Black (b)(3)(b)(6)
1LT, MI
S2 Planner
HHC 173rd ABCT

1. Please tell me about yourself, hometown, source of commission, college education and experience, Company command, training and schools, previous deployments if any. Did you previously deploy to Afghanistan, with what unit and when.

I am a military brat who moved around a lot, but settled in Kentucky when I went to college in (b)(6) My parents live on a farm in (b)(6) since I graduated from college from Western Kentucky University. I was a civilian for awhile and then decided to join the Army and go OCS. I did the whole MI OBC and airborne school after I got commissioned and had orders to 173D where I was placed as the BN AS2 in 2-503 (ABN) IN BN and remained there for approximately 2 years before moving to BDE HQ after the deployment.

2. When did you join the 2nd-503rd? When did you learn that you were going to deploy to Afghanistan.

I did not know much prior to coming to 2-503 (ABN) IN BN, just what the school house teaches you. I came to Italy early because I found out that there was a JMTC rotation in Grafenwoehr and I did not want to miss out on the training. About halfway through the GTA rotation, we found out that we were no longer going to Kirkuk, Iraq, but instead, Konar and Nuristan Provinces in Afghanistan. After that we had to completely change all of our scenarios and train to fight the new and much more complex battle in the mountains of Afghanistan. Our JMRC rotation in Holensfeld had still not adjusted fully as the Afghan National Army personnel that attended the training were quite upset when all of the "actors" spoke Farsi and not Pashtu or Dari.

3. What type of training did you perform for your deployment?

We practiced IPB, conducting detailed enemy analysis, and how to create intelligence products for CONOPs and other briefing that would be given downrange while in JMTC. We also had to execute basic warrior tasks and skills training while we were there. In JMRC in Holensfeld, we conducted our MRE where we integrated all ISR assets that we utilized downrange in our exercise. We also conducted TOC operations and provided actionable intelligence to units as we trained for the upcoming deployment. For the short time that I was in garrison, we had a large emphasis on the Company Intelligence Support Teams/Battalion Intelligence Teams concept. Skills such as utilizing BATS/HIIDE Systems, producing company level intelligence products, conducting tactical interrogations, and detainee operations/searches were all taught to the COISTs.

4. Did you feel ready to deploy (both individually and your unit)?

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Definitely. I had the upmost confidence in all of the 2-503 (ABN) IN BN Paratroopers prior to the deployment and throughout every training event that we held while in garrison. I also felt well prepared for the deployment due to all of the training and experience that I gained while in 2-503 (ABN) IN BN prior to the deployment. If it wasn't for that training that I received, coming out of the school house, my skills and abilities would have been completely inadequate to achieve the mission in Afghanistan.

5. Did you have an opportunity to perform any Afghanistan specific training (language or cultural) or intelligence preparations for Afghanistan, given the February 2007 change of mission for the Brigade from Iraq to Afghanistan.

We did receive several briefs in Italy concerning Afghanistan culture and a brief history on the country, but I believe that the last minute change definitely made us work harder to get caught up with all of the IPB, Enemy Analysis, and overall synching with the unit that we were going to replace.

6. When did you arrive in Afghanistan?

I left for Afghanistan on 23MAY07 and arrived in Bagram with the main body HHC 2-503 (ABN) IN BN. I was on one of the first flights with ROCK 6 and the primary Staff to go out to Camp Blessing, which was the location of our BN HQ.

7. Describe the RIP/TOA with the 10th Mountain Division. Who did you coordinate with? How effective was the RIP/TOA?

10th Mountain definitely had great systems in place and new the enemy situation. I RIPed with the 2LT that I replaced, but he had only been there for 6 months or so and was placed on ADVON to return back to New York early. I quickly fell into the systems and acted as the collection manager while 10th Mountain still had control of the AO. The S2 for the BN that we replaced was very competent and had a vast knowledge of the area/terrain, the enemy in the AO, and past experiences that 10th Mountain and other units had encountered where the desperation of the enemy's tactics could truly be conveyed.

8. Describe the nature of your duties and responsibilities in the S-2 section. Did you change positions during the deployment?

I was the AS2 for 2-503 (ABN) IN BN for the duration of the deployment (DEC 2006 - October 2008). I conducted enemy analysis, built CONOP slides, managed all ISR and collection assets in AO ROCK, handled detainee operations, covered down for ROCK 2 when he was out, did a little PERSEC, handled the special programs for the BN, and random other things that I had been tasked with throughout the deployment.

