



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
3RD SUSTAINMENT COMMAND (EXPEDITIONARY)  
CAMP ARIFJAN, KUWAIT  
APO, AE 09366

ACTS-SCK-DO

30 September 2021

MEMOANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Interview with Rear Admiral Peter Vasely, USN, USFOR-A Commander and

(b)(6) 28

September 2021

1. On 27 September 2021, BG Lance Curtis, USA, (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) USMC, and (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) USMC, conducted an interview of the above personnel at CENTCOM FWD HQ, Al-Udeid Air Base, to discuss the facts and circumstances surrounding the attack on Abbey Gate, 26 August 2021.

2. Methodology: BG Curtis (C1) and (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) asked a series of questions throughout the interview, RADM Vasely answered most of the questions. When necessary to distinguish between him and (b)(6) they will be referred to as V2 and (b)(6) respectively. The USFOR-A FWD (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) was in attendance and clarified several points when RADM Vasely asked him to clarify a detail. Those interactions are noted. For brevity, MG Donohue will be referred to as D2, and BGen Sullivan as S1, whenever they are mentioned. When only one person provided an answer, it is annotated accordingly.

3. Discussion.

a. C1 provided overview of scope of the investigation, which included fact finding concerning actions before, during, and after the attack, chronology, leadership, task organization, force protection, gate operations, and medical operations. He stated the intent was to make notes of the conversation and prepare a memorandum. They would both have the opportunity to review and make additions, add context, or remove anything not correctly captured and rendered to writing.

b. Question and Answer 1.

(1) Question (C1). Would you please discuss the timeline regarding the formation of your USFOR-A (Forward) Headquarters?

(2) Answer (V2). We were first notified of the formulation of SOJTF-A in December 2020, and in from January to February 2021 we began building our staff, which continued until March 2021. We focused on relieving BG Marcus Evans, who had SOJTF-A before us, with our staff and my Deputy, (b)(6) which had been

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Interview with Rear Admiral Peter Vasely, USN, USFOR-A Commander, and [redacted] (b)(6)

28 September 2021

coordinated through SOCOM. General Clark articulated that there was potential for a POTUS decision on the status of US forces going forward in Afghanistan, and informed me that we may not deploy. We prepped to deploy regardless, and got to the point where we were validating staff at Fort Bragg, and I talked to GEN Clark again after POTUS came on and said 31 Aug all US forces would be removed from Afghanistan. Our guidance was stay on track, and I directed my staff to go to Tampa in May to work with RADM Bradley at SOCCENT to explore options going forward. We were leaning towards going to the [redacted] (b)(1)1.4a [redacted] (b)(1)1.4a

[Large redacted block containing text: (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(3)130b; (b)(6)]

[redacted] (b)(1)1.4a I assumed command on 12 July. By this date we had executed 3 possible changes to mission, but COMREL remained the same, with me reporting directly to Gen McKenzie. [redacted] (b)(1)1.4a

[redacted] (b)(1)1.4a then transitioned to something without ownership of much, but maintaining coordinating authority was. There was a significant level of complexity we had to work through at HQ, as we didn't own any of the capabilities beyond the security assistance force. Relationships were critical at multiple leadership levels, particularly at my level. I knew SOCCENT and OTH-CT leaders, I knew [redacted] (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) (worked with him at JSOC), and these solid relationships allowed us to work through a complex COMREL situation, and adapt as we went forward.

c. Question and Answer 2.

(1) Question (C1). After you replaced a much larger USFOR-A element, and due to BOG requirements you went to 650 personnel total. How did you view your task organization knowing you were going from large to small?

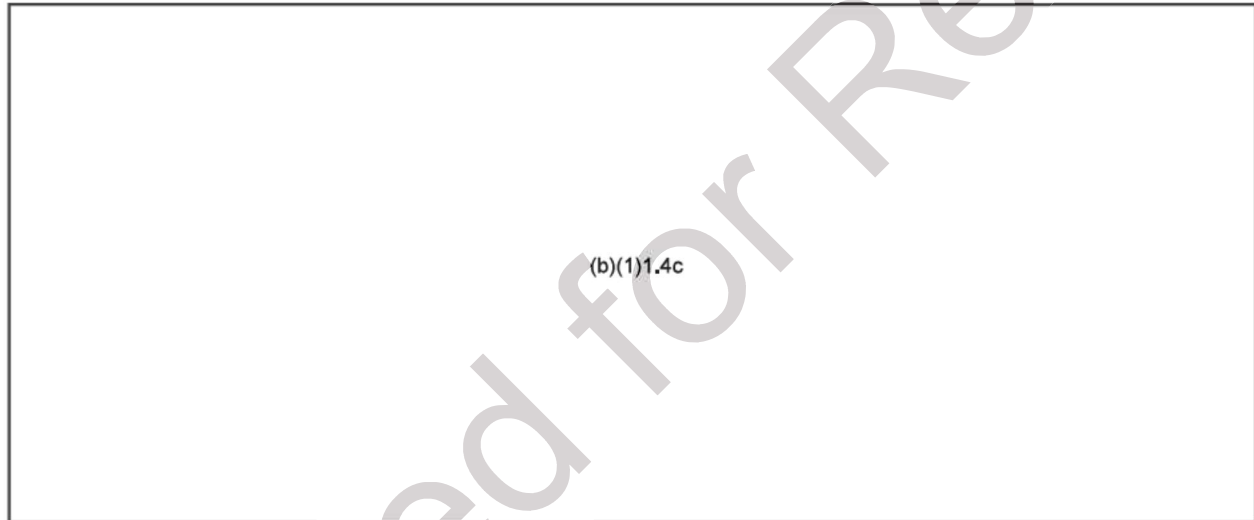
ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Interview with Rear Admiral Peter Vasely, USN, USFOR-A Commander, and [REDACTED] (b)(6)

28 September 2021

(2) Answer (V2). We focused on our tasks. Everything was Kabul-centric, so our scope of responsibility was much less in terms of area, numbers of bases, and what we were asked to do, but that was challenging, in going from 2,500 to 650 personnel, we lost visibility and sensors. The most challenging factor we had, leading up to 15 Aug evacuation, was losing external sensors outside Kabul. Despite our relationship with ANDSF, not being on the ground at 11 different bases made it difficult to get information back from what was going on in real time on the ground as the Taliban (TB) were executing their campaign plan.

d. Question and Answer 3.



e. Question and Answer 4.

(1) Question (C1). Starting with 5 Aug, what were you thinking by date, and how were you visualizing things? I've found two things incredibly helpful so far in discussions, specifically, the timeline from 26 Aug, and the timeline your team created, which is very comprehensive. Prior to 15th, what were key indicators you were looking for as a commander leading up to a NEO? We've heard certain partners had provinces as triggers, and heard Ghazni was the US trigger if it fell. What were you using as a metric for change in mission, where you would have to decide or talk to USEK?

(2) Answer (V2). [REDACTED] (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) provided your team with the latest copy of our I&W matrix that showed I&W for NEO, and triggers we thought would be met by phase prior to the NEO, then actions we needed to take both with DoD and DoS. We needed some sort of matrix to standardize our view and mindset regarding those conditions and triggers, which differed for DoD and USEK. We began developing the matrix soon after arriving on ground, because we thought we needed a standardized

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Interview with Rear Admiral Peter Vasely, USN, USFOR-A Commander, and [REDACTED] (b)(6)

28 September 2021

framework for the leadership to use. While we might disagree on what actions to take, we needed a common understanding of what we were seeing in conditions on the ground. From Jul to early Aug, conditions matched up with our matrix – numbers of districts were being taken, elements were encircling Kabul, TB were shutting off Kabul (centered around HWY 1, key districts in provinces around Kabul, cutting off lines of communication – HWY 1 to south, then north, then HWY 7). We were also looking at sustainment as it became a critical indicator, as did the status of ANDSF (checkpoints being overrun, Corps level capitulation, general collapse of security in Kabul) – these were measures of indications of severity of the conditions. Optimization was a key part of what we did, and getting USEK to understand we needed to get small in the event of NEO, because we couldn't have a 4,000 person USEK, was a big part of that. We needed to get down to a manageable level so we could transition to the things that would be difficult with any type of evacuation. USEK had their 17 conditions/decision points, so we took that product, in coordination with RSO, and added some of it to our matrix.

GEN Miller said we'd get push back from embassy regarding our desire to draw down and prepare for a NEO. AMB Wilson referenced POTUS address from July when he said we intend to maintain diplomatic presence, so not a lot of effort was focused on drawing down the embassy. In discussions with AMB Wilson, he would say, "If TB come into power, without an embassy here, how do we influence here?" In early July, even some in the embassy warned us not to show the matrix to the AMB without getting buy in from the front office, so it could be sold as a collective approach and not a power grab by DoD. We spent much effort building a product that wouldn't be viewed with skepticism by the AMB. We showed it to JTF-CR, M4, RSO, Consular Affairs, Station Chief and finalized it. The matrix showed I&W on top, recommended actions at the bottom, and starts with planning, then moves to executing the NEO. We had multiple iterations of the matrix, and showed it to the AMB during the first week in Aug, and he liked it. The matrix was never discussed or agreed to as the consummate document we'd use to decide on a NEO, it was mostly a planning tool. While M4 liked it, and we referenced it with him, whether it was the matrix, or something like it, we never had anything at the interagency level that had I&W and definitive actions. Ultimately it was used by planners, not decision makers.

f. Question and Answer 5.

