

Yankee

Interview with SSG

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

21 October 2008

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

(b)(3), (b)(6) ly name is (b)(3), (b)(6) a historian with the Combat Studies Institute, and I'm interviewing Staff Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6). This is an unclassified interview so if I stray into anything that's classified, just say, "I can't talk about that." I'd like to start out with you giving me some background on what you did before you joined the Army, where you went to school, where you grew up and how you came to enlist in the Army.

Yankee

Yankee

(b)(3), (b)(6) es, sir. I'm 31 years old and I'm from Traverse City, Michigan, up north where there's nothing really to do but outdoor activities, so I was very active in hunting, camping and all the snow sports. I did well in school, I just couldn't sit still. I was always an active, outdoor person. The first book I checked out of the library was on tanks and planes, so it was almost from a little kid that I was destined to be in the Army. Once I was in high school, I just could not see myself going to college. I knew it would waste money. I was still checking out books on the Army and it was pretty natural, actually, to join in my senior year. I was an airborne infantryman. I had no doubt, it just seemed right and it was from the get-go of what I wanted to be.

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

Could you talk about some of the military schools that you've attended prior to going to Afghanistan this last time?

Yankee

(b)(3), (b)(6) his time the schools I went to were Jumpmaster, HAZMAT, stuff that would help the company along. I was the senior staff sergeant (E6), so I was trying to do as much as I could for the company. I went on a couple training rotations to prepare us for the deployment, plus I did multiple instructions with other companies and another battalion, the brigade support battalion (BSB), in teaching them how to react to fire and stuff like that.

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

When did you take over as platoon sergeant for 2nd Platoon?

Yankee

(b)(3), (b)(6) was in April 2008.

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

Can you describe the platoon at that time? Who were the people in it? What was their state of training like and that sort of thing?

Yankee

(b)(3), (b)(6) he state of training, I'd say, of the company entirely was really high. By that time, not just the platoon itself was well trained, the whole company was. I couldn't have asked for a better unit, this company, and a better platoon to get. At that time, we had been in combat already for almost a year, so we were already well trained and combat veterans by that time. Everybody had been working well together, intermixing squads or going on another team or another squad to beef up a patrol. It wasn't hampering at all because we were so used to working with each other. We were in a high state of combat readiness at that time.

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

From 1 April until about 1 July 2008, what kinds of activities was 2nd Platoon involved in? Where did those operations take place?

Yankee

(b)(3), (b)(6) We were out at Camp Blessing so we had our area that we covered, but we also did all the battalion CONOPs plus going into other areas to help out. I wouldn't say we were doing more than other platoons and companies for sure, I don't want to say that, but we were definitely doing a lot. We did every different type of mission, from regular combat patrols, counter improvised explosive device (IED), plus

Yankee

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

the different operations that we did. We had a wide variety of operations that we were used to. We were very used to thinking on our feet and reacting.

Date (b)(3), (b)(6) Could you give me a description of what the platoon looked like, kind of a mini order of battle? What kinds of weapons systems did the platoon contain?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) We were organized as a regular light infantry platoon and all the weapons therein, plus some mounted elements when we were out on the road. These were typical from a MK-19 and a .50 cal for our heavy weapons on the vehicles to the regular light infantry platoon 240s, squad automatic weapons (SAWs), M4s, 203s.

Date (b)(3), (b)(6) Were these vehicles part of 2nd Platoon during this time period?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Yes, sir. I signed for them and was responsible for them, so yes, they were part of 2nd Platoon. Luckily my first couple of years in the Army I was an IH, which is the mounted. So I was able to get whatever they didn't know, what they didn't have a vast knowledge of already, I was able to train them up even further.

Date (b)(3), (b)(6) Can you talk me through when you first found out that there was going to be some sort of mission that you guys were going to go and establish a combat outpost at Wanat?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) It was always talked about. It was one of those locations where it needed to be set up. The district government center was at that location so they needed us to help out. It helps give them even just extra morale to have us around and they needed that, so it was always an idea to go up there. We always knew it was a possibility, that during our tour there we would go up there.

Date (b)(3), (b)(6) Can you talk me through the days prior to 13 July? What did your platoon do when they arrived? How did you set up your defensive positions and that sort of thing?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Before we even left, working with leadership, helping them come with the external assets plus their own supplies, stuff like that that we would need up there. We knew we had to have a good defensive position, so the first couple days was just nothing but digging in hard ground, which you could only get maybe about a foot to two feet down. It was still the dead heat of Afghanistan, so during the hottest parts of the day in the afternoon there was a lot less being done just because even working for 10 minutes, you're using up a lot of water. We tried to do as much as we could from first light at four o'clock in the morning until it got just too hot. Then we would rest up and then try to get some more stuff done when it started cooling down a little bit towards sundown.

Date (b)(3), (b)(6) Were these two-man fighting positions or just typical foxhole things? Could you describe these at all?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) My platoon leader's (PL) intent was to set up a bunker-type, a stronghold defense using HESCOs that we just got with the Bobcat that helped fill, plus digging the hole behind the HESCO. If we used a four-foot HESCO, then we would dig down two feet so we'd have six feet, so you might have a wall or firing ports to give us better defensive positions.

Date (b)(3), (b)(6) Could you give me any details on how you coordinated any indirect fire that you might need for a defensive position like that?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) I'm not sure if we can go into that.

Date (b)(3), (b)(6) No problem. On 12 July, could you describe what this combat outpost looked like? Talk me through how you guys set up this OP that was about 75 yards out in front of the main position.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Right. The outer defenses were single-strand concertina wire, some parts were actually double. Our main concern was the high ground around, so that's why we had the bunker positions. A single man was just not practical for the area. Up until the night of the 12th, we, of course, were being told that we were going to be attacked, and it's not that we were taking that lightly; we always knew that there was a really, really good possibility of it. But everywhere we went and every day I was in country, a different person would tell me that. It wasn't that we were getting intel and then just saying, "Oh whatever, we always hear that." We always knew we were; we just didn't know when, of course.

Date (b)(3), (b)(6) So this actually came down from Captain (b)(3), (b)(6) but it wasn't unusual that you guys might be attacked?
Oscar

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Right, that's what I'm saying. It wasn't unusual that we'd always be hearing that.

Date (b)(3), (b)(6) Could you tell me the location in reference to the little village of Wanat, where you were located? Were you directly south of the town?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) We were right in it. Their shops were on the other side of the road. They were, in a sense, our nextdoor neighbors.

Date (b)(3), (b)(6) The OP was set up directly east of the...?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) We had us, the road, then a shop and then on the other side of the shop on a little hill was the OP. It was a little bit more than a stone's throw away.

