

Interview with LTC (b)(3)(b)(6) Foxtrot
18 March 2009

Garnet

Garnet (b)(6) My name is (b)(3)(b)(6) and I'm an historian for the Combat Studies Institute at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Today I'm interviewing Lieutenant Colonel (b)(3)(b)(6) who was the 173rd Brigade intelligence officer (S2) during their most recent deployment. Today's date is 18 March 2009 and this is an unclassified interview. Let's start with some background. Where did you get your commission and what jobs did you hold in the Army before you went to Afghanistan?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) (b)(6) years old. I was born in (b)(6) and grew up in (b)(6). I graduated high school in (b)(3)(b)(6) and enlisted in the Army in (b)(6). I was a helicopter mechanic for about (b)(6) years and then applied for and attended Officer Candidate School and received my commission through that. I was branch detailed to armor and spent my first (b)(6) years as an armor lieutenant and a junior captain assigned to Fort Bragg. After that, I transitioned to military intelligence (MI) and was assigned to the 25th Infantry Division where I was a battalion S2, a brigade S2 and an MI company commander. Following that, I went to the (b)(6) where I was an assistant professor of military science for (b)(6) years. Then I went to the Command and General Staff College (CGSC) at Fort Leavenworth. Following CGSC, I was assigned as the J2 planner for the Southern European Task Force. I spent (b)(6) years there and deployed to Afghanistan with them in (b)(6). In June (b)(6), I went to serve as the 173rd S2 where I stayed until August (b)(6).

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) So you stayed with them until you came back from Afghanistan?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) Yes.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) So you had been to Afghanistan previously?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) Yes.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) What was your experience on that first tour to Afghanistan?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) I was the J2 planner at the Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) 76 level when the Southern European Task Force was the headquarters. We were responsible for three-quarters of the country, so we had Regional Command (RC) West, RC-South and RC-East as part of our area of operations. During our time, we transitioned to NATO, so RC-West transitioned to NATO control and then we only had RC-South and RC-East. Shortly after we redeployed, NATO also took over RC-South.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) Were you at Bagram Airbase?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) Yes.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) So you had a lot of experience in Afghanistan, and I would assume a pretty good comprehension of the country, the anti-coalition militias (ACMs) and working with the government forces?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) Yes. Having worked at that two-star level, I had a pretty good understanding of the demographics, the terrain, the political aspect and, of course, the ACM threat.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) I understand that the 173rd was slated to go to Iraq, but then when you were doing the mission rehearsal exercise (MRE) in February you were told you were going to go to Afghanistan instead. Is that correct?

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Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) It was actually prior to the MRE. We were conducting a brigade field training exercise in Grafenwoehr when we were officially told of our change in mission. That was about the middle of February. Our MRE was in the latter part of March.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) So you were at Grafenwoehr doing platoon live-fires and all the other live-fire things?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) Yes. We were doing brigade and battalion staff exercises.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) Were you going to then go to Hohenfels and the Joint Multinational Readiness Center (JMRC) and do the MRE?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) Yes.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) Did you go on the predeployment site survey (PDSS)?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) Yes.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) Did you have an opportunity to redirect your readiness and preparation for Afghanistan?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) Yes. Fortunately, we had a fair number of folks throughout the brigade who had Afghan experience.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) They had done the previous deployment to south Afghanistan?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) Yes. Some of my key leaders within the S2 section had previous Afghan experience.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) Did the brigade have databases compiled and all ready for Afghanistan?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) Yes. We didn't have a database to work with in terms of scenario work, but when I went on the PDSS I was able to bring back a lot of information. We also had access to some of the resident information on file from our last deployment and we used that for our trainup.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) Who did you do the PDSS with?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) It was with 3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division (3/10) and CJTF-82.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) Who was the brigade S2 for 3rd Brigade at that time?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) It was (b)(3)(b)(6)

