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Interview with 1SG (b)(3), (b)(6)

2 May 2008

**Scabiosa** (b)(3), (b)(6) **Scabiosa** (b)(3), (b)(6) This is Major (b)(3), (b)(6) with the 305th Military History Detachment. It's the 2nd of May 2008. I'm at Camp Blessing, Afghanistan. If you would, for the record, please give me your full name and what your current unit assignment and duty position is.

**Victor** (b)(3), (b)(6) My name is (b)(3), (b)(6) and my current unit assigned is Chosen Company, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry.

**Scabiosa** (b)(3), (b)(6) How long have you been with Chosen Company?

**Victor** (b)(3), (b)(6) I've been with Chosen for almost two years, but I've been with the battalion for almost seven.

**Scabiosa** (b)(3), (b)(6) Give me a little bit of your military background leading up to today.

**Victor** (b)(3), (b)(6) I joined the Army in 1988. I went to Korea and then Bragg for four years, then got out. I hated it. I was a young punk and didn't like it. I got out and hated that even worse. So I came back in and went to Campbell. I stayed there for four years and then went to drill sergeant. From drill sergeant I came straight here. I stayed a drill sergeant for two years and that was one of the best assignments of my life. I was at Benning. It was good. It's better than being around ... I just can't do that woman thing. But I'm getting ready to be a first sergeant at Jackson, which is nothing but women. It's going to be rough. Totally different than what I'm used to.

**Scabiosa** (b)(3), (b)(6) They're going to have to file down the edges on you a little bit.

**Georgetown**

**Victor** (b)(3), (b)(6) Oh, yes. I have already been told that many times. Sergeant Major (b)(3), (b)(6) I don't know if you're familiar with him, but he got me that job. He told me, "You're going to have to simmer down a little bit." I have to work that on a little bit. I have a weakness for the opposite sex, so I think I'm going to go over that and go more hard on them because of that fact. We'll see how it turns out.

**Scabiosa** (b)(3), (b)(6) It will be a rounding experience for you. You have said that you have been with Chosen Company for two years. What's your prior deployment experience before this one?

**Victor** (b)(3), (b)(6) I jumped into Panama in 1989.

**Scabiosa** (b)(3), (b)(6) You are old!

**Victor** (b)(3), (b)(6) Exactly. I went to Desert Shield-Desert Storm in 1991. I went to Iraq with this unit in 2003 and then both deployments to Afghanistan with this unit. I've been there a little bit. My wife is tired of it, though. She said, "No. You're going to have to take a break after this one." I told her as soon as I make sergeant major, in order for me to get my foot back in the door, I'll have to go to combat as a sergeant major. I'm just going to take a couple-year break and build my second house. She's tired. I'm tired. I'd say she's tired but I like the pay and I just like combat. I just enjoy it. It's less stressful than the rear.

**Scabiosa** (b)(3), (b)(6) Well, there's no bullshit. You have a mission to do and that's what your focus is.

**Victor** (b)(3), (b)(6) If you're good at your job, no one gives you a hard time and they listen to what you have to say. It would be totally different if you're a weak soldier or a shitty soldier. People look at you differently and

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they won't listen to you, but if you're good, people listen to what you have to say no matter if you're a staff sergeant (E6). I came to this unit as an E6 right off the trail and people listen. Everyone knows who First Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6) is just by reputation. I yell a lot and whatever the hell you're supposed to do, you do it now. That's the way you do it.

Victor

Scabiosa (b)(3), (b)(6) But it's the separation from family and friends that just wears you down.

Victor

(b)(3), (b)(6) Yes. This deployment is killing her. She about had a nervous breakdown on this one. She'd be all right, though. We just need a break, and that goes either way. Emailing is fine and it's different from when we first went. But now we stay a lot closer because I hear her everyday things instead of letter things. But it's still stressful.

Scabiosa

(b)(3), (b)(6) Tell me a little bit how you prepared your company for this deployment. You'd been to Afghanistan before on a prior deployment so you're familiar with the territory and a little bit with the fight going on over here.

Victor

(b)(3), (b)(6) Now that's where we were wrong. I don't want to say wrong, but we thought we knew what was going on. When we were here before, it was totally different. It wasn't as steep. It wasn't as hilly. It wasn't as nasty.

Scabiosa

(b)(3), (b)(6) You guys were further south during that deployment.

Victor

(b)(3), (b)(6) It's a totally different world. It's like a different country. First of all when we did our training, we thought we were going to Iraq.

Scabiosa

(b)(3), (b)(6) Which is the point I was leading up to. You guys were slotted for Iraq and at the eleventh hour got a change of mission.

Victor

(b)(3), (b)(6) Absolutely, so we did all our training, military operations on urban terrain (MOUT) drills, MOUT drills. If we had gone to Iraq, we would have kicked some serious ass. But because we didn't, we had to switch up. We knew about Afghanistan, though, so it wasn't a total loss, unlike another unit that had never deployed or never been here. We knew how to adapt and we have an awesome chain of command. They rolled it over and we started working it. There's unbelievable training. This is probably the most dedicated unit I have ever seen through training as it is. We were talking about deployments, but I've been here since 2002 and we've deployed three times, but that's not including all the times we went to Germany. That's away from family. My wife and I added it up and out of seven years, it's probably right at five years that we've been gone and that's some crazy stuff. This unit really trains hard and because we were training for Iraq, we put all our hearts into it. Then they tell us we're going to Afghanistan and it kind of let a lot of people down, because they know what's here and they know what to expect. We were not really interested. We were ready to go back to Iraq. Iraq is a lot more fun for soldiers because it's more in tune with normal society throughout the world.

Scabiosa

(b)(3), (b)(6) Afghanistan is a backwater war...

Victor

(b)(3), (b)(6) It's crazy. There's nothing, nowhere, no one, just a backwoods. This place is the same way it was in biblical times. That's retarded. So, everybody was looking forward to Iraq. You can walk down the street, do a patrol and hit an internet café, or go eat chow in a restaurant. A lot of people were disappointed for aspect, people who had been to Iraq before. Then we had to flip-flop and we did a lot of training, but it's all the same thing.

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**Scabiosa** (b) (3) You're focusing on individual- and unit-level training and procedures. That part doesn't change.

**Victor** (b) (3) The shooting part, the storming into a building part, that doesn't change. The only difference between Iraq and Afghanistan with MOUT training is if you kick in a door you're going to kick the whole mud wall down. You have to be nicer here. Maybe it's because it has gradually moved up. When I was in Iraq, we were dicks everywhere we went all the time. We were pretty aggressive. We kicked everything almost all the time. Here it's knock, knock, "How are you doing? Would you like some humanitarian assistance (HA)?" I hate that shit. It's more nice here.