Date (b)(3), (b)(6) How did you go about setting up the OP or how your platoon leader set up the OP? Describe what that looked like.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) That area there's a lot of big rocks, but the ground was a little softer due to the farming and we couldn't HESCOs and the Bobcat up there. So that was done with sandbags with multiple positions, plus multiple avenues that you could go to support one of the fighting positions even though they were 10 meters away. Behind it was a sandbag wall so you could run to the other position without exposing yourself.

Date (b)(3), (b)(6) The main position that you guys were in, did you have any mortars or anything with you?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Roger, yes, we had some.

Date (b)(3), (b)(6) Your mortar position, was that co-located with the command post (CP)?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) No, it was to the south.

Date (b)(3), (b)(6) Can you describe the events that took place when you guys had stand-to on 13 July in the morning?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Stand-to is not only a standard procedure for the Army, but it's something I believe in entirely. I was in the Ranch House attack back in August 2007 when they hit us at five o'clock in the morning, so I knew that was a time that they liked to hit. I'm a huge believer and a huge enforcer of stand-to. Everybody was ready, even a half hour before it got light. Everybody was up and in their armor, 100 percent (*incredible*) security and not a lot of movement around. It's one thing I preach: you're down in your position scanning

in your sector. I was doing my typical rounds of going from position to position, checking them out, when one of the Humvees with a weapons system sighted a couple guys up in some high ground. Started discussing with the commanding officer (CO) at that time what we were going to do and then I started walking towards the mortar pit. Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6) who was running the mortar, me and him are really good friends, so I was going to talk to him about laying in the mortar tube on that position and talked about what he could get up there and how fast he could move, to discuss our options with the mortar. That's when the first couple rounds hit to my left, hit the HESCO, and the next couple rounds went to my right. That first burst was when Specialist Abad was hit.

Romeo

Date (b)(3), (b)(6) He was with Headquarters Company, is that correct?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Right, he was one of the mortars.

Date (b)(3), (b)(6) So it was all pretty much small arms fire at that time onto the mortar location?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Well, it's one of those events where I remember the first burst. In my mind it was, well, here we go. I ran into the mortar pit, got into position, and then all I could hear was nothing but all sorts of small arms and explosions, so I knew RPGs were starting to come in.

Date (b)(3), (b)(6) You were located pretty close at this time to the CO, Captain (b)(3), (b)(6) Do you recall what he was doing at this time?

Oscar

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) was actually away from him. He was by the CP and, like I said, I was over at the mortar pit. The fire was so intense that I decided to stay and help at the mortar pit because they had one of the perimeter positions and that area was just behind the wall. The mortar pit was wire, but there was a trail there and there was a lot of cover from trees, so I decided to stay and help.

Date (b)(3), (b)(6) So the mortars, at this time, are still operational or were they?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Nothing that I could tell ever hit the mortar tube while I was there, but the mortar crew was pinned and we were defending that position from the south and from the southeast side. We were in heavy contact right there. We had to secure ourselves before we could do anything with the mortar tube.

Date (b)(3), (b)(6) It looked like most of the enemy fire was coming in from an easterly direction?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Well, at that time, talking from the OP, they were getting all the fire from the north, the east and some of the southeast. Then the mortar pit was catching fire from the south and the southwest. There wasn't anything really coming from the west high ground.

Date (b)(3), (b)(6) Was there fire coming out of Wanat itself?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) At that time, very little. In my opinion, they were using that time to maneuver on in.

Date (b)(3), (b)(6) Can you talk me through the rest of the actions that day?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Yes, sir. After about 15 minutes at the mortar pit, I would guess, I lose all concept of time. That's one of my things in combat. An hour goes by in two minutes and two minutes sometimes go by in an hour, if you know what I mean. Firing from there, we were throwing grenades, firing AT4s. I must have fired about eight magazines. The ammo point was there also. We were trying to get ammo from there and we'd get shot at into the pit. About that time, a round hit the mortar ammo and we saw some sparks. From talking to the mortar guys, they think it hit one of little charges that go with the mortar round and sparked.

Romeo

Pepper

That's when Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6) said for everybody to get out. So we relocated over to the company CP, dragging Specialist Abad. That's when (b)(3), (b)(6) was shot, when he was carrying Abad. Once we got there, just before that also was when the TOW truck was hit with multiple RPGs but all the crew got out safely. It was also co-located at the CP. Once I got to the CP, I made sure that our wounded were being cared for and then the CO was talking to the battalion and working external assets. I was working the local defense for that position. My radio was out at the time. They had flooded the mortar pit and my hand mike had dropped in the water and quit working so I was out of comms until I got to the CP. Once there, trying to assess the situation. At that time, the main part of the forward operating base (FOB) was not catching that much. The position to my north, which was about 15 meters where most of my 2nd Squad was, they had sustained a few casualties, wounded, so I ran over there to see what was going on and to see if they needed any help. I discovered that my medic plus two guys from 2nd Squad were wounded. They were being worked on. From those positions, I didn't fire at all. I don't know if they were re-maneuvering or doing what, but there was not that much fire coming in on the inside yet. I don't know if they were waiting for us to start moving around, which is a tactic they like to use, to wait and see. They know we care a lot about our wounded and that we'll move them. I think they were waiting for that. Then at that time, the OP had gotten the two reinforcements.

Date

(b)(3), (b)(6) That was your platoon leader and...?

Yankee

(b)(3), (b)(6) Novater. He had actually gone off before I got to the CP, so in that first 20 or 30 minutes, whatever it was ... like I said, all time is gone for me. I could spout out minutes but I have no idea how accurate they'd be. Also, Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6) led reinforcements with Sergeant Garcia and a few others (*inaudible*) on up there. When I was at that other position with the 2nd Squad wounded, that was when the Apaches started coming in. They were firing really closely to the OP, which kind of got me concerned. We couldn't get a hold of the OP, so at that time I yelled across to the CO that I was going to take some guys up there because we just could not get contact with anybody up at the OP. So myself, Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6) plus about eight other guys ran across the road, linked up with the TCP because they had their little (*inaudible*) kind of overlooking the OP. When I got behind the building, we started taking fire from the village right across where we were going to run. Tossed a smoke grenade out behind the bazaar to help cover our movement. Myself and Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6) covered from right by the building while the rest of the group went up on the terraces and across, so out of that line of fire. Once they got to the OP, I was concerned that the enemy would move in from the low ground where they couldn't see. So myself and

Scorpio

Romeo

Pisces

Pisces

Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6) ran through the smoke where we were taking fire, fired into some windows and into some buildings, into the low ground, but didn't get any return fire, then we linked up at the OP to help strengthen the defense.

Date

(b)(3), (b)(6) What was the situation at the OP when you got there?