(1) Question (C1). Was there a mentality, that if we'd gone to NEO, we'd failed?

(2) Answer (V2). No, I don't think so, the NEO was always part of the plan. Going back to the table top exercise (TTX) on 29 June with CENTCOM, it was planned and was built in as BPT mission. We never had the sense it was mission failure to have to execute a NEO. I think there was a lack of understanding of the conditions on the

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Interview with Rear Admiral Peter Vasely, USN, USFOR-A Commander, and [REDACTED] (b)(6)

28 September 2021

ground at multiple levels, which inhibited our ability to be prepared for the NEO when it began on the 16th.

g. Question and Answer 6.

(1) Question (C1). What were you seeing on the 14th? Ghani holds his press conference, says he's taking serious steps, asking if arming Kabul citizens is possible. By then Kandahar, Helmand, Herat, Badghis had fallen.

(2) Answer (V2). I was seeing that the government was collapsing. I met with Ghani and he had just brought in [REDACTED] (b)(6) so Ghani had him come in and give a brief, but I viewed that as window dressing. AMB Wilson saw it as a photo opportunity. I'd concluded Ghani was losing control of the government and the ANDSF. On 14 Aug, the TB blew through Pul-i-Alam, Logar Provincial Capital, immediately south of Kabul, and we executed 10 strikes that day, probably killed over 100 TB, and they still kept coming. I hadn't seen that in 20 years. Usually they'd pull back. We were killing them in bunches, destroying tactical vehicles, and they kept on coming. I had a conversation with the strike commander in the OTH cell about these guys being determined. A couple days prior, when Ghazni fell, I discussed with J2 that the TB knew they were close to winning and wouldn't stop, but the question was if they'd enter Kabul. The TB were saying publically they wouldn't enter Kabul. We assessed that within 48-72 hours they'd have Kabul surrounded, but were unsure if they would enter, or hold and push for continued negotiations and press Ghani with harder terms to accept. Ghazni fell on the 12th, so we started to discuss that – so on the 14th it had only progressed further. That morning the AMB had gotten a call from NSA Sullivan and SEC Blinken, who told him he needed to move. We heard the night before they were looking at a two week plan to get to 250 USEK personnel at HKIA by 31 Aug. I told him he didn't have 2 weeks, that he only had 24-48 hours. The AMB got the call from Sullivan/Blinken around the same time. We knew Kabul was going to be surrounded, with TB at the gate.

h. Question and Answer 7.

(1) Question (C1). On 14 Aug, was there still a view within some elements of the US that we still had until 11 Sep to remain in place?

(2) Answer (V2). I can't speak to what was happening in D.C., but on 14 Aug the AMB came to accept that we didn't have time and needed to move, and we began evacuating to HKIA. Our assessments were consistent regarding what we thought would happen, and at that time we assessed Kabul would fall, and it was just a matter of the TB taking it by force or not.

i. Question and Answer 8.

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Interview with Rear Admiral Peter Vasely, USN, USFOR-A Commander, and [REDACTED] (b)(6)

28 September 2021

(1) Question (C1). What happened on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August?

(2) Answer (V2). On the morning of the 15th, I got a call from M4 saying they were getting tippers that the TB were advancing from N, S, and W. I ran to the JOC, called our ANASOC LNO, and asked what they were seeing. At the time, we thought it might be a false alarm. I then went to USEK to talk to the AMB to discuss movement, and talked to [REDACTED] (b)(6) around 0800 when he notified me that the gates coming from Maidan Shar, Wardak had fallen, the ANDSF had capitulated, and TB had a free shot along HWY 1 to Kabul. It's about 25 km from there to Kabul. I knew that wasn't good, and was on my way to tell the AMB that news. [REDACTED] (b)(1)1.4c

[REDACTED] (b)(1)1.4c

j. Question and Answer 9.

(1) Question (C1). Were the TB targeting and killing ISIS-K prisoners who were released?

(2) Answer (V2). The TB killed a senior ISIS-K prisoner on day he was liberated. I think there were over 1,000 ISIS-K, and we thought they'd kill ISIS-K, but I have no reason to believe they segregated prisoners. They were solely focused on taking Kabul. They weren't massing TB waiting to come into the city. They likely numbered in the 100s, driving around in Ford Rangers going to Mol, MoD, and the Palace, telling senior officials to surrender. I didn't see the massing of forces. I was most concerned with the release of the prisoners and them being armed, close to our location. I didn't know what would happen, and was concerned about them massing on the embassy. That's why we expedited our departure. The day prior we had evacuated ~500, but still had 2,000 to evacuate on the 15th.

k. Question and Answer 10.

(1) Question (C1). What are you thinking at this point about Ghani and the ANDSF capitulating?

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Interview with Rear Admiral Peter Vasely, USN, USFOR-A Commander,  
and [REDACTED] (b)(6)

28 September 2021

(2) Answer (V2). Ghani had put out to the ANDSF to not defend Kabul, because he wanted to preserve the city and save civilian lives. We had no indications of that in prior communications with Ghani or any of his inner circle that he'd issue that decree to capitulate. Up to that point the ANDSF hadn't consolidated forces, and focused on defending what they could. That leads me to believe that they had insights on what was going to happen, but they never came out and indicated that to me or the AMB.

I. Question and Answer 11.

(1) Question (C1). [REDACTED] (b)(6) I understand that you have a good picture of the coalition present at HKIA, can you explain the coalition involved at HKIA and can you give us an overview of who was involved at HKIA?

(2) Answer [REDACTED] (b)(6) The NATO Ambassadors caucus was a weekly event, where [REDACTED] (b)(6) GEN Miller, and [REDACTED] (b)(6) participated and would get a picture of what was going on around the country. It increased the conversation around prospects of the Afghan government holding, the stability of ANDSF, and assurances around security of HKIA. These things were being discussed among diplomats, back with their respective national capitals about their ability to maintain a presence in the green zone. There were lots of watchful eyes on US commentary regarding security assurances to immediate allies in the green zone. That weekly mechanism continued to USFOR-A (FWD)'s time in August, and was increasing in intensity the 2nd week in Aug. We had three caucuses in a row where people were trying to make sense of what they were hearing and seeing. USFOR-A (FWD) was giving a releasable assessment of that. My role as DCG was to encourage them how to think of it from a security perspective, not what to think, how they could get small, how they could maintain ops as an embassy.

When we switched to HKIA, AMB Pontecorvo chaired a 1600 daily NATO ambassador's forum, which sometimes included deputies or consular staff, and carried on the function of discussion about how much time was left, and how nations could help each other with getting their nationals and Afghans out. This complemented the morning sessions run by JTF-CR (Multi-National Coordination Cell), which was a physical entity, but also a virtual mechanism, focused on prioritization of aircraft inflow/out flow at HKIA. Each nation made their bid for aircraft, but many nations were dependent on US, and were moving their nationals and Afghans through the US safe locations. The combination of the MNCC and NATO ambassador forum, was the vehicle by which international coordination took place for the NEO.

m. Question and Answer 12.

(1) Question (C1). Who were the allied forces at HKIA?

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Interview with Rear Admiral Peter Vasely, USN, USFOR-A Commander, and [REDACTED] (b)(6)

28 September 2021

(2) Answer [REDACTED] (b)(6) The US presence was biggest; UK was 2nd biggest (centered on Abbey Gate, main inflow point on to HKIA, headed up by [REDACTED] (b)(6) [REDACTED] (b)(6) Brig James Martin commanded forces; 2 para commanders; the Yorks company came in – taxi service; [REDACTED] (b)(1)1.4 was an enduring SF task force). There were teams from different nations working with their embassies providing security for consular staff as they moved around HKIA, including Germans, Italians, Australians, French, Kiwis, Canadians, Turks (airfield ops/security). There were more international diplomatic staff than there was of international military manpower

(V2). The MNCC established coordination for airflow on the mil side.

[REDACTED] (b)(6) The International Coordination Cell was a smaller group of director level personnel, with the right mindset, to establish a team to work with special interest groups, with sensitive profiles. The ICC would work on getting out sub-categories of entitled personnel that people had interest in.

(V2). It was a multi-national effort, run by [REDACTED] (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) with international participation. It didn't begin that way. On the US side, I was getting emails from the "center for humane treatment of animals", retired GO/FOs, my wife and friends in the US were getting these calls. This is important for context. Other nations were doing it as well. We did not think this would happen as part of a NEO and resulted in bandwidth and manpower being pulled from existing priorities to deal with these special interests. For the other nations it was their citizens, not Afghans. The stated priority for the US was AMCITS/LPRS/SIVs, but you had everyone from the White House down with a new flavor of the day for prioritization, and we had to develop ICC to handle this.

[REDACTED] (b)(6) The MNCC was working daily on a smooth cycle, while ICC was constantly spinning (moved hand to show the speed of the spin was dramatically different).