**Scabiosa** (b) (3) I think that's an important point because our guys aren't trained for that shit. They're trained to be door-kickers and trigger-pullers.

**Victor** (b) (3) Absolutely.

**Scabiosa** (b) (3) When you get into an environment like that, that becomes secondary to the non-kinetic side of the house. I think that's a very important point that folks need to understand, how our soldiers are being expected to make that switch, make that adaptation.

**Victor** (b) (3) That's a big deal and I'm sure you've been around so you've heard people talk about it. Someone shoots at you from a house and then your commanders want you to go back to that same house and say, "Would you like some stuffed animals, some toys or cookies?" Fuck you. How about I put a bullet in your head and then go away? Not that I would, but it's what I'm thinking. It's hard to switch from being a nice guy to being an asshole. You get mixed up and it's very confusing. Not for senior leaders. It's easier because they don't do the actual in-your-face kind of stuff, but the soldiers get confused. It's very hard for them.

**Scabiosa** (b) (3) As a first sergeant, how do you try to keep that as understandable as possible for them?

**Victor** (b) (3) There really is no way. You have to come to terms within yourself. I can tell you the reason behind it, which is that we have to gain the confidence and all that. Just all the bullshit counterinsurgency technical terms and all that. You have to do this in order to get this. If they do this then you take away this, but still they don't understand. I'm pretty sure if you asked over half of this battalion.... Do you know what my boys ask for most of the time? Napalm – and they're not joking. They are dead serious.

**Scabiosa** (b) (3) Because it works in the boulders...

**Victor** (b) (3) It just burns the shit ... it just scares you. It was an unbelievable intimidating factor in Vietnam. They knew what it was and they were scared shitless of it. These guys know that once you drop it, it's like, "Whoa, don't shoot at them, they got napalm." Or it changes their tactics completely because they're scared. They're always talking to me about it. "All we need is napalm. Give us napalm and we're good to go. We'll get this shit taken care of in two months." "Well, we can't do that, boys. What I want you to do is to go knock on that door, shake some hands and say hi. Give them a stuffed animal and some HA." It's just hard for them. They understand but it's harder for them to understand because they're in the face.

**Scabiosa** (b) (3) They're not seeing the big overarching effects of the counterinsurgency strategy. They're where the rubber meets the road.

**Victor** (b) (3) They're not sitting in upper meetings. They don't get to hear what the leaders are talking about and generally we don't take tape recorders in there so the soldiers can hear it. If they did, they'd understand it a little bit better. It's just hard to differentiate when to be nice. Just like today, my soldiers did a patrol so

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Wodhi Garam (*ph*), which is two and a half kilometers from here. The children wouldn't accept stuffed animals, cookies or candy. They wouldn't accept it, which never happens, ever. The only reason why that is, is because someone came into that village and said, "If you accept this shit, we're going to kill you or we're going to kill your parents." The enemy can always get to the grown-ups; that's easy. You threaten their livelihood or their crops. It's easy to get to them, but to get to children and make children understand how serious it is, someone had to die, or close to it, in order for children to see that and understand that. "Don't take anything from the Americans," because usually they're bombarded in the trucks. You have to be careful because you don't want to run over them because they're trying to get stuff. It hurts my heart because those kids don't live a great life.

**Scabiosa** (3), (b) (6) When you got your change of mission and knew you were coming here, how much time did you have to interact with the 10th Mountain to get a better understanding of this particular area of operations (AO) and the fight you were getting ready to come into?

**Victor** (3), (b) (6) That part was actually pretty good because they sent out two first sergeants and a lieutenant. The lieutenant was actually from this company and they sent them to us when we were doing our mission rehearsal exercise at Hohenfels. They sent them down to talk to us about everything that happened. They sent guys down who were very excited about their job and what they'd been through, not deadbeats and dirtbags. It really helped out a lot. They told us a lot about the terrain, the things they do and how they go on patrol. Not that we had time to implement a lot of that, but it was in our heads saying, "Okay, we have to do this." Back there they were saying, "When we take contact, we fire back and we fire a lot of artillery and never go check on the bodies or get a battle damage assessment (BDA)." What the fuck? What do you mean you don't check for BDA? Well, little did I know that you can't check BDA. Your boys are so smoked from doing the local patrols to go to where the enemy was firing at you, which could be as much as two kilometers away.

**Scabiosa** (3), (b) (6) With a deep-ass valley in between...

**Victor** (3), (b) (6) Yes, and you would never, ever think about it. If you tried it, you would get soldiers killed. Either they'd set up for another ambush because the enemy doesn't wear what we wear and they're just more agile and quick, or by the time you got out there you would have to make camp. You'd be so smoked that you can't do anything for the next day and a half. I never realized that because I was making fun of it, and me and the commanding officer (CO) joked about it and were dogging him out. As soon as he left, we said, "We will never do that. It's crazy." As soon as we got here, though, we were like, "Oh, yeah." When they sent that group of people to us, it was phenomenal, the way they talked to you and sat down with each of my platoons and explained things. The way we made most of our money was that they would stay in front of that platoon and give them a chance to ask whatever they wanted that had to do with anything.

(b) (3), (b) (6) Comes up with some unbelievable questions and he would answer them, or have an idea for most of the answers. If he didn't, he would go over to one of the other senior guys and say, "They asked me this question." He would then come back and let us know. It was very awesome. It prepared us more, but nothing could ever prepare you for this terrain. This is Vietnam crazy shit. I've been through some stuff in my career and this by far is the Vietnam, fighting in the woods, close ambush shit. That's some crazy stuff.

**Scabiosa** (3), (b) (6) When you first got here and you started to set up shop, this would have been June, right?

**Victor** (3), (b) (6) We got here May 24th. When we got here, for us it was just different. When we first got here, this whole forward operating base (FOB) was just made a battalion FOB. Right before we got here, two weeks earlier this was a company FOB, this was the company headquarters, and most of this stuff wasn't here. It was hard because they were trying to explain to us what they did for operations and how they handled all

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their stuff. That was when there was just a headquarters here and most of the other people were at Ranch House and Bella. They were trying to explain how to do stuff with a battalion here, and not quite explaining well enough what they did when the battalion wasn't here. It was very confusing for us. The CO always stayed up at Bella when we first got here and he had to come back down here in order to link up with us. There was just confusion. They tried to make too many changes right before we got here. Then when we got here, we were confused because of that and where we needed to be. We had to do another whole horse blanket to decide what we control and what they control. It was just weird. Their changeover wasn't complete. They should have held off with what they were doing and then when we got here, we made this a battalion headquarters. The battalion headquarters for these guys was at Jalalabad Airfield, I believe.