Yankee

Romeo

(b)(3), (b)(6) When I ran up, I could already see a few bodies so I already knew I had more than what I'd heard on the radio as far as KIA. There were a few wounded. I tasked Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6) with working the wounded while I set up the defense with the reinforcements we'd brought up. Luckily we weren't taking any fire. I think the enemy knew they weren't taking any return fire from there for a little bit, plus the Apache ... they really don't like that air ... so I think it kind of caught them as to what they were going to do next. Once we reinforced the OP, I got everybody set. The quick reaction force (QRF) was there. I linked up with my first sergeant and Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6) 1st Platoon platoon sergeant, and he brought some soldiers up to help reinforce the OP. Set them in and then we started identifying and moving some bodies. We moved two and then we were working on the PL when we started taking small arms and RPG fire up at the OP. We set in and the guys who were moving around, we got into the closest positions. I was right by a rock engaging the village and the low ground, popping over the rock and shooting. From that time I could tell that we were taking fire from the village, from the hotel, plus the building near the OP. We were engaging them, me and a few other soldiers, and then I came back around the rock. I didn't want to

Raven

overexpose myself and that's when an RPG hit the tree above me and rained shrapnel down on me. That's when I was wounded – not bad, just small shrapnel mostly in my arms. I had a dime-sized hole in my left bicep and shrapnel settled down in my bone, down by the elbow. We were taking fire. It was a big enough hole to where I thought I got shot. The medic, Specialist (b)(3), (b)(6)h), ran through fire to come give me aid. He set up a tourniquet and stopped the bleeding. I was still firing from that position, still fighting. Once the tourniquet kicks in, though, you start to lose feeling. At that point, the way I had to fire was using my left hand even though I'm right-hand dominant. That's where the wound was, so it was hard for me fire on the rock without overly exposing myself, so at that point I began giving water to guys and passing ammo.

Viking

Date (b)(3), (b)(6) How long did it take for the MEDEVACs to start arriving? I assume you were on one of the first MEDEVACs?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) No, actually there had already been one or two MEDEVAC lifts. I was the third, I believe.

Date (b)(3), (b)(6) From what I hear, those guys did a bang-up job.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) I gotta tell you, the bravery of the MEDEVAC crew was just unbelievable. The MEDEVAC that landed to pick me up landed right on the terraces not 20 meters from the OP. I ran to it, got in and, to be honest, I was fully expecting to get hit by an RPG.

Date (b)(3), (b)(6) During the major parts of this firefight, can you describe the small arms fire, RPGs? Was the enemy shooting rockets, mortars? Could you give me a description of that?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) There was a lot of small arms, a lot of AK, definitely a lot of PKM and RPK from their fire support positions. There was a lot of that raining in. The RPGs were pretty heavy. When I was down at that mortar pit, there was a guy shooting either in a tree or from behind a tree, and luckily enough he wasn't smart enough to realize that when he shot the RPG, it would come out, the fins would pop out, they'd catch the branches and it would send that RPG off in a different direction. He did that multiple times and he had a good eyes-on into the center of the pit, so it was pretty fortunate that he wasn't intelligent enough to figure out that he had to move to a better position.

Date (b)(3), (b)(6) You described the QRF getting up there fairly quickly. How fast did they get up there? I guess they had about seven kilometers to go?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) The first part of the trip you could go pretty fast, but the last two and a half kilometers is not much wider than a Humvee, it's windy and there are a lot of spots where you could get ambushed. They did a really good job of maneuvering through that.

Date (b)(3), (b)(6) I didn't realize they got up there that fast. That's incredible in that terrain. I'm looking at a 1:50,000 map right now. Do you know at all what happened to the platoon leader when he went in there? Was he briefly involved in a firefight or was he killed on the way in there?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) No, he got to the OP. I think Hovater was at the OP but not necessarily in it. I think he was hit right before he was able to get inside it. He was just a few meters away from the OP proper. Then he got to the rock. From talking to the individuals who were up there, the only thing they heard from Lieutenant Brostrom was someone yelled to him, "Hey, he's right behind the rock." Lieutenant Brostrom said, "Where?" There was a bunch of gunfire and then nobody heard from him after that.

Date (b)(3), (b)(6) Could you describe, being a veteran of all this combat in Afghanistan, maybe what you think young NCOs should know and some lessons learned that you'd like to impart to new NCOs?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) on't ever get confident that you know what the enemy's going to do. Don't ever get overconfident. The enemy changes. Once they start realizing something's not working, they will change and adapt. It goes by region. That area and up north of that in Nuristan, they've got good fighters. They only engage when they know they can win. Whereas a lot of other times, there are guys who will attack targets of opportunity and they'll just get waxed. These guys will set things up and they know exactly what they're doing. Listen to the intel when they say there's Chechens and Arabs running around the area. The fighters are going to be led by much more highly-trained individuals and they will teach those guys, like the whole running of the water to make some of our positions a little less defensible, to actually assaulting the positions. Perfect use of support by fire is all stuff that tells me that someone is highly trained in operations and how to conduct against us.

Date (b)(3), (b)(6) there anything else you'd like to tell me about this operation, that you'd like to get out there and see in print?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) just the heroics of every single soldier. The people who support the soldiers, they call us heroes and stuff like that. This platoon and the QRF, every single soldier was a hero. There weren't just a few guys who rose above the occasion. Every single soldier did. Every single soldier knew what was asked of them and they went way above. Every single soldier. I was reduced to a rifleman for most of the fight, so even when their current leadership was wounded or doing something else, each individual soldier acted as if he was an NCO. It was absolutely amazing. I read somewhere that in the first part of a deployment, soldiers will only care about saving themselves, and then once they get to the last part of the deployment, they start worrying about their brothers and even more so. That's what this group did. They fought for each other. I was absolutely amazed. Every single soldier fought extremely hard. I have to imagine that a couple of the guys who were killed knew they were just eventually going to catch a bullet, yet they kept doing it by popping up and returning fire. If anything could be said about this platoon, it's that every single soldier fought like an Audie Murphy. It was just unbelievable.

Date (b)(3), (b)(6)'s my understanding that you guys were pretty short. You only had a couple weeks left in country, right?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) a couple days, actually.

Date (b)(3), (b)(6) Well, I greatly appreciate this. I will write this up, get this interview transcribed and sent back to you so you can look it over. If there's anything in there you want to add or subtract, you can do that at that time. I should be able to get it back to you within a week or so, just so you can read what you said and if there's something in there that you don't want in there, you can take it out or you can add anything you want. I did have one more quick question. You guys had about 25 Afghan soldiers with you? Can you describe their performance, if there was any, or their actions?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) They never got out of their holes. They only had four wounded, which tells me that the enemy directed their fire at the Americans, not the Afghans. The Afghans sprayed and prayed. That's about it. To be honest, though, it was more than I expected. The other numerous occasions I've been on with Afghan soldiers as our backup, they ran.

Date (b)(3), (b)(6) You guys hadn't had anything to do with training these guys? They just came in and linked up with you?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) These guys we were supposed to help train a little bit, but with our op tempo it was just impossible to do any kind of further training. We did do some.