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) Did you get a pretty good data transition from the Spartan Brigade?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) Yes. They were in a transition themselves during that period because when we received our change of mission, they were extended and their area of operations changed. They went up into the four provinces that we would be responsible for. Originally they had all of RC-East.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) Were they at Jalalabad already or were they still at Salerno?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) When we were there for the PDSS, they were at Jalalabad. We went to the PDSS just prior to our MRE. We actually flew from the site survey to our MRE.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) Did they do the MRE with an Iraq model or an Afghanistan model?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) It was with an Afghan model, but it had some Iraqi nuances that they just couldn't change. One of them was linguists. They just couldn't change the contract in time so we had Iraqi-Arabic linguists with Iraqi dialects and regular Arabic linguists. But the scenario itself was adjusted to Afghanistan.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) How adequately prepared did you feel the lower-level brigade soldiers and leaders were? Did they have a chance to get any cultural or language training?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) Not to the level we would have had if we had gone to Iraq. We actually had a pretty well-developed training plan for Iraq. They weren't able to adjust to get that training for Afghanistan. A lot of that was mitigated by the experience we had at the senior, mid-, and in some cases, the junior NCO level from our previous rotation. I think there was enough of that experience where they could do opportunity training, so to speak, within the organization.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) Did you have an opportunity to work on a campaign plan of any type at the brigade level?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) We didn't produce a campaign plan. The brigade commander said, "Brigades don't produce campaign plans. That's really for theater commanders." But we did work on a supporting plan to the CJTF-82 plan.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) When did you actually deploy to Afghanistan?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) May 2007.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) So you had a couple months to work on the relief in place (RIP) before you did the formal change of authority?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) No. We had two weeks. Our official transfer of authority (TOA) was 6 June.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) That's pretty quick. How did you feel the RIP/TOA went?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) I thought it was very well done. They had a very good plan for the RIP. I can't really speak for the battalions and units to any great degree, but within the brigade staff, us and the Spartans had to develop a plan together once we got on the ground. We then backbriefed our deputy commanding officers each day on the status of our RIP plan. We'd backbrief them on what we had accomplished that day, what issues there were and what we were going to do the next day. The plan was put together very well.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) We've been told by other folks that at the brigade level you focused on economics, non-kinetics and governance while the battalions focused on the kinetic fight. Is that accurate?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) Yes, with respect to providing specific direction and orders. It was a little different on the intel side. Most of our support went to the kinetic fight with respect to providing intelligence and assets.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) One thing I want to make sure we don't break is the classification barrier here, but I understand that you had the Shadow and Raven unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) as organic sensor platforms?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) That's correct.

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Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) Did 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry have organic Raven systems?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) Yes.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) I assume that the battalion employed the Raven as a battalion asset?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) Yes, probably more at the platoon and company level.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) The Shadow was a brigade resource?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) Yes, and we would support battalion operations or requests for collection. The battalions would actually control the asset.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) Let's talk about the Waygal Valley and then get down into Wanat. What were your impressions of the political and cultural dynamics in the valley?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(4) The Waygal Valley was a complex environment. There was a portion of the population that viewed themselves as Nuristanis and not a part of the province of Kunar. In some ways, that split the Waygal Valley north and south. Wanat was actually the district center for Waygal, which is actually in Nuristan, but Wanat is in Kunar [DRC note: Wanat is actually within Nuristan, and serves as a District Center for Nuristan Province, as is most of the Waigal Valley]. That made an interesting dynamic for the unit on the ground to deal with. Some of the people viewed themselves as Nuristani but they were actually in Kunar. The provincial governor may not have had as much influence up there that he otherwise would in other areas. Because of the isolation of the villages, a lot of times the folks viewed anyone who entered the valley as foreign and there wasn't a lot of trust. Also, influence from other similar individuals was easily achieved. There were enemy organizations operating out of Pakistan that had a large influence there that we didn't have elsewhere.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) Prior to the deployment, did you have any opportunity to talk to any Nuristani experts or do any focused research on Nuristan and Kunar?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) Some of us who had deployed before understood some of the dynamics of Kunar but not so much up in Waygal. We focused more on the Korengal Valley and because of our experiences last time, we found the Korengal Valley to be the number one issue in that particular area. We needed to develop a solution for the Korengal Valley. The problem set in Waygal began after we arrived. That area wasn't as significant as the Korengal or couldn't influence as much as the Korengal, but it was still a problem set that we needed to figure out as well. We didn't study a lot on Nuristan, but we did do some because it was going to be one of the provinces in our area of operations. In looking at our most significant problem sets, though, we viewed the Korengal as the most significant for us to solve as a brigade.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) Once you deployed, did you have a human terrain team (HTT) to work with full-time?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) No. We didn't get them until the first of April.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) How effectively were you able to utilize them?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) We really weren't able to. They were mostly doing information gathering while we were there. I took two majors out of hide in January and they started to build the information databases in preparation for the HTT's arrival. They spent about two or three months combing through our area of operations. When the HTT arrived, they took it over from there. We didn't utilize them really at all. They were still in the information gathering stage when we were there, but from what I understand they have been pretty helpful to 3rd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(4) Let's move on to Wanat. What was your involvement in the brigade planning process to set up a combat outpost in Wanat?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) I provided the brigade commander an intel assessment for that particular area for the build-up and the reaction of the threat there. I didn't do so much on the reaction of the political aspect, because the battalion on the ground had much better visibility on the governor, the district governor and police. I basically just provided him with the reaction of the enemy if we moved there or did not move there and what the second- and third-order effects would be.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) Did you do a formal risk assessment for that operation?

