

1 [The testimony began at 1124, 7 October 2009.]  
2

3 **LtGen Natonski:** I'm Lieutenant General Richard F. Natonski,  
4 United States Marine Corps. I have been appointed by  
5 the commander of U.S. Central Command to conduct an  
6 investigation into the facts and circumstances  
7 surrounding the combat action at Wanat, Afghanistan  
8 during July 2008. Lieutenant Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta and  
9 Lieutenant Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6), Sigma are judge advocates  
10 and they are also assigned to this investigation team.  
11

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

18 Prior to coming on the record today, you signed a  
19 Privacy Act Statement; is that correct?  
20

21 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: Yes.  
22

23 **LtGen Natonski:** Your testimony will be made under oath. And  
24 you will now be sworn.  
25

26 [The witness was sworn.]  
27

28 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta Please state your full name, spelling your last.  
29

30 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu  
31

32 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta What is your current unit and unit's location?  
33

34 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: My current unit is Marine Air Support  
35 Squadron 6 out of Chickopee's Reserve Air Support  
36 Squadron and I'm the commanding officer.  
37

38 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta And are you currently a lieutenant colonel in the  
39 United States Marine Corps Reserve?  
40

41 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: Yes.  
42

43 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta In July of 2008, what was your unit and that  
44 unit's location?  
45

1 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: I was not with that unit at the time, I was  
2 with Regional Corps Advisory Command-East out of Camp  
3 Blessing.  
4  
5 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta: Afghanistan?  
6  
7 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: Afghanistan with an Embedded Training Team.  
8 I was OIC of Embedded Training Team 5-3.  
9  
10 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta: Now prior to coming on the record today, did you  
11 have a chance to review the transcript and the  
12 interview dated 3 April 2009 with Mr. (b)(3), (b)(6) with Garnet  
13 the Combat Studies Institute?  
14  
15 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: Yes.  
16  
17 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta: About nine pages long?  
18  
19 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: Yes.  
20  
21 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta: And is there anything you'd like to change about  
22 that statement?  
23  
24 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: No.  
25  
26 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta: Would you adopt that statement as part of your  
27 sworn testimony today?  
28  
29 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: Yes.  
30  
31 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta: Thank you. What is your MOS?  
32  
33 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: Infantry Officer, 0302.  
34  
35 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta: When did you arrive in Afghanistan to be part of  
36 the RCAC?  
37  
38 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: March 16th, 2008.  
39  
40 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta: And you were located at Camp Blessing?  
41  
42 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: Correct. I was--headquarters for 2d Brigade  
43 with my ETT's were--my ETTs were out of Camp Blessing.  
44 I also had Marines at Michigan, COP Michigan, COP  
45 Eagle Main, COP Miracle, COP Vegas, COP Korengal, and  
46 COP Famoto and COP Bella.  
47

1 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta What U.S. Army units were at Blessing?  
2  
3 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: At Camp Blessing it was headquarters for 2d  
4 Battalion--2/503rd and part of that was Chosen Company  
5 which was part of one of their infantry companies.  
6  
7 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta And the battalion command post was at Blessing?  
8  
9 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: Correct.  
10  
11 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta And did you work with the battalion command post?  
12  
13 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: Yes.  
14  
15 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta Did you tour the various COP's where your Marines  
16 were?  
17  
18 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: Yes, I did.  
19  
20 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta Could you describe the COP settings in relation  
21 to terrain?  
22  
23 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: If you want to be more specific--which  
24 COP's----  
25  
26 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta COP Bella----  
27  
28 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: COP Bella was at the--typically was at the  
29 bottom of a ravine and next to a river which was  
30 embedded into the walls of the valley there and the  
31 soldiers had set up a COP there surrounded by HESCO.  
32 And COP Bella was secured by OP's. One being the Army  
33 on the left side, on the west side; and on the east  
34 side it was secured by the ANA, the Afghan National  
35 Army and my ETT's.  
36  
37 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta How about Michigan?  
38  
39 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: Michigan was another platoon size Cop which  
40 had an Army platoon and an ANA platoon which was  
41 manned by one ETT, sometimes two ETT's, and the  
42 National Guard soldier and then secured the mouth of  
43 the Korengal for the 2/503rd and then Able Main was a  
44 little bit larger. It probably had 80--it varies on  
45 the number of ANA. It had an ANA side, an Army side--  
46 kind of integrated but they kind of kept to their side  
47 and secured about half the base or maybe three

1 quarters of the base at different times and that had  
2 a-- I had a little more ETT's there, three ETT's, a  
3 captain, a staff sergeant and a corpsman, and plus'd  
4 up with a mortar platoon from the New York National  
5 Guard.

6  
7 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta At COP Bella, can you describe the individual  
8 fortifications, please?  
9

10 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: HESCO's, they did have some new--they call  
11 them "brick and mortars" basically the Afghan builds  
12 brick and then they cover it with a mud covering but  
13 it is greater fortification than just a wood  
14 structure, a bee hut as they call them out there, you  
15 know, sandbagged out. That's pretty much the way it  
16 was. I mean, Bella, you know, the LZ was-- it was a  
17 tight LZ. They would have to come in from different  
18 approaches. There's only one way in and one way--  
19 egress route out. They'd come in sometimes from the  
20 north sometimes from the south but the LZ was tight on  
21 the river and then they kind of build around it which  
22 were just bee hut--fortified bee huts.  
23

24 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta Was there overhead protection?  
25

26 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: Yes.  
27

28 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta How about down at Michigan?  
29

30 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: Yes. They had overhead protection. It was  
31 all sandbagged. You know, maybe two--two layers of  
32 sandbags to protect them. You know, the ANA,  
33 sometimes they were in wood huts--maybe not as great  
34 as fortifications but, you know, the continuous  
35 defensive improvements were a steady work for both the  
36 ANA and the Army units out there.  
37

38 Michigan was fully HESCO'd 360 around. You know, the  
39 eight by eights and the four by fours topped off with  
40 that and then you had sentry posts on top plus, you  
41 know, various time listening and securing--motion  
42 sensors.  
43

44 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta Were you involved with the planning for the move  
45 to Wanat?  
46

1 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: I was involved in all the planning because  
2 the ANA were going to be part of the securing the COP  
3 itself. So, you know, that Task Force Rock did  
4 implement while I was there and---

6 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta Task Force Rock is 2/503rd?

8 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: 2/503rd, excuse me. And Lieutenant Colonel  
9 (b)(3), (b)(6), Diamond ensured that his staff always incorporated the  
10 ANA into a portion of it just because the battalion  
11 itself was spread thin. Obviously you can see through  
12 the--along the patch to Korengal and the Waygal, you  
13 know, any battalion sized element plus'd up with, you  
14 know, the ANA which we ran anywhere from 430 to 550  
15 depending on the week. So the planning for COP Kahler  
16 --as they called it for Wanat, I was involved in, you  
17 know, what the structures were going to be for the  
18 ANA, where they were going to be at the site along  
19 with (he's probably Captain (b)(3), (b)(6) --now, but)  
20 Lieutenant (b)(3), (b)(6) --was the engineer that was Falcon  
21 involved in the planning phase for that. Falcon

23 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta Did the planning start when you first arrived in  
24 Afghanistan in March or at a later date?

