

1 [The testimony began at 0953 hours, 14 October 2009.]

2 **Sierra** **LtGen Natonski:** Okay, Captain (b)(3), (b)(6) I going to read you
3 something that I have to read to all witnesses before
4 we begin. I am Lieutenant General Richard F. Natonski,
5 United States Marine Corps. I have been appointed by
6 the Commander of U.S. Central Command to conduct an
7 investigation into the facts and circumstances
8 surrounding the combat action at Wanat, Afghanistan,
9 during July 2008. Major General David Perkins, United
10 States Army, has been assigned as the Deputy
11 **Gamma** Investigating Officer; Lieutenant Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6)
12 **Sigma** and Lieutenant Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) are Judge Advocates
13 assigned to the investigation team.

14 The testimony that you provide today will be recorded,
15 transcribed, and included in our report of the
16 investigation. Based on your testimony, we may also
17 prepare a separate written statement for your review
18 and signature.

19 Prior to coming on the record today, you signed a
20 privacy act statement. Is that correct?

21 **Sierra** **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6) Yes, sir, that's correct.

22 **LtGen Natonski:** Okay. Your testimony will be made under oath
23 and you will now be sworn.

24 [The witness was sworn.]

25 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6) Could you please state your full name, spelling **Gamma**
26 your last?

27 **Sierra** **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6) My first name is (b)(3), (b)(6)
28 (b)(3), (b)(6)

29 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6) And what is your current unit and unit's **Gamma**
30 location?

31 **Sierra** **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6) : My current unit is 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry
32 and it's stationed at Caserma Ederle, Vicenza, Italy.

33 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6) : And you are currently a Captain in the U.S. Army? **Gamma**

34 **Sierra** **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6) : Yes, sir, that's correct.

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1 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6): Okay. In July of 2008, what was your unit and **Gamma**
2 unit's location?

Sierra 3 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): In July 2008, I was with Able Company, 2-503
4 Infantry stationed at FOB Able Main in Peshawar
5 Valley, Afghanistan.

6 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6): What was your duty assignment? **Gamma**

Sierra 7 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): My duty assignment was the platoon leader for
8 Third Platoon, Able Company.

9 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6): Prior to coming on the record today, did you have **Gamma**
10 a chance to review a statement you gave in August of
11 2008?

Sierra 12 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): Yes, sir.

13 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6): And is there anything you'd like to change about **Gamma**
14 that?

Sierra 15 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): No, sir.

16 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6): And you adopt that statement as part of your **Gamma**
17 sworn testimony today?

Sierra 18 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): I'm sorry, sir, do I doubt it?

19 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6): Adopt it? **Gamma**

Sierra 20 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): Yes, sir.

21 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6): All right. Are you an Infantry Officer? **Gamma**

Sierra 22 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): Yes, sir, Infantry Officer.

23 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6): How long had you been in the 2nd of the 503rd? **Gamma**

Sierra 24 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): I got to the 2nd of the 503rd in July at the
25 previous year. I got to Afghanistan, I think, end of
26 July. I was with 2nd Battalion by the first week of
27 August 2007, while they were deployed so--and I've
28 been with them ever since.

29 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6): And you were operating out of Able Main? **Gamma**

Sierra 30 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): Yeah, at the time of the incident--yes, sir.

31 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6): And where else had you operated? **Gamma**

Sierra 1 CPT (b)(3), (b)(6): When I first got to Afghanistan, I was assigned
2 to a staff position working out of Camp Blessing for 3
3 months. And then I moved to Able Company where I was
4 at FOB Hanaker-Miracle which is in the Pesh Valley,
5 and then I was there for about 6 months and then the
6 last 6 months I spent with Able Company at FOB Able
7 Main.

8 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6): So, the battalion was getting ready to rotate Gamma
9 back to Italy in July of last year. What actions were
10 you taking to get your platoon ready to go?

Sierra 11 CPT (b)(3), (b)(6): At the time, in July, we were packing up our
12 containers, starting to mail stuff home, and we were
13 beginning to rotate guys back and actually, at that
14 point, we probably sent the first one or two Soldiers
15 from my platoon back to home station.

16 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6): We're you conducting any operations during that Gamma
17 time?

Sierra 18 CPT (b)(3), (b)(6): Yes, sir, we were. We were conducting what we
19 called steady state operations which consisted of-- we
20 continue to go to our weekly Shuras or the meetings
21 with the elders and the locals as well as continue to
22 do some enemy interdiction missions, you know, more
23 localized less far-reaching, long-range missions.

24 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6): So were you aware of the battalion undertaking a Gamma
25 battalion level operation during July----

Sierra 26 CPT (b)(3), (b)(6): Yes, sir. I was aware of it both through, you
27 know, being told by my commander and just through the
28 rumors that were going around.

29 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6): And what had you heard about that operation? Gamma

Sierra 30 CPT (b)(3), (b)(6): From what I had heard about the operation before
31 in talking to my commander was that they were going to
32 send Chosen Company up into the valley, close down FOB
33 Bella and then send them up to a village called Wanat
34 which, at the time, I had never been to or heard of
35 but they said it was north of Camp Blessing in the
36 Waygal Valley, I think it is. But I knew it was to the
37 north, northeast of Camp Blessing and it would be
38 closer to Blessing than Bella but that was about all I
39 knew before I sat down and looked at the order.

