

SWORN STATEMENT

My name is (b)(3), (b)(6), Uniform . My current unit is 229 Charlie Company, Ft. Benning, Georgia. I am a Specialist in the U.S. Army.

In July 2008, my unit was 2nd 503rd, 173rd Chosen Company, Second Platoon, and I was in Kunar Province, Afghanistan. My duty assignment was a SAW Gunner.

I first learned that my Platoon would be moving to and setting up a FOB in Wanat in July/August of 2007. My platoon had not previously established a FOB during my tour in Afghanistan prior to Wanat. I was told that my Platoon would be departing for Wanat in May 2008, but for some reason that date was pushed back to June 2008, and subsequently changed to July 2008.

I remember getting off the helicopter and looking where the COP was being established and thinking that we were screwed, because the location was in a bowl with limited protection. In addition, I believe it was a terrible idea to assign my platoon to the new mission at Wanat at the end of our tour. We should have been assigned that mission in April 2008 or during the winter time when the insurgents were not actively fighting us because it would have been safer for my Platoon.

My other concerns about building a new FOB at Wanat was based on the fact that new troops would be rotating in and the old ones would be rotating out, which is when the insurgents usually attacked. Also, during this transition period people lose their focus because they are busy packing and accounting for equipment.

Prior to July 2008 my Platoon had visited Wanat numerous times to conduct recons and presence controls in response to civil issues in the area. On these trips to Wanat our Platoon Leader or Company Commander and First Sergeant would accompany us, and engage the local leaders in the district center. During these engagements, my Platoon had never once fired upon until the spring of 2008.

For the mission to Wanat I only brought the mission essentials. I took a few personal items such as socks, a change of ACU's, T-

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shirts, extra pair of boots, water, etc. Since we were told that we would be continually supplied, I only carried six liters of water in my assault pack.

When my platoon got to Wanat, we realized that we did not have enough water to supply us. To establish the FOB defenses, we had to dig in the heat. Water became an issue after the first day we arrived at Wanat because of the extreme heat. The day after we arrived at Wanat, my platoon was directed to stop digging each morning around nine o'clock on because we did not have enough water to sustain us in the high heat. This continued up to the day of the attack at Wanat. On the second day, after our arrival, we were resupplied with water, but it was not sufficient for the number of troops we had. During the times we were not digging we basically sat around and did nothing.

There was also a shortage in the amount of available concertina wire and pickets for the FOB perimeter. While we could have used more wire at the FOB, I believe OP Topside had double concertina wire surrounding it. If our platoon had more concertina wire, I do not believe that that it would have made any difference in our ability to deter the insurgents.

As far as heavy equipment, we had a Bobcat, "baby front loader" at Wanat. It didn't work to well because the ground was too hard for it to dig up any dirt. Soon after we started working on our positions, the Bobcat ran out of gas. Although our platoon was resupplied with a blivet of gas for the Bobcat, it did not arrive with the required hoses and attachments to pump the gas into the Bobcat. The Bobcat sat idle for about one or two days due to the lack of gas. At some point, civilian front loaders and dump trucks were supposed to arrive in addition to the Bobcat.

In my opinion, even if we had sufficient water, my platoon could not have made our position safer from the insurgents. Although the platoon did not have overhead cover or protection, we had an abundance of sandbags at to fortify our positions. For example, the day before the attack, my squad had dug positions 18 inches into the ground and stacked sandbags three to four feet high. OP Topside had both gun teams set in to the position and were

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well dug in. What we needed was assistance from civilian contractors with their big front loaders to fill the HESCO baskets.

This mission did not seem as organized or well-planned as other missions/CONOPs that we previously conducted. In previous missions we always felt that there was a clear and concise plan to accomplish the mission, however there did not seem to be a clear and concise plan for the Wanat mission. For the Wanat mission the availability of assets seemed to constantly change. For example the week before the move, our platoon was told that we were going to receive Specter gunship support. The day or so before the first planned movement we were told that it was taken away. We were also told that we would have Predator ISR support for the seven days after we arrived at Wanat, but this asset was also pulled a few days after we arrived. Combined with the previously mentioned delays the Wanat plan to accomplish the mission was unclear. We expressed our concerns to both SFC (b)(3), (b)(6), Yankee and 1LT Brostrom who told us to hunker down and get the job done.

The second day of my arrival to Wanat I remember feeling pretty shady because there were civilian Afghans watching us build the FOB; but I thought they were watching out of curiosity. But on the day before the attack there were a group of Afghan men watching my Platoon from the Bazaar, peeping over their shoulders and looking, and drawing in the sand with sticks. When we went up to go by cigarettes the men stood up and started kicking the sand away. It caught my eye and I mentioned it to Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6) and Staff Sergeant (b)(3), (b)(6). They acknowledged that they had seen it as well. Everyone was aware that the Afghans were acting shady and we knew that something was going down.

Prior to the attack, we conducted no patrols because we did not have sufficient manpower. Over several nights, we observed groups of individuals walking in the mountains close to our position. We requested permission to drop some rounds near them to see what they would do. Captain (b)(3), (b)(6) did not approve the requests because we couldn't determine if the individuals were carrying weapons. The day before the attack at Wanat I remember seeing a few people in the village. I did not see many men or

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children and I never saw any women in Wanat. On the morning of the attack, during stand-to, a member of my platoon saw someone through the sights on his TOW and was about to engage them when we started taking fire from the insurgents.

During the battle, we did not encounter any manufacturing issues with our weapons. The SAW is a dependable weapon but when it gets dirt and dust inside it does not function properly. During the attack at Wanat, I had plenty of ammo for my SAW and fired about 3,000 rounds with it. I eventually set it aside because of weapons jamming from the dirt and dust getting into it caused by RPGs hitting near our position. In optimal conditions the SAW is a great weapon, but otherwise it is inconsistent, when dirt and dust gets inside it. Afghanistan is a sandy and dusty area which creates problems for the SAW. When I put my SAW down I grabbed one of the injured engineer's M16 and began firing it with no problem. We also had a MK-19 during the battle, however the shield and the smoke stack was damaged in the battle which prevented the weapon from being able to traverse and properly support elevated positions such as OP Topside.

I was disappointed with the decision to pull out of Wanat. I am not sure if there was a better location to put a FOB than Wanat. I didn't understand why we came here in the first place. In my opinion, if there was a good enough reason for us to go there, there should have been a good enough reason for us to stay here.

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