26 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: I think that the planning had been ongoing.  
27 They had wanted to close Bella because it's an air  
28 centric, you know, COP and bring it down to Wanat  
29 where they can support and have greater effects with,  
30 you know, the population because there wasn't a great-  
31 -large population up at Bella. That outpost was put  
32 up there for, you know, I'm not sure of the reason,  
33 but at the time, they were probably solid reasons and  
34 they secured it as time went on and they just weren't  
35 having any effects with it--with the population. I  
36 mean, it was very small population up there than Wanat  
37 had--it was still in Nuristan-- but you could have  
38 greater effects through the Waygal Valley south going  
39 towards Camp Blessing.

41 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta So when you arrived in Afghanistan, it's your  
42 impression that the planning for Wanat had already  
43 begun?

45 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: Yes. There was talks that they wanted to  
46 move Wanat and then there had been--March, April, May--  
47 --probably May it really started getting geared up--

1 June they started, you know, Captain (b)(3), (b)(6), Oscar was doing  
2 SHURA up there with the Wanat elders.

3  
4 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta: Before the unit moved to Wanat, had you ever  
5 visited Wanat?

6  
7 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: Yes.

8  
9 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta: Please describe that.

10  
11 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: I went up with a Army--it think it was a  
12 convoy of about four vehicles--five vehicles--whatever  
13 the minimum was we went up there, myself, Master  
14 Sargeant (b)(3), (b)(6) --and Specialist (b)(3), (b)(6) --I went up and  
15 it was just one group of ETT's since my ETT's were  
16 going up there and I was going to put 25 to 30 ANA up  
17 there, just kind of wanted to get the feel for the  
18 land, where they were going to put them and just, you  
19 know, part of the planning process and, you know, get  
20 the feel for the group. And we drove up there, left  
21 early morning. It's a rugged terrain road--unimproved  
22 road all the way up there and when we got up there  
23 Captain (b)(3), (b)(6), Sigma was leading the SHURA and he was  
24 supposed to meet with the elders up there.

25  
26 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta: Do you recall where that SHURA was held?

27  
28 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: It wasn't held. We got up there-- defensive  
29 positions waiting for the elders to show and as usual  
30 sometimes, they were hesitant to show up with the  
31 Americans because, you know, whether they're Taliban  
32 or whether they're locals and, you know, sometimes you  
33 don't know who's who and on what side of the fence  
34 they're playing on that day. They didn't show up  
35 because it was the end of the negotiations for the  
36 property that they wanted to have. And at that stage  
37 of the game--at that stage of the planning process was  
38 almost--it was assumed that they weren't going to take  
39 any money to save face with the Taliban saying, hey,  
40 the Americans just took the land and there wasn't any  
41 negotiations. If they negotiated with the Americans,  
42 they'd feel like they were facilitators to the  
43 Americans and would lose face with the Taliban. So  
44 they're kind of playing both sides of the fence there.  
45 So by us just moving in and taking--even after five or  
46 four or three months of negotiations and with a, you  
47 know, payment for the property which was going to be

1 figured out by higher command, it would be easier just  
2 to-- for them to save face.  
3

4 So they didn't show up that day. We stayed at the  
5 site for about--I want to say it was approximately 60  
6 minutes and then we said, hey, it's time to head back  
7 and when we started to move back, we ended up finding  
8 an IED which was not unusual. So we secured the site  
9 waiting for EOD to show up which took the good part of  
10 the day--two or three hours from Camp Blessing, blew  
11 the hole, and then moved back because on that same day  
12 we're doing planning for another operation that was  
13 taking place both in Serconni--and through the Pesh--  
14 down at Camp Blessing.

15  
16 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta: Do you recall the approximate date of your trip  
17 up to Wanat?  
18

19 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: I want to say it was--it had to be in June  
20 because we did approximately four or five operations  
21 between May and June because based on the moon, you  
22 know, the full moon that was taking place at the time,  
23 so we were doing a lot of operations during that time.  
24 I can go back and look but I want to say it was the  
25 end of May, early June that I went out there to do the  
26 site survey with Captain (b)(3), (b)(6), Oscar  
27

28 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta: Was it your impression that was not the first  
29 time that someone had gone up to do the site survey?  
30

31 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: No. Captain (b)(3), (b)(6), Oscar  
32 had been up there  
33 numerous times. He'd done numerous SHURAs with the  
34 elders up there--spent many personal appearances with  
35 them--talking over the site, talking that we wanted to  
36 come down to--out of Bella down to Wanat to get  
37 greater effects with the population.

38 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta: Did Captain (b)(3), (b)(6), Oscar  
39 show you the site itself,  
40 proposed site?

41 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: Yes.  
42

43 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta: Based on your experience as an infantry officer,  
44 what did you think of that?  
45

46 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: You know, this is hind sight. At the time,  
47 you know, the area is flat but the problem is it's

1 surrounded by--you have a bazaar to the east, you have  
2 a hotel just north of it next to the road, you have a  
3 Mosque directly north of you, and then you have  
4 buildings all surrounding it which is not--I'll be  
5 honest, which is not uncommon for these COPs up there,  
6 you know, to be embedded with the people. Is it the  
7 best tactical position? Well you'd want the high  
8 ground, some place you could support with an LZ. But  
9 this was part of the counter insurgency-is to be with  
10 the population. They would build a COP around it and  
11 with HESCO's. It would be two layers of HESCO's with  
12 the ANA and the U.S. soldiers inside of it. So,  
13 tactically, is it the best position? I mean, if you  
14 look at any of these COP's out in Afghanistan in the  
15 Hindu-Kush Mountains, none of them are in the best  
16 tactical positions unless you want to be on top of a  
17 mountain at 10,000 feet. So but to be in with the  
18 population without taking away, you know, the  
19 farmland, taking away from individuals it was probably  
20 one of the more probable positions that they would  
21 utilize.

22  
23 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta: Did you have reservations with that site, about  
24 that site?

25  
26 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: If you walk out there and you are out of  
27 your UAH or you're up on the HMMWV and you look up,  
28 you can see the ravine or the valley that comes down  
29 from the east--picture in my head--but it comes down  
30 from the east. The river going around it provided good  
31 security there. But, I mean, they can get into the  
32 mountains and shoot from any direction inside of the  
33 thousand feet at that location. I think Wanat is at  
34 close to 5,000 feet. The base of the valley down at  
35 the pass is 3,500 and some of those peaks were up  
36 around 6 and 7,000. So in many different places they  
37 could--it wouldn't be the best tactical position but  
38 for part of COIN it would probably be a good location  
39 to be within the community, within the villages.

40  
41 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta: Closer to when the operation was executed, were  
42 you around the 2/503rd in their battalion CP?

43  
44 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: Yes.

45  
46 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta: Were they planning to rotate shortly after  
47 executing the operation? Are you aware?