1 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6) Did you see an order? Gamma

Sierra 2 CPT (b)(3), (b)(6): I saw a Power Point slideshow that my commander
3 had and that was the afternoon or evening after I
4 talked with Lieutenant Brostrom at Camp Blessing
5 before he went on the mission. I asked my Commander
6 if he'd seen something, I think, later that day. He
7 showed me a PowerPoint slide show that kind of
8 depicted how the move was going to go and how the
9 operation was going to be done.

10 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6): Was it a CONOPs brief? Gamma

Sierra 11 CPT (b)(3), (b)(6): I think it was a CONOP brief--I believe so. I'm
12 not 100 percent sure.

13 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6): Let me just take a moment here and show you a Gamma
14 document and see if that----

Sierra 15 CPT (b)(3), (b)(6) I know the format. I'm not sure if I saw the
16 entire thing. I saw, I think, one slide which was kind
17 of an overall concept of the operation slide which-- I
18 think I saw this slide.

19 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6) Why were you interested in looking at the Gamma
20 battalion CONOP?

Sierra 21 CPT (b)(3), (b)(6): Well, my platoon was on our battalion QRF
22 rotation and I knew just based on having talked to
23 Lieutenant Brostrom that day at Camp Blessing, I knew
24 if something was going to require battalion QRF at the
25 time my platoon was on it, it would probably be this.
26 So, I had never been to Wanat, I was just trying to
27 familiarize myself, kind of, with the general area.
28 But also just kind of as a concerned friend, I wanted
29 to see the plan that John was about to execute.

30 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6): I'm sorry, just for the record, if you could say-- Gamma
31 --when you say "this slide"--it is the--is it numbered
32 or does it have a name?

Sierra 33 CPT (b)(3), (b)(6): It's not numbered. Its Phase One and Phase Two
34 of Bella--this establishment, Phase Two, is the Wanat
35 build up--it was a slide that looked maybe somewhat to
36 this, maybe not exactly this but----

37 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6) Okay. Gamma

Sierra 1 CPT (b)(3), (b)(6) : An over arching concept of the operation slide is
2 what I remember seeing.

3 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6) : And you were the battalion QRF? Gamma

Sierra 4 CPT (b)(3), (b)(6) : Yes, sir. At the time, 2nd Battalion was
5 rotating battalions--or platoons--as the battalion
6 QRF. So that meant, for us, that we were on a one-
7 hour recall from any mission that we'd been executing.
8 So that if I was out at a Shura, for example, I had to
9 be able to be back at Able Main in PZ posture within
10 one hour. So during the times that platoons are on
11 battalion QRF cycle, we still conduct our daily
12 patrols but we made sure we stayed within a one-hour
13 window of being able to get back and get ready to
14 execute. So----

15 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6) : Regarding the CONOP--or regarding Operation Rock Gamma
16 Move, it sounds like you were first alerted to the
17 operation from your friend, Lieutenant Brostrom?

Sierra 18 CPT (b)(3), (b)(6) : Yes, sir.

19 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6) : And then you went and pulled information Gamma
20 regarding operation?

Sierra 21 CPT (b)(3), (b)(6) : Yes, sir. I mean, I'd heard about it and I just
22 didn't know all the details. A lot of times other
23 companies did missions that we vaguely heard about
24 but, you know, due to geographic separation and lack
25 of connectivity, I rarely saw other company's missions
26 or CONOP briefs. Just with this one, after talking to
27 John, I thought if I was going to be involved in any
28 way, it would be as a QRF and that, you know, I just
29 wanted to get a look at where it was and kind of what
30 the plan looked like.

31 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6) : So as a matter of routine, the battalion would Gamma
32 not forward down to the QRF platoon the----

Sierra 33 CPT (b)(3), (b)(6) : Not----

34 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6) : ----operations going on? Gamma

Sierra 35 CPT (b)(3), (b)(6) : Not to my understanding. I mean, as a platoon
36 leader, I never--I was on QRF cycle maybe two, three,
37 no more than four times in my time there. But I never
38 got passed on any CONOPs. I'm assuming or, you know,

1 guessing that the company commanders had them but as a
2 platoon leader, I never saw them. And in this
3 particular case, like you said, I went and pulled this
4 information from the company whether it be this slide
5 or whatever he showed me, but I do remember seeing
6 something on it.

7 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6): Okay. You had a conversation around 7 July with **Gamma**
8 First Lieutenant Brostrom, the platoon leader for
9 Second Platoon, Chosen?

Sierra 10 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): Yes, sir.

11 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6) What was that conversation about? **Gamma**

Sierra 12 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): I dropped off my first sergeant that day for--
13 they were doing a promotion board, I think, and I knew
14 John was there and I'd be at Blessing for a while. So
15 I just--whenever I was there and I knew he was around,
16 I'd go and try to catch up with him. So I just went
17 over and we talked about a lot of things. He'd just
18 come back from mid-tour leave, we talked about that
19 and then eventually the topic went over to talking
20 about the upcoming operation. And I just----

21 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6): To the best of your recollection, what were his **Gamma**
22 thoughts on the upcoming operation?