**Scabiosa** (b)(3), (b)(7)(F) That's an important point that needs to be noted. This whole region was basically brand new as far as our coverage goes. Your predecessors from 10th Mountain were the first ones to actually operate in this area and hadn't been here for very long until you guys were coming into the area. When the 173rd came in, it was expanding it that much more. That's why you said it went from a company area to a battalion area because you guys were expanding this region.

**Victor** (b)(3), (b)(7)(F) Yes, sir. The whole time we were trying to understand what our sector was, we were helping out battalion with details and trying to figure out where everything goes that's coming in. The new stuff that these guys didn't have, we were bringing in new stuff and trying to figure out where to put it. Not to mention their force protection was atrocious. I don't know whether they thought they were safe or force protection units came out and assessed this place, but they were pretty jacked up. There were holes in the concertina where soldiers had trampled it down. They had tanglefoot ... 15 feet standard is 15 feet outside of concertina. The locals had come and taken all the tanglefoot and left the pickets, to use for something, and they had taken all their force protection. They wouldn't fix it because they knew we were coming in. They had a lot of issues and the force protection was messed up. My company, because we're here, which is an un-fucking-believable place to be and I'd never want this again, to be the unit that's stuck with battalion, but we had to be their bitches, excuse my language, to do everything. Everything they needed or wanted done came from us. Everyone else was gone and had their own little FOBs that they were in total control of. Not to mention we had Ranch House and Bella as well. It was just an unbelievable pain in the ass for this company, to do that plus our normal missions. I didn't like it.

**Scabiosa** (b)(3), (b)(7)(F) Is that what you first focused on, trying to bring this place up to speed and get force protection into place?

**Victor** (b)(3), (b)(7)(F) Absolutely, 100 percent. I told these guys that what you never want to do to someone is to start projects that the next unit is going to come in the middle of. If you can't finish things, don't even start them. It's easier for them because they have control from the start. They did a lot of shady stuff with contracting and land issues throughout the battalion. There were a lot of things we were cleaning up, fixing and trying to understand who owns this. "Oh, he owns it but his brother has a piece and his cousin has a piece as well." Most of the time, we were trying to figure out who the hell was in charge of this stuff. So yes, all we were doing was fixing stuff they left. I'm pretty sure the unit coming in is going to say the same thing, but we have been here so long we're saying, "Damn, we've seen how it is now compared to where it was before."

**Scabiosa** (b)(3), (b)(7)(F) You're right, and that never changes. This unit will come back here in a couple years and say the same thing.

**Victor** (b)(3), (b)(7)(F) That was mainly what we were doing. We were trying to figure out where our sector was, where our sector started and ended. Where does the battalion's intersect with ours, where does it become their

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control? There are still issues with that, like when we're doing call for fire missions. Who controls it? Does battalion control it or does our company control it, because we're right here? They want us to control it and they send an email and it says, "You guys control all this shit," but when we control it from there on out, then there's a big issue of, "You weren't supposed to control that. That was our job." "Fuck you! You told us this before." It's a nut roll. I never want to be with the battalion again. It's just a pain in the ass. I like our leaders, there's just too much confusion. I would rather go somewhere, focus on my combat ops and fix my own FOB. No one tells me how to fix my own FOB if it's my FOB. This is not my FOB. I could go around and make corrections to anything that's screwed up, tell the sergeant major, "Check this out. We need to fix this." Then if he doesn't have enough people, I'd help him because it was my idea, but I don't like for you to come tell me, "Hey, fix this." This is your fucking FOB, why am I doing it? We were fixing a lot of stuff initially, which is just par for the course. We wanted to get right into combat and it wasn't like that. All the other units were pretty much fixing stuff, yet they were out doing their patrols and getting into contact. My company, for the first three months, their feelings were hurt because they never got into anything. Unless you have been in a lot of them, and been there, done that, you want to get in to it. Once you do, you're like, "Well, okay, I'm good." A lot of my guys' feelings were hurt because nothing was going on. Bella was pretty safe and at Ranch House nothing happened, but all that shit changed in August when we amped up. Everyone got lackadaisical then, though, because nothing was happening.

**Scabiosa** (3), (b) Prior to things changing, tell me a little bit about the Ranch House and Bella. Did it make sense to you when you came in here?

**Victor** (3), (b) Absolutely not. I went up to Ranch House prior to the attack. It was just amazing. I built a FOB of my own as a platoon sergeant when I was last in Afghanistan and just as a rule of thumb, you have to see another guard post. It sounds retarded to say it because you're like, "Yeah, no shit," but there was only one post that you could stand on and see more than one other post. There were no sectors of fire. It went straight up a hill and around the corner. Our weakest corner was protected by the Afghan Security Guards (ASG), which is right where the enemy came in. The layout of Bella and Ranch House, I didn't understand. You couldn't get to Bella by vehicle. The only way you could get to either one of them was helicopter and that right there tells you there's potential danger. You only have one way in and one way out, and you're screwed. My guys at Bella met me at Wanat, which is halfway in between here and Bella, and my guys here walked to Wanat. These guys came back here and I walked with the guys who came from Bella back to Bella. Holy shit, you can't walk in this place. It's unbelievably crazy. We probably had six or seven heat casualties. It's just a nasty place and there's no reason. I'm not sure what the reasoning was and I still don't know. When we got here and talked to 10th Mountain, they were so excited to have the forward most northerly FOB. What does that mean? How does that affect us? Aranas was on the side of a hill and the town of Aranas was 200 meters down the hill, but it was 200 meters straight down. On normal land it was probably a six- or seven-kilometer movement and it was only 200 meters down. We didn't go much further than Aranas, which was worthless because that was where a lot of the bad guys hang out.

**Scabiosa** (3), (b) It's where the fight ended up coming from anyway, when it did come.

**Victor** (3), (b) Yes, it all came from there. We came down the same path all the time because there was no other path. It was a cliff and a cliff. They tried to set up a foot improvised explosive device (IED), a personnel IED, on the walk. It didn't work out, but it just tells you that you have to go in the same way. Thank God, because they had a lot of dudes attack that FOB and no one died. There were 14 dudes. All the ASG got the fuck out. The Afghan National Army (ANA) ran down to the other end where there was no contact and it was just my boys. Eight of those boys initially were wounded. There was like six dudes left and one of those guys is in for a Distinguished Service Cross (DSC). They held down the fort against 45 guys. They

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say 80 but no one ever knows. The guys on the ground say there were a lot of dudes. If you hear of firefights through the battalion, nobody ever sees anybody. It's hard to spot the enemy. They saw every single swinging Richard that day. They were all over the place, right behind the tactical operations center (TOC). They were 15 feet or 30 feet from where they were, trying to get in. If they could have taken out that group of people right there in the middle, it would have been over. I can't believe no one died. That's just amazing.