1  
2 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: Oh, planning to rotate, the whole battalion  
3 was rotating out. Yes. On July 30, 31st, they were  
4 supposed to rotate out.  
5

6 **LtCol** (3), (b)(6), Beta Based on the duties associated with a RIP/TOA,  
7 did you have an opinion as to whether or not the  
8 battalion was fully focused on the move to Wanat?  
9

10 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: I believe the battalion was fully focused on  
11 the move to Wanat. They put all their assets--  
12 obviously they can't move all platoons--a full company  
13 up there because they don't have a full company to  
14 move up there. I mean, that's why they used the ANA  
15 up there. But, you know, supported the triple  
16 seven's, the two guns down at Camp Blessing, the 120  
17 mortars up there, the assets from 173rd that they were  
18 trying to push up there, the financial backing for  
19 building the COP up there, I think, was there, and  
20 they had all the material to quickly up HESCO's and  
21 building material based at Camp Blessing to be helo  
22 lifted up and ground transported.  
23

24 **LtCol** (3), (b)(6), Beta In your opinion, was the battalion headquarters--  
25 whether it be the planners or the logistics folks or  
26 the CO, were they in anyway distracted by the RIP/TOA?  
27 Distracted meaning not putting the requisite level of  
28 emphasis on the move to Wanat?  
29

30 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: No, I don't think they were distracted at  
31 all. I worked intimately with the 3, the 3-Alpha, the  
32 fires--and Captain (b)(3), (b)(6)--and they were completely  
33 focused on security up there and as much as they could  
34 be you know as--but they also had eight bases they're  
35 watching during the RIP/TOA that's transpiring. And,  
36 you know, the Korengal, which is one of their bigger  
37 bases up there, which sees a large portion of the  
38 fires that are going on. I mean, out of the TIC's or  
39 the troops in contact out of there, the Korengal sees  
40 the most of it and that was going on too. So I'm not  
41 going to say they're not spread thin, but they had  
42 their eye on the mission.  
43

44 **LtCol** (3), (b)(6), Beta General, questions regarding site selection?  
45

46 **LtGen Natonski:** You had mentioned a series of COPs that  
47 Marine ETT's were located at. In general, what was

1 the mission of these COP's? Was it counter  
2 insurgency, operations, or was it interdiction of  
3 supply lines between Afghanistan and Pakistan? What  
4 was the general focus at these COP's?  
5

6 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu:

7 The general focus was, one, interdiction.  
8 You know, the inner centric ones they're all foot  
9 patrols. My Marines ran one or two patrols a day with  
10 the ANA and the Army platoons. They did joint patrols  
11 on a regular basis and sometimes they did independent  
12 patrols, but it was mainly interdiction especially for  
13 COP Bella. They would go sometimes long patrols, no  
14 more than a day patrol. They'd never go out any  
15 longer than a day and any further than the 120's could  
16 reach or the 81's can reach. But at all times based  
17 on the artillery we had out there, we always had the--  
18 the triple 7's could reach out and touch them and they  
19 could get authorization at Camp Blessing to fire those  
20 and they also had two other guns at Camp Wright--which  
21 is PRT Asadabad--which could also reach out and touch  
22 them.

23 And the way the fire support was set up along the Pesh  
24 --you had 120's at Able Main which is the center of  
25 the Pesh to your right and we had 81's at Michigan.  
26

27 **LtGen Natonski:**

28 Was there a shift in the mission that you  
29 noticed among Task Force Rock 2/503rd with respect to  
30 moving forces out of Bella which was focused on  
31 interdiction down to Wanat which was in an area where  
32 the district center was and a greater population?

33 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu:

34 **Diamond**

35 **Colonel** (b)(3), (b)(6) --his staff, Major (b)(3), (b)(6) --and you know, **Gray**  
36 they were focused on getting in with the population  
37 and getting the effects of the population from PRT,  
38 USAID, and getting things to these people; i.e.  
39 running water, paving the roads, better food,  
40 education. You know, that was all part--I mean it was  
41 a kinetic area. I mean for whatever the reason whether  
42 the Taliban liked to send people there to train or  
43 there's additional men, fighting age men that just  
44 fought for money.

45 **LtGen Natonski:**

46 The period for planning for Wanat went on  
47 for months.

1 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: Yes.

2  
3 LtGen Natonski: I believe one witness mentioned that he'd  
4 heard about it in March, was about the time frame you  
5 first heard of the potential to move to Wanat?  
6

7 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: I'd hit the ground probably March 19th and I  
8 want to say it was April for me just because I hit the  
9 ground, I did my RIP with my other ETT's out there and  
10 I went directly into combat missions. I didn't even  
11 finish my RIP/TOA and I was doing night inserts with  
12 the ANA and the Army.  
13

14 LtGen Natonski: So it was a considerable period. In terms  
15 of the timing of the establishment of Wanat in the  
16 midst of the RIP going on with 2d battalion and I  
17 believe it was a unit coming in from the 1st Infantry  
18 Division and I also understood there had been an  
19 Apache attack on a group of Afghan civilians that led  
20 to the deaths of some medical personnel in the Waygal  
21 valley.  
22

23 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: I'd like to make to--I was actually in the  
24 TOC that day when the Predator was up and the HILUX  
25 was firing mortars at Bella. They were all fighting  
26 age men. They were all carrying weapons. They were  
27 dropping rounds. Whether they intermixed with each  
28 other, who knows. They brought them down to--their  
29 wounded down to Blessing and they provided immediate  
30 medical attention for the ones that they could. And  
31 the ones that didn't need immediate medical attention,  
32 we sent to Asadabad. But on that day, different press  
33 reports say all the medical--there's not one doctor  
34 out in that valley. You know, I'm not sure what  
35 they're defining as medical people, you know, maybe  
36 they wear a white shirt or something but there are not  
37 a lot of medical people out there providing anything.  
38 So the Taliban out there has a great IO plan much  
39 better than ours. They get out in front. It wasn't  
40 two hours later that that Bella attack was in Reuters.  
41 I mean, if you checked the commercial internet, if you  
42 could. So they're very quick to get out there and  
43 push that information out and, information flows out  
44 there. It's almost immediate to the western press.  
45

1 **LtGen Natonski:** There was an NGO organization that had hired  
2 I believe Pakistan doctors to work that valley,  
3 whether they were in that convoy or not----  
4

5 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: From my understanding, they weren't.  
6

7 **LtGen Natonski:** What makes you believe that?  
8

9 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: There could have been a doctor or whatever  
10 they're defining as a doctor or a medical staff or  
11 personnel. Supposedly from my understanding and this  
12 is second hand, some of them had just left Bella and  
13 they have like a little bazaar there if I can remember  
14 correctly. And some of the personnel were there. But  
15 the Taliban or you know anti-coalition forces, they'd  
16 see them at the time or AEF intermixed with them. And  
17 you know when they were dropping the rounds, they  
18 observed the HILUX for, I don't know, 35 or 40 minutes  
19 before they took any action, before the Apache's took  
20 any action. So, you know, watching them set up,  
21 watching what they're doing, making sure they had  
22 proper PID before they would execute anything.  
23

24 **LtGen Natonski:** After that instant, did you detect,  
25 personally, any change in the atmosphere among the  
26 residents of the Waygal valley towards the----  
27

28 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: My sergeant major, one of my operation  
29 sergeant major, he's a SOPD from the valley. There  
30 was--we had embedded numerous time to make sure that  
31 he wasn't providing information to the bad guys, if  
32 you want to call them the bad guys, but the Taliban  
33 and THT seems to vet him relatively well and it's very  
34 difficult to tell. I mean, you talk to one person--I  
35 can go to any valley and talk to one person and say  
36 hey they love us and on the other side, they don't  
37 like us. We didn't really have that much of an impact  
38 up in the Waygal at that time. I mean, we would do  
39 patrols up to a certain part but they'd be vehicle  
40 patrols or kind of--as far as a foot patrol could go.  
41 But it didn't seem--after they attacked, there was  
42 some obviously up in Wanat was pushed down that they  
43 were extremely obviously upset over any friendly  
44 casualties that occurred from that event.  
45

46 **LtGen Natonski:** So the first planning you'd heard about  
47 Wanat was in the April timeframe. Do you know----

1  
2 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu:

3 I want to say it was April and it was very  
4 superficial at that time. They were saying because of  
5 what occurred at the Ranch House, they closed that.  
6 They got attacked there and then we were up at Bella  
7 and I know Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) --their concern it was just  
8 air, you know, we need to get out of there, it's not  
9 doing anything for us and we need to consolidate a  
10 little closer, be able to ground support our COPS.  
11 Because, you know, once winter comes, bad weather, you  
12 got to plus everything up, it would make more sense to  
13 move to Wanat and have greater effects on the  
14 population and the Waygal Valley.