Sierra 23 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): We didn't really talk about it initially but I
24 knew, you know, that it was on his mind and I asked
25 him, you know, what he thought about it because--like
26 that morning, we'd gotten, you know, an ambush with
27 some small arms fire--one of our trucks had been hit.
28 And he showed me one of his trucks that had been--had
29 a window blown out from coming back from Wanat on one
30 mission. And that's kind of when we started talking
31 more about, you know, the upcoming operation. And he
32 had obvious reservations about it to me and, you know--
33 ---

34 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6) And what were those reservations? **Gamma**

Sierra 35 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): It's--I mean, in my previous sworn statement, he
36 said, you know, he didn't think he had a big enough
37 force going up there and he didn't think he had enough
38 guys. He didn't think that the timing was right at
39 all. I think he'd already sent out one or two guys to
40 go back to home station at that point----

1 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6): The timing due to the RIP? **Gamma**

Sierra 2 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): Due to the RIP, sir. That was, you know, one of
3 his big concerns and what he told me were some of his
4 guys' concerns as well as that, and that they were
5 trying to execute this and we already had, you know,
6 almost one foot out the door. And you know, we talked
7 a little bit about--I'm trying to think--overhead
8 coverage. And he said that they were supposed to have
9 coverage laid on which, you know, made him feel
10 better. But his biggest concerns were that he didn't
11 have enough people up there with him and that it was
12 so close to the end that, you know, it was tough to
13 keep his guys' minds focused.

14 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6): Was he concerned about the amount of combat power **Gamma**
15 he was taking up there?

Sierra 16 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): Yes, sir.

17 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6): Why was he concerned that the force he was taking **Gamma**
18 wouldn't be sufficient?

Sierra 19 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): He was concerned a lot because he'd been at FOB
20 Bella for a long--he showed me some pictures and
21 videos from there--and you know, we were comparing his
22 high ground, who's higher and who's FOB was in a worse
23 location. I asked him about where Wanat would be
24 built, if would it be any better. He said, no, it
25 wouldn't be much better because--there'd be a more
26 accessible road but they'd have no OPs established
27 like they did at Bella where there's at least some
28 advance warning and some over watch from a higher
29 elevated position than you would have at Wanat. So
30 his concern was that he couldn't push OPs out, even
31 just hastily establish them, and still build up
32 fortifications where the permanent FOB would go. He
33 was also concerned that he was going to be pretty far
34 away from the nearest friendly forces.

35 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6): How far is Wanat from Blessing? **Gamma**

Sierra 36 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): The drive up by HMMWV from Blessing, I think,
37 normally he told me it takes 35 to 45 minutes. And
38 it's an unimproved road so there's no pavement,
39 there's no gravel and rock, and there was, you know,
40 turns and wash outs and switch backs like a lot of the
41 roads in Afghanistan. So it was not something that

1 could really be negotiated quickly. And you know, we
2 talked a little bit about that because I told him I
3 was the QRF platoon and that, you know, hey, if
4 anything ever happens up there I'll probably be coming
5 up. He told me, you know, from Blessing up there is
6 probably about a 45 minute drive. So for me, out of
7 Able Main, it was probably about an hour and twenty
8 minutes, hour and a half to get there.

9 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6): From your conversation, did it appear that he had **Gamma**
10 spoken to anyone in the chain of command about his
11 concerns?

Sierra 12 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): I think I asked him if he talked to his commander
13 about it and he said he had. But, you know, how much
14 or what he had spoken to his commander about, it's
15 either really vague what he said or I just can't
16 recall. But I --I remember that he said that he
17 **Oscar** talked to Captain (b)(3), (b)(6) about it and he had brought up
18 some of his concerns. I can't remember and I don't
19 know what he covered, you know, what concerns were
20 **Oscar** answered or, you know, what Captain (b)(3), (b)(6) said. Just
21 I asked him if he talked to anyone about what he
22 thought about the mission and he said he had.

23 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6): Is there anything else about that conversation **Gamma**
24 that sticks out in your mind?

Sierra 25 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): I mean, the phrase that still sticks out in my
26 mind is, you know, what he told me and, you know, his
27 very candid feelings about the mission and he's said
28 he thought he was going to get fucked up, which I know
29 it's in my previous sworn statement but it's the
30 phrase that stuck with me for the longest time
31 because, I mean, that's an infantryman's take on a
32 situation he's about to walk into and he was not
33 pulling any punches. So I mean that--he definitely
34 did not have a good feeling going up there but he was
35 the type of guy that was going to try to execute the
36 mission no matter what. So, I mean, he went up
37 anyway.

38 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6): After you said good-bye on the 7th, did you have **Gamma**
39 any more Coms with him between the 8th and the 13th?

Sierra 40 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): No. After the 7th, that was the last time I
41 talked to him and I just--from that point on I just
42 followed it as close as I could.

1 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6): How did you follow it? Gamma

Sierra 2 CPT (b)(3), (b)(6): Over our TACTSAT Radio and trying to get updates
3 from our Company TOC--we had a little more
4 connectivity--seeing what was posted on the MERC-chat-
5 -and then partly because I knew we were the battalion
6 QRF and partly because, you know, I was just worried
7 about him and his platoon going up there after, you
8 know, what he told me and how he felt. So I just
9 listened to the TACTSAT. And the initial move went in
10 fine and nothing happened on the way in. And I
11 thought, all right, well, they're on the ground and
12 they're going to get established. And then I heard
13 that they sent a Destined Company TOW vehicle up there
14 or a vehicle with a TOW launcher on it, so that made
15 me feel better. Because one of his concerns was the
16 lack of combat power, fire power. So when I heard
17 they were going to send a TOW truck up there from
18 Destiny Company that assuaged me a little bit. And
19 then the morning of the 13th, I got woken up by my RTO
20 saying TACTSAT was full of reports and then, you know,
21 we started getting ready.

22 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6) Between the 8th and the 12th when you were trying Gamma
23 to keep up to date, did you become aware of any
24 reports of new indications and warnings of enemy
25 action, pending enemy action?

