

1 [The investigation opened at 0831, 14 October 2009.]

2 **LtGen Natonski:** I am Lieutenant General Richard F. Natonski,
3 United States Marine Corps. I have been appointed by
4 the Commander of U.S. Central Command to conduct an
5 investigation into the facts and circumstances
6 surrounding the combat action in Wanat, Afghanistan
7 during July 2008. Major General David Perkins, United
8 States Army, has been assigned as the Deputy
9 Investigating Officer. Lieutenant Colonel
10 and Lieutenant Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6), Sigma are judge
11 advocates assigned to the investigation team.

12 The testimony provided 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. Prior to coming on the record today
17 you signed a privacy act statement; is that correct?

18 **SFC** (b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo Yes, sir.

19 **LtGen Natonski:** Your testimony will be made under oath and
20 you will now be sworn.

21 [The witness was sworn.]

22 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta Would you please state your full name, spelling
23 your last?

24 **SFC** (b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo (b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo

25 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta What is your current unit and that unit's
26 location?

27 **SFC** (b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo My current unit is Chosen Company, 2-503d,
28 located in Caserma Ederle, Vicenza, Italy.

29 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta You are currently a Sergeant First Class in the
30 U.S. Army?

31 **SFC** (b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo Yes, sir.

32 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta In July 2008, what was your unit and that unit's
33 location?

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1 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq In July 2008, I was once again with Chosen
2 Company, 2-503d, and I was sitting in Wanat,
3 Afghanistan.

4 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta In July 2008, what was your rank and duty
5 assignment?

6 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq I was a Staff Sergeant Promotable, and my duty
7 assignment was a 60 Millimeter Mortar Section
8 Sergeant.

9 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta Prior to coming on the record today, did you have
10 a chance to review a sworn statement you made back as
11 part of an AR 15-6, dated 16 July 2008?

12 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq Yes, I did, sir.

13 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta It is seven pages. Is there anything you care to
14 change about that statement?

15 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq Negative, sir.

16 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta Did you sign the bottom of the first page and
17 date it for today?

18 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq Yes, I did, sir.

19 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta Do you adopt that statement as part of your sworn
20 testimony here?

21 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq I did not, sir.

22 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta Excuse me?

23 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq I did not doubt it as part----

24 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta Oh, no, excuse me, do you adopt it?

25 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq Oh, roger, sir. I thought you said, "Did I doubt.
26 it."

27 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta When did you join Chosen?

28 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq I was assigned to Chosen Company, let's see, I
29 got to the Rock in September of '06, and I got
30 assigned to Chosen Company in January '06.

31 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta You also went to Wanat with Chosen?

1 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq Roger, sir.

2 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta When was the first time that you learned the unit
3 might move up to Wanat?

4 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq After we were in theater for a couple of months,
5 there was lots of talk about it, and there were
6 several discussions, that all we were waiting on was
7 the land agreement. I believe it was, with the
8 District Governor and the village people, the
9 townsmen, towards when we can actually occupy it. I
10 would say probably about four or five months into the
11 deployment there were discussions about it.

12 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta That would have been in Summer '07, Fall '07?

13 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq Yeah, around Summer to the Fall. I remember we
14 were talking about shutting down the Ranch House at
15 that time. And then they were saying that after the
16 Ranch House got shut down, they were probably going to
17 open up a secondary FOB in between Blessing and Bella,
18 and it was in the village of Wanat. I could be off on
19 the timing but that's about what I can remember
20 correctly. It was a long time ago.

21 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta Earlier in your deployment, pre-July, had you
22 ever been to Wanat?

23 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq I had never been there, sir.

24 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta So, did you participate in any sight survey for
25 Wanat?

26 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq I did not, sir.

27 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta Did you move on the 8th with 2d Platoon up to
28 Wanat?

29 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq I was one of the first ones there.

30 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta When it became light out, in the morning after
31 you had arrived, and you saw the terrain and the
32 location, what were your thoughts?

33 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq My honest thoughts?

34 **LtCol** : Please.
(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta

1 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo Excuse my language but, "What the fuck am I doing
2 here?"

3 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta Why is that?

4 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo I mean, this is only my opinion of course, I
5 mean, it was the exact same scenario of what we had
6 been complaining about that 10th Mountain had did. We
7 were placing a FOB in the bottom of the valley with
8 mountain ranges surrounding, I mean, there was one-way
9 entry and one-way exit on the main MSR. The mountain
10 ranges were just too close for my opinion. I mean, we
11 should have been higher up on high ground. But this is
12 just Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo

13 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta Did you express your concerns to anybody?

14 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo I let a couple people know how I felt about it.

15 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta Platoon Sergeant?

16 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo Platoon Sergeant and PL.

17 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta What did your mortar section consist of? How
18 many Soldiers?

19 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo On the night of my arrival, it had consisted of
20 just two of us. There was myself and Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6), Maple
21 who originally occupied with our 60. The following
22 day, or the day after, the rest of my mortar section
23 was being brought in. I don't remember exactly, they
24 either flew in, yes, they flew in, and they brought a
25 120 millimeter mortar system and another three
26 Soldiers.

27 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta Okay, so when you went up on the 8th, you had a
28 60 millimeter and a 120 millimeter?

29 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo Just the 60.

30 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta And the 120 came in the next day?

31 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo The 120 came in with the rest of my mortar
32 section.

33 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta The ammunition, the rounds?

1 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq I had the 60 rounds with me and then when the 120
2 came in--that's what was, when they flew in, they
3 brought the 120, 120 ammo, and more 60 ammo for me.

4 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta As far as in placing your weapons within the COP,
5 did you get to pick where you would set your weapon,
6 the mortar pit?

7 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq Lieutenant Brostrom was very set on you're the
8 subject matter expert on your weapons system. Me,
9 being the mortar section sergeant, all he wanted me to
10 do was advise him and give a general reasoning as to
11 why I am emplacing it, and why it makes the best
12 tactical sense to have it in that position. And from
13 there, he would allow me to make my decisions so he
14 went with it.

15 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta What was your reasoning for placing the mortar
16 pit where you had placed it? Based on the terrain?

17 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq The terrain mainly, because from where we were
18 at, my opinion of where I emplaced the 120 system was
19 due to the fact that it would be one closer towards
20 the side of the village.

21 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta [Handing the witness a diagram.] Could you show
22 these gentlemen?

23 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq Roger. I emplaced the 120 system here [pointing
24 on the diagram]. Reason being is that this was pretty
25 close on the side of the village, and the river bed
26 was on the backside. In order for anyone to creep up
27 close enough to do any damage to my 120 tube, they
28 would have to come through the village so it would be
29 almost impossible; ideally, were the villagers to
30 remain in place, we would definitely know. This
31 ridgeline was real close up on the side. The mountain
32 range down through here and cut up back and around up
33 in here was where the bondai was--the river, it was
34 actually kind of closer. And then these ridgelines
35 were further out, so the chances of us taking contact
36 up here would be a lot more slim because it's pretty
37 steep. If they are going to advance from there, the
38 only thing they could do is fight us forward by fire.
39 You know, throw some lead down on you. But all the
40 advancing elements would come from, I'd say it was the
41 Northeast. The East and the Southeast would be where
42 the advancing elements would come from because this

1 ridgeline over here was so steep. So the most likely
2 course of action, like I said, would be a support by
3 fire and them advancing from here. We had emplaced
4 the seven foot HESCOS as a back wall here, four foot
5 here, four foot here, and four feet on the front.
6 That way, I pretty much cornered off the mortar system
7 in the center. That way, if they did establish a
8 support by fire here and they started hammering down,
9 they would be hitting seven foot HESCOS which would
10 allow me to place indirect suppressive fire on top of
11 any advancing element coming down off the ridgeline
12 into what was known to be our COP or FOB or whatever
13 they are calling it these days. So that is why I
14 chose that position, sir.

15 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta Were those seven foot HESCOS full?

16 **SFC** (b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo We couldn't get them full because the Bobcat
17 couldn't reach up high enough.

18 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta So how high were they, inside, what were they
19 filled with?

20 **SFC** (b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo Whatever I could throw in them, sir. E-tools, I
21 mean, I threw ammo cans once I fired and they were
22 empty. I threw ammo cans in it. I just threw
23 whatever I could to get them full. I mean, the far
24 two sides--the far one on the left corner and the far
25 one--I guess, you would say the North corner and the
26 South corner were full. All the four foot HESCOS were
27 full. The one on the North corner got filled up. The
28 one on the South corner got filled up. The two in
29 between them could not be, because of the waddi system
30 next to it and then the Bobcat couldn't come up in
31 there. It couldn't raise up high enough. The reason
32 we were able to do the North one is because it was
33 also kind of a, almost like a terrace or a plateau,
34 and so the Bobcat was able to pull up around and was
35 at just enough height to drop down the side of it. We
36 climbed up on E-tools and leveled off what we could
37 and dropped extra dirt and tossed them into the center
38 too.