15 **LtGen Natonski:**

16 And had there been any dates set?

17 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu:

18 No. No dates at that timeframe.

19 **LtGen Natonski:**

20 So it kept getting punted downrange.

21 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu:

22 Correct. In the planning phase, and, you  
23 know, it really started to ramp up May, June. They  
24 started to plus up all Class V stuff, you know,  
25 plywood, wood, generators, water, things of that  
26 nature that would be necessary to move the COP. You  
27 know, all the building construction material was  
28 staged at Camp Blessing. Because the way, you know,  
29 this is probably end of June coming into July, they  
30 were plus'ing up all the gear because they wanted to  
31 go up there, get it in, get the HESCO's up, you know,  
32 get immediate fortified protection as quick as  
33 possible.

34 **LtGen Natonski:**

35 And it was to establish what you have called  
36 a "COP." Is that the terminology used at Wanat?

37 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu:

38 That was the terminology used.

39 **LtGen Natonski:**

40 Had you ever heard of the term "vehicle  
41 patrol base" used in conjunction with Wanat?

42 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu:

43 No. That was the description of the-- what  
44 they had at the time of the attack, a vehicle patrol  
45 base. But they were going to establish a COP there.

46 **LtGen Natonski:**

47 Okay. And getting back to the timing, here  
they were in the midst of a RIP. They were also, I

1 believe, working the 15-6 Army investigation that  
2 looked into the attack on those civilians that we had  
3 talked about where it was supposedly Afghan medical  
4 personnel. That was going on and I gather during a  
5 RIP, assets particularly air assets are really tapped  
6 out. What was the focus of effort that you remember  
7 in that 2d battalion?  
8

9 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: Well they're--they're----

10  
11 **LtGen Natonski:** At the time.  
12

13 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: The full RIP hadn't completely started. I  
14 mean, they were gradually--we had a--the RIP was going  
15 in phases obviously, you know, they were doing one COP  
16 at a time and working it that way. And so the CH47's  
17 and the Apaches that would come up with them did have  
18 them scheduled. But they were also scheduled along  
19 with which they refer to as the "Red Ridge" as the  
20 usual logistics support that we'd receive up at Camp  
21 Blessing every four days which would supply Bella,  
22 Vegas, and the COP. They'd do logistics runs; i.e.  
23 bottled water, food, any necessities, ammo, things of  
24 that nature. So, you know, the flights were still  
25 being run so those assets were being utilized but they  
26 could be diverted at any time.  
27

28 **LtGen Natonski:** And apparently they were because they were  
29 not all of the flights required to bring in the  
30 equipment and supplies needed at Wanat. Did you hear  
31 of that case?  
32

33 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: I can't comment that positively. They were  
34 utilizing all the assets that were coming up on a  
35 regular basis. So the CH47's, if they were coming up,  
36 they were bringing assets up there back and forth but  
37 they were scheduled--I think I did see what they had  
38 scheduled for the support of Wanat for the gear. At  
39 the same time, you know, you're closing the base up at  
40 Bella which that started weeks before. So we were  
41 retrograding out of there and that gear was being sent  
42 down to any--ancillary gear that wasn't necessary was  
43 being staged at Blessing. From Blessing, once they  
44 got the security perimeter set up at Wanat, that gear  
45 would either be ground transported or brought up by  
46 TT.  
47

1 **LtGen Natonski:** The planning into the establishment of  
2 Wanat, were you involved in that planning with the 2d  
3 battalion?  
4

5 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: I was involved more in the planning for the  
6 construction of the ANA huts, things of that nature  
7 with Lieutenant (b)(3), (b)(6), Falcon at the time.  
8

9 **LtGen Natonski:** The detailed planning had the initial  
10 elements moving in under the cover of darkness and  
11 then a flight of CH47s bringing in additional people  
12 to include the ANA's.  
13

14 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: Yes. Because what they did is they took, I  
15 think in the morning of the 9th, they brought Staff  
16 **Aqua** Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6) or Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6) and now Sergeant  
17 (b)(3), (b)(6), Burgundy, Corporal (b)(3), (b)(6) down with 10 ANA. And that  
18 evening they brought 14 more so we had 24 up there  
19 with 3 Marines and they put them in positions. And,  
20 you know, the UAH's came up from, you know, Chosen  
21 company came up from Blessing.  
22

23 **LtGen Natonski:** And during that period they had ISR on  
24 station and Predator covering the establishment of the  
25 COP. Were you aware of that?  
26

27 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: I am aware. I can't say specifically that  
28 day on that moment. But, you know, Predator was  
29 usually up. And you know the Intel, Captain (b)(3), (b)(6) we  
30 would request pred--or any smaller like UAH's--UAV **Magenta**  
31 that they would use up there for surveillance at all  
32 time. I mean, they used all the assets that they  
33 could have when necessary.  
34

35 **LtGen Natonski:** Did every COP request Predator or when there  
36 was a request from Predator that originated in a COP,  
37 was there a certain sense of urgency that they would  
38 not have requested it if they didn't feel threatened  
39 based on their indications and warning of an attack?  
40

41 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: No. And usually Predator was up, you know,  
42 for something like Bella just due to the fact that we  
43 would get Intel that, you know, there's many  
44 insurgents in the area, two or three insurgents in the  
45 area, or greater number of insurgents. And, you know,  
46 after the July 4-- you know there's a greater height  
47 in security. And now, you know, we're getting--

1 they're, you know 2/503rd is getting more information  
2 or more Intel from THT that, you know, that they're  
3 staging that, you know, they're upset over this so  
4 we'd want ISR up in the air just to see what is  
5 occurring out there. Is there greater movements of  
6 larger members of people at night? Where are they  
7 moving? Are they moving along, you know, main MSR's?  
8 Are they in the villages? Because usually many of  
9 these Afghan villages they shut down at night but then  
10 you see, you know, large numbers moving around. I  
11 don't think they saw that----

12  
13 **LtGen Natonski:** Were you aware of any reports coming out of  
14 Wanat that had indications and warning of Afghan--  
15 anti-Afghan forces----

16  
17 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: Well, I mean, I remember specifically, you  
18 know, after the attack of July 4th, then we closed  
19 Bella and we moved down to Wanat. I mean, we're only  
20 talking 5 clicks and the people from Wanat support  
21 Bella. They worked up there. And many of them even  
22 worked for the Army up there in different jobs they  
23 would provide them, you know, THT would let them. So,  
24 you know, that information flows down. So, you know,  
25 the village people, the people that live on the  
26 outskirts in the villages, they were obviously upset  
27 so-- which is an incubator for, you know, hostilities.  
28 I mean, Nuristan has been historically known not to  
29 like outsiders.

30  
31 **LtGen Natonski:** Were you aware of any reports originating  
32 from Wanat after the initial force went in or  
33 surveillance or spying groups on hillsides not Intel  
34 fed through the----

35  
36 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: I think there was some Intel that there was  
37 going to be an attack but it was unsure when.