**Scabiosa** (b) (3) That fight pretty much sealed the fate of Ranch House. Even before that fight, were you guys trying pull stakes and say, "Look, there's no reason for us to be here"?

**Victor** (b) (3) Absolutely. We told them many times, there was no reason. I'm just asking for the purpose of being here. We could pull everyone from Ranch House to Bella and work some stuff out there, just because it's safer. When I went out there, it's the hair on the back of your neck kind of fear. You're out in the middle of nowhere with no one to come to your aid at all. If you're taking fire on your FOB, no one can land there, because that's where the pickup zone (PZ) was. No one can come there. No running water because it was on the side of a cliff. No showers. No communications ability hardly at all. So yes, everyone wanted out, but they did what they were supposed to do. That place sucked, and to throw in some extra miseries, all those guys looked like they had chicken pox because of the sand fleas, which are unbelievably nasty. Even my medic who's supposed to have all the cures for that shit, it was all over his face. The battalion was saying, "Use bed nets. That shit works." Well, I was up there in a bed net and saw like nine fleas drilling their way through the net. That didn't stop them and it was just very nasty. It was a nasty place. Too many animals and stuff like that. We definitely did not want to be there. But the other unit was just proud as hell by that point, and we couldn't figure it out. Once we shut down Ranch House, then everyone started thinking the same thing. "Why are we here?" It was pretty bad because one of our senior leaders came out, got off the bird and had never been there before. He said, "What the hell do we have a post here for?" Why would you say that in front of soldiers? Tell me you don't want us here and I'm out in two weeks. He said that in front of a lot of my soldiers, and that's the main thing that keeps coming up over time. Why the fuck are we here? Certain people don't want us here and we're trying to figure out why we're here. It's just silly. Now they're talking about getting rid of that one, too, thank God. It's just too far out. You can't do anything with it. We're putting a new base in Wanat and you can drive there. Anything can drive there, fly there or whatever. Bella and Ranch House? You're screwed. If it's bad weather, at Ranch House you could get nothing. You can't even drive a Hilux. It's on the side of a hill. You can't drive trucks out there. You have to get mules from the town and pay for whatever you need to come from Blessing. Have those vehicles come as far as they can go and then mules from there. That's crazy. It's dangerous and not very smart.

**Scabiosa** (b) (3) Tell me about some of the operations you guys would try to run, either from out of here or Bella.

**Victor** (b) (3) We did all kinds of operations until 9 November. We went everywhere and did everything. All those towns within three or four kilometers, my guys have been there 20 to 25 times. After Ranch House was taken down, the guys from Bella went to Aranas three or four times back and forth on that same path with no issues. There wasn't a super threat right there at Bella. They went out all over there and would go out on 13- or 14-man patrols and then have 14 or 15 ANA. It was damn near a platoon-size element going everywhere. It's the same thing, you have to stay low, which is what kills you because then you're in the bowl for everyone to shoot at you. Me and the CO were at Bella one day and we were planning a mission but it got canked from battalion. We told them we were going to go up to this hill which was right behind Bella. From standing on Bella, it looks like a four- or five-hour trip. So I looked at the CO and said, "Let's do it. It'll be a little gut check for the boys." So we went up there and 16 hours later ... we got up there and there was no water, so everyone was black on water. We didn't realize that, but then we had to come back down. There was no running water up there so everyone was drinking IVs. Every time you thought you were heading down, you came to a cliff and we couldn't find our way down. It could have

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been very nasty. We were doing cliffhanger type shit. We tried to make it from one spur to another spur in order to get down to the water or the road. It's very nasty and you don't realize. That's one thing we need to stress to these new guys is that you can't go too far. Even on the mountains, there are some places that don't have water. We had eight heat casualties that day, including one of my platoon sergeants. Everyone drank all their IVs and it was just nasty. It was getting dark and the cliffs we were walking on, you can't move on them at night so we had to stay there. The only problem was that we didn't have any water and everybody was jacked up. It was a Catch-22, so we had to get out. We took extra chances of soldiers falling for the greater good. It was kind of stupid that we did that in the first place, to do a gut check in a combat zone. It makes no sense. If you don't know your terrain, don't go. That was when we first got here.

Scabiosa (3), (b) You talked about always having ANA to go on patrols with your guys...

Victor (3), (b) Every time.

Scabiosa (3), (b) There are folks who will ask, "Don't they know the terrain? Isn't this their backyard?" Well, no, this is not their backyard because they're coming in from whatever region they have been recruited and trained in and they're just stationed here like we are.

Victor (3), (b) Absolutely. Sometimes we would take the ASG and that would be a different story, though, because it's their town and their territory. Still it's the communication between the two. We had this guy taking us up the mountain and taking us back down. We told him to take us to Muhlades (ph) Bridge. He took us to this bridge. It was just a cliff. We could see it, we just couldn't get to it. We went up and then we came back down, he said, "There's Muhlades (ph) Bridge." But there was a cliff and there was no way to get down to the water. We had to walk another five hours just to find a different way down. ANA doesn't know anything about the terrain because they're not from this part. About 90 percent of them aren't from around here, so they don't know anything about what you're doing. They suck ass anyway because if you're in a firefight with the ANA, the initial action of the ANA is to go to high ground. No matter where your US counterparts are, they spread out, they run up the hills and they shoot sporadically. They have no control over their weapons. They shoot wherever they think the enemy is coming from, whether or not there are people in front of them, behind them or beside them. They don't think about what they're doing. They have had so many people cut their fingers off using RPGs, holding their weapons wrong, or shooting one of their buddies with the backblast of an RPG. They are worthless, they really are. The bad thing is, after a firefight, after they spread out, you have to find them all. That was the main thing, on 9 November, after we thought we had everybody and then someone would tell us we were missing somebody. "You're not missing anybody. You have them on a MEDEVAC bird." There's no accountability like platoons have in our Army. They just disperse. When the shooting starts dying down, slowly they start trickling back in. On 9 November, all my guys pulled down and consolidated at the base of a river and then two ANA dudes came walking up. They thought they were enemy and almost shot them. It's stupid and very unsafe. If they're behind you, you could get shot. If they're in front of you, you know you're standing fast and so when they go like this, you're pretty safe – because most of the time you get hit from the front or the sides.