Sierra 26 CPT (b)(3), (b)(6): No, not to my recollection. I mean, I was still
27 running my operations at the same time so I was just
28 kind of following them in the background. But I never
29 heard any reports about increased enemy or threat of
30 enemy up there. But I mean, just from talking to John
31 I knew it was high. I didn't really know any
32 additional threats or increases. Everyone in the
33 battalion knew about what happened when the pick-up
34 truck--I guess the week prior or 2 weeks prior--had
35 been hit by the Apache and we know that upset a ton of
36 people in the area but no reports ever came down to me
37 about, you know, there's now an additional threat.

38 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6): Between the 8th and the 12th, were you aware of Gamma
39 any issues with Second Platoon, Chosen, with having
40 the supplies or equipment to complete their mission?

Sierra 41 CPT (b)(3), (b)(6) No--no, sir.

1 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6): You said that if you got the word that there was **Gamma**
2 contact at Wanat, you had prepped your platoon. Did
3 you platoon ever roll?

Sierra 4 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6) Yes, sir. We got the initial call, my RTO woke
5 me up and said that Wanat was getting hit and there
6 were casualties. So, you know, at that point I
7 figured we'd probably be activated. So I went up to
8 the company TOC to talk to the commander and, you
9 know, just started getting my guys ready, getting the
10 trucks ready because, for all intents and purposes, it
11 seems like we'd go up. We were prepared to go mounted
12 but we didn't know if we'd be air assaulted in or not
13 and then the word came down to start launching up to
14 Wanat. So we sent six vehicles, 30 PAX.

15 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6) And about what time did you arrive? **Gamma**

Sierra 16 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6) It's hard to say what time I arrived. It might
17 be in my sworn statement from before, I can't remember
18 if it is. But I know by the time we'd gotten there,
19 almost all of the enemy fire had stopped. They had
20 overhead--overhead they had Apaches and some fixed
21 **Quebec** wing, I think, on station. Captain (b)(3), (b)(6) platoon
22 was already on the ground. The enemy fire had mostly
23 stopped by the time we got there in terms of that
24 reference point. But it took us about 2 hours, I
25 think, to get up to Wanat from Able Main--maybe a
26 little longer.

27 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6) When you pulled into Wanat and you saw where the **Gamma**
28 emplacement was, what were your thoughts based on its
29 location and terrain?

Sierra 30 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6) Me and my platoon sergeant talked about it, you
31 know, after we kind of got everything under control
32 that we could and we both agreed that we didn't think
33 it was in a good spot; the biggest problem being that
34 it was in the low ground. It was--on both sides
35 within 100 meters it was masked by the terrain and the
36 houses, and the only thing I'd heard about them having
37 positions on the high ground was about the OP. I
38 never went to the OP and it wasn't until later in the
39 day when I was actually shown where the OP was and,
40 even then, I thought it would be a lot higher, you
41 know, up a little further on the hillside or maybe a
42 more dominant piece of terrain. But, you know, me and
43 my platoon sergeant both agreed that this was no spot

1 to put a FOB in. We were just struggling to
2 understanding why they tried to build it there.

3 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6): How long did you stay in Wanat with your platoon? **Gamma**

Sierra 4 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): My platoon was up there, I think, until all main
5 elements left. I left later that night to begin my
6 escort duties back with John's remains. But my
7 platoon, I think, stayed on the ground for 2, maybe 3
8 days and somewhere on the way out I'd gotten word that
9 they were on the way back and everybody had left Wanat
10 and closed back on their parent FOBs.

11 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6): And what were your thoughts when you heard that? **Gamma**

Sierra 12 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): I mean, partly relief that my guys weren't out
13 there anymore, part anger that we were leaving, part
14 disappointment that everything happened like that and
15 now we're giving the ground up--a lot of different
16 emotions. From a professional leader's standpoint, I
17 thought it was a loss, you know, I didn't see it much
18 as a victory in any way because we'd given up the
19 ground that, you know, we lost these guys to initially
20 take and try and defend. From a personal standpoint,
21 you know, a little more compassionate standpoint, I
22 thought it wasn't such a bad idea, though, because we
23 didn't--the guys are almost already out the door and
24 there was, you know, not really the means to hold that
25 ground without--I don't know--extending our platoons,
26 you know, another month or so to make it even feasible
27 to bring in the new company there. So part of me was
28 relieved but part of me was disappointed, I guess.

29 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6): During your time at Able Main, how often would **Gamma**
30 the battalion commander come around to your position?

Sierra 31 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): Able Main was situated on the main road between
32 Camp Blessing and Asadabad, the only road that left
33 out of the valley. So it was very common for the
34 battalion commander to drive past the FOB and then,
35 you know, for his various engagements and on his way
36 back, stop in to see how we're doing. We were very
37 accessible compared to a lot of FOBs and COPs, and we
38 saw the battalion commander I'd say probably once
39 every 2 weeks if not more frequently. Like I said, it
40 was a very accessible route, only about 35 minutes
41 from the battalion headquarters at Camp Blessing by
42 truck. And we moved, you know--we covered him through

1 that AO so he would often stop in just to see how we
2 were doing.

3 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6): Sir? **Gamma**

Sigma 4 **LTC** (b)(3), (b)(6) You mentioned early on that part of the standard for
5 the QRF was to be in PZ posture within an hour, was
6 the first option normally to airlift the QRF to
7 wherever it was going to go?