(V2). 4,000 separate requests came in, and the team recovered over 8,000 people from those requests, but it was mostly Afghans from special interests, and even included dogs. There was all goodness in this, but the lesson learned is it was a distraction from the main effort as they were coming directly to the individuals on the ground trying to accomplish the task at hand. Eventually CENTCOM, State, and OSD brought it to their level, but we were still being contacted by phone/email telling us we had a moral obligation to get a certain person/family. Every request went into the database.

[REDACTED] (b)(6) There was no shortage of anxiety and there was a palpable level of crisis. You only needed to stand at the gate to realize these people were in fear for their lives, which sat on your mind constantly. The number of requests coming in was insurmountable.



ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Interview with Rear Admiral Peter Vasely, USN, USFOR-A Commander, and [REDACTED] (b)(6)

28 September 2021

[REDACTED] (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) – could take 6-18 hours to bring one person in, drained significant resources

(V2). Teams dedicated to bringing people into HKIA could have and should have focused on our priorities. I'd like to know where was this level of urgency to get these people in before 15 August that didn't exist before it became a crisis. In the future this needs to be factored into the Joint Pub for NEOs. There should be an interagency led effort to identify the groups/individuals coming in. It became a distraction due to the time and effort devoted to it, and it could have planned out better. Of the 4000 requests received, my question back was, which bin do these people fit into in terms of Afghans – P1, P2, SIV? Due to the numbers and scope/scale, that requirement to bin these people properly remains today, and State back in the US is still trying to get these people out. In the future, this needs to be taken off the tactical level leaders on the ground who are focused on other priorities. There needs to be a single focal point working on this. I can only speculate on the number of AMCITs and other TCNs who couldn't get out because of the focus on this effort.

[REDACTED] (b)(6) I don't know you can effectively prep for a NEO (I did Libya as well). From a systems perspective, if you want to manage expectations, you need to have a conversation up front about the extent you could lose control of ability to measure performance and output. As downward pressure from DC/social media increased, then special interests joined in, that broadened the aperture of ambition – what we would've been using as a metric, such as F77 data, became very dynamic and impossible to manage because it was always shifting. We are now left with a delta of people trying to get out, which is still in excess of what we expected to get out.

n. Question and Answer 13.

(1) Question (C1). A constant theme is ministerial pressure by country, can you talk about atmospheric and expectations by country, tied to timeline?

(2) Answer [REDACTED] (b)(6) I worked for the US, so looking at this from a US perspective, it was increasingly about volume. For other nations, it was focused mostly on the US, but in the international forum, some nations were needier than others due to resources and pressure from their capitals to get X number of people through. In the final Ambassador forum sessions, we talked about being out by 31 Aug, and we told internationals they'd need to be out by 27th. In the week leading up to 27th, there was pressure on countries to close out, and they had bus loads, mini convoys of special interest evacuees to get out, which placed pressure on the back end. Most internationals were out mid-afternoon on the 27th. The UK left at 2200 on 28th and USFOR-A (FWD) left on the 29th.

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Interview with Rear Admiral Peter Vasely, USN, USFOR-A Commander, and [REDACTED] (b)(6)

28 September 2021

V2 – This was all tied to the Joint Tactical Exfiltration (JTE) and D2's plan to set conditions for security for the JTE at midnight on the 31st. Non-JTE essential personnel had to be off the airfield so D2 could execute. Norwegians stayed until the Role 2 finished up, per their request, right until the end. On the night of 27th, Italy, Turkey, Japan, France, NATO contingent (SCR) all left; US, UK, Norway remained; Turkish AMB remained. On the 31st, there were multiple discussions I was privy to with POTUS and Cabinet, and ultimately the decision came down from a military perspective, and my best advice provided to POTUS. From my perspective it became a matter of can vs should, which was based on risk. It was clear we weren't going to get all Americans out, and by 22nd/23rd we started having conversations at senior levels about extending beyond 31st. My perspective was based on direct conversations with TB (23 Aug in Kabul at HKIA), and a conversation as senior cabinet official had with senior TB official, to include [REDACTED] (b)(6) – when it was broached that we may need a few extra days, there was a visceral response from the TB, and [REDACTED] (b)(6) said you won't stay past the 31st, or there would be consequences – “the US had lied to the TB since the agreement was signed, and this would be just another violation of the agreement,” – they were adamant we'd be out by the 31st. So we said, let's play this out, would we win the fight, yes, we'd win the fight, but to what end? From my perspective we had good coordination with TB out of necessity for security of the airfield, where they were facilitating our ability to get Americans out, and providing security for the airfield. Clearly the 26th was a lapse in security on the TB's part. Aside from that we were getting good cooperation from TB because they wanted us out. They were responding to most of our requests in the affirmative to that point. From my perspective, if we stayed past 31st that cooperation would end, and we'd assume risk to force and mission, with possible asymmetric action, the TB letting crowds through, possible hostage taking. The TB wouldn't need to fire a shot, just back off the gates and encourage a surge on the airfield, and I think they would do that. Worst case, they wouldn't execute a frontal assault, but indirect fire into aircraft or fouling the runway would be enough to close the APOD and force us into JFE where we'd need to open Bagram. We'd need to retake key terrain, break out of the bowl, take high ground overlooking HKIA. We would lose US personnel, and likely there would be massive civilian casualties, and to what end? How long would we do that for, and to what end? With no cooperation from TB to facilitate movement, plus activities to disrupt our ability to get out, in weighing the risk vs gain, I'd rather end on 31st, with TB cooperation, then put everything at risk by staying past 31st. That was my perspective, which I provided via the military chain of command, and POTUS decided to stick to 31st, and drove our timeline.

o. Question and Answer 14.

(1) Question (C1). On the 15th, you've got ISR showing TB are advancing, you know the situation is changing, you've talked to M4, but initially you weren't seeing the indicators.

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Interview with Rear Admiral Peter Vasely, USN, USFOR-A Commander, and [REDACTED] (b)(6)

28 September 2021

(2) Answer (V2). Indicators were there'd be TB entry and advance into Kabul city. On the 14th they were at the gates, and had pretty much encircled Kabul, according to multiple sources and ISR. From the 12th when they took Ghazni, it was just a matter of time before they'd have the force to take Kabul. What we didn't understand was if they'd enter Kabul, based on what we were seeing in open source. On the 14th or 15th, it was still unclear if they'd advance into Kabul. The decision to evacuate was based on us being encircled, and an inability to move if they'd decided to advance into Kabul. Ghazni was the decision point to evacuate from our perspective. There was no ANDSF force able to oppose TB advance on Kabul. The official request for NEO from State on came on the 13th. We started evacuation of embassy on 14th, and on 15th, we saw

[REDACTED] (b)(1)1.4c  
[REDACTED] (b)(1)1.4c On the afternoon of the 14th we started the evacuation, but it was a controlled evacuation.

p. Question and Answer 15.

(1) Question (C1). Who moved on the 14<sup>th</sup> from the Embassy?

(2) Answer (V2). It was non-essential, non-mission critical personnel to man the embassy, and non-essential staff in the HQ. We had planned as part of optimization to get our JOC set up at HKIA and had prepped that a week prior by sending key elements of the staff to establish the JOC. [REDACTED] (b)(6) began moving to HKIA on the 13th in order to be up and running when we did move our HQ, but as of 14 Aug, USEK still had 2,500 US personnel, and government contractors. We got 500 out on the 14th and then started to expedite it. There was a 12 hour period of constant flights, when we told people to leave their bags and get on planes. After word of the breach at Maidan Shar, we consolidated to the JOC or key positions to maintain accountability. We were in position on our side at the south compound to manage transition, but the USEK was in a state of flux. A number of platoons assisted USEK with destruction of equipment, starting on 14th. We recalled security personnel on 15th to man ECPs at USEK, and the only people we had at the embassy were going door to door to get people to evacuate. That continued until the morning of the 16th when we got our last people to the airfield.

q. Question and Answer 16.

(1) Question (C1). After your conversation with M4 about indicators, what were your actions, priorities?

(2) Answer (V2). I was focused on accountability of our personnel and UESK personnel, within south compound and chancery, but didn't get it from the embassy until we were on HKIA. Then, defense of the embassy compound due to uncertainty of TB

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Interview with Rear Admiral Peter Vasely, USN, USFOR-A Commander, and [REDACTED] (b)(6)

28 September 2021

actions. I was thinking of Tehran, 1979. Given we were striking TB as they were leaving the prisons that day, why wouldn't they attack us. I was also focused on protection of aircraft, and worried about SAFIRE and what TB would do to shoot down aircraft.

r. Question and Answer 17.

(1) Question (C1). Did you have any assurances from TB at this point?

(2) Answer (V2). On the 15th Gen McKenzie and SRAR secured a contact for us. M4 had gone to Doha and talked to [REDACTED] (b)(6) about staying outside Kabul, and he identified [REDACTED] (b)(6) on that day because the TB had already entered the no-go zone M4 had wanted. We requested emergency destruction of CRAMs at the embassy three days prior, and had been denied. [REDACTED] (b)(1)1.4a

[REDACTED] (b)(1)1.4a

s. Question and Answer 18.

(1) Question (C1). What's your calculus on when you need to move?

