

SWORN STATEMENT

White

My name is Sergeant Major [redacted] (b)(3), (b)(6) and my current unit is HHC, 3rd Ranger Battalion, Fort Benning, Georgia. I am currently a Command Sergeant Major in the U.S. Army and my occupation is infantry.

In July 2008, my unit was 2d Battalion, 503rd of the 173rd Airborne Brigade. I was the Battalion Command Sergeant Major. I had been with the Battalion since 11 August 2005. In July 2008, my duties consisted of making sure the platoon/company FOBs were defendable, that the FOBs were policed up, and that they were being properly maintained and improved upon. For the RIP/TOA I ensured the FOBs were ready to receive incoming troops and to ensure people were in place for turnover.

To the best of my recollection, before winter of 2007, we decided to move Bella down to Wanat. As a Command Group, we wanted out of Bella. We did not want to hand over Bella to the new incoming unit. Bella was located on very untenable terrain and the enemy was already hitting Bella pretty regularly.

Regarding the execution of Operation Rock Move in the last two weeks of the deployment, it was necessary for us to conduct the move than passing it to the incoming unit. We were more familiar with the terrain and the enemy and had a better chance of success to execute the move than the incoming unit whose previous experience was in Iraq.

In addition, we learned over 15 months that if we were not actively patrolling or conducting operations for even a day in our Company Battle Spaces the enemy would fill the white space left unpatrolled and then we would pay for our inaction in the form of enemy ambushes, coordinated attacks on our FOBs and OPs, IEDs on route, etc. If we had handed BELLA over to the unit that was replacing us, who was not intimately familiar with the mountainous terrain and enemy they would have paid a heavy price, in my opinion. If they were left with the task of moving BELLA to Wanat the same would have been the case, in my opinion, due to their lack of Afghanistan experience

Prior to July of 2008, I went to Wanat for leadership engagements to discuss with the elders about moving to Wanat.

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Although the Company Commander conducted most of the negotiations, the Battalion Commander, Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) got Diamond involved with the negotiations in the May 2008 timeframe. Although, the elders were not complicit with the insurgency, they did not resist them. I believe they were caught between us and the Taliban. The elders were reluctant to have us move to Wanat which took a few months of negotiation. I believe these negotiations enabled the insurgency to learn about the timing of our move.

As an infantry-man, I didn't like Wanat because it was surrounded by high ground. If we would have moved to the high ground, we would have been away from the population. The site in Wanat was the next best location because it connected us to the population, District Center, District Governor, and the ANP station.

Once the platoon moved into Wanat, there were some logistical problems. There was a delay with the construction company that was supposed to build the FOB defenses in reaching Wanat. They were contracted to construct stone walls around the FOB. I did not know what the delay was, but they did not make it to Wanat before the battle. We sent what we could out there which was three engineers and a miniature bulldozer to help them build the hescos. Up to that point, I believe the troops were filling them with E-tools. I had also read a report about a water shortage at Wanat. When we learned of the issue, we got water out there the best we could. My understanding, the lowest level they got was a half-day's supply of water.

I did not participate in the planning for Operation Rock Move and I do not remember being briefed on Operation Rock Move. We were getting ready to RIP, so I may have been focused on that. As the Command Sergeant Major, I would have provided input on any shortcomings I would have seen in the CONOP plan. Although I was not part of the CONOP brief I raised some tactical concern with the company commander regarding the Wanat defenses.

Throughout the deployment, I reviewed all the SIGINT/INTSUMS sent to me by the S-2 regarding the battalion's battle space to specifically include Operation Rock Move. From my review of the S-2 reports, I was aware of a potentially large attack on

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COP Bella, however intel always said something was going to be hit most of our FOBs were under this same threat from time to time without coming to fruition. I don't recall any discussions about planned ISR being pulled away from Wanat, but it might have been pulled away for other operations such as "Mountain Highway." The Brigade allocated ISR resources to locations with the greatest threat, however I do not recall of any requests to battalion to pull back the ISRs to cover Wanat.

I would not be surprised if higher pulled the ISR assets due to other missions in the brigade AO. Over our deployment we learned to adapt to limited assets. We had the reputation of being able to do more with less. We learned over our 15 month deployment that our FW/RW CAS and CASEVAC Aircraft were 45 minutes away from our Battle Space, unless it was dedicated to the TF. We learned to work within the time constraints for getting assets to the threat area. For example, our Battle Space had a fire plan with targets and TRPs for each route and valley we patrolled. In an engagement where CAS (FW or RW) was needed indirect fire could be fired and adjusted using preplanned targets to help support the fight until CAS could arrive.

Other than battle damage to weapons, I didn't hear of any problems with the weapons during the battle. During a meeting with the ISGs in the battalion, in November 2007 they reported that their weapons performed well under fire. Regarding the Battle of Wanat, you can only put so many rounds through a weapons system in a minute. The weapons have a max rate of fire, and if you surpass that, you're going to have damage.

In terms of combat operations, the move to Wanat was the Battalion main effort. After the move, I was planning on visiting Wanat, however I did not go to Wanat initially because I was planning the RIP. After the battle, I went to Wanat later that day. It looked to me like a beginning of a COP being built, as compared to the first 4 days of FOB construction at Hanaker/Miracle.

After the battle, I don't recall who made the decision to withdraw from Wanat, but that was a brigade HQ decision in my opinion. I wanted us to remain in Wanat instead of seeming that we got pushed out. I was torn when I heard we were pulling out

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because I wanted my soldiers out of harm's way but at the same time, did not want to hand the Taliban an IO victory (second and third order effects).

AFFIDAVIT

I, White (b)(3), (b)(6) HAVE READ OR HAVE HAD READ TO ME THIS STATEMENT WHICH BEGINS ON PAGE 1 AND ENDS ON PAGE 3. I FULLY UNDERSTAND THE CONTENTS OF THE ENTIRE STATEMENT MADE BY ME. THE STATEMENT IS TRUE. I HAVE INITIALED ALL CORRECTIONS AND HAVE INITIALED THE BOTTOM OF EACH PAGE CONTAINING THE STATEMENT. I HAVE MADE THIS STATEMENT FREELY WITHOUT HOPE OF BENEFIT OR REWARD, WITHOUT THREAT OF PUNISHMENT, AND WITHOUT COERCION, UNLAWFUL INFLUENCE, OR UNLAWFUL INDUCEMENT.

White

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

Subscribed and sworn to before me, a person authorized by law to administer oaths, this 21 day of October 2009 at Fairburn GA.

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

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

Owl

(Typed Name of Person Administering Oath)

Lemon

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

Judge Advocate
(Authority To Administer Oaths)

~~NAME FOR TITLE~~
ORGANIZATION OR ADDRESS

INITIALS OF PERSON MAKING STATEMENT

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

White