Sierra 8 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): I guess the thought behind that, sir, is that
9 typically, you know, places where we expect to have a
10 QRF are up in the mountains or not accessible by
11 vehicle. So by putting the standard of being in PZ
12 posture within an hour that would allow us to get onto
13 a bird but, if we needed to, we always kept our trucks
14 ready to roll on a moment's notice. 'So PZ posture
15 also meant, you know, you were ready to leave the gate
16 in trucks.

Sigma 17 **LTC** (b)(3), (b)(6) Right, right, just kind of a general term for being
18 ready to go.

Sierra 19 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6) Yes, sir.

Sigma 20 **LTC** (b)(3), (b)(6) But the QRF that was launched to Wanat was via ground,
21 was via the road between Blessing and Wanat.

Sierra 22 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6) Yes, sir.

Sigma 23 **LTC** (b)(3), (b)(6) I am sorry, if I missed it. You have been up and down
24 the Pesh Road before?

Sierra 25 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6) I have been up and down the Pesh Road hundreds of
26 times, the turn off that led to Wanat, I had to have-I
27 knew where it was on the maps, but the maps are
28 unreliable. So, as I got closer, I just had it
29 described to me because I knew the city around Camp
30 Blessing, Nahganaum, I knew it fairly well, having
31 gone through it and I was directed to the turn off and
32 it was pretty simple, it was one road left or right
33 and we just made a right and so.

Sigma 34 **LTC** (b)(3), (b)(6) Have you had in the past-- did you ever have a TOW
35 vehicle chopped to you to beef up your combat power?

Sierra 1 CPT (b)(3), (b)(6): We do not have a TOW vehicle; we did have a TOW
2 position at Able Main that was a permanent position.
3 So, I knew that was a good asset to have.

Sigma 4 LTC (b)(3), (b)(6) In what way, was it the optics or the ordnance or
5 both?

Sierra 6 CPT (b)(3), (b)(6) A combination of both, sir, I mean, the ability
7 to see the enemy there and then engage them directly.
8 As effective as we were with mortars and artillery, a
9 wide guided missile directed on point was my preferred
10 option especially for long-range targets if we could
11 positively identify them.

Sigma 12 LTC (b)(3), (b)(6) So the thinking was that you would not just use it as
13 an anti-personnel weapon?

Sierra 14 CPT (b)(3), (b)(6) Typically at the ranges where they can maneuver
15 on us, small arms would be ineffective and mortars
16 were not accurate enough. But often times we would use
17 it in unison with indirect fire, you know, get the
18 grid, launched the TOW, at the same time bring in
19 mortars. So it was very effective weapon for us on
20 numerous occasions. So, when I heard that they had one
21 going up there, like I said, I felt better.

Sigma 22 LTC (b)(3), (b)(6) And was there any standard--or nonstandard--rehearsals
23 that you did as part of your battalion QRF cycle, or
24 was it something that you just kind of have been in
25 country long enough that you essentially know was
26 expected and a rehearsal was not necessary.

Sierra 27 CPT (b)(3), (b)(6): My platoon conducted QRF drills as part of our
28 training. There is an area along the Pesh Road that
29 convoys were consistently ambushed and were almost
30 always called to be QRF. So, I knew--me and my
31 platoon sergeant had our guys conduct drills for
32 getting mounted in getting out and we did not rehearse
33 any necessary getting to PZ Posture, but our platoon
34 standard was having a bag ready to go at any time for
35 QRF and being able to be out the gate within 10
36 minutes in trucks.

Sigma 37 LTC (b)(3), (b)(6) Was the QRF-- was there any QRF rehearsal that was
38 part of a larger rehearsal for a larger operation, in
39 other words, like a combined arms rehearsal or ROC
40 drill?

Sierra 1 CPT (b)(3), (b)(6): During some of the larger operations, I know that
2 one combined arms rehearsal for ROCK-Avalanche, I was
3 still on staff at that point but they had the QRF
4 platoon leader there at the combined arms rehearsal
5 telling him, you know, where he would have his guys
6 array and what they were expected to do. So, they did
7 include the-- along the large-scale operations the QRF
8 platoons in their rehearsals.

Sigma 9 LTC (b)(3), (b)(6) Not for Rock Movement?

Sierra 10 CPT (b)(3), (b)(6): Not for Rock Move, sir.

11 LtGen Natonski: You talked about the force size concerns
12 that you had with the size of force that Lieutenant
13 Brostrom was taking up. Have you ever done a COP?
14 One of these smaller isolated COPs before?

Sierra 15 CPT (b)(3), (b)(6) I never built one, sir. But I know that COP-
16 Hanaker-Miracle that I first went to was far from
17 complete when we got there and we spent time on that
18 COP with small-sized force.

19 LtGen Natonski: How big?

Sierra 20 CPT (b)(3), (b)(6): At any given time my platoon was probably between
21 25 and 35 Soldiers, it varied depending on people
22 being on leave, people being at training, or injured.

23 LtGen Natonski: So, a platoon----

Sierra 24 CPT (b)(3), (b)(6) Varies, sir.

25 LtGen Natonski: Is there a template for an establishment of
26 a COP or manning a COP in the unit or battalion?

Sierra 27 CPT (b)(3), (b)(6) I never saw template or an over arching this is
28 how 2d Battalion mans a COP or a FOB or an outpost for
29 that matter. I know that we had fairly extensive
30 experience at doing it. I know in the time that we
31 were there and the Korengal they established several
32 new outposts, Hanaker-Miracle was a brand new COP, it
33 started out as a corn field and three vehicles and
34 then in a couple of the places down in Destined
35 Company AO.