(2) Answer (V2). I worked through that quickly on the 15th, but I was on one of the last chucks to move. The [REDACTED] (b)(6) once they were set and JOC was set, I'd leave. I left [REDACTED] (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) with the JTE element and got to HKIA just before midnight on 15th. Just the JTE and security element came out around 0130 on 16th, overall it was a rapid movement.

t. Question and Answer 19.

(1) Question (C1). By approximately 0130 on 16th USFOR-A HQ and USEK was clear?

(2) Answer (V2). Yes.

u. Question and Answer 20.

(1) Question (C1). On Aug 15/16 POD, what's your view of HKIA as you arrive?

(2) Answer (V2). As we arrived, it was chaotic. We had embassy personnel, MEU, SPMAGTF, 82nd personnel to set conditions for security for NEO, embassy

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Interview with Rear Admiral Peter Vasely, USN, USFOR-A Commander, and [REDACTED] (b)(6)

28 September 2021

civilians waiting to get on flights out, basically on-loading C-17s that were bringing in security forces. The embassy's plan was to keep less than 250 at Kabul Air Compound (KAC). As soon as we get to the JOC, [REDACTED] (b)(1)1.4g and was focused on completing JTE and getting updates from team at south compound of embassy, when we saw the first group of civilians breach HKIA, trying to get on C-17. The first breach, I believe came through south terminal road, where there were no physical barriers.

v. Question and Answer 21.

(1) Question (C1). Were the Afghans gone on the southern portion of the airfield?

(2) Answer (V2). The ANDSF had collapsed, and from the CJOC at south compound, we watched Ghani's MI-17 fly away mid-afternoon on the 15th. [REDACTED] (b)(6) showed up at the CJOC asking for tasking. Both wanted to stay and fight, but my guidance was to get whatever forces you can to HKIA, because it was not worth it at that point as your president and everyone else had fled. I told them they could potentially incorporate their forces into security at HKIA (early evening 15th). They departed, and went to HKIA. No ANDSF entities were remaining. [REDACTED] (b)(6) were leaders without a force at that point. Until then, we didn't have a clear understanding of how many ANDSF were in Kabul because GIROA hadn't consolidated. Estimates were there were less than 10,000, but when they got the message from Ghani not to fight, they went into hiding, or went north, unsure, but ANDSF had collapsed. As part of our HKIA assessment, we hadn't had a meaningful discussion with [REDACTED] (b)(6) about defense of HKIA for a NEO because we didn't want to let the cat out of the bag, and let them know we were planning for a NEO, so there was no coordinated plan with ANDSF for external defense of the airfield. The assumption was TB would stop outside Kabul, giving us time to have that conversation and establish external security. It was a conscious decision with AMB Wilson about not wanting to let ANDSF/GIROA know we were planning for a NEO. When we got the airfield it was our HQ, and BGen Sullivan (S1), who were setting conditions for NEO and had responsibility for NEO and were setting up positions, but didn't have time because forces were still flowing in. I had talked to S1 about security as they started the NEO, and he talked about setting forces as they were coming in, the MEU had just started to flow. On the 13th the 82nd started to flow forces from CONUS.

w. Question and Answer 22.

(1) Question (C1). On the 16th, did US forces number only about 350?

(2) Answer (V2). We had our 650 aligned to the BOG, but don't know the number of MEU forces already there.

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Interview with Rear Admiral Peter Vasely, USN, USFOR-A Commander, and [REDACTED] (b)(6)

28 September 2021

x. Question and Answer 23.

(1) Question (C1). I think by the 15th Marines only had about 350, from JTF and 1 company from 82nd.

(2) Answer (V2). That sounds right. [REDACTED] (b)(1)1.4d S1 was worried about security on eastern side, security around Alvarado and KAC, so we had open space to the south, where Afghan forces had been, but were no longer there due to collapse of ANDSF. There was probably a company of 82nd sitting at the ramp as I arrived at HKIA waiting to be employed. The first indicators were from the [REDACTED] (b)(1)1.4g [REDACTED] (b)(1)1.4g that Afghan civilians were trying to board a C-17 at ramp 8, [REDACTED] (b)(1)1.4c [REDACTED] (b)(1)1.4c saw people coming from the south gate, through the terminal, across the runway, to the aircraft. For the rest of the night I talked to S1 about closing the breach, and we spent 3 or so hours clearing Afghans away from aircraft and off runway. We had about 2,500 come through Abbey Gate, and they stayed towards south side, but inside perimeter. Then we focused on securing south gate. People found other ways to get in, jumped fences, came in through Abbey Gate. It comes down to we were still setting the force, evacuating the embassy, and breaches occurred before we had capacity to secure the airfield. By morning of 16th, we had 5-6k people all over the southern portion of the airfield, and even on the runway. We couldn't open the runway because of it. Late morning 16th, the mass of civilians on HKIA slowly began moving north across the runway, overwhelming the US security forces aligned to attempt to contain the crowd. I ordered the one C-17 and 2 C-130s to leave

y. Question and Answer 24.

(1) Question (C1). Were you seeing an incredible amount of maturity and professionalism?

(2) Answer (V2). Absolutely. [REDACTED] (b)(1)1.4a [REDACTED] (b)(1)1.4a Guys from the 82nd had flown 18 hours, arrived, immediately were told to get into position, with no RSO&I. There were thousands of civilians, and armed TB immediately external to HKIA. The only two casualties occurred at the terminal when soldiers from 82nd engaged armed individuals who engaged them first. These were the only engagements, aside from non-lethal riot control, warning shots, and CS gas. We were always thinking about possibility of ISIS-K and TB. The Soldiers, Sailors and Marines showed tremendous judgment and maturity not firing on the crowd, and as they began surrounding the aircraft taking off. They could have engaged. Commanders tried keeping them calm, and troops on the ground did everything right, they did an amazing job, can't say enough about the job the Soldiers and Marines did. Two gunmen came in with the crowds, raised their weapons, caused panic, and soldiers were able to identify them, and separate them, before

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Interview with Rear Admiral Peter Vasely, USN, USFOR-A Commander, and [REDACTED] (b)(6)

28 September 2021

engaging them. We never determined who the gunmen were, and TB never claimed responsibility for them. The first conversation with [REDACTED] (b)(6) took place on 16 August. We flushed aircraft early afternoon on 16th. M4 was due to fly in and the crowd moved from ramp 8 to ramp 9, and were all over the runway. We cleared them off ramp 8, set security, [REDACTED] (b)(1)1.4d and ramp 8 was secure, but runway was fouled and we couldn't accept any aircraft. We turned around M4's plane in flight because of it. We were preventing forces from coming in because of the runway.

z. Question and Answer 25.

(1) Question (C1). Were the intermediate staging bases not established at this point?

(2) Answer (V2). We hadn't had the conversation about ISBs at this point, in terms of capacity. We knew about Camp Al Sayliyah, and we were still negotiating Kuwait and Bahrain at that point. This continued to be a problem to the 19th. The key issue on the 16th was securing the airfield and keeping the runway open.

aa. Question and Answer 26.

(1) Question (C1). What coordination took place with the TB at this point?

(2) Answer (V2). In subsequent conversations with [REDACTED] (b)(6) we discussed the need to establish checkpoints and what they were willing to do to keep us secure and HKIA secure. It began the evening of the 16th. Initially TB support was tentative, and they were reluctant partners. There was still a feeling out period. We didn't have serious conversations on what we wanted to focus on until we had face to face discussions when D2 got on deck. At that point, we were telling them to get their forces off the airfield, told them we won't fire on them, if they don't fire on us. Early morning on the 17th, forces were flowing in, ECCs were taking in personnel, slowly at first because prioritization from DoS was AMCITS, and TCNs with appropriate documentation, and those with approved AMB-signed SIV documentation. We had crowds of 1-2k people at gates and began getting indications of how difficult it was going to be at the gates to sort through people. I went out late afternoon on the 16th, at North Gate, they hadn't opened the vehicle gate, but were using a personnel turnstile, and people were crushing on that – there were already thousands of people at the gates

bb. Question and Answer 27.

(1) Question (C1). Where were you most vulnerable at this point?

(2) Answer (V2). At this point on the 16th/17th, the southern sector due to its porous nature, and at the gates due to the massing of people we were seeing. My first

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Interview with Rear Admiral Peter Vasely, USN, USFOR-A Commander, and [REDACTED] (b)(6)

28 September 2021

thought seeing the masses of people was this is an IED waiting to happen (VBIED/SVEST).

cc. Question and Answer 28.

(1) Question (C1). Why do you think it took ISIS-K so long to become a factor?

(2) Answer (V2). I look at the speed they were able to move. We knew they had cells in Kabul, Nangarhar, etc. We knew they had the capability to launch rockets into the airfield (had done it on Afghan Independence Day in July). [REDACTED] (b)(1)1.4c

[REDACTED] (b)(1)1.4c

The speed they moved to consolidate, plan, execute was fast. I look at it as how fast they were able to execute. They had potential for multiple attacks, with suicide bombers and rockets. TB engaged 2 motorcycles at North Gate the afternoon of 26th. Three days later was the rocket attack. One point worth noting, when we talk about the future intent and capability of ISIS-K, is the speed and ability they showed from being a non-player, to attempting multiple vehicle, suicide, rocket attacks, in the span of 11 days. Bringing in an individual who had been in prison to execute attack is pretty telling of their capability. Early morning on the 17th, the runway was clear, the N, E, Abbey Gates were open, people were flowing through, things were at controlled chaos level. It was slow on the 17th, into the 18th, we were very focused on AMCIT/LPR/TCN priorities.