39 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta Prior to going up to Wanat, did you have a chance
40 to do any fire support planning on a map?

1 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq I wasn't even supposed to go, sir. I got the
2 call, I think, the night before. The night before or
3 two nights before and then I was told I was going.

4 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta Who told you were going?

5 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq I got the call via FM, from Chosen 6.

6 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta Where were you?

7 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq I was at Michigan at the time. I was a Section
8 Sergeant controlling fires out of Michigan.

9 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta Were assigned to another platoon?

10 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq It was still part of Chosen Company AO but, yeah,
11 I was assigned to another platoon. I would say
12 probably about three clicks from Blessing, four clicks
13 from Blessing up on the Kunar Pech River Valley.

14 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta You came back in the next day and got ready to
15 roll with 2d Platoon?

16 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq Yes, sir. And they kicked the convoy out, sent
17 me, my 60 tube and Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6). We packed out
18 equipment, and we moved out to Blessing. We stayed at
19 Blessing for 24 hours. Yeah, so it would have been
20 two nights before--we stayed at Blessing for
21 approximately 24 hours. And we pushed out with 2d
22 Platoon early that morning and occupied at FOB Kahler
23 or whatever they're calling it, the base, fire base,
24 patrol base.

25 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta Ideally, before you would move up to a position
26 like that, what kind of planning would you have liked
27 to have done?

28 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq I would've liked to have sat down with the FSO
29 and spoke with him, see what type of--because the FSO
30 had been up in there before. They had done several
31 presence patrols in there and meetings with district
32 governors and so forth. I would have liked to have
33 sat down with the FSO and spoke of any targets which
34 would have been in the area. He gave me a target
35 lists, overlay, and a worksheet. So I was able to
36 plot the grids and see what's going on. But ideally,
37 I would of liked to be able to sit down and have him
38 be like, "Okay, look...", to know that the mountain

Maple

1 side was real steep on that side and that the other
2 valleys, the valley that was connecting, stuff like
3 that. Certain little things I would have liked to
4 been able to discuss with him, sir.

5 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta: Because of the terrain, were there areas where a
6 155 would have difficulty impacting or a large range
7 of error probability where your mortars would be
8 better suited?

9 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo: Most definitely, sir.

10 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta: Did you know of those when you went up there?

11 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo: He had told me the ridge line, that cut across
12 this ridge line here, pretty much either the 155 would
13 impact on this ridgeline or it would hit the far
14 ridgeline and anything cutting from this ridgeline to
15 that ridgeline is pretty much dead space in between,
16 which was another----

17 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta: So the key slope that was to the Southeast of the
18 position?

19 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo: Pretty much, sir. That is one of the indicators,
20 as well, towards why we placed the 120 right there
21 with the direction of fire.

22 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta: Between the 8th and 12th of July, up at the
23 emplacement at Wanat, were there any issues with
24 supplies?

25 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo: As far as?

26 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta: Water, supplies to build the emplacement?

27 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo: I always hear of different people talking about
28 how they always ran out of water, went black on water.
29 I don't know how that went. With us, the way it was
30 distributed out was Sergeant, pulled in all the squad
31 leaders and section sergeants. In my case, it was a
32 section sergeant. There was a section sergeant in the
33 case of the engineers. Pulled all of us in there and
34 based off of the amount of water which we received and
35 the amount of packs which we had, we were allocated a
36 certain amount of chow and a certain amount of water
37 to sustain us. And then, they kept, I guess, a
38 resupply if needed, if anyone was burning more than

1 others. Like, the OP guys up there burned more water
2 because they are constantly digging, shit like that;
3 correction, "stuff like", then they could get more.
4 We never had an issue with my mortar guys. We
5 conserved our water. I don't know if that's just
6 based off of our NCO leadership who was doing it or
7 whatever the case may be. We never ran out of chow,
8 and we never ran out of water. We got low on water
9 several times. But at that point, it was on me to
10 make that decision for my men to go ahead and have
11 them back off, because the heat was getting to them.
12 If we are running low on water, I am not going to burn
13 through my water. I mean, a good NCO is going to know
14 that. You have to know your limitations in which you
15 can push you element before it's like, "Alright, am I
16 going to burn through all this water? When is the
17 next resupply? Now, am I going to have Dudes going
18 down as heat casualties;" it doesn't make any sense.
19 I never had that issue. Whether some personnel did or
20 did not, I can't really speak for them, but I never
21 had that issue with my men and my water.

22 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), **Beta** What kind of digging or manual labor was part of
23 setting up the mortar pit for your section?

24 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), **Romeq** We dug a hole for the 120 base-plate. We had to
25 cut some HESCOS because there were no four foot
26 HESCOS, I guess, to send out to us. We had to cut
27 seven foot HESCOS down, so we cut some of those.

28 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), **Beta** So you did that to facilitate your fire support
29 plan?

30 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), **Romeq** Roger, sir. For the mortar system, defense line,
31 yes. So we cut the HESCOS, dug a hole for the 120,
32 filled some HESCOS with E-Tools the best we could.
33 What else did we do? Helped dig some fox holes and
34 better people's positions, helped them out. We laid
35 concertina wire, pounded pickets, stuff like that.
36 Normal day to day activities for FOB base improvement.

37 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), **Beta** What were the engineers doing that you saw, the
38 engineer section?

39 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), **Romeq** The engineers that I was working with are pretty
40 straight. They were helping us out. They helped us
41 with the wire, and they helped a couple of us fill
42 sandbags. The ones that I worked with at my position

1 with the Bobcat, those guys are pretty good. They
2 were hard workers. They helped us cut HESCOS. They
3 helped me stand up the HESCOS. They helped me fill
4 the HESCOS. I guess, they were doing their engineer
5 job. The guys at the other positions, I can't speak
6 for. We could pretty much, I mean, day to day
7 activities, we pretty much stayed within the realm of
8 our mortar firing point unless we were placing the
9 perimeter with concertina wire because we were always
10 improving it and doing what we could and that's pretty
11 much the same thing as everybody else. Everybody else
12 was always at their positions unless they needed
13 something and then they would come down; or if I
14 needed something, I would go to the C2 node and link
15 up with Lieutenant Brostrom or Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6) and
16 that's about it, sir.

Yankee

17 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta From the 8th to the 12th, the Bobcat, was it
18 constantly being used?

19 **SFC** (b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo Oh yeah.

20 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta Did you ever run out of fuel?

21 **SFC** (b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo Not that I can recall. I think maybe one time it
22 did. I don't recall. I remember reading something in
23 the paper about that, and I was trying to recall it
24 but I can't. I can't really say for sure. I think it
25 might've been like when we were clearing out the LZ or
26 filling the HESCOS. It might have happened once, but
27 I really can't say for sure. It's not one of those
28 things you keep in mind during the time or I didn't
29 anyway.

30 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta Did the Bobcat fill your position, the mortar
31 pit, as best as it could within its limitation?

32 **SFC** (b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo Most definitely, sir.

33 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta And it was working throughout the emplacement?

34 **SFC** (b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo Roger, sir.

35 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta Could you take us through the morning of the
36 13th, please?

37 **SFC** (b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo : What do you want to know?

1 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta Start us off at stand-to. What does a mortar
2 section do during stand-to?

3 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq During stand-to, basically, I wake up all my men,
4 and we're all sitting on the gun. I will get my radio
5 checks with all the positions and make sure everyone
6 has COMS with me in case they need to run a firefight,
7 I mean, a fire mission. From there, you just sit and
8 wait. What I like to do during stand-to is, dependent
9 upon how likely the situation of contact, is I like to
10 request to do "observe for firing". So that way I
11 might be able to drop one round in each direction in a
12 safe place in which it could be observed, just to let
13 people know, "Hey, I'm up. And if you feel like doing
14 something, I am ready." Do you know what I mean?
15 Just as an eye-opener; maybe, at the same time, that
16 may deter anybody from doing anything as well.

17 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta Did you have a chance to do that at Wanat?

18 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq I have done it before. I did it with the 60.
19 Whenever we would go out there--anytime you initially
20 sit in a base plate, you want to fire one to two
21 rounds so you get a good settlement on the base plate.
22 So that way your initial round that is fired is not in
23 the middle of a firefight and it's going to be off by
24 50 mils, 20 mils. You want that initial round to be
25 right on target when you fire it. So, yeah, we had
26 fired some 120 missions on that Northeast ridgeline.
27 We had fired some up there on the hillside after we
28 got it cleared and made sure nobody was up there with
29 the 120. I think that was the day before.