38  
39 **LtGen Natonski:** Did you hear of any actions conducted at the  
40 battalion level, the 2d battalion level in order to  
41 provide them any support, ISR or otherwise?

42  
43 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: Just from my personal interaction with  
44 Captain (b)(3), (b)(6) he would attempt to get Predator for  
45 during these--during movement to Wanat because it  
46 would provide good intelligence.

Magenta

1 **LtGen Natonski:** Well there was ISR during the first two days  
2 of the movement into Wanat, but when there were  
3 indications and warning of a potential attack from  
4 various sources, did the battalion take any actions  
5 that you were aware of to bring back Predator or any  
6 other ISR?  
7

8 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: I can only assume that they did.  
9

10 **LtGen Natonski:** You don't know for a fact?  
11

12 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: I don't know for a fact.  
13

14 **LtGen Natonski:** Okay. And you were not aware of these  
15 transmissions originating at Wanat back to the TOC,  
16 they were probably going through the company position  
17 at Blessing and then up to the battalion.  
18

19 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: Correct. You're not really talking--  
20 you're talking a 100 feet between the two. I  
21 mean, they're collocated on the same base. I mean, I  
22 usually didn't go up to Chosen's TOC but I usually  
23 stayed in battalion TOC. And that night, you know, I  
24 can't say. I was probably there. They had a 20-- they  
25 usually had a 2000 BUB with Lieutenant Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6), Diamond  
26 and then everybody bounced out after that. So I  
27 probably usually shut down around 2200 on the night of  
28 the 12th. And everything seemed-- when I say  
29 "secure," they were dug in and they were waiting for,  
30 you know, the heavy equipment, bulldozers, front end-  
31 pay loaders to move up there. And I did know about the  
32 issue with the Bobcat. That the--and this doesn't get  
33 into the enemy forces, but they couldn't fill the  
34 HESCO's with the Bobcat. It wasn't high enough.  
35

36 **LtGen Natonski:** What about the additional construction  
37 materials? You said they were waiting for that. When  
38 was that?  
39

40 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: The construction material was staged at  
41 Blessing. But there had been some short falls--I'm  
42 trying to--my memory--with getting the key equipment,  
43 obviously is a front payloader to fill those HESCOs  
44 which provided that security out there, you know, when  
45 you have four or five feet of earth and ground in  
46 front of you. And I can't remember the reason, but it  
47 was delayed. You know, you're not dealing with, you

1 know, Army. You're dealing with local contractors.  
2 Some of it's Army. You know, the guys getting up there  
3 and saying, hey, this is where it goes and then, you  
4 know, they deal with local contractors for many other  
5 things.  
6

7 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta: Your CP in relation to the 2/503rd CP, what was  
8 the distance?  
9

10 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: My CP is right on the base and it's a quasi  
11 compound probably a 150 meters.  
12

13 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta: And how often would you visit their CP?  
14

15 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: All day long. My day started around 0630.  
16 We had a joint TOC with the Task Force Rock or 2/503rd  
17 in which they manned their radio which is an HF radio  
18 in the clear. But, you know, the ANA couldn't get over  
19 on the other side. I mean, the Army would go back and  
20 forth and they'd have a liaison with the Afghan TOC--  
21 but I'd be back and forth all day long just because in  
22 the interaction, the bases, and the logistics working  
23 with-- integrated with, you know, 2/503rd because  
24 everything they did, we did. We plus'd them up on  
25 patrols. We'd plus them up on operations. We  
26 interacted. I was kind of the liaison from the ANA  
27 side to the Army on what the ANA can provide. And,  
28 you know, certain portions of it you didn't want to  
29 bring the ANA in on it just because cell phones work  
30 out there and they're on those things nonstop so you  
31 got a little bit of OPSEC going on so I would say I  
32 was in the TOC all day long from 0600--I would--0630  
33 I'd go in the morning and see what was going on and  
34 see if there was any TIC, any troops in contact,  
35 amongst the eight bases and, you know, keep checking  
36 in. I'd have my talk with the ANA in the morning and  
37 move back and forth and what was going on in different  
38 missions so it was all day.  
39

40 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta: Did you attend any confirmation briefs  
41 specifically addressing the move the Wanat?  
42

43 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: I want to say yes, but I can't remember  
44 specifically. I was in on, you know, the engineer  
45 meeting for the ANA and me and my master sergeant on  
46 the logistics of the ANA.  
47

1 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta: Did you speak to anyone on battalion staff  
2 regarding the why of moving to Wanat at the time they  
3 were doing the RIP/TOA?  
4

5 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: I probably spoke to Major (b)(3), (b)(6), Gray  
6 and like I stated earlier the why was to close Bella.  
7 It's up there. It's doing anything specific and they  
8 wanted to get closer with the population of the Waygal  
9 Valley and have greater effects in the valley.  
10

11 LTC (b)(3), (b)(6), Sigma: Not to beat this too far to death, but did you attend  
12 any deliberate, what we would refer to as deliberate  
13 planning for the Wanat in other words what the Army  
14 calls aid?  
15

16 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: Most of it, the tactical portion was done at  
17 the company level. It was obviously within the  
18 battalion but it was Chosen's AO that they, you know,  
19 the company was given. They had Ranch House, Bella,  
20 they also had Michigan the way Task Force Rock  
21 designed itself. You know, the tactical portion was  
22 really done at the company level and I had my captain  
23 sit on some of it and then anything at battalion level  
24 I sat on it so--but we had such a small part and we,  
25 you know, the ANA what they'd bring out there is just  
26 bodies, force provider, extra 24 bodies to secure the  
27 area.  
28

29 LTC (b)(3), (b)(6), Sigma: So most of your insight into the move to Wanat would  
30 have been, like, meetings with the brigade engineer  
31 and stuff like that?  
32

33 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: Yes. And I had some meetings with Captain  
34 (b)(3), (b)(6), Oscar on the location where the ANA are going to be,  
35 how are we going to support them. You know, because  
36 that was my element. You know, I want to say the care  
37 taker for the ANA because they'll do whatever they're  
38 supposed to but I got to make sure to be the honest  
39 broker for them.  
40

41 LTC (b)(3), (b)(6), Sigma: And I'm guessing that Wanat was probably an item that  
42 was briefed nightly at Blessing or one of many things?  
43

44 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: It would be briefed by Chosen Company or it  
45 Oscar would be Captain (b)(3), (b)(6). Lieutenant Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6), Diamond  
46 would ask them how did the SHURA go, you know, we're  
47 still working through it, you know, whatever the

1  
2 dynamics were or the elders were playing against it.  
3 I mean, it's very, I want to say political but within  
4 the village on who owns the land and who's going to  
5 get paid for it. There's always a fiscal issue that's  
6 attached to many of the things done in Afghanistan.

7 **LTC** (b)(3), (b)(6), Sigma: If you remember, after the force moved up there and  
8 did some initial occupation, do you remember any  
9 updates or anything by Captain (b)(3), (b)(6), Sigma there he said,  
10 yeah, looks good, everything's on track? Oscar

11  
12 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: I can generally say he felt things were  
13 good. I know they had a SHURA on the 12th and  
14 everything seems to be on track, you know, hey, we're  
15 waiting on, you know, the heavy equipment to show up.  
16 We got the convoy ready to go. We'd staged here, take  
17 off at zero dark thirty to get out on the road. So,  
18 you know, we hear threats of, you know, imminent  
19 attacks but it's the Pesh it's the Korengal. That's  
20 not out of the ordinary. I mean, it's not something  
21 that, hey, this is something new that's showing up. I  
22 mean, we'd been--by then we'd been dealing with it for  
23 four and a half months and Task Force Rock's been  
24 dealing with it for 15 months, you know, so, you know,  
25 if they're taking the appropriate actions necessary to  
26 ensure that they're going to have the means to handle  
27 whatever business comes their way.