36 LtGen Natonski: So, in actually, when you look at what
37 Lieutenant Brostrom went out with his platoon, further

1 augmented by the TOW and mortar section and a platoon
2 of ANA and Combat Engineers. You don't think that
3 that was enough or is that looking back in hindsight?

Sierra 4 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): I guess looking back in hindsight, sir, compared
5 to other operations but part of the problem was that
6 John's understanding of that terrain, both the
7 physical and the enemy was way better than mine and
8 look at some of these other operations that we did to
9 build OPs or CONOPs, those are typically company
10 events.

11 **LtGen Natonski:** So they have done company size COPs then?

Sierra 12 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): The building of the COP was probably a company
13 size event, the manning later would maybe just a
14 platoon or maybe even a squad or typically from the
15 beginning of the CONOPs in the past and this is all
16 looking back, it was usually--the initial build was
17 supported by a larger force than would man that COP
18 later.

19 **LtGen Natonski:** Within Task Force-Rock?

Sierra 20 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): Yes, sir.

21 **LtGen Natonski:** So this was--from your experience, was
22 probably a midrange, but given the terrain and the
23 threat, you felt that he--and he certainly expressed
24 to you that he felt that a larger force-- more people
25 is what he would have wanted?

Sierra 26 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): Yes, sir.

27 **LtGen Natonski:** You mentioned the time and the fact that it
28 was tough with the RIP going on to keep people's minds
29 focused, they had just abandoned Bella and now the
30 Waygal Valley was pretty much empty of US presence,
31 what timing would have been better for the
32 establishment, in your mind, of this COP? Would it
33 had been better to have waited for the winter and the
34 non-fighting season? Would that have been a better
35 timing? You had a new unit, was it better to have put
36 the COP in with seasoned hands that knew the terrain
37 vice putting in a new unit in there and, oh, by the
38 way, it has been told to us that with Bella gone, now
39 the entire valley was potentially occupied and one of
40 the reasons for Wanat, in addition to engaging the

1 people in that district area and the police that had
2 their headquarters, it provided protection for
3 Blessing, which was at the end of the valley. So,
4 your thoughts on the timing?

Sierra 5 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): In terms of the time of the year, the winter is
6 definitely the way to go, it severely limits the
7 enemy's ability to maneuver and support themselves on
8 the hills because the temperatures drop way below
9 freezing and there is snow.

10 **LtGen Natonski:** Was there snow in the area in the
11 wintertime?

Sierra 12 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): I mean, I don't know firsthand, sir, but there
13 must have been because I know the elevations and----

14 **LtGen Natonski:** I mean, you had been there a year, over a
15 year?

Sierra 16 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): Yes, sir.

17 **LtGen Natonski:** Did you see snow up in those elevations?

Sierra 18 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6) Yes, there is snow, I don't know what levels it
19 is at, but definitely to the north of Camp Blessing
20 there is snow in the winter, I know that, and Camp
21 Blessing itself saw snow. Combination of the weather
22 and the enemy uses that historically as a refit
23 season, if I had to plan it out, winter would have
24 been a better time on. In terms of keeping the guys
25 focused, you know, leaders can do everything that they
26 want and try to tell the guys how bad of a situation
27 they are going into, but the fact of the matter is
28 that some guys had already left to go home and the
29 guys were counting down the days to leave. And after
30 15 months, it's tough to keep everybody focused.

31 **LtGen Natonski:** But you did mention that Lieutenant Brostrom
32 **Oscar** had risen concerns had risen concerns to Captain (b)(3), (b)(6)
33 ----

Sierra 34 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6) He was the one, when I asked him if you talk to
35 anybody about it, he said he talked to Captain (b)(3), (b)(6) **Oscar**
36 who was his Company Commander. He never really covered
37 the conversations were what he said but he said he
38 talked to him about it.

1 **LtGen Natonski:** You mentioned that the Battalion Commander
2 would swing by maybe once every two weeks to Able
3 Main, I think.

Sierra 4 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): Yes, sir.

5 **LtGen Natonski:** Able Main was similar, I guess, in size to
6 Blessing or?

Sierra 7 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): Smaller than Camp Blessing, we had a platoon plus
8 that Company Headquarters section----

9 **LtGen Natonski:** But it was on the road----

Sierra 10 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): It was on the main road, I mean, I position-- I
11 would not call it secure but was regularly patrolled
12 by both us and other units using that main road. The
13 Battalion Commander, as part of his battlefield
14 circulation would get out to places like the Ranch
15 House and some of the COPs that we were on.

16 I know with Able Company being on the road, it
17 was very easy for him to circulate down and see us and
18 I know that he spent a decent amount of time in and
19 around the Korengal Valley because there was a road
20 that could take him to the company headquarters and I
21 am not sure how often though he got on the helicopter
22 and was able to get out to the more remote locations
23 like The Ranch House or Bella or some of the smaller
24 FOBs in the Waygal.

25 **LtGen Natonski:** In your experience over there--and you were
26 there 15 months?

Sierra 27 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): I was there 13 months.

28 **LtGen Natonski:** Did your troops ever have problems with
29 their M4s or SAWs? Malfunctions?

Sierra 30 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): Yes, sir. I mean the combination of the terrain
31 and part of the problem with an air assault mission up
32 on the hill is that it kicks up a lot of dust and
33 sand. And I know of at least one incident when our
34 guys attempted to engage some folks and they had two
35 M4s jam.