30 When we first got in, up here on the Northwest
31 ridgeline, I had fired some 60 rounds up there when I
32 set in my 60 base-plate. Initially, what I did is,
33 right there where the 60 tube is marked right here on
34 this map, I had basically made it into a hide and
35 shoot. I had emplaced a 60 tube, initially, day one
36 that we got there. Fired those rounds up here, like I
37 spoke about, and then we pulled the 60 out of action,
38 leaving polls in place. Whatever the case may be, we
39 left our polls in position. So that way, basically,
40 my ideological thinking on this, which didn't turn out
41 to work this way because we took more than we thought,
42 is if we had gotten pinned down in the mortar pit, we
43 could use the secondary position-, the 60, to place
44 the tube and be able to free up an element to move

1 back to the 120 and able to provide whatever
2 suppressive fires were needed. But, it didn't work
3 out that way.

4 Anyway, that morning, we woke up for stand-to, got our
5 radio checks. I'd say it was 0430, 0433 when the
6 initial bursts went off. It came from the East
7 ridgeline, the initial burst. The first initial burst
8 that caught my attention became straight up, down the
9 side of the mortar pit. At the time, it was, I want
10 to say, it was Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6), Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6), Pepper
11 myself, Staff Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6) and PFC Abad. Abad was
12 standing between all of us, and we were talking to the
13 guys. We had just packed away all of our equipment.
14 We were supposed to be flying out that day. That
15 initial burst came right down the center and hit my
16 Soldier, hit my Joe, Private First Class Abad. He
17 went down. We pushed out to our corners and started
18 returning fire, trying to get an assessment of where
19 it was coming from.

20 By that point, the TOW truck had already been lit to
21 hell and back, and it started to catch fire. Rounds
22 were coming in from everywhere. At this time, the
23 mortar tube, the 120, I was told that my direction of
24 fire, my primary direction of fire would be the
25 hillside to the Northwest. The gun was already laid
26 there. There was a bondai up there in which we were
27 taking direct contact from.

28 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta What is a bondai?

29 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo A bondai is a mud hut, sir, just a mud hut which
30 was pretty odd. We didn't see anybody up here the
31 whole time. The whole four days we were here. The
32 day before anything took place, there was a two-man OP
33 spotted up there. It looked like they were pulling
34 observation. I wanted to fire a round somewhere up
35 around there, maybe over them, to the left or right.
36 I got denied because there was no positive
37 identification that they were actually conducting
38 military observations or anything.

39 That morning of 13 July, there was a four to five-man
40 element doing the same thing, conducting observation.
41 The TOW truck was repositioning itself to scan through
42 to get good eyes-on. Then, the fire fight broke out.
43 The initial burst came across right into the mortar

1 pit. The TOW truck started getting hit. The OP
2 started getting hit. And at that point, was when we
3 realized we were taking contact from every fucking
4 direction possible. No matter where you moved, you
5 heard a round snipping by. No matter where you
6 looked, you saw a muzzle flash in the distance. You
7 see them--there was a wood line that went right around
8 the MFP. There was a wood line right behind it with a
9 canal there. They were right up on top of us. We
10 could hear them yelling and hear firing. You could
11 see the muzzle flashes. At that point, I had posted a
12 man here in the center; it was Sergeant , to
13 tend to PFC Abad. (b)(3), (b)(6), Pepper

14 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta : Still inside your pit?

15 **SFC** (b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq : We were still inside the pit at this time. Abad
16 got pulled into this corner. Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6), Pepp was
17 tending to him. Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6) was here. I was here. Yankee
18 (b)(3), (b)(6), Maple was here. Two engineers were here, I mean
19 just sitting on their asses, holding their helmets and
20 pulling them down, scared shitless; flat out. I have
21 no other way to mention it.

22 Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6), Ivory he dropped two or three rounds
23 initially. He was the initial one to drop rounds.
24 Then he kicked off and went to firing. Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6), Yankee
25 had his MBITR, I believe. They said that the OP
26 needed suppression because they were getting hit
27 pretty hard. I pulled off and dropped two or three
28 rounds up here to the Northeast to try to get, the
29 support by fire, to get them off of us.

30 At this time, PFC (b)(3), (b)(6), Mahogeny , I called him
31 (b)(3), (b)(6), Mahogeny . I apologize (b)(3), (b)(6), Mahogeny came out, dumb kid,
32 he came around the front side with his 203. He just
33 started lobbing 203 rounds to put them up on top of
34 the bondai, up on the hillside, to try to get them to
35 let up as well. We were taking too much contact on
36 the 120 to get them to let up on fires. I mean, I am
37 standing there dropping those rounds, and you've got
38 rounds pinging right off of the 120. From that point,
39 I had to peel back off because----

40 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta : What was the range to the bondai?

41 **SFC** (b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq : Straight up the hillside, I would say about 300
42 to 400 meters, sir. At that point, I had to peel off

1 the 120 because Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6), Maple was saying that he
2 sees guys moving, now, in that wood line. So then I
3 figured, "Okay, I need to put more effective fires on
4 these targets and get them to back off of us."

5 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta And that is the wood line right to the West of
6 your position?

7 SFC (b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo Probably a meter, two meters off of my position.
8 So I peeled off the 120 and started firing and
9 throwing some hand grenades into the wood line.

10 Ivory Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6) fired his AT4 into the wood line.
11 Well, not into the wood line, there was a house about
12 200 meters, two story house, where a dude kept coming
13 around with RPG and firing them directly at us. Then,
14 I had an RPG skip off the top of my K-Pot. Sergeant
15 (b)(3), (b)(6), Maple thought that was funny. He just laughed at
16 me. He was like, "Oh shit, did you see that?" And I
17 was like, "Yeah, I saw it dude. Are you fucking
18 kidding me?" So he fired the AT-4 up to the house
19 and, like I said, there were a lot of trees there so
20 it kind of caught a tree and shot straight into the
21 damn air so we didn't get the effects of that. We
22 were just taking, I mean, the contact was immense,
23 intense. Then the contact we started taking from the
24 East ridgeline just started picking up, because at
25 that point, the TOW truck had already caught three
26 RPGs, direct hits. It's on fire, so I guess they
27 figured it was out of the fight, and they just started
28 hammering down on us. We threw those hand grenades.
29 We fired what we could fire. I tried one more time to
30 drop some mortar rounds. This time, I shifted the
31 cannon more towards the West so that way I could try
32 to hit those houses that were in there.

33 At this point, anybody who has been in anything large
34 on that type scale same shit I went through at Ranch
35 House, everything around you is declared hostile. If
36 they are up to--of course this is my opinion--if they
37 are all the way up to--they allow them to get one to
38 two meters off of my fence line and I am taking
39 contact from every single house there, then I figured,
40 "The hell with it. I'm going to drop whatever rounds
41 I can and try to get them to pull back." So I shifted
42 the tube towards the West, and I started dropping
43 rounds. Just shifting--basically I had turned into a
44 traversing mission. I dropped a round, traversed. I
45 dropped a round, traversed. I had no more rounds, and

1 I had nobody to get rounds for me. I mean, I still
2 have rounds in the ammo pit, but I had no one to hand
3 them to me because they were all engaged in a
4 firefight. But that was the point in time when I
5 turned and I went to get more rounds. An RPG came
6 over my left shoulder and slammed into the ammo and
7 peppered the shit out of me. It put me on my ass. I
8 jumped back up. I went to fire and that's when my
9 weapon was no good. It had been peppered with
10 shrapnel. I put it down. The two engineers were
11 still sitting there not doing shit, so I grabbed his
12 SAW. The pit had flooded overnight because a natural
13 spring, we were being loved that week, a natural
14 spring popped up from where we dug our hole for our
15 120 base plate. A natural spring popped out of
16 nowhere and my pit flooded. We woke up in the morning
17 and there is like ankle deep water; and it was like,
18 "What the hell is going on?" With all the explosions
19 going on, mud is being splashed everywhere. I picked
20 up the SAW and the belt was already in it. The rounds
21 were seated in feeding, so I slammed the bolt to the
22 rear and went to fire. I got a big "ka-chunk", which
23 everybody hates to hear. Immediately I dropped to a
24 knee and applied remedial action. Opened up the feed
25 tray, swept down the feed cover, kicked the rounds
26 out, swept out the feed tray, opened up the top,
27 looked down in the center to make sure there is
28 nothing jammed in it. It was clear, so I slapped
29 down, slapped the rounds back up top, pulled the tray
30 down, and gave it a second charge. I went to fire
31 again and got a second "ka-chunk". At that point, I
32 opened it up and took another look at it. I couldn't
33 see anything wrong with it, so I just put it to the
34 side and grabbed the other kid's M-16. I flipped it
35 to burst and started burning through magazines to try
36 and suppress them because I had no automatic weapon at
37 that time. I started burning through magazines.