Date (b)(3), (b)(6) Were they from this area or were they from somewhere else in Afghanistan?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) believe they were from somewhere else, but I'm not 100 percent sure.

Date (b)(3), (b)(6) Okay, well, thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed by (b)(3), (b)(6)

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) My name is (b)(3), (b)(6) (DC) and I'm a historian for the Combat Studies Institute at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Today I'm interviewing Sergeant First Class (b)(3), (b)(6) who was the platoon sergeant for 2nd Platoon, Chosen Company, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry. We're going to be talking about the engagement at Wanat, Afghanistan, in early July 2008. This is a follow-up to the previous interview done by (b)(3), (b)(6) of CSI, to clarify certain points of interest. Today's date is 2 April 2009 and this is an unclassified interview. Do you remember who your platoon interpreter was? Are you still in contact with him?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) No, I don't remember who it was.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Was it the same guy the whole time?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) They kind of rotated a little bit. To be honest, I wasn't that close with any of them.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) When did you find out you were going into Wanat?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) We weren't sure. The mission was always on again, off again for months. We were geared up and ready to go around 4 July. When Specialist (b)(3), (b)(6) got wounded up at Bella, they canceled our movement up there. I'm not sure who made that call but I think it was the brigade commander. It continued to be on again, off again until we left on 8 July. We knew about 48 hours before we left that it would definitely be a go.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) I got the idea that you guys were expecting to go up there for a couple of months.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Yes. Like I said, it was on again, off again. Something would happen and they would say no. I'm sure if I took away about 50 percent of the no's and go's, it would leave just plain rumor and that would still leave about once a week where it was changing.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Did you guys get a formal operations order from Captain (b)(3), (b)(6) Oscar

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Absolutely. As a matter of fact, I listened in to the brief they gave to division. That was the only time I was starting to get a warm and fuzzy about it. That's when I started to believe that it was a mission that could be done and done to the best of our ability. Division at that time had said we would have all assets available to facilitate our movement up there as well as the building of the base. They said we'd have the assets because of the possibility of what we could be expecting in that area.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Did you sit in on the briefing to General Milley on 7 July?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Yes.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) How do you think the briefing went?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Are you talking about the one the day before we left?

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Yes, the one where the battalion commander briefed the general.

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Yankee

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

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) That may not have been the one I listened in on. It may have been the one we were sitting in on before we went up on 4 July. I know they briefed before 7 July.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Assume by the day before you were doing your pre-combat checks and making sure your guys were ready to go?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Roger.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Did you do full rehearsal of concept (ROC) drills or anything like that?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) No, not like we had for previous operations. There was something of a rehearsal between the squad leaders, the platoon and the company commander to ensure we knew the mission and what was going on.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Were they like the standard brief backs?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Roger.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Had you guys been up to Wanat before?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Yes.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Did you pretty much know where you were going to go?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Yes. The commander had set up where he was envisioning the positions, which was pretty much where we set up. We knew the area, so we knew from pictures we took and from visiting the positions where we were going to go.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Had you selected the observation post (OP) position previously?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) We decided on the general area for the OP back in March or April. I remember going up with Captain (b)(3), (b)(6) and picking the spot. We were even toying around with possibly putting the forward operating base (FOB) somewhere up there, but due to the construction of a road and some other logistics it was decided to go in another spot but the OP (b)(3), (b)(6) there. Lieutenant Brostrom and I also discussed putting it on top of the hotel.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) I understand that you put the OP there so you could have visibility to the east and northeast.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Roger.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Otherwise you couldn't see anything [in those directions], right?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Right.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Can you imagine that this mission wasn't greeted with overwhelming enthusiasm by the platoon.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) No, it wasn't.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) How did you get the guys motivated?

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Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) didn't change any of my attitude or how I handle the platoon. I'm always very motivated. I'm all about the mission and doing my job for my country. We weren't there for 14 and a half months just to have the last two weeks be screw-off time. We were there for 15 months to do a job and we were going to do it until the last day possible. I continued on with that attitude and talked about the fact that we were going to do this mission because we were the best and we were the guys who were going to get it done. I didn't change anything. I thought it was important not to change anything they were used to or else they would pick up on some negative feelings that some of the guys close to me had already picked up on from me without me even saying anything.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) How long had you been with the platoon?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) got with them in April but we all knew each other from training before. I didn't get as long of a transition period as most incoming platoon sergeants or platoon leaders have. It was a very short learning process because they all knew me from when I was Weapons Squad leader in 1st Platoon. They knew how I behaved, how I reacted to stuff and what my policies were. It was a very short transition.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) When did you head up to Wanat?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) In the evening of 8 July in a Humvee convoy.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Did you have any expectations about what you were going to run into or what was going to go down at Wanat?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) It was raining that night so I knew enemy activity would be extremely low. I also figured that since they were all worried about Bella, there would be few, if any, enemy out unless they were OPs. I felt that was going to go off without a hitch. I didn't think we'd have any problems until the locals found out we were there and word got out that we were actually going to stay and weren't just there for a visit.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Assume on 9 July you did your standard stand-to?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Right.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) The morning did you lay out the positions and get the guys working?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Roger. The work started right at dawn. We got into position and started priorities of work after stand-to. We'd already walked off where the positions were going to be, so guys just started digging and getting things going.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) When did you link up with the engineers?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) They came in on the Chinooks sometime that morning.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Understand that you had a number of helicopters arrive during the day bringing supplies and the Afghan National Army (ANA).

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Roger. We had Class IV [construction and engineering materia[s] and Class V [ammunition] coming in with a little bit of Class III [POL for the HMMWVs and Bobcat]. It was mostly Class IV and V from when they broke down Bella.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) When did the Bobcat show up?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) the following day.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) were you expecting any more support or assistance that never did show up?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) es. I know we expected one civilian backhoe or frontloader. It was definitely heavier than the Bobcat and it was supposed to come up there the day we occupied.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) can even drive a Bobcat. You can't do much with a Bobcat.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Well. I can't say that. The work it did do during those two days we had it definitely saved some lives.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Were there surveyors from the engineers there?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) es. They were tracking that they were going to start building the FOB right away. They had marked off the guard towers and where the walls were going to go. We kept going back and forth on the first day about priorities of work. I wanted the positions done so we could defend them when they started the work. Once they started working in the area where the defense position was, we'd break it down and move it. I really wanted those positions in first because I knew it would be a while before we could get any kind of guard tower or wall.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) s I understand it, you didn't occupy the C-shaped building that was in the middle of the combat outpost (COP).