Scabiosa (3), (b) They probably don't like to take the lead too much, do they?

Victor (3), (b) No, absolutely not. It's like pulling teeth, and that's another thing: there are no off days for the United States Army. But their Fridays ... just like the guys who went to Wohdi Garam (ph) this morning, they had to go by themselves. It's Friday. *It's Friday?* What the fuck does that mean? But they don't do anything. Absolutely nothing. It's a goof-off day like our Sunday, except the problem is that we don't

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take off any days, never, and they do. Every day when we have patrols and it's a Friday, we have to do it by ourselves and we know it. We have to plus-up our boys for Fridays when we go out.

**Scabiosa** (3), (b) (6) What about the interpreters who go with you. How are they?

**Victor** (3), (b) (6) Some of them are good. There are a couple trustworthy, super-great guys. In Bella and Ranch House, though, they're worthless because more of the guys don't understand the dialects of the area. This whole place, just like Korengal, you go one valley over and it's totally different. The interpreters can understand a few things. They can understand names but that's it. Down here it's okay. They can speak to everybody because it's more populated. If you get out to Ranch House and Bella, it's a totally different language. We have an interpreter sitting at our observation post (OP) at Bella, we get integrated communications (ICOM) chatter and the only thing he can say is, "There's ICOM," because they're speaking Nuristani and they don't understand it. It's pretty frustrating. No matter how many interpreters you get, no one speaks that exact language so it's very hard. Overall they're pretty good, though. The guys get too comfortable with them and say a lot of shit around them that they shouldn't. They become friends to the soldiers. We have one interpreter whose wife is from the Bella area and he's just friendly with too many people around that area. Nothing has been proven against him, he just knows too many people over there. Or someone could get to his wife's family and automatically he's your enemy. It's just like that ASG shit on Kahler. In my opinion, he just walked up there and that was a straight up...

**Scabiosa** (3), (b) (6) Explain that incident a little bit.

**Victor** (3), (b) (6) They were getting ready to go out on patrol. Before they go out, they always leave to take the high ground. They have to go from Bella to OP Speedbump. They have to go through OP Speedbump to just check in to say, "Okay, we're moving to higher ground. We're going through you guys." They have done that 25 times before. They're halfway there when they called them on the radio and they wouldn't answer. They got closer and they still wouldn't answer. They got to the fence and Sergeant Kahler said, "Hey, you guys, something's up. I don't know what's going on so let me go check this out." He went inside the wire and in front of the bunker yelling and screaming the whole time. "Americans! We're going on our mission! We're coming through!" The next thing you know, a shot rang out and blew the back of his head off. There was no accident, in my opinion. I went up there right after that. There were three bunkers up there and he got past the first bunker and almost past the second bunker. They had seen who it was and heard him yelling. They know who we are. You can't misunderstand that. Then when he walked by, they shot the back of his head off. Then the soldiers who were down by the fence kept calling Sergeant Kahler's name and he wouldn't answer. So they grabbed all their shit and started running up to see where Sergeant Kahler was, and then the ASG shot again. This whole time they're shining flashlights in the bunker and yelling, "American!" There's no way that was an accident. There's no way. The guys tried to subdue them and then there was a big Mexican standoff about who was going to put their weapons down because they were scared that they were going to get shot by us, and understandably so. There was a big Mexican standoff for about a minute or two minutes. That's a long time to have someone pointing their weapon at you and you not pulling the trigger yourself. Finally they put them down and then they were so worried about Sergeant Kahler convulsing and bleeding all over the place. The guys took the bolts out of their weapons and had them sitting in a circle. Everyone was focused on Sergeant Kahler, just a small group of three to five dudes. Those guys got away. That guy is still at large. He was shady before. There were questions before about him being shady. He talked his buddies into doing some nasty shit. No way could that have been an accident. Pretty crazy shit.

**Scabiosa** (3), (b) (6) What about your guys here? Besides the shit details, your guys are on patrols out of here, convoys out of here...

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**Victor** (b) (3), (b) (6) The shit details initially were pretty big to square this place away, but after that it's not bad. It's not bad being here. Everybody understands. Don't mess with them, they have security for this area. They have patrols for every day. Every other day they do a foot patrol close to see the bazaar. They put people in the Biometric Automated Toolset System (BATS). As far as patrols, every other day or every third day, they do big patrols. They either go up to Wanat, out to Chapa Dara or out to Wohdi Garam (*ph*). I would say they do a big patrol about every three days and they have ANA trucks, our trucks and sometimes foot patrols. They're patrolling out of here all the time.

**Scabiosa** (b) (3), (b) (6) How is the local area around here? Not a lot of contact, relativity positive?

**Victor** (b) (3), (b) (6) Absolutely. Pretty friendly. That's why we were so surprised this morning when the kids refused the animals because it's pretty friendly. We've been hit a few times out west in the Chapa Dara area, but gradually as you get closer to Blessing everyone is usually friendly, very nice. Usually if you give them flags they will hang them up right then. Toys, candy or HA. Unlike every other place, like Ranch House or Bella, not very friendly. They really don't want you there. But these guys, they like us. We bring a lot of money. We employ probably 100 workers on this FOB alone.

**Scabiosa** (b) (3), (b) (6) How are your soldiers holding up?

**Victor** (b) (3), (b) (6) When we first got here, the unit we were replacing was very lackadaisical and they didn't care about security. Our guys, though, are they tired of combat? Yes, and they want to go home. As far as letting our guard or our defenses down enough for someone to get a chance, not going to happen. When we got here, a lot of those guys were messed up in the head. I'm not quite sure why, but I think their chain of command let them get like that, or their chain of command was like that themselves. When we got here, there were some their guys who would go sit by themselves and mumble. We have been in just as much, if not more, shit than that other unit was in. Then they had a lot of catastrophic incidents with Chinooks crashing, but no Vietnam-style ambushes like Battle Company or Chosen Company. My guys aren't like that. I don't know about Battle. They get shot at a lot. The guys, they're hanging in there, sir. Definitely wanting to go home and everybody is ready for it. Fifteen months is too long for a combat deployment. It's too long. Now, soldiers can do this for two to three years. Oh, well, that's your job. If you can't, you get out, or you go see a psych doctor and get out. You deal with it. I think the main thing is that it's hard on families. Do you know how many divorces we're going to have when we get back? People change and people meet other people, even if they don't want to. It gives you so much time to get close to someone else, to do something else or to get into a different pattern than what you had when your husband was here. Fifteen months is too long and 12 months is pushing the limit. If you're in a place like Bagram Airfield or Jalalabad Airfield where you don't do a lot and you're not getting shot at a lot, maybe 15 months or 12 months is okay. But when you're fighting all the time and have bullets zinging at you, you want to do that for as little time as possible. Serve your time and get out, and then maybe the next time you come back, it's to someplace that won't be as dangerous.