38 Another RPG came in, slammed into the ammo a second
39 time. When I looked over that time, I saw that the
40 cameo-nets and the ponchos that we had in place had
41 caught fire. I saw that the mortar rounds had taken
42 direct hits from rounds, and I saw they caught fire.
43 When on fire, the mortar 120 cans start to expand.
44 Well, if a 120 charge ignites, the magnesium inside
45 gets pretty fucking hot. So when I seen the can
46 expanding, I figured there is two rounds there, a

1 whole shit load of rounds under it. It was also the
2 ammo resupply point, so I got 762 here, 556 link, I
3 got hand grenades here, I've got claymores here. It's
4 going to be one big damn boom.

5 At that point, I told everybody to break contact back
6 to the C2 truck, the TOC. So we started breaking
7 contact. I counted people out and took off. I don't
8 know if I was just that damn scared or what, but I
9 beat everybody to the TOC truck. I get in there and I
10 see one of my guys, and I'm like, "Where the fuck is
11 everybody else at?" And he was like, "Sergeant, you
12 passed them." So I had to turn around and go back,
13 around the back of the truck. And just as I was
14 coming around the backside of the truck, they started
15 filtering in. I started counting them in to make sure
16 I had a good count. Then there were two dudes that I
17 didn't have a count for. So I started to go towards
18 them, which the Chosen 6 FSO had seen. He was
19 watching us as we were breaking contact out of there.
20 He had seen that the guy who was carrying, Sergeant

21 (b)(3), (b)(6), Pepper who was carrying PFC Abad, had taken two
22 through the legs. He had dropped with Abad. He went
23 over there and secured them two and was helping bring
24 them back. I met up with him at the ass end of the
25 truck. I remember grabbing Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6), Pepper And he
26 is kind of a weightlifter, and I went to run--I had
27 already lost like 25 pounds, so I dropped down to 175,
28 he was like 230 or 240 in full kit. And I went to run
29 with him, to drag him, and I remember my damn legs
30 coming out from under me and landing on my ass. I was
31 like, "Oh my God." So I yelled for somebody to help
32 me and they ran out. We pulled him inside where the
33 truck was. We pulled him inside and there were two
34 ranger graves dug. There was a HESCO wall here and
35 the truck was in position here. I believe it was--PFC

36 (b)(3), (b)(6), Portland was on the 50 cal; who was then gunning at all
37 these buildings over here that we were initially
38 gunning at, because they were taking contact from
39 there. He was on the 50 cal putting some rounds down
40 over there. We pulled them inside. We started
41 initial treatment on PFC Abad. Specialist (b)(3), (b)(6), Mahogeny
42 who went all the way through the 18D course, I'm not
43 sure what his story is but he got booted like a week
44 before graduation, thank God he was there. With his
45 medical knowledge, he was able to provide a lot of
46 assistance. So he took over Abad because there was

1 nothing I could do for him. He was just bleeding out
2 and there was some blood coming out, whatever it was,
3 it was internal. He didn't have a lot of blood coming
4 out but you could definitely see in his face that he
5 was fading. I started assisting with Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6), Pepper
6 who kept complaining; he thought his balls were shot
7 off. I got my knife and cut open his pants. I got to
8 see his wounds and let him know that he was good and
9 reassured him. We started bandaging him up.

10 At that point in time was when the guys in the TOW
11 truck--the whole time the guys in the TOW truck
12 remained in the TOW truck while it was on fire, I mind
13 you. It was fucking crazy. They came running out of
14 the TOW truck and dove right through a gunner's
15 porthole that the truck had established. They dove
16 through there. It was Staff Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6), Ixia
17 Specialist (b)(3), (b)(6), Specialist (b)(3), (b)(6) and there might have
18 been one other. Anyway, they dove through the hole, Chicago
19 and shortly after, that was like the loudest explosion
20 I ever heard or felt. I really thought that I was
21 dead or something. I didn't know what the hell had
22 happened. The TOW truck had exploded. TOW rounds
23 exploded, everything went off. I just remember I was
24 on a knee over the top of Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6) and the Pepper
25 explosion--there was a HESCOE wall right here, we were
26 inside two ranger graves, and the explosion was just
27 so intense that it knocked me on my ass through a damn
28 HESCOE wall. And it just exploded and everybody just
29 kind of fell over like, "Oh, what the hell was that?"

30 Shortly after that, a lovely present fell from the
31 angels above. A TOW missile landed right in the
32 middle of the CCP. It was sitting there and you could
33 hear the gyro clicking. Which, anyone who has ever
34 been around a TOW missile knows that once that gyro
35 spins up, the missile is about to launch. So, the
36 missile lands there and it starts spinning and you
37 hear buzzing noises where it is kicking off. A lot of
38 people started to get up and run out and there was
39 nowhere to run. I told Specialist (b)(3), (b)(6) to give me Khaki
40 two sandbags. I grabbed the TOW missile, I ran out
41 to the center of the base, and I threw it down; turned
42 around and ran back to the C2.

43 By the time I got back to the C2, Captain (b)(3), (b)(6), Oscar
44 Chosen 6, told me that the OP was being hit pretty
45 hard, and they are about to be overran. He lost

1 contact with Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6), Cyan and somebody needed to get
2 over there. I told him, "Sir, I don't have a weapon
3 right now; but if you give me your weapon. I will go."
4 He gave me his M4, and I told Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6), Sergeant
5 (b)(3), (b)(6), Maple , Specialist (b)(3), (b)(6), Mahogeny Specialist (b)(3), (b)(6), Khaki Ivory
6 Yankee Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6) I grabbed about five or six guys,
7 pretty much everyone who was sitting there that wasn't
8 tending to a casualty. I said, "You, you, and you."
9 By that point, Abad had already died so (b)(3), (b)(6) was Mahogeny
10 freed up. I said, "You, you, and you grab a fucking
11 weapon, grab some ammo. You are coming with me."

12 At that point, we pushed from the C2 truck to Staff
13 Pisces Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6) truck where they were fighting off
14 personnel, as well, taking fire from the bazaar and
15 the hotel. Once I got inside there, he had two
16 casualties that he had been treating. I told him that
17 I needed them to provide me a screen, i.e., pop some
18 smoke, drop some rounds, put some rounds down or
19 something, because I had to push from his truck over
20 to the South end of the bazaar to try and get over to
21 the OP. This part I feel stupid for, but it is kind
22 of funny; now I laugh about it. I had him hand me a
23 smoke, and I popped the smoke. And like, I remember
24 distinctively everybody was getting ready to run, and
25 I was like, "No, wait. We have to let smoke build."
26 I stopped and watched my watch. I remember staring at
27 my watch, and I remember watching my watch 10 seconds
28 for the smoke to build. It sounds stupid, but for
29 some reason I did it. Anyway, the smoke built up, and
30 we shot across the road. I think Staff Sergeant
31 (b)(3), (b)(6), Pisces and a couple other guys had joined my element
32 that was pushing across.

33 Once we got across the road, we came up on the South
34 end of the bazaar. I was going to cut through the
35 backside of the bazaar and straight up to the OP.
36 Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6), Titan was located over here where the TCP
37 was established. He told me that I couldn't cut
38 through there because he had seen a lot of movement
39 back there, and there was a lot of guys back there and
40 not to go that way. I told him that is the only way I
41 know, the direct route. "Is there anybody at his
42 position who could guide us across?" He said, "There
43 is a route, so we cut across back into his position."
44 I got with him and I asked him, I was like "Where is
45 (b)(3), (b)(6), Scorpio , Staff Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6), Scorpio ?" He said, "They

1 already went up to the OP to reinforce it." I was
2 like, "Alright." In my mind, I already know there's
3 more casualties up there because we lost COMS with the
4 OP. If somebody is up there alive, then we are going
5 to have COMS. I spoke with Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6), Titan
6 Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6), Tangle was there, shot to hell. (b)(3), (b)(6), Fig was
7 there, shot to hell, wounded, shrapnel, whatever they
8 had. They were both lying on the ground. (b)(3), (b)(6), Plum said
9 that he knew a route. He had some shrapnel in his
10 side or something. He said that he knew a safe route
11 to get there. It was pretty quick and effective. We
12 just had to cross over the concertina wire. I was
13 like, "Alright, whatever, I don't care." Specialist
14 (b)(3), (b)(6), Plum led out. Once he led out, then I shot behind
15 him and everybody in the little group followed me. We
16 cut up under the concertina wire where it lapped over
17 a rock formation. One man held up and everybody shot
18 underneath. I shot across this terrace, staying low
19 enough where nobody up here would see me, and taking
20 my chances with anybody in the hotel. I cut across
21 the terrace and came right up on the OP.

22 As I came up on the OP, the first person I saw was
23 Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6). They have established-- it was a good
24 fortified position the way they had set up with the
25 sandbags and the way they cut into the side of the
26 mountain and everything. It was a good position.
27 They had set up a little porthole where if they needed
28 to link fire from, as a base platform from the top,
29 but if they needed to, they could also drop down to
30 the porthole so they had cover top and bottom and
31 around.