36 **LtGen Natonski:** It was a factor of the dust from the
37 helicopters?

Sierra 1 CPT (b)(3), (b)(6): Yes, sir. Anecdotally, I don't know if the guys
2 ever reported having problems with their M4s, but I
3 know that there is at least one or two separate
4 incidents where the M4s jammed based on, you know,
5 dust and everything kicked up by the helicopters.

6 LtGen Natonski: That is why you keep weapons clean; right?

Sierra 7 CPT (b)(3), (b)(6): Yes, sir.

8 LtGen Natonski: That is part of your----

Sierra 9 CPT (b)(3), (b)(6): I don't think--I don't know of any weapon
10 failures that were not just user error or not being
11 able to keep the weapon clean.

12 LtGen Natonski: Okay, thanks.

13 MG Perkins: You were the Task Force QRF; correct, at this
14 time?

Sierra 15 CPT (b)(3), (b)(6): Yes, sir.

16 MG Perkins: Now did you take your directions straight from
17 battalion headquarters or would it come down through
18 the company?

Sierra 19 CPT (b)(3), (b)(6): The morning-- the morning of the 13th, my company
20 commander got a call from Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) saying send Diamond
21 the QRF. I mean, really, the order we got was to move
22 to Wanat and link up with Chosen 6 and help them
23 secure the site. So, the only order the battalion
24 really passed to us was to move up there and as we got
25 closer, they kind of refined their guidance that they
26 wanted us to clear all of the draws on the road
27 between Blessing and Wanat because one intel report
28 had threatened that the enemy would attack Wanat and
29 then place an IED on that road to detonate along----

30 MG Perkins: Is that why it took two hours to get up there
31 because you were clearing the route as well?

Sierra 32 CPT (b)(3), (b)(6): I am confident that we could have gotten there a
33 lot faster had we not been tasked to do that.

34 MG Perkins: But normally, was there an established procedure
35 if you were the task force QRF as on who you maintain
36 contact with and who would give you your orders?

Sierra 1 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): From the QRF-- we had been spun up one or two
2 other times for potential QRF mission and while there
3 is no written or said standard, the understanding that
4 I was always under was that once you got to the on-
5 scene commander, you would fall under their
6 jurisdiction.

7 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6): So was the standard that the task force had a **Gamma**
8 platoon on QRF, was that sort of the default--we had
9 one platoon out of the task force and it was on a
10 rotating basis, and you got ID'd as the QRF?

Sierra 11 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): Yes, it started at the beginning of the
12 deployment with one platoon constantly on QRF, it was
13 actually a platoon from Chosen Company, I think that
14 it was either their 1st or 3d Platoon and they would
15 remain at Camp Blessing where they had an improved HLZ
16 ready to be moved anywhere at a moment's notice.

17 **MG Perkins:** So, you had to be prepared to do either ground or
18 air movement depending on the situation?

Sierra 19 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): Yes, sir.

20 **MG Perkins:** Now obviously, as you stated, Captain (b)(3), (b)(6) was **Quebec**
21 already there prior to your arrival, sort of for the
22 lack of a better term, he was an internal company QRF,
23 again that was SOP that the companies would designate
24 QRFs and then you would have a task force one and you
25 would sort of triage by that, the company would employ
26 there's first and if it was beyond their capacity they
27 would pull the battalion in?

Sierra 28 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): Yes, sir.

29 **MG Perkins:** Is that the normal operating procedure?

Sierra 30 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): Yes, sir. Typically depending on the size of the
31 mission, if the entire company was being engaged or
32 being used for a CONOP then they would try to detonate
33 outside of the company, saying that this would be your
34 first line QRF and then the battalion always had the
35 battalion QRF waiting and then I know for platoon
36 operations, we would just designate internal.

37 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6): Do you know if there was a requirement--you were **Gamma**
38 with Able Company; correct?

Sierra 1 CPT (b)(3), (b)(6): Yes, sir.

2 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6): And you were the task force QRF, but once you got Gamma
3 committed then Able Company had to immediately
4 reconstitute another QRF? So, battalion always had a
5 committed QRF?

Sierra 6 CPT (b)(3), (b)(6): I don't think that there was that requirement,
7 sir, because I think they use a kind of layered
8 approach where each company had a platoon that was
9 available for QRF or could be pooled, I just knew that
10 we were the primary; I don't think there was ever a
11 plan for Able Company to send multiple QRFs.

12 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6): And so you were the only additional elements Gamma
13 outside of Chosen that went to Wanat; correct?

Sierra 14 CPT (b)(3), (b)(6): No, there was another platoon that was flown in
15 from Battle Company's AO and I think that once the
16 commanders had an appreciation for the situation they
17 sent us of the initial battalion QRF and then Battle
18 Company was also asked to send a platoon or to give up
19 a platoon to send as well so that we could continue to
20 secure the area because based on the amount of
21 casualties and the size of the area that we were
22 expected to secure.

23 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6): You said that you were there for 13 months? Gamma

Sierra 24 CPT (b)(3), (b)(6): Yes, sir.

25 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6): What would you characterize, understanding, both Gamma
26 your platoon/company/task force level of all of the
27 tribal and government issues in the Waygal Valley, you
28 know, the Nurastani, Pechdune, fault lines, etc and
29 things like that; did you feel that you had a good
30 feel for where those were and what the hot button
31 issues were?