**Scabiosa** (b) (3), (b) (6) When you talk about a 15-month tour, that's only part of it. You also have to factor in all the months that you're away preparing for this 15-month tour and how much time you really have when you get home before you have to start preparing for the next tour.

**Victor** (b) (3), (b) (6) Which is why I'm going to be a first sergeant at basic training and take a break. It's pretty crazy. I've been doing it for six years – go to war and come back, train for half the time you're back, and then you have three months with your wife or family to take a vacation or do what you want to do. It's not working out. There was some shit on Armed Forces Network (AFN) that said in order to get re-acquainted to the way of life, it generally takes 18 months.

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Scabiosa (3), (b) They're advertising that but yet they don't give you 18 months.

Victor (3), (b) I haven't been at home with my wife for 18 months since I came to combat the first time. That's the most retarded thing, and why the hell would they put that on TV? It's bad for the families. If you're fighting in combat, or even if you aren't, it's still hard being away. A lot of things change in a year to a year and a half.

Scabiosa (3), (b) Your Chosen Company guys and the Battle Company guys have been in a lot of serious fights. You guys had the Ranch House fight. You guys had the Bella ambush on the 9th of November. How has that affected your soldiers? Obviously a lot of tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) would change, but how has that affected your soldiers?

Victor (3), (b) You know what, sir, I don't think it has changed my soldiers much, just that they miss their buddies and have a little heartache over that. It did change brigade's views as far as what you have to have and who you have to have with you when you go outside the wire. That was the enemy setting up an unbelievably perfect ambush on 9 November and 22 August. There's a video of where the guys point out their op order. That's just amazing. But does that mean you should change how aggressive you are as a unit? Brigade put out a lot of stipulations because they were scared that we were going to get into another big one. The boys aren't scared. The boys want to go out there and fuck up some people, but there are so many stipulations. I can't remember who it was, but the rest of battalion, specifically one, they're trying to get off the FOB, and our battalion they're trying to keep on the FOB. That's just people's perceptions of what's going on. If someone tells you're going out and then they keep adding more stipulations of what you have to have ... you have to have three layers of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) in order to leave the wire. What about these guys? Well, they just have to get out. It changed everyone above us. These guys are ready to make amends for their friends. As far as messing them up, I'm sure it hurt them a little bit. A lot of those guys are really close and tight-knit, especially when you're on a FOB like those two over there, living together month in and month out. I don't think it screwed them up too much. They wanted revenge and they wanted to go out, which might be why brigade put that stipulation on them. I don't know a percentage, but this battalion has had an unbelievable amount of troops in contact (TICs) compared to everyone else. This place is nasty. If you stay on your FOBs, you wait for someone to attack and then you finally go out and do a patrol, you will get torn up. They have plenty of time to place IEDs, plenty of time to put caches wherever they need to run to. You have to get out because it's a counterinsurgency. A lot of people don't realize that sometimes you don't always have ISR assets or artillery can't reach, but you go out. You have to go to a *shura* or get to this other FOB or whatever. If you have all those stipulations, you don't do shit and you sit on the FOB. You do a local patrol, which is basically what they're doing now, because to go out past a certain point, everyone's hair stands up on the backs of their necks from the battalion on up. "What are you doing? Has that been approved?" Now everybody is scared to do anything because they don't want to upset the people above them. I think the soldier would agree with me.

Scabiosa (3), (b) How do you assess your enemy?

Victor (3), (b) When we were here before, the enemy was an unbelievable joke, a laughingstock. They would shoot and run. Sometimes they would stay and fight and just get demolished. They had nowhere near the technical or tactical sense to do anything. To me, they were as dumb as a box of rocks. These guys here, though, are just phenomenal. That dude we killed at the Ranch House had his commanders sitting around a fucking map and he was pointing and saying, "You go here at this time and you'll come over here." Unbelievable, just like what we would do. He did troop leading procedures and tactical ops the same way we would. They set up a support by fire. They flanked around to the outside, that's a battle drill. "You flank around to the side and shoot down to make sure you hold them down while we come in on this side." It was just phenomenal. These guys were very smart and have been fighting for a lot of years,

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unlike the guys who were here last time who were just idiots. The only time they would cause casualties was when they got caught with a bunch of dudes in the same spot. There was just a lot of fire going back and forth.

**Scabiosa** (b) (3), (b) (6) It's like the old adage of combat, that the idiots will be the first to die and the smart ones will continue to adapt.

**Victor** (b) (3), (b) (6) Those guys keep changing and seeing our TTPs. "When they take contact from this FOB, it takes them approximately seven minutes to get mortar rounds to us." So within seven minutes, they know they have to shoot and then be somewhere else. That's just amazing. Now we tell the villagers, "Don't have people (*inaudible*) or they will die. Don't have them up." The village will sign an agreement. So when we get fire from one area, we just pepper the whole area with 155s or 120 or 60 millimeter mortars, just pepper the whole area. Egress routes, rat lines, so they have no place to go. I guarantee a lot of them were dying, but obviously we don't know it. It's too far to go, too much of a pain in the ass and too much of a risk to check it out no matter how curious you are. We dropped artillery one night and it was actually close enough to where we could send a patrol out. There was blood splattered all over the place. That was the one chance we got to go look and see what happens when someone loses a lot of blood. We either killed two or three dudes or someone had a feast on some cow and goat. Another thing that amazes me about these people is their ability to get people out. Holy shit, I have been in a lot of firefights, but.... Those guys came through Ranch House. They had to come through one funnel spot through the wire. Once they came through that funnel spot, then they spread out. That's when they were getting torn up. My guys had a box of 80 hand grenades and were just throwing them at those guys. They killed probably 15 to 20 dudes. No one was left but the commander, and that's because that dude had enough nuts to get close enough and he was back behind our TOC when he died. No one wanted to come up that close to pull him back. All the other guys, wow, and that goes for all the other firefights we were in. How many people do they come with? If we see 20, maybe there are 40 as a reserve for cleaning up bodies. That shit's amazing. I'd never seen anything like that.

**Scabiosa** (b) (3), (b) (6) You guys are a year into your deployment now. How would you gauge the success of what you guys have been trying to accomplish in this region, at your level?