32 As I approached, Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6), Cyan got eyes on me and he
33 started coming out. I told him to come out. I pulled
34 him out. I dove through the hole. And as I came
35 through the hole, was when I seen how bad it really
36 was up there. Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6) was sitting down, he
37 couldn't do shit. His radio was shot to hell. I told
38 him to give me his radio, so I could send a SITREP.
39 His radio, he had taken rounds in his radio, shrapnel
40 in his radio. There was no radio anywhere up and
41 running. There was a board that they set a cross for
42 that platform. I was talking about, for the hole it
43 fired through, so I got up there and pushed that over.
44 I knocked it over and started pushing and pulling the
45 casualties out and handing them to everybody. Once

Scorpio

1 everybody started flooding in, I started assigning
2 sectors of fire and placing guys; and then Sergeant
3 (b)(3), (b)(6), Ivory and Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6) took over that. I told them
4 to take over and finish placing everybody. They
5 started placing everybody. We pulled out the rest of
6 the casualties. Then I started collecting up the
7 bodies, because I didn't want everybody staring at
8 bodies next to them, demoralizing them. As they were
9 sitting there looking, their morale was dropping. I
10 started having all the bodies being shuttled and
11 consolidated in one position.

12 At that point, all of a sudden, there was a lull in
13 fire which is when the initial QRF, 1st Platoon,
14 Chosen Company, Captain (b)(3), (b)(6), Quebec his element arrived.
15 There was a lull in fire. At this point, everybody is
16 thinking, "Okay, the firefight is done." There are a
17 couple pop-shots going off here and there, nothing
18 really major. We are good. We start collecting the
19 bodies and putting them together. The medevac bird
20 starts touching down. We start getting all the dudes,
21 who are shot, out and getting them on the birds and
22 getting them out. No sooner did the last birds start
23 coming in to set down, it was like a whole new
24 firefight began. It was just as intense and just as
25 many rounds as when the firefight first started.
26 Immediately, it was like somebody had turned the light
27 off and then all of a sudden turned the light back on.
28 All hell broke loose. We started taking contact from
29 everywhere again. We used what weapon systems were
30 available to be used. We had a 240 that we took from
31 the Marines that was with us. One of the guys, he
32 said that he couldn't carry it, so I handed it to
33 Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6), Maple Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6), Maple
34 is like a freak of nature. He is an ungodly stud when it comes to PT and
35 carrying stuff. So I just handed him the 240, gave
36 him a shit load of rounds, and he carried that up to
37 the OP. I placed him on, I guess, it would be Western
38 portion terrace, where he could see directly into the
39 backside of the bazaar and the hotel. I told him,
40 "There are no friendlies moving through there.
41 Anything that fucking moves through there shoot it."
42 There was all kinds of movement, and he's yelling out,
43 "They got weapons and weapons." I said, "Just fire at
44 them dude." He just started putting rounds down
45 through the hotel and the backside of the bazaar with
46 the 240. The barrel started to glow white. So of

1 course, classic move you are not supposed to, pour
2 water on the barrel; but it was the only barrel we
3 had. We had no spare barrel. So I took a knife, and
4 to keep it just cool enough not to make a cold so the
5 barrel starts to warp but just cool enough to be able
6 to continuously fire through it, we were putting water
7 on the barrel to cool it down. We were still lobbing
8 hand grenades and firing up the ridge over here.
9 Captain (b)(3), (b)(6), Quebec sent his element to push up just past
10 the Mosque. Once they got up there and they started
11 taking contact from this bondai, these two bondais up
12 here, they were taking contact from the backside of
13 the hotel.

14 LtCol (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta Now the bondais up here, you are referring to the
15 East?

16 SFC (b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo Where the eastern ridgeline went up there was
17 another one, like in between due East ridgeline, the
18 Southeast Ridgeline, say about 6-700 meters, there was
19 another ridgeline, and we were taking contact from
20 there. They had it as close as they could get it and
21 as far as they could get it, sir. We were taking
22 contacts from there. I remember seeing them fire some
23 AT4's up there. Then I remember Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6), Raven
24 First Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6), Victor and a couple 1st Platoon guys
25 made their way up here. Before all that, when I first
26 got in here and reestablished our security, Chosen 6
27 made his way up here; and by the grace of God, I don't
28 know how the hell the man did it, he went right in
29 between the hotel and the bazaar. He shot up in
30 there. I remember I was moving bodies and pulling
31 people out. And it was when I was evacuating
32 casualties, because I had grabbed Sergeant Garcia and
33 I am pulling him, and all of a sudden Captain (b)(3), (b)(6), Oscar
34 just pops up. It was like somebody just dropped him
35 from the sky. Kind of scared me, you know? Just
36 then, Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6), Scorpio said, "They just threw a
37 grenade and didn't explode." We looked over to the
38 left, and it was sitting right there. Captain (b)(3), (b)(6), Oscar
39 just grabs it, and he fucking chucks it. And then we
40 pulled out Garcia, and then the firefight picked back
41 up. Then the QRF rolled in. Then came First Sergeant
42 (b)(3), (b)(6), Victor and Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6), Raven We were sitting there,
43 and we continue to fight and fight and fight. The
44 Apaches were doing gun-runs. I remember they brought
45 us ammo a couple of times because we were running low

1 on 240s. They brought more ammo up to us and then
 2 there started to be another lull in fire. That is
 3 when Private (b)(3), (b)(6) made his way up there on one of
 4 the ammo resupplies. And I just remember seeing the
 5 look on this kid's face. and he was like, "Sergeant
 6 (b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo, Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo I got the 60 tube. I got
 7 it set up, and they want me to do a fire mission."
 8 And I said, "Alright, do you got it?" And he was
 9 like, "Sergeant, honestly, I don't know what the fuck
 10 I'm doing." He was like, "I'm so scared. I don't
 11 know what I'm doing." I said, "Alright, kid, I'm
 12 coming down with you." So I checked in with Sergeant
 13 (b)(3), (b)(6), Raven; Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6), Yankee had already gotten shot.

14 Once the fire picked back up, took four casualties
 15 right off the bat. They started air bursting RPGs
 16 into the trees. And when they started doing that,
 17 shrapnel just rained down. Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6), Yankee got shot in
 18 the arm, and Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6), Sigma took shrapnel from one of
 19 the RPG's that they airburst into the trees.
 20 Specialist (b)(3), (b)(6) took shrapnel in his eye from
 21 covering us and everybody else. When he saw that RPG
 22 hit, he laid across and took shrapnel in his face and
 23 his eye and stuff. So on the last medevac bird, we
 24 had to evac those guys out. Like I said, it picked up
 25 like on the second to last medevac bird, a whole new
 26 barrage of fires picked up. We had to pull those guys
 27 out. I know I'm jumping around but I'm just
 28 remembering stuff as it comes to me, I apologize.

29 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta: You mentioned you had trouble with the SAW down
 30 in the mortar pit. When you got up to OP topside, did
 31 you have any issue with weapons, or did you see any
 32 issue with equipment?

33 **SFC** (b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo: They were all done, sir.

34 **LtCol Bligh:** How so?

35 **SFC** (b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo: There were polls that were seized to the rear and
 36 weapon systems blown in half from direct hit with
 37 RPGs. If you had fragmentation pieces--I think there
 38 was one SAW that we picked up that was worth a damn.
 39 Everything else had just been peppered, everything
 40 else, with either shrapnel or bullets and you couldn't
 41 work it. I tried to charge a charging handle on one
 42 SAW. And when we went to use it, there was a round
 43 stuck in the side that grabbed the bolt, so the bolt

1 wouldn't go forward anymore. The 240s that were up
2 there had been, one had been--looks like Superman just
3 grabbed it and dented it in half where it had taken a
4 hit from an RPG, another one had rounds that was
5 peppered in it. The butt-stock was blown off of it.
6 The weapon systems that were, I mean, everything that
7 was up there was just destroyed. When when I came
8 upon the OP, I mean, just with the nine dudes, I mean,
9 the eight dudes that were dead lying around, guys who
10 were wounded and could barely move, and everybody was
11 like--when I got up there, it was like a worst
12 nightmare. I still fucking see images of it
13 sometimes, you know, when I close my eyes before I go
14 to bed; just climbing through that hole and when I
15 stood up just looking at it. It was every infantry's
16 worst nightmare. You just see guys on your left were
17 wounded, propped up against the rocks; and it got
18 dude's face blown off, dead. You've got another guy
19 whose face you can't even recognize and weapon systems
20 just snapped in half and blown to hell and shit. But
21 no, the weapon systems that were left up there weren't
22 worth a damn.

23 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta: From battle damage?