28  
29 **LTC** (b)(3), (b)(6), Sigma: So a day to day just kind of battle rhythm and  
30 battalion TOC, would you say it's pretty much like any  
31 other battalion TOC in the sense that there's reports  
32 coming in to the battle captain and the RTO's from all  
33 kinds of different places----

34  
35 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: Their battle captain was a sergeant first  
36 class--very articulate; he's got his bachelor's  
37 degree. He was just amazing. I mean, he could run  
38 that entire call by himself and so he was up to snuff.  
39 Gray He kept, you know, Major (b)(3), (b)(6) or Major (b)(3), (b)(6) was the Red  
40 XO. They were always in and around the area. If  
41 there was--if there was a fire mission that was  
42 necessary, they were there. They could be reached and  
43 they were very proficient in their profession.

44  
45 **LTC** (b)(3), (b)(6), Sigma: I guess what I'm kind of getting at is that there were  
46 a variety things obviously going on all day not just

1 the occupation of Wanat so there's reports coming into  
2 battalion TOC from different COPs saying----

3  
4 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: Absolutely. And depending on which company  
5 commander where they were at the time, they were  
6 handling different information. They would handle  
7 imminent threats at the--like Able Main they would  
8 handle those. If it was anything big, they would push  
9 it to the battalion side up at the Korengal. And that  
10 was just a regular basis up there.

11  
12 **LTC** (b)(6), (b)(6), Sigma: Was there a dedicated fire support? Was there an FSO  
13 for the battalion?

14  
15 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: Yes. That was Captain (b)(3), (b)(6).

16  
17 **LTC** (b)(6), (b)(6), Sigma: And was there an FSO section that was in the battalion  
18 TOC, did they clear fires?

19  
20 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: Yes. They clear fires. The fire--the  
21 triple 7s, they needed field grade approval.

22  
23 **LTC** (b)(6), (b)(6), Sigma: Do you know if there was company FSO?

24  
25 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: There was. They had--did one tube of 120's  
26 at Camp Blessing.

27  
28 **LTC** (b)(6), (b)(6), Sigma: Okay. That's all I have.

29  
30 **Maj** (b)(3), (b)(6), Owl: Sir, just to review. You were the OIC of which  
31 unit?

32  
33 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: The ETT 5-3, Embedded Training Team.

34  
35 **Maj** (b)(3), (b)(6), Owl: And you were in charge of how many COP's? COP  
36 Vegas?

37  
38 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: I'm not--when I say "in charge," I was in  
39 charge of the ANA. They are actually-- I want to say  
40 they are Army occupied COP's but the ANA provided a  
41 force provider and force protection for each and every  
42 one of those COP's in some, they provided close to 80  
43 percent of the COP's. Prior to me arriving because it  
44 was such a new--the Army didn't trust them at all and  
45 it was over a period of time and diligence on my ETT's  
46 part that brought confidence to the Army on their  
47 abilities.

1  
2 **Maj** (b)(3), (b)(6), Owl: Yes, sir. And it was for Michigan, Vegas,  
3 Korengal----

4  
5 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: Korengal, Romoto, Able Main, Honerker-  
6 Miracle and Bella and Wanat, when they moved to Wanat.

7  
8 **Maj** (b)(3), (b)(6), Owl: And what was after Able Main.

9  
10 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: If you start from the east and work back  
11 which is probably better is Honerker-Miracle it's Able  
12 Main, it's COP Michigan, and then Blessing at the  
13 Waygal and the Chapidar and if you go up into the  
14 Korengal, it's Vegas, the Korengal, and Romoto which  
15 was an all ANA, they call it a COP but more or a  
16 fighting post. It's five buildings, concertina on the  
17 side of the hill and three ETT's and 25 ANA and then  
18 the Army had different OP's up in the Korengal, which  
19 was Dallas which was a little further, like 300 meters  
20 to the south and they had secured a couple of the  
21 other OP's. And we had Camp Blessing and then Bella.

22  
23 **Maj** (b)(3), (b)(6), Owl: Thank you, sir.

24  
25 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta: Were you aware of a risk assessment being  
26 conducted for the operation move to Wanat?

27  
28 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: Now that you bring it up, I do remember them  
29 doing a risk assessment and I can't remember what  
30 transpired from it.

31  
32 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta: Do you recall when you saw that in relation to  
33 the execution of the operations?

34  
35 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: No, I can't.

36  
37 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta: Did you participate in any discussions on the  
38 13th and 14th of July regarding the future of Wanat?

39  
40 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: I was in and around the discussions. I was  
41 never directly involved in the discussions.

42  
43 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta: What did you hear?

44  
45 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: So it was the 13th, 14th, 15th--we pulled  
46 out on the 16th if I remember correctly. They were  
47 trying to decide whether they wanted to keep it or

1 not, whether they were going to fortify it and whether  
2 we were stay there, whether it was worth it, you know,  
3 do the whole Army planning process. Is this something  
4 that we want to stay and fight for and build it up?  
5

6 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta Did the battalion, in fact, do the planning  
7 process before a decision was made?  
8

9 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: I'm not sure the battalion had--they had  
10 some input. It came from higher whether we were going  
11 to keep it or not.  
12

13 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta How did you learn of the decision that your ANA  
14 would be withdrawn from there along with the U.S.  
15 Army?  
16

17 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: I think it was at the--the battle update  
18 brief that they said we were going to close Bella, I  
19 mean close Wanat and move everybody back to Blessing  
20 and close it down.  
21

22 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta What were your thoughts on that?  
23

24 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: My thoughts at the time was, I mean, we've  
25 put all this time into this event, obviously we got  
26 our nose bloody and I say we did. But, I mean, if you  
27 wanted to have effects in that valley and that's what  
28 you wanted to do, you know, and from an IO  
29 perspective, you know, they won again. I mean, if you  
30 look at, they attacked us at Aranus, right? We  
31 withdrew out of there. They attacked us at Bella, and  
32 they did that on a regular basis, but we withdrew out  
33 of there. Now in following the IO reports and Reuters  
34 and different agencies, Taliban was boasting on that  
35 information. We threw the Americans or coalition  
36 forces out of Aranus, we threw them out of Bella,  
37 they're moving out of there. We attacked them with  
38 200 at Wanat. We're leaving now there too. So the  
39 huge IO went for that, you know, they've thrown the  
40 Americans out of Nuristan which Nuristan has always  
41 been a contentious place, historically. It was the  
42 last to turn Muslim as the country goes and they  
43 usually do not like them from Nuristan.  
44

45 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta As a Marine commander during the planning process  
46 you were working the logistics piece that would  
47 support the establishment of the emplacement, were you

1 comfortable with the level of support that was planned  
2 to establish the emplacement?  
3