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) o, we didn't. It was marked that we couldn't occupy it because we hadn't talked to the civilians or laid down any groundwork yet and we didn't want to upset anyone.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) was wondering why you didn't use that building. It was specifically not allowed to be occupied?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) ight. There were even some big five-by-five logs out there that I was asking permission to take to use for overhead cover and just refund the guy later, but we couldn't use them. They weren't ours and we didn't want it to appear that we were just going into town looting and stealing.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Did you have any Class IV that you could use for overhead cover?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) o. I had definitely put that on my supply request to the executive officer (XO), but even the first day it was tough getting all the lifts we were supposed to get. On the second day, there were flat out arguments between our battalion and whoever they had to talk to to get the flights going out to us.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) o you think that was because of the relief in place (RIP)?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) es. Any lack of assets during the month a RIP is going on is going to be due to that. Moving thousands of troops around in theater is going to take up assets in an already asset-dry environment like Afghanistan. It's hard enough when there's nothing going on to get the aircraft we need, but with the RIP going on it definitely chews up the aircraft.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) ho helped site the OP?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) wasn't part of the initial group that decided where the OP was going to be. I was down on the main part building defense positions and working supply. I got up to the OP a little later after they had already started digging in.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) what did you think of its position and layout?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) think that Serge (b)(3), (b)(6) as definitely using the ground and working it the best he could. I didn't like the OP but it was the best spot we had available. I felt that to the east the enemy had too much cover and concealment to move up on it, but we didn't want to move the OP too far where it would be too far away to easily reinforce and support, yet we wanted a good position. That location was the most feasible and actually quite a bit of distance.

Cyan

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) what was the distance from the command post by the C-shaped building to the OP?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) was about 50 meters.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) was still pretty close but that was a steep 50 meters, wasn't it?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) wasn't too steep but it was covering an area that we could get surprised from. It was kind of pulling two duties. It was a defensive position of sorts to watch the backside of the village.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) got the idea that there were discussions about moving it further east but the problem was that it would then be too exposed for the number of guys you had.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) right.

Garnet DC: Also, in order to get to it you'd have to walk across the terraces and you'd be pretty exposed doing that.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) right. Quite exposed. It was the best possible position we could use. There were some big rocks for cover and we used the military crest to help better use the Class IV items we did have. We were doing whatever we could to make the best use of what we had and make it last as long as we could.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) from reading other accounts, it seems like the universal belief was that you didn't have enough of anything to construct the positions.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) roger. Once that Bobcat arrived and we were able to get the HESCOs up and around, we had positions that I felt we could work with. I knew they needed improvement but it was a step in the right direction. They were getting to be positions that I knew we could defend from.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) let me talk through the positions to make sure I understand them. Looking due north at 12 o'clock, at about seven or eight o'clock did you build a field latrine, kind of to the southwest?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) right.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) were there also a couple of HESCOs in place there?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) yes. I had a couple of HESCOs built around it because I didn't want exposed plywood where people went to the bathroom.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Was the mortar pit a little further to the north above that?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Right.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6) told me that only the bottom four feet of the HESCOs had dirt. The rest of them were just exposed HESCOs.

Pepper

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) No. I would say there was more like five and a half feet of dirt. That's where I was when we started firing and I had to get on my tippy toes to get over the top of it and shoot comfortably.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Was it also dug down a couple of feet?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Yes. Every position was dug down as best we could. The ground was unforgiving on that part. We could only get a foot, sometimes a foot and a half down. The OP had better luck because they had the terraces up there to work with. The rest of us could only go about a foot or foot and a half down.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) From the photographs I've seen, it looks like you had mostly e-tools and a few shovels and picks.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Right.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Did you have any axes or chain saws to cut wood with?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) We didn't have any chain saws but the engineers brought some. Everybody was talking about cutting down a tree but we ended up not doing it because there was no need to.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Did you guys think about cutting that area of brush and trees northwest of the OP?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Yes. That was brought up so we could push more wire out so it could be easily observed.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) I understand that you guys went black on water during the second day you were there.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Yes. I thought we had enough for three days plus, but I underestimated the heat and digging and how much water we would burn through.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) You actually pulled out the tables and it looked to me that you'd be going through 12 gallons every hour.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) It was insane. I realized on the first day that water was going to be an issue, so I started pushing to get some more. That's when they started to try and get the civilian trucks to bring some water up, which we did get. They also brought in some Class IV on the third day. The water issue was something I cited right off the bat. We were burning through the water much faster than I had anticipated.

Garnet DC: Did you have any water purification equipment with you?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) We had tablets. We had enough to fill two five-gallon orange buckets and we had enough to make another 50 gallons.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Were those iodine tablets?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Yes.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) at least you had some way of purifying water.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) right. We never got to the point where we were like, "Oh crap. We are *really* out of water." We always had those iodine tablets.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) that still takes some time to do.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Yes. It takes some time and of course you have to throw in the fact that some guys are going to get diarrhea from it.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) right. Then you'd have to get extra liquids into those guys.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Yes.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) get the idea that you and Lieutenant Brostrom didn't feel like you had any extra soldiers to do any patrolling into the village.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) No. We did some patrols to go talk to people but we didn't go very far. By 12 July we had planned a patrol and we were confident enough in our defenses that we could start pushing out a squad to start covering more ground.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) but you wanted the priority to be getting defensible positions, right?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) right.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) understand you had a company of about two dozen ANA and that the platoon had had some problems with the Afghan Security Guard (ASG) before. It seems to me there wasn't a lot of trust between them and the ANA?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) No, there wasn't. To my fault, I didn't have any trust either. In the engagements I'd been in before at Ranch House, they had run away. They ran away from the fight on 9 November as well. I didn't put a lot of trust in them.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) let's go back to the positions. Up to the northwest was your 3rd Squad. I understand they had a truck with a Mk19.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6)opper.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) who was the squad leader for that squad?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) that was Sergeant Garcia.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) were the ANA in between to the right?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Yes. I had ANA on both sides of that squad.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) was the 2nd Squad to the north with another Mk19 truck?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Right.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) The Marine embedded training teams (ETTs) had a separate hole behind the ANA, correct?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Right. They wanted to be centrally located for their ANA. They were in the middle of those two plus the ANA position that was farther to the southeast.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Understand the Marines had a 240 with them?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) es.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Understand there was a command post to the south near the C-shaped building with another truck and a .50 cal.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Right.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Understand you had built a ramp on 12 July to move the TOW truck to.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Right.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) When did you end up repositioning the TOW truck?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) The TOW truck was pretty much repositioned every day.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Did you do that under cover of darkness?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) A couple times. We were moving it continuously. We wanted to get the thermals looking everywhere. It moved around a lot during the day but at night I think it moved less.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Was the 60 millimeter mortar in a separate position in the middle of the COP?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Roger. The thought process behind doing that was creating more of a mobile spot. The base plate was already buried but also to keep it mobile.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Understand that 1st Platoon with Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6) was to the southeast. They had a traffic control point (TCP) position built up and a truck with a .50 cal, correct?