24 **SFC** (b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq: From battle damage, yes. Some of them, like I
25 know (b)(3), (b)(6), Redwood his M4 had seized up where he had fired
26 so many rounds through the chamber that it actually
27 overheated. And when the bolt went inside, it seized
28 in there. Which we later on after the firefight,
29 later that day, we messed around with it enough where
30 we pulled it back and you could see where shards of
31 metal had just started searing to the inside of the
32 chamber where it had gotten so hot. There were so
33 many rounds put through weapon systems. I went
34 through about three or four UBLs that day. It was
35 just ridiculous.

36 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta: At the end of the fight, what was the status of
37 your two tubes?

38 **SFC** (b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq: They were both good, sir. The 120 had some
39 rounds that had been hit off of it, knocked off of it
40 and whatnot. The 60, like I said (b)(3), (b)(6), Redwood had come
41 up and got me. I went back down and we established
42 the 60. Right when we are getting ready to fire
43 though, more birds were circling in the AO and stuff
44 so we got put at "check fire".

1 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta : Who put you at a check fire?

2 **SFC** (b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq Chosen 6 had told me not to fire because birds
3 were in the AO.

4 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta : Looking back at the mortar pit that you
5 constructed, is there anything--any other material you
6 would have wanted to have had while you were
7 constructing it that you didn't have? Would you
8 normally put some sort of additional cover over the
9 ASP?

10 **SFC** (b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq : Roger, sir. In actuality, I would have
11 constructed, I would have still went with pretty much
12 the squared shape system for the mortar system. But,
13 what I would have done is I would have had cut out,
14 over on either side it wouldn't have mattered what
15 side, cut out with the HESCOS , pretty much almost
16 like going underground, a cover piece where all the
17 ammunition would have been stored. So that way, it
18 would have allowed more freedom of movement inside the
19 pit. If we had to drop a tube down, lower, raise it
20 up, whatever the case may be, if we had to swing out
21 or around--I mean, other than the ammo bunker portion,
22 not really, we had everything. It's not really that
23 hard to construct a mortar pit.

24 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta : For the ammo portion of that, would there have
25 been a piece of construction equipment needed to dig
26 that?

27 **SFC** (b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq : Yes, you would probably need a back-hoe, because
28 you would have to dig a deep enough hole for it. You
29 could use a Bobcat, but it would take a hell of a lot
30 longer. And you would need--I would probably go with
31 fucking 8X8s, some 4X4s, excuse me, some pickets long
32 enough, some 2X4s. It would take a lot of equipment
33 and material to build it properly. The one we built
34 at Blessing was ideal. It was perfect. I would have
35 loved to have one of those everywhere I went. If I
36 could have uprooted that and just took it and set it
37 down, it would have been awesome. At Blessing, we had
38 anything and everything we needed to do it with, and
39 we had workers do it.

40 **LtCol** (b)(3), (b)(6), Beta : What was your understanding that--you mentioned
41 that when Specialist Abad was hit, you were getting
42 ready to leave that day.

1 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq Roger.

2 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta What was your understanding that you went up to
3 Wanat, how long you would be there?

4 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq Four days. The fourth day we were leaving and
5 another mortar section was taking our place. Because
6 up to that point, my guys were--we got used on all the
7 CONOPs and everything like that. The guys who are up
8 at Bella did a lot of good things. They took quite a
9 bit of contact up there, but once they pulled us to
10 Wanat, that left no mortar systems at Blessing,
11 because we had to take the 120 with us. That also
12 left Michigan without a 60 millimeter mortar. I think
13 what they ended up doing was pushing their guys into
14 Michigan and Blessing. My argument was that they
15 should leave us there. They wanted to take the guys
16 that they pulled from Bella to Blessing, have them
17 refit, which was why it was the four day period, and
18 then they were going to push them back out because
19 that's where all of our stuff was. So that way we
20 could pack up what we had at Blessing and what we had
21 at Michigan because we were leaving. Since their
22 stuff was already packed, they didn't have to worry
23 about packing. So they were going to pull them back,
24 the crew that was up at Bella, replace us, and then
25 have the crew from Bella stay and hold that ground
26 while we moved back and got ready to roll out.

27 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta By "rollout", you mean retrograde back to Italy?

28 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq Yes, sir, getting ready to RIP out.

29 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta Were they going to replace your two tubes with
30 two tubes?

31 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq Roger, sir, with the organic property for OEF
32 VIII.

33 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta What was your understanding when you went up on
34 the 8th into Wanat of the enemy situation?

35 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq I had been tracking what was going on in Bella.

36 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta How were you doing that?

37 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq Via the TACSAT, every trip when we went to
38 Blessing, I would talk and see how many contacts they

1 were involved in, seeing where they were coming from,
2 what sized elements they were getting hit with, stuff
3 like that; just a little, good to know things. Since
4 I was involved in the Ranch House incident, I kind of
5 had a bad feeling about the Waygal Valley. It's just
6 not a good place. And after 22 August and 9 November,
7 Waygal Valley is just hell. It is a death trap.
8 There is nowhere to go there. There is not a ground
9 that you could really hold, not in my opinion. Up in
10 the Nuristan, there's nothing there. It's just
11 mountains.

12 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), **Beta** After the battle, did you remain up in Wanat?

13 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), **Romeo** I remained in Wanat, and I broke down the
14 firebase.

15 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), **Beta** When you got the word that the emplacement was
16 going to be broken down and you are all going to
17 retrograde, what were your thoughts?

18 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), **Romeo** I was pissed, sir.

19 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), **Beta** Why is that?

20 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), **Romeo** Because we just lost nine guys for no damn
21 reason. Everybody knew, every single swinging dick
22 knew that when we set up that FOB, there was going to
23 be a big-ass firefight. Everybody knew it because of
24 all the Intel that was gathered saying that they were
25 going to try to overrun Bella. Well, guess what? You
26 shut down Bella, what is going to happen? All of
27 those dudes who were consolidating to hit Bella are
28 just going to go ahead and move their little asses
29 right seven clicks down the valley and hit the next
30 FOB. They are thinking, "Well, we mass attacked on
31 Ranch House, they shut it down. We hit Bella hard
32 enough and if they have enough intelligence that we
33 massed enough people, they got scared and they shut it
34 down and ran. So why not hit the next one." I mean,
35 that would be my logic if I was the guy running their
36 scenario. It's like: "Wow, we massed enough people.
37 We took out enough guys on the first one. They just
38 jettied out," they closed it down 9 November, "We
39 killed enough people that now they don't even go into
40 Nuristan, into the Aranus Valley. Well, hell, we are
41 doing something right; we hit Bella hard enough?"
42 They got enough Intel that they have killed enough of

1 us that they got scared and they packed up and they
2 moved out of Bella, because they hear of this massive
3 attack that we are going to do. Hell, why not hit the
4 next base down? Push down to Wanat, mass your forces,
5 surround it, hit it hard enough, they are going to
6 break it down.

7 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta From the 8th to the 12th when you were in Wanat,
8 did you personally witness or learn of any indications
9 and warnings of the attack?

10 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq Some of the, I mean, there wasn't really any
11 indications. I have been on four deployments.
12 Sometimes you just get an eerie feeling, and you just
13 know that something is coming. You don't know what it
14 is you know it is coming. Some of the people they
15 would just hang out in the bazaar and the shop right
16 here and they would just hang out and sit there and
17 stare at you. Most of the time, the Afghans do that
18 but it is never the same guys. They will sit there
19 and watch for a little while and then they would
20 leave. These guys were just sitting and watching and
21 watching. The kids would just come up, stand there,
22 and watch. They wouldn't leave. Normally they get
23 bored with it. They come, they watch you sometimes
24 for a long period like an hour. But then they get
25 bored and they just walk away because you are not
26 paying them any attention. They are like a little
27 kid. He gives them attention and they will stay. If
28 you ignore them, they go away. These guys would just
29 sit there and watch us and watch us. They would move
30 to sit in the shop by the bazaar and watch. Then they
31 would go by the Mosque, stand in the windows and watch
32 from the Mosque. I never expected to take any contact
33 from back here.

34 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta That is towards the West?

35 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq Roger, sir, towards the West. There was never
36 anything from there. No one ever really watched us
37 from there, maybe they did, and I just didn't catch
38 it. I know in the Taliban and video they released,
39 they had guys strung all up on here on that two story
40 house. They had dudes on the roof. I watched all the
41 videos that they released. There wasn't anything to
42 where you could be like, "You know what? This guy is
43 up to no good." There was never anything like that.
44 It was just a lot of watching. The thing that got me

1 was when the District Commander or District Chief,
2 whatever you want to call him and the Police Chief
3 said that he was taking all of his police and they
4 were leaving for a night, that they were leaving and
5 they weren't going to be back for a day or two. That
6 is what set it off for me, that is when I started
7 telling Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6) and all my boys, I said, "Hey
8 Ivory look, something is going to happen. You need to start
9 being ready because something is going to happen."
10 The morning of the 13th we were all supposed to
11 rollout, you know, we thought we are going to get out
12 of here scot-free but that's when it happened. It was
13 that morning. It was the morning Abad was supposed to
14 fly home.