4 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: I was, you know, the planning phase, the  
5 HESCO's, the water structure, the infrastructure, how  
6 they were going to support this and the reasons behind  
7 it because you can support it; i.e. the plan was to  
8 get this base up there, right? Build roads which  
9 they'd already constructed a paved road from Asadabad  
10 to Camp Blessing, cut the trip down from four hours to  
11 an hour provided a main MSR for people to do  
12 agricultural, move products, this and that, same  
13 concept up there. It was a kind of a rose on the side  
14 of a mountain. And you already had plans--already had  
15 plans, contractors, bids, everything--build a road  
16 right up to it. This way, you know, the population  
17 can be connected, lines of communication, better  
18 fortifications, greater by providing these things  
19 which was arranged out of Asadabad this is what the  
20 central government can do for you so it's showing, you  
21 know, it's part of the COIN process. It's showing the  
22 people that the central government has influence and  
23 can provide certain amenities certain, simple  
24 amenities to you and, you know, help you grow as a  
25 nation, get back on your feet.  
26

27 You know, the plan, solid in the planning process.  
28 And I think, you know, the people of the Waygal Valley  
29 what the government--the central government of  
30 Afghanistan can do for them. And that was part of the  
31 planning process. It's really not a tactical, hey, we  
32 need to attack the enemy but it's getting greater  
33 effects on the population. And, you know, Task Force  
34 Rock--I've read different reports but, you know, being  
35 there for four or five months, they pushed that on a  
36 regular basis, what are we doing for these people out  
37 there? We're building.  
38

39 **LtGen Natonski:** Did they keep statistics on that?  
40

41 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: I'm not sure whether they did, but, you  
42 know, they worked intricately with PRT, Governor  
43 Waheedi.  
44

45 **LtCol** (3), (b)(6), Beta PRT is----  
46

1 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu.

2 Provisional Reconstruction Team out of  
3 Asadabad, Camp Wright, USAID, micro hydro dams, you  
4 know, my guys we built a clinic, schools, Korans, we  
5 used my mula all the time. Anytime we did anything  
6 with the population, we went out with the platoons.  
7 The Army platoons never gave anything out. Afghan  
8 soldiers always gave everything out. Again, the face  
9 of the central government was always being pushed.  
10 Any place that Governor Waheedi---- who's the  
11 provincial governor for Konar, you know, Lieutenant  
12 Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) was with him. Usually, I was with him  
13 sometimes when I could make it and Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6)--  
14 who's my Kandac commander was pushed out because he's  
15 not-- and he used Pashtu, and he could talk to the  
16 people. And he's very charismatic usually.

Diamond

17 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta

18 On the timing of the move to Wanat, or the  
19 execution of the operation, do you know or do you have  
20 a sense was this the battalion commander pushing to  
21 execute the move to Wanat or was it being directed  
22 from higher to do the move?

23 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu.

24 I can't accurately or positively answer  
25 that, but I know Lieutenant Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) wanted to  
26 make the move and not leave any leftovers for the  
27 1/26th that was rolling in. They'd done the planning  
28 and this is what they wanted to do. We have  
29 everything in place to make this happen. Prior to  
30 them moving in, we'll get the COP built up, we'll do  
31 the RIP it seemed realistically was it a lot on the  
32 plate? Yes, I won't deny that. But he didn't want to  
33 leave that for, you know, the new battalion ripping in  
34 because, I mean, that area has a lot of work to do and  
35 if they're going run it, their people had already been  
36 there. They knew the dynamics. It would be another  
37 six or seven months--you know, four or five months  
38 before they're back on their feet meeting the locals  
39 that are involved in this. Captain (b)(3), (b)(6) had been  
40 working this for--you know, the planning phase could  
41 have been, you know, at least four or five months long  
42 just the initial SHURAs, meeting them and trying to  
43 decide what the location should be and they just  
44 didn't want to leave it for Task Force Spader-- which  
45 is 1/26th--and then leave them and say hey, why did  
46 you leave me up in Bella, we could have moved down to  
47 Wanat? So I think--well I know that was the thinking.

Diamond

Oscar

1 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta And you had seen a larger campaign plan as the  
2 reason why connecting the road? You had seen the  
3 battalion's plan to execute the move?  
4

5 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: Yes.  
6

7 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta Did you see a plan for sustainment of Wanat?  
8

9 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: I don't know whether the sustainment would  
10 be much easier than sustaining Bella because the only  
11 way you can supply Bella is by air and HILUX, I don't  
12 think Bella is sustainable. So, you know, the  
13 planning and the thought and the concept of Ops had  
14 went into it, I think, was right on. I mean, if you  
15 look at the three valleys and you've got the Pesh,  
16 Waygal and the Chapadara and the Korengal which I  
17 don't want to say control but have effects on the  
18 population, I think, was necessary to have that there  
19 and be able to have effects on the population there.  
20 I think it was a suitable spot on that area. I think  
21 with Bella, they were just too far north and it was  
22 just a poke in the eye with no tactical purpose  
23 whatsoever.  
24

25 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta Was the 2/503rd, did they regularly issue Op  
26 Orders?  
27

28 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: Yes. The spring they did, I want to say 5  
29 Ops. It was really based on the moon. Everything is--  
30 usually everything is--heliborne assaults they were  
31 done in sequence of the moon, full moon so we'd have  
32 great illumination and in all the operations, the ANA  
33 were involved just about.  
34

35 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta And were written op orders produced?  
36

37 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: Not on the ANA side, but on the Army side,  
38 yes.  
39

40 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta Did you see one for the move to Wanat, a written  
41 op order?  
42

43 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: I want to say yes. I can't remember off the  
44 top of my head. I did have a little office over in  
45 the 3-Alpha shop so I was always in there especially  
46 on the planning for when we moved from Bella. On any  
47 of the helo portions of it because the HLZ coordinator

1 which was a young staff sergeant and Captain  
2 was the S-3 alpha for it, [redacted]

[redacted] (b)(3), (b)(6), Silver

[redacted] (b)(3), (b)(6), Silver

3  
4 **LtCol** [redacted] (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta During your daily visits to the 2/503rd and in  
5 planning for this movement, Operation Rock Move, did  
6 you, in fact, ever hear the term "vehicle patrol base"  
7 inside the battalion CP?  
8

9 **LtCol** [redacted] (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: Yes. That's what we were going to set up  
10 initially because we have vehicles up there. And  
11 until we can get that HESCO up there and set up a full  
12 COP.  
13

14 **LtCol** [redacted] (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta And so that was briefed as a vehicle patrol base  
15 initially?  
16

17 **LtCol** [redacted] (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: We would establish a vehicle patrol base for  
18 a COP to be built.  
19

20 **LtCol** [redacted] (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta So when the S-3 was briefing a con op, would he  
21 use the term "vehicle patrol base?"  
22

23 **LtCol** [redacted] (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: No.  
24

25 **LtCol** [redacted] (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta Did you ever see it in writing "vehicle patrol  
26 base," or VBB?  
27

28 **LtCol** [redacted] (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: No.  
29

30 **LtCol** [redacted] (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta General?  
31

32 **LtGen Natonski:** You'd mentioned the decision to abandon  
33 Wanat and the fact that 2d battalion had input. Who  
34 actually--do you know what level that decision--the  
35 discussion was raised at? Was it raised at the  
36 brigade level?  
37

38 **LtCol** [redacted] (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: I think it might even run higher than that.  
39

40 **LtGen Natonski:** Okay. But you are not aware?  
41

42 **LtCol** [redacted] (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: No. You know, I'm kind of at the bottom at  
43 this level, especially as an ETT advisor. So when it  
44 came down, I was actually surprised especially after  
45 the fight.  
46