Only about 15 total Consular Affairs personnel were present initially. AMB Bass didn't arrive until Aug 18/19. The start of NEO was largely being executed by State's pick up team. When briefing POTUS, conversation was about the process moving too slowly, and State began to change guidance. On the night of the 18th, POTUS said to expand the aperture, to include women, children, etc, and the flood gates were open. On the 20th we paused because we had mass numbers coming through the gates, and had about 15k on the airfield, which concerned us due to an inability to process, and the flow of aircraft was still in the 20s/day. We had issues with ISBs and their ability to accept more people. The 20th is when [REDACTED] (b)(1)1.4c was overwhelmed, and HKIA capacity was overwhelmed. At that point M4 decided to assume risk at ISBs, not HKIA. We didn't have JMEEL equipment on the ground – tents, cots, shade, Class I – had a restless population at HKIA. We had a 7 hour PAUSEX, and M4 decided to accept risk at [REDACTED] (b)(1)1.4c to reduce pressure at HKIA, but it still took a couple days because aircraft flow had to catch up. The numbers reduced at HKIA, but we were still averaging 7-9k pax/day throughput, and started bringing in NSU and their families.

dd. Question and Answer 29.

(1) Question (C1). The additional population, fits in your guidelines, but demand is increasing correct?



ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Interview with Rear Admiral Peter Vasely, USN, USFOR-A Commander, and [REDACTED] (b)(6)

28 September 2021

(2) Answer (V2). Any idea we were going to have a controlled environment to handle prioritization went out the window because we didn't have ability to set conditions to have an organized NEO – set security, set ECCs – it was trumped because elements of USG did not understand the conditions on the ground, and time required to prepare for NEO. We quickly were overcome by the security situation, which forced a long delay. Then capacity to prioritize ECC functions to match airflow coming in was a challenge. We didn't take into account what our expected capacity would be, vs the number of aircraft required. It became a daily decision based on State's changing priorities, and airflow available. For future NEOs, we need to decide to craft a well-developed prioritization matrix for who we want to evacuate. S1 did plan to use Camp Sullivan as an off-site location to bring prioritized individuals – as it was close to Abbey Gate and Barron Hotel – but that went out the window due to an inability to secure it; doing that would have relieved pressure on HKIA.

ff. Question and Answer 30.

(1) Question (C1). What was the ISIS-K threat on the 20th?

(2) Answer (V2). We started to see attack planning indicators earlier than the 23rd, but on 23rd started to see specific attack plans against HKIA.

gg. Question and Answer 31.

[REDACTED] (b)(1)1.4c

[REDACTED] (b)(1)1.4c We heard VBIEDs were planned, 12 Suicide attackers, rockets against HKIA, and we realized on the 25th that they were ready to execute. Early on the 26th, we heard they were marrying up suicide bombers with the media so we knew the attack was coming. The North and East Gates were closed by the 25th, but large masses were outside the gates. US forces were protected due to standoff, barriers. The South Gate was not an issue because TB had created standoff, and controlled the lone access point which was about 1km south of US forces. The biggest risk we saw was to Abbey Gate. Just south of the gate they had the chevron, which controlled access to Barron Hotel for processing by British. The TB were on top of connex boxes at the chevron providing security. On the 19th we established the chevron, the Brits had been operating at Barron Gate, and had a mass of people from there all the way along the canal to Abbey Gate. S1 and [REDACTED] (b)(6) opened Abbey Gate, and pushed the crowd back to the chevron. There were large crowds built

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Interview with Rear Admiral Peter Vasely, USN, USFOR-A Commander, and [REDACTED] (b)(6)

28 September 2021

on the other side of the chevron. They could control/process people into the Barron. There was also an outflow area for those deemed not suitable. There was a large crowd in the canal near another gate the Marines could control. The canal walls provided a mechanism to keep people from forcing their way through. Abbey Gate became a multi-national foot gate. Marines would pull people out of the canal – this set up was put in place on the 19th and continued until the 26th. S1 had the TB identifying personnel, and bringing them forward as well. Just prior to the attack, the Brits, US commanders, and TB commanders had just finished a coordination meeting to discuss mitigation of the threat. On the night of the 25th, I talked to S1 about closing the gate. He said he'd work it, and the next morning he said there was no way to bring Marines off the gate and close it, because it would isolate the Brits, who needed to conduct passage of lines through the USMC force at the gate.

hh. Question and Answer 32.

(1) Question (C1). We heard you wanted to close Abbey Gate by midnight on 25th, but that would create 2 problems – isolate the Brits, and result in a crowd control problem, which would require 48 hours to regain control and get Brits in, is that correct?

(2) Answer (V2). The risk to force increases exponentially with Abbey Gate closed, and Brits still at Barron Hotel. We wanted to close the gate during POD 25/26 Aug, but Brits couldn't get everyone processed in time, and needed the next day. Given size of the crowd there, S1 recognized the risk of all the people there, and possibility of an ISIS-K member getting through to the front of the line, so his forces tried to push the crowd back through the choke point there, but couldn't do it. He had the TB push most people away from the retaining wall near Abbey Gate, but through the course of the day, the crowd worked their way back towards the Marines.

ii. Question and Answer 33.

(1) Question (C1). Was there an agreement between US forces, DoS and Brits that we had to keep Abbey Gate open?

(2) Answer (V2). Yes, but not just Abbey Gate, but all the gates. While other gates were physically closed, Marines at the other gates were pulling people in selectively. It was up to the gate commander to close the gate due to crowd conditions. We never stopped bringing in people until they were finally closed on the 29th. We would close gates to slow the flow into the airfield, but still pulled key people in. During this threat, we said N and E gates are closed due to the threat. We were closing Abbey Gate to deal with the threat posture temporarily, but the intent was to maintain the ability to flow people through all the way to the end. The Marines' inner gate closest to airfield, then their outer gate was closest to blast, then the chevron was further south. The difference between Abbey and N/E Gates was it was a light, swing gate, while the

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Interview with Rear Admiral Peter Vasely, USN, USFOR-A Commander, and [REDACTED] (b)(6)

28 September 2021

others were a heavy, rolling gate. Important takeaway – there was an intent to close the gate, but due to supporting relationship with Brits, it became a physics and time problem to get all the Brits and their people from the Barron Hotel through the gate in time. The intent was to get everyone through late afternoon, early evening, to have it closed POD 25/26 Aug, but the Brits would not have been prepped to conclude passage of lines until evening of 26th. TB conducted screening outside the chevron, with coordination with US and Brits. The bomber, according to eyewitness accounts, approached the Marines and likely was on top of the wall across from them. I am unaware of any AMCIT names being provided to the TB.

The West Gate was used for AMCITs, the South Gate was a vehicle gate, and the N/E/Abbey Gates had most of the people flowing there. AMCITs were struggling to get through at N/E/Abbey due to crowds. We developed the idea of using Camp Sullivan, so State sent a message out to have AMCITs avoid the other gates, and go to Sullivan, which we coordinated with the TB, but messaging from State was muddled. The first message gave the incorrect location (South gate), the second message the timing was messed up. D2 and I discussed the best option, as Sullivan said it wasn't going to work, and we coordinated with the TB to use the Mol gate on west of the airfield (also referred to as TB Gate West) to get AMCITs through. We saw challenges with messaging, challenges to get TB to agree, and challenges with Afghans showing up with extended family members, not just immediate family. State had an idea to issue SIV-like documents via cell phone, which people were texting/air dropping to each other, and thousands of people had them the next day. On 27-29 Aug, as we were shutting down other gates, we started discussing other ways to get AMCITs and local national workers from the embassy into the airfield. Special interest groups began showing up at the South Gate with buses of people, so the TB wanted bus numbers, drivers' name/number, and manifest of the buses. These were exclusively Afghan special interests, no AMCITs, but led to angst about giving names to the Taliban. State at the West Gate may have given a manifest of AMCITs to TB, so they could be let on the airfield. Towards the end, as we shut down the North Gate (after the 26th), crowds had gone from the 1000s to the 100s, the NSU gate crowd side grew larger, West Gate crowd grew larger, and it turned in to a shell game at the gates. After the 26th, we focused on getting AMCITs through West Gate, and used the South Gate for special interests on buses. NSU Gate was used for NSU and particular AMCITs leading up to the JTE. D2 was given guidance to retain the ability to bring people in until POD 29/30. The reality is that various entities were bringing people through all types of gates, so to say everything was contained to controlled gates would be a lie, but for the most part, N/E/Abbey/SW/NSU gates were the official gates.

[REDACTED] (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) commented – to get on a US aircraft, they had to go through the north HKIA processing center, where JTF-CR would finger print, scan, bracelet, manifest them)

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Interview with Rear Admiral Peter Vasely, USN, USFOR-A Commander, and [REDACTED] (b)(6)

28 September 2021

(V2). The north terminal turned into a processing center, and people were held at various locations aboard the airfield. S1's team did a great job of controlling the flow of people and processing them for flights. Charter aircraft were using Ramp 9 and southern terminal, and loading people that were not processed by Marines

jj. Question and Answer 34.