15 **LtCol**(b)(3), (b)(6), Beta Lieutenant Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6), Sigma

16 **LTC** : Was the hit on the ammo and the mortar pit, do you
17 (b)(3), (b)(6), Sigma think that was a lucky shot or do you think it was
18 targeted the same way as the TOW?

19 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo : I think that they were targeting the mortar pit.
20 I think the round getting a direct hit was a lucky
21 shot. I know, for fact that they were targeting us by
22 the amount of contact we were taking inside the mortar
23 pit. Like I said, the rounds being off the mortar
24 system and the first burst being let off hitting Abad,
25 I would say that they were targeting at us, but they
26 don't really aim well enough to make a direct hit.

27 **LTC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Sigma Did you guys have what you felt like was enough of
28 the right kind of ammo prior to the attack? Were you
29 concerned at all, "Hey, I need more ammo," or, "Hey, I
30 need different types of ammo," or were you comfortable
31 with what you had on hand?

32 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo Not with my guys, sir, I was pretty comfortable.
33 I made all my guys carry 12 magz, plus; plus we had
34 three to four grenades on us, and then for our mortar
35 ammo, we were straight.

36 **LTC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Sigma That's what I meant, as far as the mortar ammo?

37 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo The mortar ammo? No, we were good, sir.

38 **LTC** : You said there was 7.62 and a bunch of other stuff
39 (b)(3), (b)(6), Sigma in the mortar pit itself. Was that just for the
40 mortar team or was that for the whole platoon?

1 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq It was basically a consolidated ASP. It was for
2 everybody. I had a four to five-man crew, I can't
3 remember, five-man crew, and with that, you only need,
4 if necessary, you can run a 120 or a 60, whatever the
5 case may be, with a two-man element, somebody on FDS
6 and somebody to man the gun. The man who runs FDS,
7 after he checks the gun, can drop rounds. You can run
8 it with that. The thought process was the only other
9 safest position would be the mortar firing point
10 because we had the HESCOS and everything to keep the
11 ammunition consolidated. Then I have three men who
12 can carry ammunition to any position that needs it.
13 Nobody expected it to be that immense of an attack.

14 **LTC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Sigma After the Ranch House fight did you guys in Chosen
15 change any TTPs? Did you do anything differently?

16 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq Not really, sir. The only--the biggest thing
17 with Ranch House was--we didn't concentrate. I'll
18 tell you what we did. We didn't allow the Afghans to
19 have a complete sector without some type of U.S. Force
20 supporting that element. Ranch House would have never
21 went down the way it did if, flat out, in my opinion,
22 the Afghans didn't give up their sector. When they
23 broke contact, they opened up the whole Southeastern
24 sector which allowed them to flood right up and gain
25 ground on about 60 percent of the FOB, and it was
26 theirs from there. The rest was just fighting to
27 survive and trying to push them back. If that is what
28 you were referring to then, yes, we did learn
29 something and ran with it from there.

30 **LTC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Sigma Sir?

31 **LtGen Natonski:** Your supply, you mentioned you had water,
32 you had ammo, what about concertina wire?

33 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq We ran out of concertina wire day two when we
34 were placing it around the perimeter, around the FOB.

35 **LtGen Natonski:** Did you get more?

36 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq They resupplied us with some more. We didn't
37 have enough to run triple strands like you're supposed
38 to all the way around the whole FOB, never at one
39 point.

1 **LtGen Natonski:** But when you did run low, you got
2 resupplied?

3 **SFC** (b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq: Yes, sir. We got resupplied some concertina
4 wire.

5 **LtGen Natonski:** You mentioned the mortar pit getting hit
6 with that RPG and the box expanding, did it ever blow?

7 **SFC** (b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq: No, sir, it did not.

8 **LtGen Natonski:** It didn't blow?

9 **SFC** (b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq: No, sir. We had EOD blow it. I told them that
10 they had to pull it themselves because I wasn't going
11 back in there.

12 **LtGen Natonski:** You were getting ready to go home. You were
13 in the midst of a RIP. What did you think of the
14 timing of establishing Wanat at that time and place?

15 **SFC** (b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq: Did I think it was the greatest idea? No. Did I
16 want to do it? No. Did it have to be done? Yes.

17 **LtGen Natonski:** Why did it have to be done?

18 **SFC** (b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq: Because we lost the Ranch House, we shut it down.
19 We just shut down Bella. You need a stopping point.
20 With Blessing being the Battalion FOB, you needed
21 something to stop them from coming down the Waygal.
22 If not, they would just continue to mass their forces.
23 And you can't have your Battalion TOC in the same
24 amount of contact, in which you can take a company or
25 a platoon and place them in. You can't overwhelm the
26 TOC like that. You have to allow them the ability to
27 freely maneuver to be able to do the things they've
28 got to do, get the assets, pull from where they need
29 to pull and all that.

30 **LtGen Natonski:** So you don't think the fact that the RIP was
31 going on distracted--it needed to go in there so the
32 next unit could fall in on that position in order to
33 engage in the valley and protect the North entry way
34 to Blessing?

35 **SFC** (b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq: Roger, sir.

36 **LtGen Natonski:** Okay. The 60 millimeter mortar that you had
37 was not in your mortar bunker?

1 **SFC**_{(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo} : No, sir.

2 **LtGen Natonski:** It was out kind of centrally located?

3 **SFC**_{(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo} : Yes, sir.

4 **LtGen Natonski:** Had you dug a pit for that?

5 **SFC**_{(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo} : Yes, sir.

6 **LtGen Natonski:** Or was it just laying----

7 **SFC**_{(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo} : What it was, was we had dug out the base plate,
8 set in the base plate, and fired that to get a good
9 settle.

10 **LtGen Natonski:** Had you dug a pit around it?

11 **SFC**_{(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo} : No, sir.

12 **LtGen Natonski:** Was that SOP?

13 **SFC**_{(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo} : No, sir. I never got to--I never completed the
14 120, so I never got to start building on what I wanted
15 for the 60.

16 **LtGen Natonski:** But eventually you would have----

17 **SFC**_{(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo} : There would have been a secondary smaller pit
18 there, roger, sir.

19 **LtGen Natonski:** For the 60?

20 **SFC**_{(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo} : Roger, sir.

21 **LtGen Natonski:** You could have fired that 60 in a 360----

22 **SFC**_{(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo} : 360 degrees. There was no max or minimum
23 elevation which would have obstructed----

24 **LtGen Natonski:** You mentioned the police having left and
25 really started you getting concerned and plus all of
26 the surveillance that was going on. Do you know if
27 that was reported up the chain by Lieutenant Brostrom
28 or Captain [?]
_{(b)(3), (b)(6), Oscar}

29 **SFC** : I don't know, sir.
_{(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo}

1 **LtGen Natonski:** But you had enough indication and warning
2 from which you saw that there was going to be an
3 attack of some sort?

4 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq Roger, sir.

5 **LtGen Natonski:** Getting back, you mentioned a lot of
6 malfunctions on the weapons. There has been a lot in
7 the papers about it.

8 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq Yeah, where everybody misquotes me. I love it.
9 They are making me look like the jack-ass. It's
10 awesome.

11 **LtGen Natonski:** Well, as you described the topside, a lot of
12 the weapons were malfunctioning because of battle
13 damage.

14 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq Yes, sir.

15 **LtGen Natonski:** And you did mention the case where one M4
16 seized up from being hot. Was that the only--do you
17 observe a large proportion of weapons that
18 malfunctioned, not because of battle damage but that
19 malfunctioned----

20 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq The only time I have ever noticed weapons
21 malfunction was there was about three weapons that I
22 knew at Wanat. All of them, were M4's, never a SAW,
23 never a 240 or anything like that. Every time it has
24 been due to continuous firing. The weapon system
25 overheating, the bolt getting stuck to the rear
26 because the spring ends up snapping on the inside
27 because it got weakened by the heat or the bolt
28 seizing to the inside of the chamber. It was because
29 so many rounds had gotten pumped through it at a rapid
30 rate, like slap a magazine in it and flip it on burst,
31 you are spraying, drop the magazine, and slap another
32 one and keeping it on burst and spraying to try to
33 gain fire superiority. But it has never been due to
34 normal usage.

35 **LtGen Natonski:** In all of your experience have you seen----

36 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeq I love the M4. That's why it angers me that they
37 misquoted me the way they did. If you read in my
38 sworn statement that says exactly the same thing that
39 I stated here and which is the exact same thing that I

1 keep saying but somehow they love to take out all the
2 shrapnel pieces that I talked about and just made it
3 sound like I'm talking bad on the M4 and the machine
4 gun weapon system. It just angers me very, very much.

