -- either up from your staff or a phone call from Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) Diamond or anyone -- of the battalion ever saying that they needed more assets for Wanat whether it was more troops whether it was more helicopters whether it was contractors or anything?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta I remember that there was a delay, sir, in getting some of the stuff up there, like we discussed earlier, I don't remember any specific request of getting this or that in particular; no, sir.

MG Perkins: Was there ever -- I am assuming then that it was never portrayed to you that hey, look here is an issue and if we can't resolve that we need to stop what we are doing or we need to come back or anything like that, in other words, we're going to reach a point in which we could not continue the mission until something changed whether it was ISR contractors or anything like that?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: I think that would have caught my attention, sir, in a big way. And I would have said, okay, stop -- you know, and I don't -- to the best of my recollection, sir, that was never stated to me in those terms.

MG Perkins: You said you always tried to partner with the ANA and operate with them so routinely in a situation like this where you have an American platoon and an ANA, what types of activity would the ANA do?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta Sir, I expect them to be doing the same general things that we are doing, I mean, because of the nature of ANA development at the time, you know, training through operations, if you will, is what we

called it.

Now, its -- I mean, not the ideal situation to build an army if you had a CTC and you can run an ANA ---

MG Perkins: Well, for instance as you were briefed in Wanat and you were told the force available we are going to have a platoon from Chosen company and we will have ANA platoon. In your mind, what were the types of things in this particular case that you would expect them to have been doing up there?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta The same thing my soldiers -- that I would expect my paratroopers to be doing plus the added piece of getting the ANA to connect with the people because they are the most respected organization, I think, in Afghanistan still and ---

MG Perkins: So they would have been maybe one of the key bridges to the population ---

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta Right. In talking to the population and figuring out what was going on. We always tried to put them up front and show the population, here is your Army. Here are your sons fighting for you. And that is an integral part of the COIN strategy is to connect the government, if you will, and the face of the government -- the ambassadors of the government on the ground which is the ANA, ANP.

MG Perkins: You said you got up there on the 13th, later in the day, after the fight, and -- when you got on the ground and looked around and even with the advantage of hindsight now, what do you think would have made a difference, I mean, there is all kinds of speculation about you could have done this or you could have done that, I mean, if you took a look at it, what would have, if you had to pick like one or two things that would have made a difference, what would have been in the realm of possible?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta One OP up high on the ---

MG Perkins: -- On the eastside or?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: The northwest side, sir.

MG Perkins: Up above the district center?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta Up above the district center.

Now, of course I am speculating, sir, I don't know how much that changes the fight but if you tell me to pick one thing, that's what I'd pick, sir.

MG Perkins: Right. Okay.

LtGen Natonski: Just back, on -- were you area of any distrust or atmospherics in that platoon towards the ANA or the Afghan support as a result of Sergeant First Class Kahler's shooting?

COL (b)(2)High Not that I recall, sir, because the Sergeant Kahler -- and I still to this day don't know exactly how he died -- we could not determine if it was an accident or a deliberate act. He was killed by the ASG, I believe, not an ANA guy. So -- and the ASG fled, so this was not ANA so I would not expect that -- that ANA platoon had any connection to the death of Sergeant Kahler.

LtGen Natonski: No, I am talking about them in general but the Afghan forces?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: No. I would probably have to leave that to Oscar Captain (b)(3), (b)(6) and Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) to talk about Diamond specifics with that relationship.

LtCol Sigma (b)(3), (b)(6): A quick alibi, if the ANA was not performing to standard -- the standard that you described, who in your mind is the commander who would be responsible for that?

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta: Well, I think it is a partnership because you have got the ETT's with you and they, obviously, work even more closely with their ANA partners, so I would expect there would be a dialog between Captain (b)(3), (b)(6) Oscar Lieutenant Brostrom and the ETT. I forget the gentleman's name, a Marine who was the ETT, I think in this particular case to say, hey look we have got to do this.

The ETTs were there to help train and develop their skills and then we -- we as the maneuver force or the

battle station owners were there to help conduct these operations in conjunction with them. And then, again, training through watching and emulating and seeing how we are doing things and making those corrections and suggestions. That's the way it's supposed to work.

Beta

LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6): Thank you, sir.

LtGen Natonski: Okay, Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta, you are ordered not to discuss the testimony you provided today with anyone other than members of the investigation team. You will not allow any witness in this investigation to talk to you about the testimony he has given or which he intends to give. If anyone should try to influence your testimony, or attempt to discuss your testimony, you are instructed to notify Lieutenant Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) Beta or Lieutenant Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) Sigma do you understand?

COL Preysler: Absolutely, sir.

LtGen Natonski: Okay. I just want to thank you for your service to our country and for what you have done for the Army and thank you for coming down today.

COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta I appreciate it, sir. Thank you very much.

[The testimony was closed at 1534 hours, on 19 November 2009.]

CERTIFICATION OF VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT

Subj: TESTIMONY OF COL (b)(3), (b)(6) Delta, USA, GIVEN ON 19 NOVEMBER 2009, AT NORFOLK, VIRGINIA

In accordance with section 0214 of JAGINST 5800.7E, I certify that the subject transcript is an accurate verbatim transcript.

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

Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army
Judge Advocate

4 DEC 09
DATE