(1) Question (C1). On the 26th, there were multiple threat streams, but nothing specified. At 1743 the blast occurs, what's broadly going through your head as the commander?

(2) Answer (V2). There was some confusion early on in how it was reported (began discussing a slide depicting the blast site, pre and during blast). There was a combination of elements at Abbey Gate. Guards were aligned against the wall, the female team was helping with females coming through, there were snipers in the tower, the PSYOP team was passing info to try and control the crowd. On this graphic you can see an approximation of where the service members were killed by the blast. I was in the JOC talking to D2 when the blast occurred. There were initial indicators of multiple blasts and SAF. Most injuries were from ball bearings and lead shot from the blast. Immediately following the blast, I was watching the blast site [REDACTED] (b)(1)1.4c, and notifications of US casualties began coming in. D2 was providing oversight because his team owned the JOC, so I was monitoring as he was coordinating with his teams for MASCAL event, and developing situational awareness of the extent of injuries, then paying attention to other gates in case another attack was coming. [REDACTED] (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) and [REDACTED] (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) and 82nd Surgeon had rehearsed for a mass casualty event and were well prepared for the event. Everything was devoted to getting casualties to the Role 2 site. We discovered after the fact that there were multiple trauma capabilities that had focused in on the Role 2 after the event. The Brits, 82nd, etc had plenty of capacity on hand to handle casualties as they came in. It went as well as it could have, due to the level of work that went into it ahead of time. My actions focused on the next attack, so I got on the phone with [REDACTED] (b)(6) who was tracking the attack and converging forces on the site. We increased security and situational awareness at all external locations and passed word to all forces to inform them of the attack. We had a constant VTC bridge open, MRChat, face to face engagements with commanders – all used to disseminate threat streams prior to, and after the attack. Once it didn't appear there'd be another attack, we turned to getting accountability, and determining status of other gates. We were looking at bringing buses through south gate that night, and had heard there were possible SVBIEDs coming to the gate, so I went down there. Ultimately we and the TB decided to close that gate due to the threat. The TB then took actions to shut down traffic leading to gates, which they hadn't done that previously. From that point forward, the TB took a concerted effort on crowd control, security, and locking down traffic coming towards HKIA.

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Interview with Rear Admiral Peter Vasely, USN, USFOR-A Commander,  
and [REDACTED] (b)(6)

28 September 2021

kk. Question and Answer 35.

(1) Question (C1). Did the TB take casualties in the attack?

(2) Answer (V2). I don't know, they never mentioned it.

ll. Question and Answer 36.

(1) Question (C1). Any idea of how many Afghan civilian casualties there were?  
We've heard varying numbers.

(2) Answer (V2). The initial assessment was 60+ civilians killed, 75 injured in the attack, but the best number is based on the number of civilians treated at Role 2. Our numbers based on firsthand accounts on scene, but the number could be different, as these numbers are from that night.

[REDACTED] (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) commented – the initial assessment was from social media imagery, and being able to count the numbers on the ground, however there were a number of injured who were ambulatory or dragged away who may not have been in the pictures)

(V2). The most accurate account is what came through the Role 2, beyond that is speculation

[REDACTED] (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) commented – open source, within a week said 160 killed and injured)

mm. Question and Answer 37.

(1) Question (C1). At midnight on 26th, the decision was made to close Abbey Gate; fortified to remain closed, correct?

(2) Answer (V2). At that point, we moved all the way back to the inner gate, and decided not to reopen again. The focus at Abbey Gate was retrograde of UK and US forces, and that had been accomplished.

nn. Question and Answer 38.

(1) Question (C1). Did anyone see the bomber?

(2) Answer (V2). There are no indications he was identified prior to the attack.

oo. Question and Answer 39.

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Interview with Rear Admiral Peter Vasely, USN, USFOR-A Commander, and [REDACTED] (b)(6)

28 September 2021

(1) Question (C1). Were there any indicators the bomber was carrying identification that helped him get close to the gate and service members?

(2) Answer (V2). I have no information on that. You may get something from SPMAGTF leadership on that, but most who were that close were killed in the attack. The best assessment we have is from one of the British commanders down the road who observed the individual walk up. The reality is, Marines were dealing with a restless crowd, so how do you focus on an individual in a crowd like that. This attack could have happened any day prior to the 26th, because there was no way possible to manage the people coming to the gate.

pp. Question and Answer 40.

(1) Question (C1). The best info I have now is, according to medical personnel, no US KIA could have been saved, no matter what was done, and by 27th at 0100, the Role 2 had been cleared and all casualties were gone.

(2) Answer (V2). Yes, that was rehearsed. There was good coordination between medical and air evac teams. I can't imagine the level of effort it took to do that. Everyone cleared the deck to get everyone out quickly to decompress the Role 2. We were concerned about the Role 2 capability when the numbers were down to 650, and [REDACTED] (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) talked to me about what we lost in medical capability if we went down to 650. Fortunately that was overcome by events when M4 came back and said don't worry about 650, go to 1000. That was also aided by the Norwegians who could have left when their embassy did, but asked to stay and essentially doubled the capacity of the Role 2. On top of that, having so many forces there who ran to the sound of guns to assist, the ability to rapidly decompress the Role 2 was important

qq. Question and Answer 41.

(1) Question (C1). I have the impression that the 3 flag officers working together was largely enabled by the relationships between those officers. What was the true Task-Org?

(2) Answer (V2). This is what CENTCOM gave us (line/block chart). Bringing in DIV HQ and TAC to run airfield security made sense considering my lack of understanding of airfield security and limited size/scope of the USFOR-A FWD HQ. It was always understood that the appropriate elements from SPMAGTF, MEU, and 82nd would be there, with S1 running it. I never considered we might need a separate entity to manage airfield security, but the way it ended up made sense. I asked M4 for help, and told him I didn't have anyone dedicated to airfield security, and M4 said he would bring in the 82nd Division TAC to run that. If we had to take Bagram back, that's when LTG Karilla would come in. I never gave it a thought that we'd need a second 2-star to

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Interview with Rear Admiral Peter Vasely, USN, USFOR-A Commander, and [REDACTED] (b)(6)

28 September 2021

run airfield security. The COMREL we ended up with came in on the 16th at the earliest, when we realized we were having issues with airfield security. The decision was made early to go with this COMREL, it was a little ad hoc, but it was fine. What's not on there is the division of labor, which was left to the three of us sitting down to talk through it. That was very easy based on my relationship with D2 previously, and the relationship I'd developed with S1. For the division of labor, I'd be in charge of C2, up and out engagements (AMB, Turks, Component HQs, etc). S1 would have ECC Ops, and D2 would have airfield security (gates, ECPs, runway was clear). The challenge was getting that to the echelon commanders and staff. We did OK with that, but there were some challenges, for example for those working at a gate doing ECC ops, they might not know who's actually in charge. Most challenges arose predominantly between those doing ECC or security operations. There was some initial confusion at the O-5/O-6 echelon regarding who they worked for related to specific tasks at the gates. S1 and D2 worked out that S1 was in charge of the gates, backstopped by additional security provided by 82nd (D2). Leading up to Abbey Gate, both D2 and I spoke with S1 about Abbey Gate, and all three thought we should close it the night of the 25th, and there was no confusion or disagreement on that. D2 and S1 tried to work it. The final COMREL came out in a Night Order from CENTCOM. Most friction was avoided due to relationships we had with each other.

rr. Question and Answer 42.

(1) Question (C1). How does USFOR-A's departure factor into the timeline, and what discussion did you and D2 have about that?

(2) Answer (V2). Our staffs discussed the JTE, and initially I was going to stay with a small C2 element until the end, but decided it didn't make much sense. I spoke with D2 about his forces, and collapsing security on the ground was the main effort, so we decided I didn't need to be there. S1 had to collapse his HQ as well, and the timing/sequencing worked out with my HQ being the smallest, so we left first. AMB was staying to the end because he was directed to do it. We left at 0330 on 29 Aug, and there were no decisions left to be made requiring my HQ to be there. S1 continued shutting down ECC ops until he departed on the 30th. D2 continued with preparations for the JTE.

ss. Question and Answer 43.

(1) Question (C1). Who covered the 82nd on their departure?

(2) Answer (V2). There was discussion about how that should happen. D2 preferred to report directly to CENTCOM, OTH-CT platform, and strike cell, and he had the ability to do that all the way until their departure. Upon my departure, we re-established back at Al Udeid, so we had full visibility of the JTE, but D2 had

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Interview with Rear Admiral Peter Vasely, USN, USFOR-A Commander, and [redacted] (b)(6)

28 September 2021

communications with M4 and didn't need alternate C2. I retained TEA for ROE 001 (would have been ISIS-K deliberate), but D2 had self-defense authority. The strike on the 29th was executed as self-defense by the strike cell, on behalf of D2. We made preparations for an attack on the 29th, and ISIS-K wanting to attack the night of the 30th, but heard they were deciding to wait until the morning of the 31st. That left us sweating it as we were waiting on the final 5 aircraft to get off the ground. ISIS-K had the will and ability to attack from the 26th onward. They launched rockets on 29th while the weather was bad, cloud cover was there, and we saw the firing location shortly after they fired. The night of the 29th and into the 30th, the threat stream was even more compelling than it was leading to the 26th.

tt. Question and Answer 44.