Sierra 32 CPT (b)(3), (b)(6): In terms of the Waygal Valley, I really did not
33 have much and I don't think that my guys did, we did
34 not operate in that area. Anecdotally, I know that --
35 you know, I was on battalion staff for 3 months which
36 is at the mouth of the Waygal Valley and from
37 everything, you know, I knew about The Ranch House
38 attack and there were rumors that the locals may have
39 tipped off the enemy about--that there is a control
40 out, unconfirmed, and we all knew that we did not

1 receive a line of contact around Bella or Camp
2 Blessing in terms of direct fire attacks, but we
3 contributed a lot of that to, most of the time, the
4 cold weather up there and that the enemy just bypassed
5 them in general because it was just such as small
6 element.

7 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6): Again, what did you do while you were on staff? **Gamma**

Sierra 8 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): I was a contracting officer. I was the assistant
9 S4 in charge of contracting.

10 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6): Had you heard about any, just because you had a **Gamma**
11 background in that, any issues with contracting as
12 they set up Wanat?

Sierra 13 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): I have since the incident heard about the
14 contracting issues that they had and it does not
15 surprise me. In the 3 months there, I executed or
16 started numbers of contracts that did not begin on
17 time, people--workers refuse to go to areas because
18 they thought it was too dangerous, and that was
19 actually one of the biggest pains for me was trying to
20 get Afghans to execute a contract they had won or
21 chosen to bid on. From my understanding on how it
22 would happen is that an Afghan with a computer and
23 spoke English or telephoned would win the bid and then
24 contract kind of subcontractor locals in the area
25 which is usually a stipulation of the contract when
26 they use local hire, but a lot of these contracting
27 companies did not have permanent construction workers
28 and trucks.

29 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6): He was a guy with a computer? **Gamma**

Sierra 30 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): Is a guy with a computer who got the e-mail and
31 won the bid and daily dish out the money--and a lot of
32 times he had to hire locals that had trucks and
33 shovels and whatever.

34 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6): So, contracting friction was sort of the way of **Gamma**
35 life, is what you are saying?

Sierra 36 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): Yes, it was not an easy process and the Afghans
37 sometimes needed prodding or threats of pulling the
38 contract and not working with them again to motivate
39 them to execute, so when I found out later that the
40 Afghans refuse to go into the valley, we actually--to

1 send trucks to send contractors into the Korengal
2 Valley, we had to plan American Patrols or they would
3 not go and that was a constant--that is just a
4 constant--if the Afghans did not feel that it was safe
5 enough they would just simply refuse to work. And
6 there was almost no punishment for them because I had
7 a few times where I had to doc contractor's pay and
8 the contracting office said that I could not do it
9 because it was not written into their contract that
10 they would be docked pay for not entering in a
11 dangerous area or not fulfilling contracts on time. I
12 don't know if that ever got resolved, but it was
13 something that I brought up before I left. The Afghan
14 contractors felt more pain if they did not finish on
15 time despite putting you will have finished by this
16 date and I don't know why that was but that was
17 something where contracting was always an issue with
18 the Afghans trying to get them to execute on time.

19 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6): Okay, thanks. **Gamma**

Sigma 20 **LTC** (b)(3), (b)(6) Who replaced you as the assistant in contracting?

Sierra 21 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): Captain (b)(3), (b)(6) took over from me in terms of-- **Copper**
22 he took over contracting, he was the assistant S4.

23 **LtGen Natonski:** At the time of Wanat?

Sierra 24 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): Yes, sir.

25 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6): And is he still-- **Gamma**

Sierra 26 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6): Is not in 2d battalion anymore, he left, if he is
27 still at the career course, he would be at Benning,
28 but--just thinking about his timeline, he is probably
29 at a unit by now and out of the career course. He
30 took over from me and he finished out the deployment
31 as the contracting officer. And it was such a
32 demanding tasks, in terms of keeping on top of it, it
33 required one dedicated person to being in charge of
34 it, so, like I said, it would not surprise me Afghans
35 did not show up to execute. That was all after the
36 fact. I had not heard about anything like that
37 leading up to it.

38 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6): Thank you. **Gamma**

Sierra 1 **LtGen Natonski:** Captain (b)(3), (b)(6), you are ordered not to
2 discuss your testimony that you provided today with
3 anyone other than the members of the investigation
4 team. You will not allow any witnesses in this
5 investigation to talk to you about the testimony he
6 has given or which he intends to give. If anyone
7 should try to influence your testimony or attempt to
8 discuss your testimony, you are instructed to notify
9 **Gamma** Lieutenant Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) or Lieutenant Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) **Beta**
10 Do you understand that?

Sierra 11 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6) : Yes, sir.

12 **LtGen Natonski:** Hey, I just want to thank you for your
13 service to our country, to the Army, and for what you
14 did in Afghanistan, and I guess you are getting ready
15 to go back?

16 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6) : Yes, sir.

17 **LtGen Natonski:** Good luck on your upcoming deployment.

Sierra 18 **CPT** (b)(3), (b)(6) : Thank you very much, sir.

19 **LtGen Natonski:** Thank you.

20 [The testimony closed at 1038 hours, 14 October 2009.]

CERTIFICATION OF VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT

Sierra Subj: TESTIMONY OF CPATAIN [REDACTED] (b)(3), (b)(6) USA, GIVEN ON
14 OCTOBER 2009, AT VICENZA, ITALY

In accordance with section 0214 of JAGINST 5800.7E, I certify
that the subject transcript is an accurate verbatim transcript.

[REDACTED] (b)(3), (b)(6)

Sigma

[REDACTED] (b)(3), (b)(6)

Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army
Judge Advocate

18 NOV 09

DATE