**Victor** (b) (3), (b) (6) I'll say it like this. If the unit comes in and does what we have done with the aggressiveness we have been using, then it will be awesome and it just carries on. But if they get here and do the sit-on-the-FOB thing where they only go out every now and again and don't use the same tactics, then they won't do anything. I believe we've helped a lot. A lot of people trust us around the major FOBs. If they need anything or if their kids get hurt, they will bring them to our FOBs. But if the next unit doesn't do what we're doing generally – it might not be as good or as aggressive – but generally if they do the same things, all progress is good. By progress I mean the ability to talk to them, for them to understand what we're talking about, getting along with the people around us. I think the enemy has lost the foothold that it did have on this place because we're always out and about talking with people, giving HA and even cement. If you give cement to guys, they think you're cool. I think it's 80 percent better than when we got here, but if this next unit...

**Scabiosa** (b) (3), (b) (6) It can reverse in a heartbeat...

**Victor** (b) (3), (b) (6) Without a doubt.

**Scabiosa** (b) (3), (b) (6) Sometimes it's a hard question to answer as far as progress because we're a nation of instant gratification and in a counterinsurgency fight like this, there's no instant gratification. It's a marathon. Do

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you think that's hard for us as Americans as a whole and for the soldiers on the ground, because you can't see immediate gratification?

**Victor** (3), (b) (6) Yes. If you're talking to soldiers, they will tell you, "I'm not really sure what we're doing here." They don't know and you have to keep telling them, "We're here to help build the infrastructure of Afghanistan so they can do their own shit and we can leave." On the ground right there with them, they just don't see it. They're going to say, "Okay, whatever, I'm going to do the same thing I did when I first got here. I go out on patrol, we meet people and we say hi. Sometimes we get shot at." It's the same shit for them. Absolutely, and I question it myself sometimes. "Are we really making a difference?" I don't know, I really don't know. I know there are a lot more good things going on now than when we got here, but what does "good things" mean? If the United States pulls out in a year, will it go back to the way it was? Oh, hell yes. These people know nothing but that the dude with the most guns wins. So when we leave and if you don't have a gun, you're a slave to somebody else.

**Scabiosa** (3), (b) (6) Everything we do out here is relying on support from higher levels – MEDEVAC support, indirect fire support, close air support, ISR capabilities. There's never enough of it anywhere and there's always a fight to try to get what you need. How would you rate that from your point of view and your experience here in this theater? How has the support been? How much of a challenge has that been?

**Victor** (3), (b) (6) If you're talking support as in ISR, I have no issues. It has gotten a lot better since we first got here and has progressed throughout because they realized what we need. But what it has taken for them to realize that is blood. I wish we would have gotten to that point without getting into 17 firefights a day and without losing a soldier every week or every month. As far as supply, I really don't have an issue because they have done everything they could do and have spent a lot of money to get people out here. There are little things that don't mean anything to the big people that would change the morale of a lot of soldiers. All the small FOBs, KBR can't go out there and fix stuff because they don't have the protection. KBR needs to hire people that don't mind getting in the shit.

**Scabiosa** (3), (b) (6) In the old days, we had combat engineers and that was their job.

**Victor** (3), (b) (6) Exactly. Now it's outside contracting that can't do it. Okay, you're fired. Give me some people who don't mind getting into firefights and being alongside and helping out the soldiers, and they would get paid extra for it. I have a latrine CONEX and a shower CONEX that haven't worked since they have been there at Bella. You know the screensaver on a computer screen where the pipes go all around, that's what it looks like in between the two CONEXs, trying to figure out the water flow and the drainage and all that shit. If they just sent one KBR dude out there for a week, we would be good to go. But as far as supply and getting the things we need, the main thing that has made the money for this unit and has settled down combat this spring as compared to last is the Improved Target Acquisition System (ITAS), the Long Range Advanced Scout Surveillance System (LRAS) – the thermal sights. I don't know if you're familiar with that.

**Scabiosa** (3), (b) (6) I am but I'd ask that you explain that for the record. Somebody listening to this interview 25 years from now won't know what the hell you're talking about.

**Victor** (3), (b) (6) My guys at Bella had a little thermal sight that goes out 2,500 to 3,000 meters and can give you a grid of whatever you're looking at. Before, those guys got to within 100 meters or 200 meters if there was good coverage and you couldn't see anything. It's just changed the way of the fight. The guys who are fighting us now at Bella have to fire mortars, rockets and small arms over 2,000 meters away because we can see them. Just the other day, we saw 15 new dudes right above Jamamesh (*ph*), which signed a treaty with us that no guys from this village will be up there. Fifteen dudes congregating in that area carrying shit in their hands and we blew them the hell up. That was straight-up enemy and they would have gotten

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above Speedbump and that would have been a three- or four-hour firefight out there. But because we saw them, we destroyed them and it was over. The Jamamesh (*ph*) guys came the next day and I said "Yes, those were bad guys. We heard all the shooting. It was crazy." The equipment we got over time, I think this summer will be nowhere near as detrimental or get as many people hurt as last time. The main thing is eyes – eyes during the night, eyes during the day and the ability to see farther.

**Scabiosa** (3), (b) (A) As first sergeant, what has been the biggest challenge during this tour?

**Victor** (3), (b) (A) As a first sergeant, I would say paperwork, in a non-tactical sense. The guys at Michigan, Ranch House and Bella, I have to go there with scanners and printers. They only go so far and you only get so many. They go down and every time a resupply goes up, hands off the paperwork, they fix it or do whatever they have to do with it, and then the next pass someone brings it back down. Instead of taking two days, it takes two months. That's my major thing as a first sergeant is just admin, and also resupply when we had Ranch House. I don't wish that on anybody. The only way you can do it is by air, but then there was another stipulation because Chinooks can't go up there, so you have to wait longer because Blackhawks are the only ones that could go up there.

**Scabiosa** (3), (b) (B) Then you factor in the winter months when they don't fly at all...

**Victor** (3), (b) (B) During the summer months, you have to do twice as much as any other FOB because you have to stockpile stuff. I think that was my two major things – admin and resupply, and morale. A lot of first sergeants don't go out very often. They sit and handle their business. Every two weeks, I would go out to Bella, every week I would go over to Michigan, and it was just morale. If uniforms are jacked up I would tell the platoon sergeants so I wouldn't talk directly to the soldiers. So when I see a soldier, I would say, "Hey what's going on? What's up, man? Where are you from again?" I would be sitting around talking to them and getting a feeling for what they're all about. I would just sit down and listen to their stories. I like it. I like being with them and hanging out with them.

**Scabiosa** (3), (b) (A) As a first sergeant, what has been your greatest success this tour?

**Victor** (3), (b) (B) I'm not really sure there is a greatest success as a first sergeant. It's not really a win-defeat kind of situation.