9. What was your involvement in the planning process to occupy Wanat?

I had assisted in the locating of suitable HLZs (for the location of the Vehicle Patrol Base) and conducting terrain analysis and enemy situation for the area. I had never actually been to Wanat until 13 JUL 08, so I did not have any eyes on the area, but I also was not in the decision making process in deciding that a VPB be established there. I was also not involved in the location of layout of the VPB in Wanat.

10. Do you have (or who would have) copies of the Battalion BUBs for 9-12 July?

The BN would likely have those as our hardrive was copied prior to our redeployment. I believe that the BN S6 still possesses the hardrive and the S2 can access the information. The BUBs are likely classified.

11. Did you perform a formal IPB for the occupation of Wanat? Did you prepare a formal risk assessment?

We conducted numerous enemy analysis in our INTSUMs and made it very clear that the enemy threat was increasing due to the increased CF interest in the area and the locals belief that a base would be built. During the creation of the CONOP the S2 section ensured that the threat in the area was properly represented and that the enemy situation (however great) was not under exaggerated. All intelligence that we received was published in the INTSUMs and was sent to all leaders in the BN.

12. Did you participate in the 6 July briefing by 2-503rd Infantry to 173rd Brigade Commander for the Wanat Operation? Were any modifications made to the operation based upon this briefing?

Magent

I was not in the briefing as CPT (b)(3)(b)(6) (the primary S2) was likely participating in the brief as I normally assisted in the creation of CONOP Slides, but rarely briefed the CONOPs. I do not believe that any changes were made to the operation.

13. Did you participate in the 7 July briefing by 2-503rd Infantry to BG Mark Milley, DCG-O 101st Airborne Division for the Wanat operation? Were any modifications made to the operation based upon this briefing?

I did not attend this brief either and am not aware if any changes were indeed made at this time too.

14. Were you getting a flow of intelligence from Wanat- specifically indications of enemy courses of action such as abandonment of Wanat by citizens, large numbers of military aged males closely monitoring construction of COP Kahler, movement of groups of individuals in surrounding mountains on night of July 11th-12th, interrupted Shura on July 12th, Dinner with Wanat residents on July 12th?

We continued to get reports about the increasing enemy activity in the area and attempted to convey the litany of reports to higher. We were receiving collection from the DIV level at the beginning of the implementation of the VPB in Wanat, but on the evening of 12 July all of our collection was pulled because (this is just my assumption) DIV did not believe that the threat was that credible, or that other requirements were more important. I heard about the shura interruption on 13 July and did not hear about it while I was working on 12 July. For the days prior, we had collection monitoring the surrounding mountains and villages and did not see anything on the night of 11-12 July; although, HUMINT reports continued to come in indicating their presence. Due to the lack of connectivity, the unit may have not passed up the information, or if they did it was not passed along to me.

15. Did you feel that adequate ISR and collections assets were devoted to the Wanat occupation? If not, what resources do you feel would have been useful? Was there any discussion of moving one of the Battalion Raven assets up to Wanat?

Like I said earlier, DIV had pulled our FMV (BDE FMV could not reach due to LOS issues), so we had no collection when the actual attack began to occur. If collection had not been pulled, we would have had possibly seen the AAF moving into position and interdicted them. The Predator was allocated to us through the time that the attack had occurred. CJTF101 would likely be the point of contact for the product. The Raven is not a suitable asset in Afghanistan. None of our companies used the system because of the terrain, the UAV would often loose link and then disappear into the side of a mountain. The system proved to be of no use time and time again.

16. When did you get SA that Wanat was under "A Ranch House Style Attack" as Chosen Six reported? Please discuss your actions in detail during this engagement.

I was in my office, which was approximately 15m from the main TOC when I read my mIRC and saw that CHOSEN Company was taking intense fire from a close proximity to their location. I began to contact BDE and request assets from higher that were necessary to provide SA to the engagement. We began to track the battle and plot all enemy locations while assets were being diverted to our AO. It took at least an hour for the Predator UAV to move all the way to the engagement area from where it was diverted to, which I believe was south of Jalalabad at the time that it was diverted. Once Predator and Medium Altitude SIGINT was on station, we began to queue the assets off each other and identify enemy positions. We also received locations of enemy positions from the ground units and assisted in targeting several groups of enemy fighters. Reinforcements from both CHOSEN and ABLE Company were sent in via ground convoy to support the CHOSEN 26 and CHOSEN HQ Elements. They continued to receive attacks from multiple enemy positions until they were able to push out to the surrounding high ground. At midday, I was sent to go with the TAC (being up for at least 30 hours at this point) to Wanat. I saw all of the friendly positions prior to and during the enemy

assault. We also saw how the enemy was able to advance on the OP that sustained the majority of the casualties.