Scorpio

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Right.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Wasn't there also an ANA position there to kind of help them with the TCP?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Right.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Who was the 2nd Squad leader?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6) Pisces

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Was Sergeant Pitts kind of in charge of the OP? Cyan

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Roger.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) the two 240s were up there as well, right?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) yes.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) So there were two 240s and a squad automatic weapon (SAW) at the OP?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) longer.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) So most of the firepower that you can move is up there.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) longer. I wanted the 240s up there because of all the heavy weapons we had down below. I also knew that the 240 with the ETT could be moved to whatever location we needed it to be down on the main FOB.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Did you have clearance to do any searches in the village? Would you typically have cleared homes in there?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) No. I don't know if clearance is the right word. It was more just frowned upon. I don't want to say that I was given an order not to do it, but it was typically not part of the commander's intent to go kick in doors unless we had a reason.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) All that does is piss everybody off.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Right.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Did you have a chance to do any humanitarian work – medical civic assistance projects (MEDCAPs) or veterinary civic assistance projects (VETCAPs)?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) No.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Had there been any discussions of doing that?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) longer. The basis of establishing that was to start trying to get aid for that village with the district center and then moving outward to show what the government of Afghanistan could do for them. We didn't actively discuss it because our job was to get the COP going so the incoming unit could come in, finish building it and then start giving out aid. It was following counterinsurgency doctrine to get that stuff going up there.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Your platoon emphasis was really just to establish a solid, defensible position on the ground?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) longer. The way I understood my mission was to get that place started and get as much done as possible in order to facilitate a good RIP for the guys coming in.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Then you'd let Task Force Duke actually start to use the COP?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Right.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) You got news that there was a *shura* at the district center on 12 July, right?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6)s.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) was told it was before Captain Myer arrived.

Oscar

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) right. There was a *shura* that we were not invited to on either 11 or 12 July. I'm not really good about the dates.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) understand that torqued off Lieutenant Brostrom.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6)s.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) did his red hair kick into effect there?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Yes, it did. He was not pleased about it.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) can you talk me through that?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) We thought we definitely should have been invited and knowing they held it without us made us feel like they were talking about us. We were worried about what they were planning and/or discussing as far as the future was concerned. We were wondering if they were going to try and kick us out like they did or what. It was definitely the topic of conversation.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) understand that culturally that was really considered an insult to you. The fact that they didn't meet with you when you came in and then held a meeting without you was culturally insulting, right?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Yes.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Lieutenant Brostrom picked up on that?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Absolutely.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Did you go with him to interrupt the *shura*?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) No. Our thought on that was if one of us was going someplace, the other needed to be on the FOB. He went and I stayed.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) What did he tell you when he came back?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Now they gave him some excuses and tried to play it off. They were pretty much done when he interrupted them. He tried to continue the *shura* a little more but they weren't pleased, to say the least, that he had arrived. He also said there was some shock and possibly some fear that we might find out what they were discussing in there, which I'm sure had to do with moving the people out of the village to prep for an attack on us.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) That's really interesting. I was told that the guys on guard duty had started to see dudes moving through the Improved Target Acquisition System (ITAS) and Long-Range Advanced Scout Surveillance System (LRAS) a night or two before the attack.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) The night prior to the attack, right around the time ending evening nautical twilight (EENT) had started to kick in, ITAS saw five guys on the high ground to our west. Lieutenant Brostrom and I had told

everybody on the first day. "There's no reason for people to be up there and if we see anybody, it should be considered a threat against our FOB and you're free to engage." The people had no problem with that. It was already established that if we saw anybody up there, we were going to fire at them. ITAS couldn't tell if they had any weapons, but they thought they could see stuff on their backs.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6)ght. As I recall, you really can't see weapons with thermals but you can usually pick up a pack because it absorbs sweat and moisture.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6)ght.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6)id you engaged any of those guys before?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) No. We had done some fires up there the day prior and up to the north just for the mortars to get their grids and get their base plates settled. We hadn't engaged anybody.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6)id you shoot 60 millimeter, 120 millimeter or both?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) We did shoot both mortars.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6)id you shoot 155 from Blessing?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Yes, but not at these guys. All three of those weapon systems had been fired before to get targets and stuff like that.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6)egistration?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6)egistration. That's the word I was looking for. I'd like to add something about seeing those guys up there and not firing. I really respect Captain (b)(3), (b)(6) and wouldn't even think twice about going into combat with him again, but it's difficult for a commander to come up with the proper decisions on the heels of that 15-6 he had as a result of the Apache firing on those vehicles. I believe that kind of thing hinders an officer's ability to make the right decisions. Take that for what it's worth, but I think it is very debilitating to an officer.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) haven't read that 15-6 but I'm familiar with the event. I've conversed with a couple Afghan folks in the valley and they were pretty adamant that these were peaceful, innocent doctors from the clinic that got zapped. Did you have any situational awareness on that?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Yes. The guys at the OP told me that they were fired upon by that truck and the doctor that was killed was actively working with the insurgents. The funny thing is, he worked for the civilians and they'll believe anything these people say before they'll believe us.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Even though you think it was a good engagement, the problem was the perception of how the people in the valley viewed it.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Right. I think that was definitely a contributing factor to the number of individuals that attacked our base that day. I wholeheartedly believe that. But at the same time I believe the whole 15-6 investigation made him [Captain (b)(3), (b)(6)] a little gun shy, even though he was cleared. I know it's easier for a person underneath him to say, "I definitely would have fired." But had I been in his shoes, maybe I would have made the same call he did. I believe Captain (b)(3), (b)(6) was being more cautious than I knew him to be.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) understand that on 13 July Lieutenant Brostrom was going to take out a patrol and select a new OP position?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Roger. They were going to go look for an OP position for the ANA.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) were you going to try and get them on some commanding high ground and set up a formal OP?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Roger.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) obviously that patrol never got off.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) right.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) understand that when you got hit, you were visiting the mortar pit?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) was. Usually I started my rounds before the time I did on that day. We had seen some more guys that morning and I was hanging on the TOW truck helping the commanding officer figure out what we were going to do about it. I decided to visit the mortar pit and talk to Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6) I knew everybody was awake there because I could see them, but that kind of stopped my rounds to visit all the positions.

Romeo

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) from the charts I have, it appears that beginning morning nautical twilight (BMNT) was around 0515 or a little before.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) that sounds about right. We were up at 0415 or 0430.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) that was standard, right? You would get guys up about an hour before BMNT.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) es.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) when the attack began, I understand you were pretty much pinned down at the mortar pit.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Roger. I was just outside the mortar pit when we got the first burst, the one that hit Abad. I ran into the pit and we started returning fire. The mortar pit was flooded. I don't know if I can attribute that to the locals diverting the stream that was right next to it in order to flood it or because of where the engineer was digging the day prior. I don't know if it just created a spot where the water could flow or what. I know the majority of guys felt like the locals were the ones who diverted it, but I can't say for sure. When I dove in there, my hand mike went into the water and that hand mike doesn't like water at all. I had no communication from the get-go since my hand mike shorted.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) am glad to see that the Army still hasn't come up with a waterproof hand mike.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Right.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) you really weren't around Lieutenant Brostrom and you didn't know what actions he took?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) No, I didn't. I could hear some calls coming through the radio. They were intermittent and I definitely couldn't call out. I know I wasn't catching them all through my hand mike. At the time, I was trying to help bolster the defenses in the mortar pit and get them to fire, but they were too pinned to fire.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) got the idea from talking to Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6) that they were putting some pretty accurate fire on the mortar pit.

