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The interview of the (b)(3), (b)(6) (CDR, DCO & (b)(3), (b)(6) S3) occurred on 20 August 2011 via VTC at Bagram AB.

**PERSONS PRESENT**

INVESTIGATION TEAM LEAD: BG J. Colt, US Army

INVESTIGAION TEAM DEPUTY: IO-DEP

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**Court Reporter:** The beginning of the VTC was not recorded.

(b)(3), (b)(6) **S3:** Difficult for the AWT to be able to focus on where the galats were; so it really was no different than a lot of the other ones, but the process was different because of the hasty nature of it, the fact that the aircraft was already airborne and the connectivity issues that we were having.

**BG Colt:** How many times can you guys remember on this rotation that you have done a branch to a plan while it was in motion already or already in execution like this?

(b)(3), (b)(6) **S3:** I did reach out to the other S-3s and asked that, I know that when I was in Jalalabad we never did it where we inserted a QRF. We didn't have some situation where we inserted the battle space owner in the morning, I called down to attack, they also have not had the experience that they actually had been certain of the QRF. When they were going through the RIPTOA with Task Force (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, they did have a mission that was called (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, I think it was and which the ARSOA guys inserted the QRF, so that the QRF was inserted but it wasn't actually our aircraft that did it. I can't think of any other time since I have been the 3 up here that we done it. And I know when I was down at shooter we didn't do it.

**IO-DEP:** So just to clarify a branch off the main plan like inserting the IRF on LEFTY GROVE, that didn't happen routinely?

(b)(3), (b)(6) **CDR:** NO sir. Not routinely. Again just to refresh your memory, my name is Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) [inaudible] Brigade Commander, (b)(3), (b)(6) S3 has been the 3 for about two months, so when you ask about the whole rotation, sir that why he was referring [inaudible] [voice speaking over each other]perspective of the battalion first and surveying the other 3s. (b)(3), (b)(6) can back me up on this because he covers the missions when I am not here, very very few times have we looked at any sequels, very few and we do a lot. We have done, I think by our account, we've probably done about 400 targets just between (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c Those two locations alone we've probably done about 400 missions, very very few times were we had to do any kind of sequel or any kind of branch. Some different versions of that have included, sometimes ARSOA being used, the 160<sup>th</sup> being used to go into a target where we didn't. We had one

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case in Tangi, where we went in initially received heavy fire; we came back out because we felt the conditions were not set and when the mission was shifted over to the 160<sup>th</sup> for different HLZs, so that was another version of a kind of a branch that took place, but then we were out of it at that point after we did the initial push and we came back out. We shifted over to the 160<sup>th</sup> on that night for that target. As (b)(3), (b)(6) S3 has mentioned, we have had cases where we have put the battle spaces owner in on the ground using for SSE or KLEs after the event. That is a version of a sequel, but like this where we have gone in and put an IRF or reaction force of some sort on there, I can't think of one off the top of my head. It might be one out there, I just don't remember, 100s but I can't recall one and I'm not sure if you can either the way this one happened.

**BG Colt:** Is it requirement or is it a standard practice that you would ask to revalidate a route or just the HLZ going to that route?

(b)(3), (b)(6) **S3:** It would be hard to reference it with the hasty because like the boss said, this is the first one we had like this. Now when we've had other deliberate operations when the plan changes, the unit has to push up the change to the plan to get the plan reapproved, to get that change reapproved. In terms of this with the hasty nature, this is a (b)(1), (b)(1).4 operation, that is the only time I can remember that we done it and so it didn't go through the whole process partially because they are already airborne. And so there's some immediacy to it.

**IO-DEP:** You said they were airborne at the time--- so when they--when the approval made it to the aircraft, the air mission commander, they were already airborne and en-route to the target at that time, was that your understanding?