1 **LtGen Natonski:** But you knew that 2d battalion had provided  
2 input to the final decision?  
3  
4 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: I think Lieutenant Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6), Diamond had input  
5 -----  
6  
7 **LtGen Natonski:** Do you recall what his recommendation was?  
8  
9 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: No, I don't.  
10  
11 **LtGen Natonski:** Okay. Do you know----  
12  
13 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: I'll be honest; I don't think he would have  
14 called for pulling out of there.  
15  
16 **LtGen Natonski:** How about 1/26th, they were in the process  
17 of coming in to relieve 2d battalion, do you know if  
18 they had input as well?  
19  
20 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: I know the battalion staff hadn't. There's  
21 only a small portion of the battalion staff had showed  
22 up by then. They didn't have any input on that at  
23 all.  
24  
25 **LtGen Natonski:** Okay.  
26  
27 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: This was strictly a Rock Operation.  
28  
29 **LtGen Natonski:** You mentioned Wanat being easier to resupply  
30 than Bella because Bella was air centric and depended  
31 on air and you had a road in and out of Wanat but  
32 there's only one road in and out of Wanat. And as you  
33 mentioned, they put an IED when you went up for your  
34 visit----  
35  
36 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: Yeah, but that's the hazardous business.  
37 They already had plans to widen a road for two lanes.  
38 We already had--I can't say, millions of dollars, I  
39 mean, we could task PRT to provide that but they  
40 already had plans to build that road, build it out,  
41 get construction----  
42  
43 **LtGen Natonski:** To Wanat?  
44  
45 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: To Wanat.  
46  
47 **LtGen Natonski:** Okay.

1  
2 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: And, you know, the big plan was to push that  
3 road up there, get moneys up there, get schools up  
4 there, kind of show them what's you know what the  
5 international community and the central government can  
6 provide because it's, you know, that was the end  
7 state.  
8

9 **LTC** (b)(3), (b)(6), Sigma: Given your experience in Afghanistan, were you  
10 surprised by the intensity of the attack that took  
11 place on the 13th?  
12

13 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: You know, I got there March 16th and it was  
14 pretty quiet for the first month. We went into a  
15 couple operations. You know, the Korengal was always  
16 getting hit. Those folks up there, they loved to  
17 fight, you know? And the Taliban loves them people  
18 and the work up there so it wasn't unfamiliar to have  
19 the cannons going up there in support of the Korengal.  
20 You know, Bella, every so often, they would get  
21 something, but it was nothing intense. Along the  
22 Pesh--- by then I want to say I was already in--my  
23 convoys I did 75 out of the 270 days there. I got  
24 attacked 25 times, so it wasn't out of the norm to be  
25 attacked. That number, all be it, was a greater  
26 number than usual, but we weren't able to control.  
27

28 You've got multiple valleys; you got the Pesh which  
29 runs east and west and you go up over the mountain and  
30 off to the other side there's another valley that they  
31 can run uncovered which are century old trade routes  
32 and they can move bodies out there. And along the  
33 way, there's no way to interdict them so they can get  
34 200 people out there. It's really not a ton of  
35 people. You know, they all look like villagers, part  
36 of the COIN, you know counterinsurgency so you  
37 wouldn't really know if they were moving in that  
38 direction, but I was kind of surprised at the ability  
39 to mass the 200 in and around the village.  
40

41 **LTC** (b)(3), (b)(6), Sigma: Did you get, and I know it's kind of hard to kind of  
42 characterize other folks, but did you get a sense at  
43 all that the battalion chain of command was surprised?  
44 I mean, was there a feeling in and around the unit?  
45

46 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: I think they were surprised at the number  
47 because it's usually sporadic, one, two, maybe a small

1 4, 5, 10, 15 sometimes. 200, I'm not sure where the  
2 number came from. I mean, who quantified that? But  
3 based on the volume of fire it was coming from, you  
4 know, my debriefing of my Marines that were up there,  
5 it could have been that number.  
6

7 Where the firing positions, you know. You know, I  
8 think they were a little caught off guard by the  
9 number too.  
10

11 **LtGen Natonski:** What was your impression of the ANA while  
12 you were there those nine months?  
13

14 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: The ANA?  
15

16 **LtGen Natonski:** Yeah.  
17

18 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: They are not Marines but, you know, they  
19 were growing as a unit. I conducted three independent  
20 operations, mainly coordinate searches. But where they  
21 were able to get 150, 200 vehicles aligned, we'd go  
22 down, search a village in a team and mark in  
23 coordination with the ANP and we would bring Army  
24 elements with us, some interference, PsyOps guys so we  
25 started building their capacity. But you have to  
26 revert back. I mean, we had to start with baby steps,  
27 you know, fire and control, point and shoot. You know  
28 they'd just fire at will at random locations. Actually  
29 setting up fire positions, defensive perimeters,  
30 patrols and you know with the expansion of the ANA and  
31 I said this is a brand new Kandac, you know there's a  
32 lot of issues initially. But if you look at it from  
33 when I took over in March and from my understanding,  
34 they're still out there. And when I left in November,  
35 they were doing extremely well. You know, the  
36 planning phase, you know the Marine Corps planning  
37 process, they would do some, nothing was written. No  
38 sense being written when you have 85 percent  
39 illiterate.  
40

41 **LtGen Natonski:** Were you familiar with the platoon that was  
42 at Wanat during the attack?  
43

44 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: Army or ANA?  
45

46 **LtGen Natonski:** The ANA.  
47

1 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: The ANA. You knew some of the soldiers, the  
2 officers, you know, that's the weakness for the ANA at  
3 the moment due to the fact that in some places a paid  
4 position and in the best person doesn't always get the  
5 job. You know, I had NCO's that were much more  
6 tactically sound and I couldn't get a first sergeant  
7 made into a lieutenant and then many officers, you  
8 know, like I said, I had some Tajiks that were  
9 fighters but some of the Pashtuns, they were lazy,  
10 slob and you know, my Captains or staff NCO's or  
11 NCO's would pick the ones that would work. We'd try  
12 to, you know, we'd have to make the system work. You  
13 can't complain about it. You make it work for them.  
14

15 **LtGen Natonski:** You don't recall the platoon at Wanat then?

16  
17 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: No, not specifically?  
18

19 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta Major (b)(3), (b)(6), Owl?  
20

21 **Maj** (b)(3), (b)(6), Owl No, sir.  
22

23 **LtGen Natonski:** Okay. I've got an order for you here.  
24 Lieutenant Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu, you are ordered not to  
25 discuss the testimony you've provided today with  
26 anyone other than members of this investigation team.  
27 You will not allow any witness in this investigation  
28 to talk to you about the testimony he has given or  
29 which he intends to give. If anyone should try to  
30 influence your testimony or attempt to discuss your  
31 testimony, you are instructed to notify Lieutenant  
32 **Beta** Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) or Lieutenant Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) Do you  
33 understand that?  
34 **Sigma**

35 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: Yes.  
36

37 **LtGen Natonski:** And I would just like to thank you for your  
38 service to our country and to the Corps and in your  
39 performance in Afghanistan and your tour with the  
40 ETT's, so thank you very much.  
41

42 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Zulu: Thank you very much, sir.  
43

44 [The testimony ended at 1233, 7 October 2009.]

CERTIFICATION OF VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT

Subj: TESTIMONY OF LTC [REDACTED], USMC, GIVEN ON 7  
OCTOBER 2009, AT FORT LEAVENWORTH, KANSAS

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), Beta

Lieutenant Colonel  
U.S. Marine Corps  
Staff Judge Advocate

9 November 2009  
DATE