Pepper

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Yes, it was very accurate. The ammo was towards the back of the pit. Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6) ran to get some grenades and he was taking some pretty accurate fire. The rounds were hitting just behind his feet or just to the side of him. They were definitely coming straight through the mortar pit. That fire was coming from the east and southeast.

Romeo

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) From the east? Was that where the bazaar was?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) It was more from the southeast.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Wasn't there a big compound a couple hundred meters to the southeast?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Yes.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) That where you thought the fire was coming from?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) We were taking fire from the ridge that was to the front of the checkpoints on the road, kind of far back. They were long shots but I think they were shooting with RPGs and PKMs because the bursts were pretty wide, but they were definitely getting some rounds in. When I'd get up to shoot, the rounds were hitting on top of the HESCO where I was shooting from. We were taking fire from the landing zone (LZ) side where the trail and big building were. I don't know if we were taking fire from the bazaar. If we were, the rounds would have been hitting the other side of the HESCO so it wouldn't have been where I was. If you see where the front of the mortar pit is, draw a line straight over to where the enemy had support by fire on the ridge to the southeast.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Specialist (b)(3), (b)(6) drew a sketch for me of where the enemy fire was coming from. He basically drew a big black circle around your entire position. That kind of describes what was going on there.

Fig

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) We were throwing grenades to the low ground to our west. I know we were taking some RPG fire from a guy up near the building in the trees. Luckily he wasn't smart enough to figure out that if he shot from behind the tree, the fins would come out, hit a tree branch and go a different direction. I know he fired a couple times but he could never get a good straight shot on us.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) How much water was in the mortar pit? Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6) thought there were just a few inches.

Pepper

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) There wasn't too much, but it had pooled up where I was because of the angle of the ground. There was nothing above shin level.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) It was just enough to make your boots wet and make things really suck?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Right. The water wasn't hitting them on the higher ground and or where the ammo was on top of the wooden planks, but when it got down towards me it was above boot level. My boots were a little lower than normal combat boots and I know it was just above them.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) What kind of boots did you have?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) They were kind of like the Donner boots [a commercial hiking boot that TF Rock commercially purchased for Afghanistan].

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) understand that you eventually take one of the quick reaction forces (QRFs) up to the OP.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) right. We abandoned the mortar pit after a round struck the ammo and sparked.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) hit the "cheese" charges [removable propellant charges for the mortars] ?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) that's what he said, I don't know enough about them but he was the one who made the call to fall back from there.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) When cheese charges light off, you don't want to be anywhere around them.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) right. We got to the command post and started working on the couple of casualties we had. I was by the truck trying to get some accurate fire on somebody I could see. I then moved over to the 2nd Squad position to check on some of the guys because I'd heard they had some wounded. Once I got there, the Apaches started flying around the OP. I was concerned that they were firing too close and we hadn't yet had any contact with anybody up there. That's when I called over to Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6) to get a couple of guys who could move and I grabbed Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6) and we went across the road.

Romeo

Pisces

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Did you run in the gap between the bazaar and the taller buildings?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) No. We ran between the very last building and where 1st Squad was off to the south. They were near that building and we ran on the side of it. I had the guys all stacked on the wall behind me. Before we made our movement up to the OP, there was a burst of fire along that wall. They were either anticipating us running across or shooting at the 1st Squad position.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) What burst of fire was coming down the road?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Got down the road but behind it. We were just getting ready to make our move to the OP. Sergeant Titan (b)(3), (b)(6) was actually the one that warned me that it wasn't him shooting, because I thought maybe they were shooting some fire across there before we ran up. We threw some HC out there and I told Sergeant Romeo (b)(3), (b)(6) to take most of the guys and run up the terrace by 1st Squad's position and across. I told them I'd cover them down the backside of that building. My fear was that once he ran up there, he would run into the OP and there was nothing watching the side of the rock where the back buildings were. Sergeant Pisces (b)(3), (b)(6) and I assaulted through where we had taken fire, around the bush area, fired some rounds in the building and then met Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6) in the OP.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) understand the TOW Humvee was burning.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) right. That was taken out in the first few seconds of the battle.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) What about the fuel blivet? Was that also burning? I was looking at gun tapes today and I saw three major fires in the COP. One was the Humvee. What were the other two?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) No. I don't know. As a matter of fact, that's more than I remember burning. I'm pretty sure that fuel blivet made it through the fight, but it's not something I actively saw.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Wasn't there a stall in the bazaar that started to burn?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Yes. That was one of the fires they saw. I heard that was from an RPG.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) This was something First Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6) and I talked about. You guys got up to the OP and you tried to gain control of the situation. I understand you had a big problem getting accountability.

Victor

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) es. I didn't have any means of communication and I didn't know how many people Lieutenant Brostrom took up with him. I was still at the mortar pit when he went up and nobody could tell me who he went up with. They also couldn't tell me who Sergeant Garcia had taken up with him either. Once I got up there, I set in defenses. The fire was pretty light at this point so that's when I started to check on the dead and wounded. I wanted to see what wounded were still here and who had moved out to 1st Squad's position. By the time the QRF arrived, the only person I didn't have an idea about was Lieutenant Brostrom. I had actually received a report that he was running down back by the FOB. When the QRF

Victor

arrived, First Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6) and Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6) came up there as well and Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6) found Lieutenant Brostrom's body. Besides identifying which body was which, I had pretty decent accountability of where people were. I knew the positions they were in but not the status on all of them.

Raven

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) et you were glad to at least know where everybody was.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) ight, but I knew I still had work to do as far as identifying bodies, but at least I knew where people were (b)(3), (b)(6) and (b)(3), (b)(6) were running from position to position along with Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6) and Captain Oscar (b)(3), (b)(6) at least I knew where the reinforcement guys were.

Mahogeny

Oscar

X-Ray

Pisces

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) (b)(3), (b)(6) told me that he found Zwilling's body way far down one of the terraces.

Victor

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) was two terraces down, but it was only 10 or 15 meters from the center of the OP. There was nobody that was outside the OP where the enemy fire was coming from and there was nobody by the buildings. My guess about Zwilling is that he was blown back off the two terraces. The terraces weren't extremely wide. One was five meters and one was 10 meters wide and about a half meter tall. Hovater's body was on the same terrace. I think Hovater was shot either reloading right there or caught one just before he made it inside the OP. Those terraces were still considered the OP. There wasn't any real "inside" the OP.