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Foxtrot (b)(3)(b) We developed some slides but I wouldn't say it was a risk assessment. I know there were a lot of commander risk assessments between the battalion commander and brigade commander, and between us at brigade and the battalion staffs there were discussions back and forth on risk. Nothing formal on paper, but there were definitely risk assessments done at the staff level and at the green-tab level between commanders.

Garnet (b)(3)(b) Did you have a feel for what the ACM response was likely to be?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b) I don't know if I had a real good feel for it. We had reports that said there would be attacks, but what I didn't have a good feel for was the level of those attacks, nor the complicity of the Afghan National Police (ANP). I think that's what was missing. Just like before at Bella, we knew they were going to get attacked and we knew they were going to shift their effort down to Wanat. It was just the level and the scope that was lacking.

Garnet (b)(3)(b) I understand that you were tracking a fairly large ACM contingent that was operating near Bella.

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b) I don't know if it was fairly large. The size was what we were lacking.

Garnet (b)(3)(b) You knew there was an ACM contingent operating against Bella?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b) Yes.

Garnet (b)(3)(b) Did you have any idea of the strength or composition of it?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b) No.

Garnet (b)(3)(b) I view the ACM as a formulation of local fighters, Afghan-centric fighters, and then transnational foreign fighters – Taliban-type fighters. Did you have a feel for what type of composition this force had?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b) We knew that because of the terrain, the size of the force didn't have to be very significant to counter us and that was always our issue with Bella. When you look at combat multipliers and coefficient of forces, the terrain increased the enemy's coefficient of force level with a minimal force. That was really our biggest issue and that's why we wanted to withdraw out of Bella and reposition in a more advantageous position on key terrain. To your question about composition of the fighters, I think most of them were local fighters supported by external foreign fighters, depending on how you define foreign fighters. The organization that I think supported them was out of Pakistan. In our area, though, we didn't see foreign fighter presence like you see in other parts of the country.

Garnet (b)(3)(b) Did you participate in the 6 July operations order briefing from brigade?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b) Yes.

Garnet (b)(3)(b) What were your impressions of that briefing?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b) I think the briefing was well done. There was enough flexibility in the plan to adjust because of threat, weather and aircraft availability, and I remember that we shifted the timeline because of some of those factors.

Garnet (b)(3)(b) All of us who have been there know that in Afghanistan, you always have to be flexible for weather and aircraft availability.

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Foxtrot (b)(3)(b) (6) Right. Because of the battalion's assessment of the threat, we were able to change the risk assessment of the aviators and mitigate the threat through the use of different routes. The routes we were going to use were assessed at a higher threat, so they adjusted them based off the battalion's assessment.

Garnet (b)(3)(b) (6) Did the plan adjust or change significantly as a result of the briefing?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b) (6) It changed with respect to the helicopter routes. Here's what did change. At the brigade level, we had assessed that the best position for the outpost was up on the high ground that overlooked the village. There were, however, matters of construction access and logistical resupply up to the outpost. That would have provided us the best security.

Garnet (b)(3)(b) (6) You're talking about gaining very high, key terrain like the three observation posts around Forward Operating Base (FOB) Naray.

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b) (6) Yes.