(1) Question (C1). Is there anything we did not cover?

(2) Answer (V2). I think we could have been much better prepared to conduct a more orderly NEO if policy makers had paid attention to the indicators of what was happening on the ground, and the timelines associated with the TB advance, and the TB intent to conduct a military takeover. The inability to understand that we were behind the power curve to conduct an orderly departure of the embassy prior to the NEO being order, precluded our ability to overcome some of our challenges out front – set the force, set security, prepare to evacuate. A lot of our early issues could have been avoided. You hear a lot of complaints from people within our own government about what coordination we did with the TB, and the reality is it was coordination out of necessity. We were dropping bombs on them right up until the 15th [redacted] (b)(1)1.4a

[redacted] (b)(1)1.4a We needed their assistance, and it's important to understand that without their coordination things could have been much worse – they helped us keep the airfield open, and helped prevent a follow on attack after the 26th – understanding that they wanted to get us out of there on the 31st.

5. The point of contact for this memorandum is the undersigned at [redacted] (b)(6) and

[redacted] (b)(3)130b; (b)(6)

[redacted] (b)(3)130b; (b)(6)

[redacted] (b)(6)

LANCE G. CURTIS  
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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
3RD SUSTAINMENT COMMAND (EXPEDITIONARY)  
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ACTS-SCK-DO

10 October 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Interview with [redacted] (b)(3)130b; (b)(6), 28 September 2021

1. On 28 September 2021, BG Lance G. Curtis, 3 ESC Commanding General, 1 TSC Deputy Commanding General; [redacted] (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) conducted an interview with [redacted] (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) at Al Uied Air Base, to discuss the facts and circumstances surrounding the attack on Abbey Gate on 26 August 2021.

2. Methodology: BG Curtis and [redacted] (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) interview [redacted] (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) in a conversational manner. This interview is written out as close to what was said in the discussion as possible. [redacted] (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) transcribed the conversation to the written format.

3. Discussion.

a. BG Curtis began by explaining the scope of the investigation, the methodology to be used to capture the statement, and introduced everyone in the room.

b. Question and Answer 1.

(1) Question: What is your job?

(2) Answer: [redacted] (b)(6). The main purpose of my job was to get people that were stuck outside the gate to HKIA inside the gate. USFOR-A FWD leadership were not able to handle the volume of special requests, so we were tasked with helping. We were also part of the multinational operations cell. That cell was staffed by us and the Canadian team but we ultimately helped 27 nations take whatever requests they made, and directing them where to go. Our team consisted of 17 nations but we helped 27 nations. I am normally a [redacted] (b)(6).

c. Question and Answer 2.

(1) Question: When were you located on ground in Afghanistan?

(2) Answer: On 11 June 2021 I was in Bagram getting a spin up on a few of our SOTFA forces. On 12 June I was at the embassy and stayed there until 16 August

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Interview with [REDACTED] 28  
September 2021

2021, when I was with the last two helicopters pulling out. I then officially left on the night of 30 August 2021.

d. Question and Answer 3.

(1) Question: What was happening on 15 August 2021?

(2) Answer: We had a big push to evacuate the embassy. There were two sides, one with RADM Vasely and one with the Department of State (DoS). On the military side, we were actively tracking districts falling and were noticing the speed. We were seeing it being done really fast, about 72 hours faster than what we expected. The Department of State were on the optimistic side. There were minor areas that weren't defended that we weren't really worried about. The DoS kept building a narrative supported by half-truths, decoupled from reality. On the military side of the house, it was more of a realistic scenario. It was more realistic, but we didn't think that everything would speed up so fast.

The DoS was saying that we would have a diplomatic stance and that they were finding ways to make sure that they stay in country. There are requirements to have people stay based on numbers and what they had to work with for Afghanistan. They didn't want to keep cutting into the 1260 because they wanted to support the city. The DoS team was trying to stay light in case they needed to evacuate. There was some friction between their groups. They were projecting leaving on 31 August 2021 and didn't seem to have much urgency. [REDACTED] and the DAT were in the room realizing that they had to evacuate on the morning of 15 August 2021. This is when they started shredding documents. They had burn pits and were shredding documents.

e. Question and Answer 4.

(1) Question: Had the DoS done much in preparation for destruction?

(2) Answer: There were over 2,000 people with the DoS there and no one was really serious about evacuating/destruction of documents until 15 August.

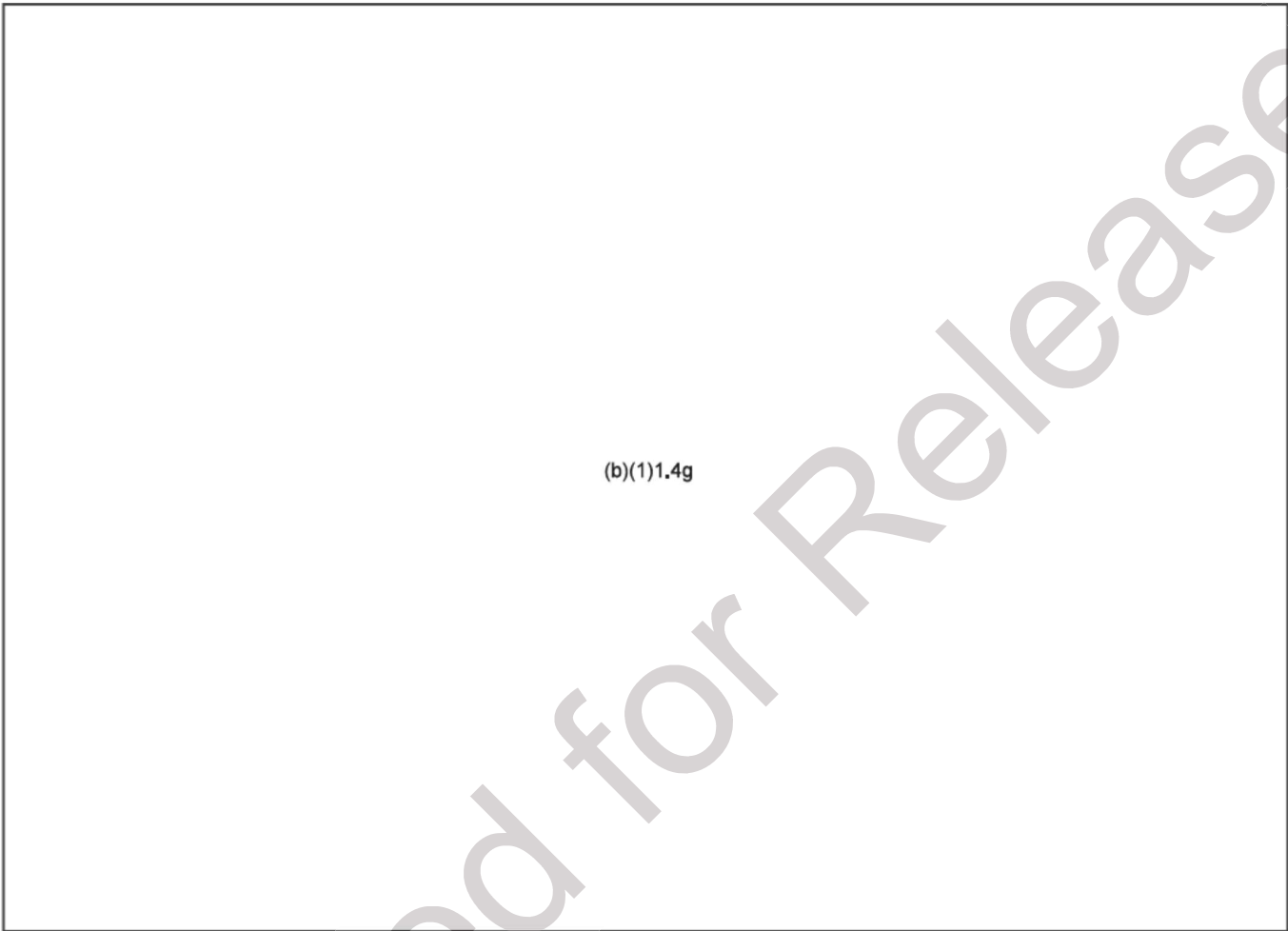
f. Question and Answer 5.

(1) Question: Do you believe that when the DoS is talking about NEO that it equals mission failure to the team? If we go to NEO, we fail? Is that belief comfort based or mission failure?

(2) Answer: I would assess a combination of both. Overall, the leadership was thinking that NEO equaled mission failure. If they departed, they wouldn't be able to do their job and protect human rights and democracy. They are all in on maintaining democracy. We were unable to share a common understanding of when and what a NEO would look like. Then Gen Mackenzie said that a NEO would happen.

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Interview with [redacted] (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) 28  
September 2021



(b)(1)1.4g

j. Question and Answer 9.

(1) Question: How did we evacuate people out of the embassy?