17. Did you get any indication from BDA, AAR actions regarding the actual composition of ACM that attacked Wanat, or their objectives in the assault?

We were able to compare reported numbers of enemy fighters in the area to what accounts were received on the ground and in my estimates, a force composing roughly 120 enemy fighters from surrounding Nuristan Villages and foreign fighters (which were IDed by the ANA Commandos that were inserted on the night of 13 July. During the night of 13 July, a large group of confirmed enemy fighters was struck (totaling about 20 fighters), but in total a conservative estimate may have been 60 enemy fighters killed that day. Many of the dead and wounded were most likely evacuated prior to the reinforcing units arriving and pushing into the high ground. The objectives of the enemy fighters were clear, to overrun and destroy all CF that are occupying the area.

18. Were you involved in the decision to evacuate Wanat? How was this decision coordinated (up or down) with 2nd-503rd staff?

I was present when the decision was being made to eventually withdraw from the VPB. When Bayonet 6, ROCK 6, and CHOSEN 6 were up at an OP, Bayonet 6 asked ROCK 6, who in turn asked CHOSEN 6 what should occur. The decision was made from the ground commander and was agreed upon throughout the chain of command. The decision was absolutely correct due to the location of the base and the surrounding buildings. Also, an increased IED threat had been in place between Camp Blessing and Wanat, which was a very narrow road, composed of dirt and rock making for easy IED emplacement. All of these factors would lead me to the same conclusion, which I believe was the proper one made at the time.

19. When did you return to Italy?

I came back to Italy on the REARVON party and arrived on 3 AUG. Several months later I moved to BDE and will remain in the 173D through the next deployment (unless not stop lost).

20. What lessons did you learn during your 15 months in Italy? How are you relating your experiences and lessons learned to your current position and future career with the Army?

I learned a lot in Afghanistan, especially about collection management and synching assets. I am going to use what I learned as a BN collection manager for my new job as the BDE Collection Manager during the next deployment. I will continue to use the skills that I have learned from last deployment to help the army in a civilian capacity.

21. Who else should I speak to from Battalion Staff regarding the Wanat Engagement?

Everyone that was in 2-503 (ABN) IN BN either HHC or Chosen Company during the time should be able to provide you with their representation of what occurred. I would stick with talking to primary/secondary staff and chosen company officers and NCOs.

22. When will you be at Fort Leavenworth for me to buy you a beer?

The next time you come to Italy. I think I will avoid Leavenworth because that means that I stayed in too long. If you have any more questions for me please let me know.

Follow on questions:

Mr. (b)(3)(b)(6) Garnet

1. Who would be a POC at Battalion S-6 for the hard drives/files on Wanat? Recognizing most of this is probably secret, although we have a secure storage facility and SIPR account here so we can work through that.

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The S2 shop and the S6 shop has access to the shared drive from Afghanistan. The new S6 for 2-503 (ABN) IN BN is CPT (b)(3)(b)(6). He can be reached at (b)(3)(b)(6)@eur.army.mil. I am no longer in 2-503 (ABN) IN BN as I had to move jobs after nearly 2 years as the BN AS2. I am still in the BDE though.

2. What was your estimate of the enemy situation on the evening of July 12th. What did you estimate regarding enemy forces, size, composition, intentions?

I do not know what the official enemy estimate was exactly, but what I believed from the multiple HUMINT reports that were coming out of the area was about 80 enemy in the area, but that area is capable of pulling enemy from a lot of Nuristani Villages and there were even reports about Pakistani Enemy moving to the area to participate in attacks. The enemy forces were mainly Taliban and HIG affiliated with some LET affiliations as well. Again, without seeing the enemy courses of actions from the CONOP slide I do not exactly remember what our estimated enemy response would be, but the most likely enemy course of action would be to conduct probing attacks of the new US position in order to discover any weaknesses. The most dangerous course of action would be the enemy conducting an all out assault at several strategic locations with the intent of overrunning that US position. There were no unique weapons mentioned in any of the reporting on the area. Most of the reports claimed the same weapons for the enemy, RPGs, AK-47s, PKMs, and rockets/mortars.