Garnet (b)(3)(b) (6) But at that time, you couldn't set up that kind of observation post, could you?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b) (6) No, we couldn't. There was always the consideration of adding air-centric outposts to an already strained rotary-wing support.

Garnet (b)(3)(b) (6) I understand that was one of the key factors that led you to get away from Ranch House and Bella.

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b) (6) Right.

Garnet (b)(3)(b) (6) Were you in on the 7 July briefing from battalion to General Milley?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b) (6) Yes.

Garnet (b)(3)(b) (6) How did that briefing go and did anything change as a result of it?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b) (6) I can't recall.

Garnet (b)(3)(b) (6) I got the idea that that briefing was pretty much an information briefing as opposed to a formal decision-type briefing.

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b) (6) If it was briefed to General Milley, he had to approve it. If it met certain criteria, it required the approval of the assistant division commander for operations, and it did meet those criteria. I'm certain that if it was being briefed to him, he was approving it.

Garnet (b)(3)(b) (6) So that was a formal decision briefing, then?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b) (6) It was a contingency operations plan (CONOP) brief and at the end he'd either approve it or disapprove it. Sometimes he'd say, "I approve this CONOP but we need to adjust this." I don't remember if things changed with that one.

Garnet (b)(3)(b) (6) On 4 July there was an AH64 attack near Bella that was controversial. The contacts I have in the Waygal Valley are still very adamant that those were all civilians. I know Colonel (b)(3)(b) (6) had no doubt that they were insurgents. What was your situational awareness of that attack? **Diamond**

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Foxtrot (b)(6) I read all the reports and the 15-6 that occurred afterwards. Are you talking about before or after or both?

Garnet (b)(3)(b) I got the idea that this was a target of opportunity attack rather than a deliberate attack.

Foxtrot (b)(6) Right. It wasn't a planned operation. At that time, we had increased reporting of the threat to Bella and I think we had already announced that we were moving to Wanat. There was a lot of increased reporting around Bella and Wanat and the threat reporting had increased against Bella. Because of that increased threat, we shifted some collection assets, which was probably why the AH64 was up there.

Garnet (b)(3)(b) What was your take on that operation?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b) I'd rather not say. I'll just go with what the 15-6 stated. I can't really comment enough to say, "Yes, good," or, "No, mistake."

Garnet (b)(3)(b) Were you getting any intelligence assessments that said that attack had changed perceptions in the Waygal Valley?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b) Yes.

Garnet (b)(3)(b) I assume that indicated that that had been an event that had damaged or deteriorated relationships?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b) Yes.

Garnet (b)(3)(b) Once they entered Wanat around 9 July, were you getting any intelligence through the battalion about what was going on in the area?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b) Yes. The battalion S2 and I talked more than once a day about it. On one occasion, he was very upset about not getting an adequate level of collection. I was kept abreast of the situation and we did note there was an increased level of reporting against Wanat, that the shift would occur from Bella to Wanat because of our move.

Garnet (b)(3)(b) Were you getting reports of things such as the village being basically deserted?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b) I don't remember a specific report that stated the village was deserted.

Garnet (b)(3)(b) Did you get any reports that stated that some of the soldiers were observing parties moving in the vicinity overnight?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b) Yes.

Garnet (b)(3)(b) Were you getting the report that Lieutenant Brostrom had interrupted a shura on 12 July that they hadn't invited him to? Apparently he found out about it and interrupted it. The soldiers that went with him said the locals were upset that he had showed up and they were very nervous that he had interrupted their shura.

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b) I don't know if that information made it to me at that time. I do recall the incident but I don't know if it made it to me before the attack. If that happened on 12 July, I don't know that I would have received the information before the attack in the early morning of 13 July. I do recall reading that, though

Garnet (b)(3)(b) So you were getting a good flow of intel from Wanat through the battalion S2?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) Yes. I'd like to speak openly, if I may.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) Please.