(b)(3), (b)(6) **S3:** Yes sir, the call that I got, I was in my S-3 office and the battle captain came in that they have to put the reaction force into an alternate HLZ, the aircraft is already airborne, they are just looking for approval. They said that they ---the connectivity is down and we couldn't print off the TOPO. So I went down to the TOPO office and while I was looking at it I told the battle captain to go up and brief the boss while I looked at the TOPO and we tried to email him the TOPO so

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we could get back up and I believe that's when (b)(3), (b)(6) CDR called him direct.

(b)(3), (b)(6) **S3:** And on that night in particular once our guys printed out the TOPO and they brought me the HLZ on a piece of paper I had a discussion with my guys from down stairs. Then I picked up the phone and called (b)(3), (b)(6) CDR. Because we did not have the connectivity I did not have the full planning products that the battalion task force would normally provide. So we talked about the HLZ which is normally one of my areas of greatest concern, it's a question of suitability of the HLZ, the threat in the area. Suitability of the HLZ the threat in the area, suitability HLZ is the first one I get concerned about, whether or not if it's close to qalats, whether or not is it on the pinnacle, and whether we're dealing with heavy dust landing areas. I looked at the HLZ, we had a discussion about the HLZ, we didn't dig into the rock and a lot of great discussion. [Inaudible][Voice in the back ground]I didn't have the rock [inaudible] [someone clearing their throat.]

**BG Colt:** Is it safe to say that by virtue of the ways the risk exists around here, that at least half of the command decision with regard to this process is focused on accidental risk?

(b)(3), (b)(6) **CDR:** Absolutely Sir.

**BG Colt:** And not operational risk?

(b)(3), (b)(6) **CDR:** Absolutely, I will tell you that from my perspective as a commander, I look at both of those very very heavily. We have lost aircraft here to both in terms of accident pilot error. We have banged up aircraft on bad HLZs and we have had aircraft shot down. So that is very much, in fact, when we first got here, I would say that I had more concern over the accidental risk because of the nature of the terrain and where we were coming in from. And as the mission continued to evolve, they kind of got much more balanced in my mind for tactical and accidental, but accidental risk is absolutely one of the top things that I worry about in this environment.

**BG Colt:** So my question is in this particular case, I sense that there was a lot of focus on the landing area, what if, can

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you describe what was presented to you contextually about the mission at this point? This was a sequel or a branch to a plan that was already in action, how did you take that into consideration with respect to operational risk at the time of the second infil?

(b)(3), (b)(6) **S3:** We were told that there were groups of people gathering in the vicinity of where the operation was going on. So that---, first consideration is that they didn't say that they were actively in contact, we know that the AWT had engagement earlier, but it sounded from the description that we got that a groups of people were massing not that there was actual fight going on at that point. The other consideration with that was that it was a 4.5K offset, so it was well away from where all the activity was and the tendency around here, is that when there is activity insurgents with surge towards that activity, so 4.5 Kilometer offset is far enough away that--- that distance itself was mitigating part of the threat because they do tend to gather when the bullets start flying. So that was part of the consideration as well sir, was the 4.5 kilometer offset.

(b)(3), (b)(6) **CDR:** And from my perspective echoing everything that (b)(3), (b)(6) S3 just said, we are aware of the overall threat of the Tangi valley, which has a history of it. And we track that and we understand that very clearly. We looked at it going into this operation, for the way they were going into and the specific zone of the objective in the HLZ for the original infil. As we looked at this branch 4-4.5 kilometers away and around the corner of a major terrain feature was a factor as we looked at the threat. In other words we felt like it was disconnected probably more than maybe someone would assume, but to a certain extent, it was disconnected geographically from where the objective was, but the context of and that we understand contextually for me, I understood contact was at the objective and that it was fair amount of contact at the objective, I believe we had a number of enemy KIA at that point and that there were some individuals that were squirting off to the left if you look at the diagram or to the west and to the northwest. And so from that context as you asked about the threat of the HLZ, the HLZ threat was more of the greater context of the overall threat in the Tangi, positively with a

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certain level of stimulation in the valley because of what was going on at the objective, but again 4 kilometer offset would that would be one of the thought processed that was in mind for me as I speak personally.