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

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) understand the Crow's Nest was actually built into one of the terraces.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) ight.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) (b)(3), (b)(6) said he felt that the insurgents may have tried to remove Zwilling's body.

Victor

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) don't agree with that. He was on the same terrace as Hovater. I think if they had tried to take his body, they would have succeeded.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) ere you able to get any feeling about what these guys were trying to do to you?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) es. I think they were sending out harassing fire and shots of opportunity on the main FOB, but I think they really wanted to take that OP.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) do you think they wanted to overrun and control the OP?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) ight. Then I think they were either trying to catch us as we came in to reinforce or do some kind of information operations theme by taking weapons or bodies.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) understand a camcorder was picked up?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) One of ours?

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) No. Later on the ANA found a camcorder in one of the houses.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) I hadn't heard that.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) I actually found somebody who speaks the language and did a bunch of searches and no video has come up about this. I think they were planning on videotaping it but they didn't have anything to video.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) It wouldn't surprise me. That was their thing up in that area. They liked to videotape everything.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Did you guys see any of those videos?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Yes. I saw the Ranch House video and the videos from the 9 November ambush.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Those are pretty widely available.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Right.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Do you have a pretty good idea of what these guys were doing, what they looked like and how the fight?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Right. I know in their Ranch House attack, their plan was once they overran the tactical operations center (TOC) and got above the LZ, to wait for the helicopters to come in with reinforcements or carry away whoever who was left, and to hit the helicopters. I don't know if they were trying to do that same thing in Wanat or not. My best guess is that they were keeping with the harassing fire on the main positions to keep us from reinforcing and they wanted that OP.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Did you see any of the insurgents?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Yes. I saw guys from all the positions I was at. At the OP I didn't see individuals as far as where we were taking fire from. Once I set the defenses in at that position, I spent the majority of my time getting accountability and finding out who was killed and that kind of thing.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) How were those guys dressed and equipped?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) From what I saw down at the mortar pit, they were all wearing dark clothing, man-dress kinds of things. I didn't see any battle dress uniforms (BDUs) or anything like that. I couldn't tell you if they were black or brown. I can just tell you that they were dark in color.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) I assume you were a little bit busy at the time.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Yes. It's amazing when you see a movie and see how easy it is to shoot a guy when he pops out of a tree. We had guys running from one tree to another tree and even though they were just 10 meters away, it was like, "Man, they covered that fast."

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) I understand it, there were some logistical challenges in keeping you guys supplied and properly equipped up there.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) absolutely.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) would have liked to have seen more guys there?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) es. I definitely would have liked to have had another platoon up in blocking positions on some of that high ground. When the 10th Mountain built that bridge and used that same area as a vehicle patrol base for three months, they put blocking positions up in that high ground. I believe they had three of them and used them for about a week.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) (b)(3), (b)(6) Hawk

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) don't know how long they were there. A week is a rough estimate. They didn't have any hostile fire from what I was told, but I believe that was because they wanted the bridge there to help them move supplies around more easily.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) was told they hired a bunch of local workers to build the bridge. Basically they put everybody to work and threw money around. That solved a lot of problems.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) ight. That was the plan for when the base started to get going. We told them that the money was going to start flowing and that Wanat was going to make a bundle of money off us being there. We were following straight out of the counterinsurgency manual trying to get this thing going. In my opinion, it kind of bit us in the butt. I don't think we should have been talking to the locals about building a base there. I think we should have just occupied and settled it later.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) I think the locals would have been happier if you had done that, too.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) would have given the enemy less time to plan for an attack. When I was at the hospital at Bagram Airfield, I talked to someone who had done one of the flyovers. He mentioned that just on the southeast ridge alone he counted eight fighting positions that the enemy had. You don't do that in four days.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) basically the negotiations with the elders and the *shuras* that were held pretty much blew your operational security and they were all ready for you?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) oger. I think that is 100 percent accurate and is one of the major contributing factors to the size of the attack they were able to mount against us.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) et's talk about logistics. I assume you did a daily call up to your company XO?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) oger.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) as that when you screamed and yelled and told him you needed more stuff?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) reality, I talked to him a couple times a day and I even talked straight to battalion at times about my issues.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Were they responsive?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) absolutely. The battalion was very understanding. They let me know that they were getting into arguments over the radio with everybody else in order to get supplies up there. They were really doing their part.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Did Lieutenant Brostrom call in the *shura* at the district center to battalion?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) I know he talked to Captain (b)(3), (b)(6) about it. Oscar

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Did he also report the people you saw on the hillside the night before?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) I'm sure he did.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) The reporting chain would have had Lieutenant Brostrom calling the company commander about that, right?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Yes, but the night before the company commander was there. He did but I can't remember the conversation. He was also calling up almost hourly about all the intel we were getting, who we were working with and who was trying to help us.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Was he working pretty hard to get you guys support?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Right.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Where are you headed next?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) I'm going to the Advanced Noncommissioned Officer Course (ANCOC).

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) How many years do you have in?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) I will hit 14 years in July.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) What are your plans?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) I needed a little bit of a break so right now I'm working at the Airborne School as an instructor. Even with all the stuff that has happened, I'm definitely staying in. I love my job. I love being a soldier and I love what I do. There's just no better place. This is the place for me.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Will you be a first sergeant after this break?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) That's the plan. I want to stay in the light infantry field. I'd love to get back to Italy, to the 173rd, but my wife doesn't really want that.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) How long will you be at Airborne School?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) I think I'll be here for two years. I think that's all I'll be able to handle.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Then you're going to want to get back to the troops again.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Absolutely.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) I really appreciate your time.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) No problem. It was my pleasure. Every day I'm amazed at the ability those guys showed that day.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) I've talked to a number of your guys and it sounds like you had a phenomenal platoon with a good bunch of soldiers.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Absolutely.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) One more question. What did you feel when you were told they were going to pull out of Wanat?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) I was happy but at the same time I felt like it would be viewed as the enemy won, especially in that area up there. It was a mixed bag feeling.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Why that time, you were ready to get home anyway.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Right.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Can you imagine that after 15 months you were pretty tired.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) We were done. It was a busy 15 months. There weren't any breathers in there whatsoever. My platoon was at Blessing and we were always heading out to support Able and Battle. We'd get into the Korengal and those fights as well. We were all over the place.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) A lot of tough experiences.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Tough, but definitely character builders. Without those experiences, I wouldn't be the person I am now and will be for the rest of my life.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) How many kids do you have?

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) We have two with one on the way. Jacob will be born at the end of May.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Congratulations. That's fantastic.

Yankee (b)(3), (b)(6) Thank you.

Garnet (b)(3), (b)(6) Thank you very much. I really appreciate your time and all you guys do for us.

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed by (b)(3), (b)(6)