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) The challenge for me and ~~my higher~~ our headquarters was with collection assets. There were so many competing priorities for collection. CJTF-101 had a priority for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) and those were approved by the assistant division commander for operations. We essentially did the same thing for ISR. There just wasn't enough collection to meet all the demands that were out there. It will burn in me forever. At the same time we were getting this reporting at Wanat, we had daily mortar attacks against a position that, terrain-wise, was even worse than Wanat and Bella up in northeast Nuristan. Our Shadows couldn't reach it either, so we were relying on Predator for full-motion video support. It was an issue for us to provide adequate support, and I kind of referenced that earlier when I said the battalion S2 was upset that he wasn't getting the level of support he thought he needed. He had guys that were building force protection on the ground and he didn't think they had the adequate overhead collection to mitigate that limited force protection. It was really challenging to provide ISR because there wasn't enough to go around to meet all the requirements that units had.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) That's a challenge in Afghanistan theater-wide.

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) Yes, it is. You could probably do a study on attacks on FOBs or against units in Paktika, Khowst and Paktia, Wardak and hear the same thing. It will burn me up forever.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) Understand. Let's move on to 13 July. When did you learn that a pretty serious attack was coming in at Wanat?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) I was woken up around 0530 local time.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) That would be just about first light.

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) Right.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) Assume you were told that you were needed in the tactical operations center (TOC).

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) Yes. There were wakeup criteria for the chief of operations, the operations officer, the commander and me. We were always the first line of defense, if you will.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) Did you take any actions during the engagement?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) My primary role at that point was to make an assessment for the CJTF-101 J2 and my commander on whether I thought the incident warranted requesting the shift of collection assets. In conversations with the S2, with my analysts and the chief of operations, we would make a recommendation and request an asset to be shifted to support it.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) It's been reported in the media that assets were then shifted to Wanat.

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) That's correct.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) But obviously they couldn't get there in time to influence the main attack.

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) Right.

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Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) After the attack came in, did you get a pretty good flow of what was going on and what the attack had been?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) Yes, over the course of several days.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) Did you get any idea of what the command structure of the ACM had been or what their intent or objectives had been?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) Not so much the command structure. Their intent was to force us to withdraw out of Wanat. What did come to light was the level of support they had with the ANP and the chief of police. The collusion of the local authorities is occasionally suspect and in that particular area, we had an incident with an Afghan Security Guard (ASG) commander and also one of our soldiers was killed by an ASG guard. That was really what was the final genesis was for our move out of Bella. The level of support that was provided from the ANP, or at least their complicity, was understood to a greater degree than we did before.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) How was the decision made to evacuate Wanat? Were you in on that decision?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) I think it was more a decision based on the fact that the commander said it was no longer suitable for us to stay.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) Was that at the battalion or brigade level?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) Both. This had implications for the whole division, so there were discussions with the brigade commander and the CJTF-82 101 commander as well.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) What was your assessment? Did you feel we should have stayed or were you comfortable withdrawing from Wanat?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) I was comfortable withdrawing from Wanat. I think the force protection that could be provided at Bella from other locations was good. At some point before we arrived, we extended our ability to secure ourselves and to resupply ourselves. I think we went too far, too fast, and what happened at Wanat stems from that.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) I know 3rd Brigade added a lot of FOBs and really extended their area. Do you think they were overextended with the logistical and support resources we had?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) Yes, but not just logistically. It was also our ability to secure ourselves – and it wasn't just Wanat. It was up in Nuristan as well. We felt like we'd gone too far, too fast, and we needed to make sure we had all the conditions set before we extend to that degree. What happened at Wanat stems directly from that.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) You want a combat outpost that can perform effective counterinsurgency operations with the population, not a place that's just a magnet for insurgent attacks.

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) Correct, but they're all magnets for attacks.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) Sure.

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) Even the ones we had adequate support to are still magnets.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) From looking at things very comprehensively and talking to a lot of soldiers, I feel that the enemy tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) were actually focused on trying to do an information operation

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where they actually seized a couple American soldiers. That's my assessment of what their objective was. Would you agree with that?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b) No. I know there was a lot of talk amongst the ~~Afghanistan~~ Asymmetric ~~Working~~ Warfare Group (AWG) folks of a TTP called snatch-and-grab. It was a TTP the Chechens used against the Russians. They claimed there were examples of that in our area of operations, but there weren't. They used some examples that were incorrect, so I don't believe that was their objective. The enemy, frankly, had a couple opportunities to do that but didn't. The one time where that appeared to have occurred was in such a close combat situation that, to me, it was just a natural reaction. They were inside hand grenade range. It was a natural reaction to grab somebody as a target of opportunity.