3. How did a Platoon at Wanat pass information to you (MIRC chat?), e-mail? radio? Was there a standard intell report format/time or did they send SALUTE type reports as appropriate. Do you specifically recall how much intel you were getting from Lt. Brostrom at Wanat? Were they providing any

assessment of the situation to you?

A lot of the PLT sized bases did not have SPOPs which allowed them to get SIPR access. Since the position at Wanat was not an established location, CHOSEN Company only had FM comms and satellite comms. CHOSEN Company would send up intel or information during the 1700 status report updates daily. All locations would either monitor the radio and be updated on the intel for the day, or would attend a video conference via SIPR. LT Brostrom was not communicating with BN during the engagement. I only heard CPT (b)(3)(b)(6) providing intel updates and information to the BN. CHOSEN 6 (CPT (b)(3)(b)(6)) was providing intel and status reports during the majority of the engagement. You could hear the fighting and explosions (most likely from RPGs) in the background as he was talking.

Oscar

Oscar

4. Did Battalion S-2 request any additional ISR/collection assets specifically for Wanat (recognizing that a new base is most vulnerable).

We submitted out requests and did receive a lot of ISR during the night to include Predator and other SIGINT assets etc. For the first three days that CHOSEN Company was there, TF ROCK received full support from DIV, but on 13 July 2009, CJTF101 pulled all ISR from us. Normally when this occurs it is because the CHOPs or the DIV CM (Collection Manager) does not deem the threat credible enough to have an asset devoted to it, or something else is deemed a higher priority due to threat. We fought with BDE and our BDE tried to get the assets reassigned to us, but DIV did not reallocate the assets to us. I was the BN Collection Manager and synched all ISR assets and conducted the collection requests, so I am absolutely positive that collection was pulled that night.

Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Caveats: NONE

Mr (b)(3)(b)(6) Garnet,
Here is what I have to help answer your question:

The enemy advanced along a stream bed that had sharp (6ft high) walls to the south side of the stream that ran east-west and dumped into the Waygal River at Wanat. The enemy was able to use this terrain and the vegetation near the creek to close with the CHOSEN Company OP. The enemy was able to get within hand grenade range of the OP and were in possession of several grenades, which they attempted to use to destroy the OP. After the enemy was done throwing their grenades, they began to throw rocks to confuse CHOSEN Company Paratroopers that might think that they were grenades. The majority of the casualties were likely sustained from the tree that was near the OP (a few feet away). The enemy actually aimed RPGs at the tree above the OP and rained down shrapnel on the CHOSEN Company Paratroopers. The tree had multiple RPG strikes and one could tell that the tree was aimed for intentionally in order to send an airburst of shrapnel into the OP from the top. These AAF were several hundred meters away toward to east northeast.

After the AAF had failed to capture the OP and due to CHOSEN Company sending reinforcements and holding the OP (these two events are directly related in my opinion), the enemy was forced to stage a withdraw from the area and take back all of their dead and wounded from the area. The AAF managed a quick withdraw likely the same way that they used to close in on the OP. The AAF likely took this route back to Kownd Kalay and Qal eh-ye Gal, the two largest villages due east of Wanat farther into the high ground.

I have attached a PPT that shows where the AAF came from and how they

approached the COP. You can see the AAF from the north used the river and the built up area (houses) to the north and west of VPB Kahler to close on the VPB and conduct their near ambush. The AAF from the east used the small
river and its large banks to move undetected while other AAF moved into the high ground to the southeast and northeast of Wanat. This is the basic Enemy situation on the day of the attack. This should help for you to get a more graphic representation of how the event occurred.

If you need anything else from me please let me know and if I can be provided a copy of your final product I would greatly appreciate it.

V/R,

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-----Original Message-----
From: (b)(3)(b)(6) CIV USA FORSCOM
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Sent: Thursday, May 14, 2009 5:55 PM
To: (b)(3)(b)(6) 1LT MIL USA
Subject: One more question

I'm well on the way to writing this study.

I wanted to clarify one thing with you:

In your statement you said: "We also saw how the enemy was able to advance
on the OP that sustained the majority of the casualties."

If possible, could you get into more details on how you appraised the enemy approach/attack on the OP from what you saw? Thanks.

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