**Scabiosa** (3), (b) (A) After you go home and you're sitting there five years from now thinking about this tour, what are you going to be most proud of?

**Victor** (3), (b) (B) Morale, how these guys took such serious hits and kept on going without major emotional issues. I hear all the bullshit going on in the Korengal and everyone taking medicine. Not a lot of my guys were on medicine. Now granted we haven't been in as many TICs, but I have as many casualties and I have as many deaths as everyone else. My guys aren't taking mood enhancers or whatever the hell you want to call it. They pick up themselves or a buddy picks them up and says, "I know Sean Langevin was a good friend of yours but he isn't here anymore. He died doing what he wanted to do, so snap the fuck out of it, pull your head out of your ass and let's do this." The ability for companies and platoons to do that with each other without outside influence is awesome. Every time there's a serious issue, we send a psych up there and he comes back and says "They're doing great for seeing five of their buddies killed yesterday. They're doing phenomenal." I think the main thing is the good times I've spent with these boys and the things they can do without being told. Now granted there have been some issues and I've had to go off the handle...

**Scabiosa** (3), (b) (A) You'll get that in peacetime, too.

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**Victor** (b) (3), (b) (6) Exactly. I'll be thinking, "Damn, Afghanistan, we went through that Vietnam bullshit. Wow, that was crazy." I think that's mostly it. We're not relying on sending people back to Bagram Airfield or Landstuhl for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). They're handling it on their own and if they have issues, they come see me. I have an open-door policy for everyone, and so does the CO. If you have issues, come talk to me about it. If I think you're being a pansy, I'm going to tell you. You have to buck up and switch up. But if I have someone I'm legitimately worried about, I'll tell them, "You need to go to Bagram and get checked out and if need be go to Landstuhl." But it hasn't come to that. Thinking about what we went through, I heard about the guys we replaced. They had their company commander get killed and their morale. My company had to go in to rescue another unit, 1st Squadron, 91st Cavalry, their fallen hero. They called up my boys and we went in there, me and my CO. When we got on the PZ at their FOB where they just lost two dudes and their company commander, they were all sleeping. I swear to God, if something like that happened on my watch with my boys, if you're not antsy to get back into the fight, to do something to take revenge, or just to go find your own man. They asked us and needed us to come in and help them with their own. I completely disagree with that. I would summon all my boys, the supply clerks. When we went in there, it wasn't just that. I don't mind helping out, but when we came in there it was like, "Hey, it's your fight now." Me and the CO went in there to talk to the platoon leaders who were in the fight and the first sergeant, and every single one of them was sleeping. They knew we were coming and they knew what we were coming there to do, and their dudes had just died. I was very disappointed. Also, the FOB was trashed. It was nasty and it was jacked up. They didn't want to go outside the wire. Since no one wanted to go outside the wire, we asked for them to give us one dude so he can show us where the initial contact was made, so we can go in and find the body. It took them half a fucking hour to find someone that wanted to go back with us. Looking at that and then looking at my boys and what happened with six dudes at one time, from the same platoon, for them to bounce back the way they did, it's just phenomenal. I think a lot of that shit has to do with the platoon sergeants, platoon leaders, first sergeant and company commander. Whatever your command presence or attitude is, it rubs off on soldiers. No one can ever tell me different. If you have a dirtbag first sergeant, platoon leader, platoon sergeant or CO, it's going to be reflected all the way down to the Joe. But if you have hard-charging leaders throughout, or even if you have a shithead platoon sergeant and a great platoon leader, as long as they balance each other out, you're good to go. That's what I would tell any unit. If you have weak leaders, don't put them together.

**Scabiosa** (b) (3), (b) (6) How would you rate your platoon leaders? There's a lot of responsibility going on with young lieutenants, shit I never saw when I was a lieutenant, thank God. All I had to worry about was crashing my helicopter. These guys are saddled with a lot of responsibility in this day and age.

**Victor** (b) (3), (b) (6) Unbelievably so. I think they're awesome. We have two platoon leaders right now that are pretty new, Thurman and Brostrom. They still have some shit to work on, but as far as technically and tactically ... I wouldn't want that responsibility coming into the Army for the first time, being responsible for all those people and the stuff they're going through. I wouldn't want it. That's why most of my platoon sergeants are just powerhouses. Lieutenants do make mistakes but the platoon sergeant is right there to slap them in the back of the head and say, "Let's not try that. Let's work on this for a little bit." I think it just balances out and it works out. Obviously there's some immaturity with the two new lieutenants we have. They have immature qualities that the platoon sergeants and myself and the CO try to fix, but as far as responsibility, phenomenal.

**Scabiosa** (b) (3), (b) (6) was talking to someone stateside not too long ago and we were talking about the condition of our Army and everything else. He's prior infantry, Special Forces, Ranger, and a hard-charger. We were both kind of in awe about the future of our Army and how incredibly good the future of our Army is going to

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be because of the quality of leaders, both NCO and officer, that we're developing in combat these days, how that's going to create such a core of solid, quality leaders for the Army in the future.

**Victor** (b) (6) think because we're in so much war right now, it's my opinion that there are going to be a lot of mistakes made that aren't normally made in garrison. Too much time in combat. Most of the platoon sergeants that have been promoted since we've been here have absolutely no garrison leadership at all. For personal stuff, if soldiers have issues, "I don't know, let me ask the first sergeant." There are just so many things since we've been in combat so long, when we go home and when you're in garrison, people tell you to shape up because you're screwing up. "Whatever, I'm going back to combat in six months. I don't care." I think that's going to be our downfall when the wars stop. How do we keep together as a unit without catastrophes happening, 97 DUIs in one unit? It's going to be painful because the senior NCO leaders are new to garrison. We'll see how it works out.

**Scabiosa** (b) (6) is there anything I haven't asked or we haven't talked about that you would like to add before we wrap this up?

**Victor** (b) (6) This unit, in comparison to other units that have been here and done that, we have given a lot and done a lot of extra things that units don't normally do. I don't know if it will show up in history books when you see it later on. I just wish every unit could be like this and I would rather stay. If it wasn't for my family, I would stay because of the qualities and the superior leadership of this unit. I would much rather stay here than go anywhere else and take the chance of getting in a dirtbag unit later on. I just wanted to throw that out there.

**Scabiosa** (b) (6) Very good. Anything else?

**Victor** (b) (6) No, that's it, sir.

**Scabiosa** (b) (6) Well, I do appreciate your time and hopefully it wasn't too painful. With that, I will end this interview.

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed by (b) (6)