Garnet (b)(3)(b) You're referring to the incident that was published in *Vanity Fair*?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b) Yes. There were a couple opportunities where we had bodies we couldn't get to and although the enemy stripped them of their clothes, they left them there.

Garnet (b)(3)(b) I believe they tried to pull a couple bodies out of the observation post at Wanat. That's based on some conversations with the soldiers and where the bodies were recovered. That's why I asked that question. I guess we'll never know if that was a target of opportunity kind of thing or a deliberate attack.

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b) Right.

Garnet (b)(3)(b) In July 2008 were you working on the RIP you were going to do with 3rd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b) Yes. Task Force Duke.

Garnet (b)(3)(b) How focused were you on the RIP at that point?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b) We had just gotten started with it.

Garnet (b)(3)(b) So some of the Task Force Duke guys were with you at that time?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b) Yes.

Garnet (b)(3)(b) I bet they were wondering what the hell they had just gotten themselves into.

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b) Absolutely.

Garnet (b)(3)(b) Did you feel there was any interference with the RIP and active operations?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b) I can't really speak on behalf of the chief of operations, but there were challenges every day with aircraft availability and the RIP just increased that. I think with the movement to Wanat, things needed to be very well planned aircraft-wise because of the ongoing RIP.

Garnet (b)(3)(b) Obviously setting up a new combat outpost will incur a substantial requirement for a lot of helicopter flights and at the same time the RIP is doing the same thing.

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b) Correct.

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Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) That's what I was trying to get to. Perhaps the resources were stretched too thin. Did you do the RIP around 23 July and then come home?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) Correct.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) What did you take away from your deployment to Afghanistan and the experiences you had?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) I gained an incredible appreciation for our soldiers, what they went through and their tenacity. Just about every day there was a story that would never make the headlines, but when you sit back and think about it, it's really amazing what we ask our guys to do and what they do. I guess what I gained was a love and an appreciation for our soldiers.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) How much longer are you going to stay in?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) Maybe for a couple more years.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) Where are you now?

(b)(3)(b)(6) I'm at Intelligence and Security Command (INSCOM) headquarters at Fort Belvoir.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) Is there anything else about what happened in Wanat that you think I should be aware of?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) I'd like to go back to what I said about the incident in Wanat stemming from us going too far, too fast. I would look beyond the 173rd and the actions in the few days leading up to Wanat, to what really led up to the whole thing from the very beginning. I think that's part of the greater story. It's easy to say, "We're just going to pull out of there." But we really struggled with that, not just in that location, but in other locations as well. We knew we needed to withdraw, relocate and consolidate some forces, but how do we do that? There are second- and third-order effects and what were we going to be giving up. That was a struggle to figure out our entire time there.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) Any time you pull out, it's considered an instant information operations enemy victory.

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) Absolutely.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) I have to hand it to the Taliban. Those guys have propaganda and information operations down to a science.

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) Exactly. You asked about risk assessment earlier and this was a constant risk assessment that we were doing at the commander and staff levels.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) One of the things you said was that you wish you'd had a better feel for cultural and ethnic preparation. I don't know how much intelligence preparation of the battlefield you were able to do before you got into country. I've talked to some anthropologists who are specialists on Nuristan and they've said it's a very complex human terrain. I just wonder how comfortable you were with that before you got on the ground and began operations in there.

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b)(6) I was pretty comfortable because I'd been there before, but I knew there were certain areas I needed to focus on because I was weak in them or my team was. Until you get there, there are just some things you don't realize.

Garnet (b)(3)(b)(6) Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b) No, I don't think so. This was good.

Garnet (b)(3)(b) I appreciate you being candid and giving me this information. I really see there being two issues here. The first is to understand the tactical engagement, which as an historian is a pretty straightforward endeavor. Then also trying to understand the conditions that led to the events is much more challenging. To me, that's the real story. Writing up what the soldiers did is a story of heroes. It's the analysis of how we got there that's really challenging for me.

Foxtrot (b)(3)(b) Right.

Garnet (b)(3)(b) Again, I really appreciate it. Thank you for your time.

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed by (b)(6)