5 **LtGen Natonski:** You can at least attribute a weapon
6 malfunctioning when it is combat damage.

7 **SFC**^{(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo} Absolutely.

8 **LtGen Natonski:** But you didn't see an inordinate amount of
9 malfunctions, and primarily those that did malfunction
10 were just the rapid rate?

11 **SFC**^{(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo} Basically, using them like an automatic rifle
12 which it is just not made to do.

13 **LtGen Natonski:** Yeah.

14 **MG Perkins:** So, you were with the 173d when they went
15 through all their training preparation Hoenfels, Graf?

16 **SFC**^{(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo} I did one Graf rotation and one Hoenfels rotation
17 with them, yes, sir.

18 **MG Perkins:** Just prior to their deployment. So when you
19 got into Theater and throughout your time there, would
20 you say that they had been adequately prepared,
21 trained for the mission in Afghanistan?

22 **SFC**^{(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo} Absolutely.

23 **MG Perkins:** So you never had an issue with the level of
24 preparation and training of the unit?

25 **SFC**^{(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo} The only thing that I would have asked for is
26 something that they are trying to push for now which,
27 I mean, we are damn eight weeks from going and it
28 makes no sense, but whatever--is if we could have
29 gotten more time on some of those rotations where we
30 turn around and we did--cause when we go to Graf in
31 Germany, we are up there for 20 some odd days. There
32 is enough land and training value around here as well,
33 as opposed to going up there. If we could get a piece
34 of land that has the terrain that is similar towards
35 what we are going to be fighting up there----

36 **MG Perkins:** You mean down here in Italy?

1 **SFC**^{(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo} Roger, sir, or even in Germany. There was a
2 stick lane that I did in Germany--I don't remember
3 what range----

4 **MG Perkins:** Did you go to Badryken Hall?

5 **SFC**^{(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo} : Sir?

6 **MG Perkins:** Did you go to Badryken Hall, the German high
7 altitude training?

8 **SFC**^{(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo} No, I didn't. But if we could get something that
9 was more tailored for boots, more like what we would
10 be walking on and trying to maneuver on and taking
11 contact from, stuff like that.

12 **MG Perkins:** More accurate replications.

13 **SFC**^{(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo} : Exactly.

14 **MG Perkins:** But as far as the basic Soldier skills and all
15 that kind of stuff, you were----

16 **SFC**^{(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo} Absolutely, sir. In Afghanistan, all you are
17 fighting from what, my experience, all you are
18 fighting is off of your basic Soldiering skills:
19 Battle Drill 1(a), react to contact, maneuvering your
20 elements, having a squad flanked from this side, a
21 squad flanked from that side, maneuvering through a
22 valley, using a squad in over watch. All your basic
23 skills that people are starting to get away from
24 because of all the battles and stuff that they went
25 into in Iraq. It's all about this and about that, if
26 you want to survive in Afghanistan, you have got to
27 know the basics. The basic is what is going to keep
28 you alive there; how to set up a patrol base, how to
29 set up an ambush properly. Those are all the things,
30 the basic skills are what kept this the alive. And
31 that is so hard to hit on when we go into training,
32 and it worked out perfectly.

33 **MG Perkins:** So what is your sensing in Chosen Company and
34 the Task Force, in general, as far as morale and
35 command climate, those kinds of things?

36 **SFC**^{(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo} : Right now?

37 **MG Perkins:** No, back when you were deployed.

1 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeg I don't know. For myself, I mean, I love Chosen
2 Company, more so than anything and the Rock as well;
3 morale was fine. There were a lot of guys, a lot of
4 guys, who were butt-hurt when they found out that we
5 were going into Wanat when we did. A lot of dudes are
6 like, "Yeah, we are two weeks from leaving. What the
7 hell?" It was the same thing here that I told my
8 guys. It sucks but if we don't do it, they are going
9 to have to do it. It's the same scenario, no matter
10 what, its war. There is a patrol that needs to go
11 out. I don't want to do it because I'm getting ready
12 to leave. Well, that one patrol that didn't get sent
13 out, you didn't provide a presence patrol. During
14 that day, at that time, another element just moved in
15 and cut around the backside of your position and now
16 they are behind you, but you don't know that because
17 you didn't kick a patrol out. The whole point of a
18 presence patrol, changing up your times, changing up
19 your rotations, changing and up days, never doing it
20 at the same time is because in the event that you
21 catch somebody doing something they are not supposed
22 to do because it limits them because they never know
23 when you are coming though. So it keeps them on their
24 toes.

25 **MG Perkins:** The morning of the 13th, did you have an
26 integrated fire support plan for the CONOP up there?

27 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romep I got the target work list sheet from the FSO and
28 from Captain (b)(3), (b)(6), Ospar and I had an overlay; that was it.
29 We had a couple internal targets. Stuff like, if you
30 set in your platoon or your company fire base, not
31 necessarily you would send every target you come up
32 with up to battalion because you always have your
33 internal targets; aA no-shit scenario, you need to
34 fire at target red or you need to fire at target
35 yellow or numbers or----

36 **MG Perkins:** But you had a fire support plan that was
37 understood by the company level up to the Task Force.

38 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romep Yes, sir.

39 **MG Perkins:** Would you say that the fire support processes
40 were understood both internal and a through to
41 battalion?

42 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romep I would say so, sir.

1 **MG Perkins:** So you don't see any confusion about how fire is
2 going to work, understanding some are internal and
3 some are external?

4 **SFC** (b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo: 120 and below is what I deal with.

5 **MG Perkins:** Did you stay tightly wound with the FSO?

6 **SFC** (b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo: Not once we were there. Once I was on the
7 ground, I didn't get to talk to him that much. He was
8 out at Bella until they shut Bella down, and then they
9 got moved back to Blessing.

10 **MG Perkins:** When you pulled in there and you started
11 working and you are filling HESCOS and all that, was
12 there sort of an overall COP plan like, "Okay, we are
13 going to do this first or we are going to do that,
14 this is what the Soldiers are going to do, this is
15 what contractors are going to do," so there is sort of
16 a timeline process?

17 **SFC** (b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo: Absolutely, sir, there was.

18 **MG Perkins:** As you were working your aspect of it, were there
19 things that you could have been doing but you didn't
20 because you had to wait till the contractors got there
21 or were you just sort of moving out?

22 **SFC** (b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo: Sir, there were other things like on top of the
23 HESCOS, I wanted to put some sandbags and stuff like
24 that, but there wasn't enough sandbags because the
25 other positions needed them to fortify their ranger
26 graves, as we call them. Their ranger graves, the OPs
27 needed sandbags up top so there wasn't enough for me
28 to take from them. And since I was using the Bobcat
29 to help fill the HESCOS, they had priority with the
30 sandbags.

31 **MG Perkins:** I understand, but there wasn't sort of an idle
32 time where nothing was going on because the
33 contractors hadn't showed up or something, you were
34 fully engaged all the time?

35 **SFC** (b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo: I would say we were fully engaged because there
36 was always something to do. When you are building a
37 new base, there is always something to do. The only
38 time that we had to stop, because there wasn't
39 anything brought up from the contractors was when we

1 ran out of concertina wire and pickets. That was the
2 only time we had to stop because of contractors-- from
3 my end of what I saw.

4 **MG Perkins:** As you were working fire support plans and just
5 general base defense, were there discussions up there
6 at the COP about procedures for QRF and who it was
7 going to be and how they would be integrated into the
8 base defense plan?

9 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo I never heard nothing like that.

10 **MG Perkins:** Okay.

11 **LtGen Natonski:** Okay, Sergeant First Class (b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo I'm
12 going to give you an order here regarding this. You
13 are ordered not to discuss the testimony provided
14 today with anyone other than members of the
15 investigation team. You will not allow any witness in
16 this investigation to talk to you about the testimony
17 he has given or which he intends to give. If anyone
18 should try to influence to your testimony or attempt
19 to discuss your testimony, you are instructed to
20 notify Lieutenant Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) or Lieutenant Colonel
21 (b)(3), (b)(6), Sigma . Do you understand that?

Beta

22 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo Yes, sir.

23 **LtGen Natonski:** I just wanted to thank you for your service
24 to our country and to the Army and compliment you on
25 your outstanding performance of duties during your
26 last tour in Afghanistan. They were lucky to have you
27 there that day, very, very well done. You are getting
28 ready to go back again, the fourth one?

29 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo This will be my fifth tour, sir.

30 **LtGen Natonski:** Well, good luck and stay safe.

31 **SFC**(b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo I hope so, sir.

32 [The investigation closed at 0947, 14 October 2009.]

CERTIFICATION OF VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT

Subj: TESTIMONY OF SFC (b)(3), (b)(6), Romeo 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.

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

Lieutenant Colonel
U.S. Marine Corps
Staff Judge Advocate

9 November 2009
DATE