**IO-DEP:** When they told you that it was a 4.5 kilometer offset, did they reference 4.5k from what? What is from the original HLZ infiltration or from where the squirters where at? How do they characterize that?

**(b)(3), (b)(6) S3:** They didn't reference it sir; I assumed it was from the objective. Usually, when we are talking about offsets for these missions, we are talking about offsets from the objective, not offsets from previous [inaudible] [voice talking over speaker]

**IO-DEP:** So your assumption was it was the objective?

**(b)(3), (b)(6) CDR:** I'm not sure if it was set specifically to me when I spoke to the task force commander, but I feel that it was, that he said that he said it was four kilometers off the objective.

**BG Colt:** Just a question, I apologize this is not logically connected to that particular, our last series of questions. Has the brigade internally to yourself and task force **(b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c** conducted any kind of either directed or formal AAR of its own internal components following this event? And if so have they documented any results or changed any practices as a result of it?

**(b)(3), (b)(6) S3:** Sir, inside the TOC itself, we did AAR inside the TOC. We didn't document it or anything else. We have made some changes and procedures since then that now---either the stands or the TACOPs guys are also looking at the CONOPS that we do. So we have started to change some procedures partially because of this event, but we didn't capture it in any kind of AAR, we did discuss it internally as an AAR, we just didn't record it.

**(b)(3), (b)(6) CDR:** And at the Brigade Level certainly the following along conversations between myself and the task force commanders. We have spent time discussing, again nothing

documented sir. We have spent time discussing the TTPs of the AH-64's in particular when it comes to providing the Cherry/Ice call, and providing security for the CH's inbound. We have spent time talking about the routes and the air speeds and the altitudes that are being used by the CH-47s on infiltration. We have talked about the question of the HLZ selection with regard to offset or not. At the CJTF level, we are definitely talking about more emphasis on offset infils not just for this but across the board, as we look at our infils in the battle space. So there are a number of things that I think that are very much in motion to address some of the sequence of events that happened with EXTORTION 17 that are happening both at the battalion and the brigade as well as the CJTF level here, but nothing that has been formally documented yet at this stage. Be frank, part of my intent was to let the investigation run its course and take the results of the investigation and go from there. I've seen something that I think we need to make sure we are taking a look at, we are focused on those, but at---- partly because we didn't have all the facts and partly I didn't want to impede on the purpose of your investigation.

**IO-DEP:** Shifting over to the; task force (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c has a log entry number 24 at 0339 local that night. Two strobes identified in the AOR and possible survivors, can you talk us through that? Where did that came from? And any corroboration or any assessment of the validity of that report.

(b)(3), (b)(6) **DCO:** Sir, I think the 3 might be in a better position to actually answer, ----

(b)(3), (b)(6) **S3:** It happened in the TOC and that came from—we heard it in the TOC; it was the S-2 that reported when they first had the (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c

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first time --- that I saw the Air Force had done a clip on it and it really doesn't look like our strobes, I think it's debris that's coming down because it doesn't move through the picture like a person moves through a picture; that I've have seen on flares, so I think it was debris coming down or something like. I can show it to you after this sir [voice stated we have seen it]

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I saw it for the first time about an hour ago.

**IO-DEP:** Yea we have seen, we looked at the same thing.

**(b)(3), (b)(6)** **DCO:** this is **(b)(3), (b)(6)**, I was in the TOC at the time when the report came in and the report was they thought there were IR strobes from behind a wall. We asked for our apaches to get a look at it, but we didn't really understand where specifically they were seeing the IR strobes coming from.

**(b)(3), (b)(6)** **CDR:** I think they were called and distance and a direction off of the air craft [inaudible] crash site. I want to say it was a hundred or two hundred meters southwest, it was something like they gave me distance and direction and we passed that information on to the AWT to get a better look at those areas. We didn't anything to collaborate or to corroborate IR strobes or survivors that were on the ground.

**(b)(3), (b)(6)** **S3:** The AWT said that the heat of the fire was just blinding everything else out and they couldn't look in the goggles and they could see anything under FLIR. This was the only time I saw was when I saw that predator [inaudible]

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