(2) Answer: I went room to room, finding keys in rooms to make sure they were all out. I would get a hammer to knock the lock off to make sure the room was clear. We would scan each room to make sure it was clear. [redacted] (b)(1)1.4g

[redacted] (b)(1)1.4g They broke up in to teams to go around. I'm not sure how many, but I estimate a dozen people didn't hear the loud speakers or were not aware that it was time to go. Some did hear it, but didn't know what to do. Some didn't have computers. For communications overall, there is a clear chain of command in the military but this was not the case for the DoS at all. There wasn't a lot of interaction between groups.

No one was covering in rooms when I checked. A lot of people didn't understand the urgency. They thought they had time to get out on 31 August 2021.

k. Question and Answer 10.

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Interview with [REDACTED] (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) 28  
September 2021

(1) Question: How did embassy personnel get on and off the helicopters?

(2) Answer: People thought that they needed a spot booked. We would have them rally at secure diplomatic apartments (SDA). We used SDA1 as the rally point. [REDACTED] (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) was the 3/10 IBCT guy doing manifest. He was standing on a HMMWV getting a list of people and pushing them to the evacuation zone. The 3/10 IBCT leadership was on it and appropriately manned the area to get people evacuated. As the LNO, I spent time with the people to make sure they were ok but I had to keep telling them that the evacuation was urgent. We pushed them from the lobby to evacuate on SDA1. We were almost to the point where we had to leave back packs and other items. People were upset because they thought they would be able to take suitcases. The Gurkhas all had one bag and backpack but were on point because they listened well and would leave stuff behind as requested. It was about a ten minute flight.

I. Question and Answer 11.

(1) Question: Can you tell more about the evacuation?

(2) Answer: During the evacuation, he walks into the embassy and was worried about accountability. He spent a lot of time walking to the main embassy area to check on civilians. The marine guards were sitting in the main area waiting for the call from DoD to lock up the building. They walked the whole building, put tape on all doors, and burned the rest. They physically checked all doors with 80% left unlocked as it was supposed to be. They taped the rest. They made sure the building was secure and then locked it all. They came back later that night and did one more walk through with [REDACTED] (b)(6)

[REDACTED] (b)(6)

We went back to SOC and oversaw more evacuations. We talked to the SOC guys to see when they would leave and instructed them to get booked and leave. I talked to [REDACTED] (b)(6) to make sure that they were put on the manifest. About an hour later, they went to go shut down their operations. I went with [REDACTED] (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) to make sure the perimeter was checked. We turned the corner and there were seven RSO guys pulling security. We collected them and seven more. HKIA was overrun with about 50 guys left in the CJOC. We got the call the HKIA was overrun and the helicopters stopped. [REDACTED] (b)(6) sent his guys up around the LZ for security and did another walk through. A few guys started trying to climb over the wall. The LNO got on and called TF Talon to make sure they conducted low fly-overs. Some of our guys fired warning shots. These were probably just opportunists taking advantage of the airfield being overrun. The helicopters started up again and left for HKIA.

We staged landing at HKIA and I wanted to wait with the commander to make sure we were all accounted for. As I looked out I saw a sea of people with tracer fire in the air. It was a mess out there. I wanted to get situational awareness of what was going on. I went to the ops center that 82nd took over and was given a room. I ran to the room

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Interview with [REDACTED] 28  
 September 2021

to change and went to the commander center after. I was the last helicopter to come in on the night of the 16th, around 0100-0145. At this point, I hadn't gotten linked up with embassy stuff yet.

m. Question and Answer 12.

(1) Question: What is your new job on ground at HKIA?

(2) Answer: I didn't really have a job upon arrival at HKIA. I arrived at the main passenger terminal at N-HKIA. The ops center was at the 20. The State Consulate was across the street in building 300. I received requests that people were stuck and needed to get onto HKIA. I talked to [REDACTED] and started a cell for getting special request personnel in building 300 with the JTF-CR Team. The Consular and Embassy teams were working out of building 300.

We needed to identify people who are stuck outside the gate and need to get in. This was my new job. I went out a few times to get people to go through the gate. I got a cell phone number and went AFG and RO002/tower 5 gate to get people. [REDACTED] had a few people contact him about needing to get through. We would get cell phone numbers and pull them in. We saw how big the job was going to be and got with 3/10 IBCT units to help. We set up computers stations and received help. They thought they could contact individual gates but it was too chaotic.

n. Question and Answer 13.

(1) Question: What was it like when you would meet someone at the gate?

(2) Answer: It was hectic, like trying to find your wife at Disney Land. There were only nine counsel officers. I worked with [REDACTED] They thought they would have time to set up lanes and didn't expect a mosh pit. It was hard to get to all of the gates all the time to vet paperwork. It was hard to even get people with the correct credentials to get through.

o. Question and Answer 14.

(1) Question: Who were at the gates?

(2) Answer: Afghans and civilian families.

p. Question and Answer 15.

(1) Question: Is building 300 called KAC

(2) Answer: No, the Kabul Air Compound (KAC) is a different area on HKIA.

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Interview with (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) 28  
September 2021

q. Question and Answer 16.

(1) Question: How are you validating people coming through the gate?

(2) Answer: At first it was sloppy. For example, a lady had a US Passport that couldn't be validated. She spoke English but couldn't validate that it was actually her. She was pushed to the front of the line up by the turnstile at North Gate. They asked what she was wearing, if she could raise her right hand, and then said she matched and pulled her through.

r. Question and Answer 17.

(1) Question: Do you personally walk out to the gates or does a Marine?

(2) Answer: At first there were only three Marines. I had to grab people through the fence. Once more Marines were at the gate, riots would break out when they pulled people through the gates. They locked the gate on a family that was coming through because of a riot. One of the kids was crushed by the crowd and the medical team had to help.

We physically had to pull people through the gate. When the 82nd showed up, it freed up a rifle team from 3/10 IBCT, so it was easier to pull people through.

(b)(1)1.4a

t. Question and Answer 19.

(1) Question: Did status change from AMCITs to anyone? Was there a process development started to establish a process?

(2) Answer: AMCIT to SIVs to anyone.

Blue Card American/Legal Permanent Residents (LPR) and green cards were allowed to take spouse and children under 21 years of age. For Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) holders, Congress approves them every year and there are usually around 24,000. This went up to 30,000 and about 9,000 more could be allocated. They were allowed about 5 people per SIV because of family. It was most common to get SIVs because you are working as a government employee for two years to qualify for one. For a brief period, we were taking anyone with an SIV number. This caused about a

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Interview with  
September 2021

(b)(3)130b; (b)(6)

28

50% failure rate because of eligibility checks in the process. I was with the chief consular that reviewed the SIV packages. We would review them for any negative markers. About 20 people would go through packets. Once approved, they would go through ally refugee challenge; usually chief admission approval and then homeland security. This was the path to citizenship to go to America.

Crowds were building faster than the capability of securing people from the gates, but the 3/10 IBCT teams would go get people from outside of the gate and pull them in.

u. Question and Answer 20.

(1) Question: Are there any available metrics on the AMCITs/SIVs?

(2) Answer: We received 4,000 request for about 30,000 personnel. About 25% were AMCITs, and 75% Afghans. We had the idea to do bus convoys at the south gate through Taliban check points on to the 82nd controlled terminal. This worked really well for a while. Then special interest groups overwhelmed the process. BGen Sullivan was receiving calls from the White House and a lot of the request were not AMCITs.

v. Question and Answer 21.

(1) Question: Who were you getting calls from and how?

(2) Answer: Mostly through WhatsApp, but also from the White House and NSA Sullivan.

w. Question and Answer 22.

(1) Question: How did you prevent bad guys from getting on a plane?

(2) Answer: They were doing screening, but there wasn't a mechanism besides a physical pat down.

x. Question and Answer 23.

(1) Question: If you had someone showing up from the masses and they didn't have any identification, what did you do?

(2) Answer: So, for a significant period of time, everyone was processed. They would scan fingers and complete biometrics. The concern was keeping the flow of people going. What kind of identification they had became a secondary consideration.

z. Question and Answer 24.

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Interview with  
September 2021

(b)(3)130b; (b)(6)

28

(1) Question: Was there a pressure to get as many civilians through as possible?

(2) Answer: Yes, they didn't want to send aircraft that weren't full. The final number was 124,000, including all foreign countries. The Brits probably got out about 4,000-5,000.

aa. Question and Answer 25.

(1) Question: What % of that was US affiliation vs. coalition?

(2) Answer: My gut tells me that less than 30% were of legitimate US connection. The rest were claims of being at-risk because of the Taliban, and so they were going to be sent through the system.

bb. Question and Answer 26.

(1) Question: Can you describe the layout of Abbey Gate?

(2) Answer: At the time, it was crowded but orderly. There was a lot of exposure there for the Marines. When the new consular team that got in around 21 August, they increased the number of consular officers from 9 to 24. These people were responsible for being at the gate doing shifts to get people processed through screened.

cc. Question and Answer 27.

(1) Question: What did/can the consular do?

(2) Answer: They know and understand the SIV paperwork and can vet the paperwork. They were able to catch small details that would catch the fake paperwork. They would seize that bad paperwork. There were people making green cards and passing them out. They would ensure that fraudulent paperwork did not get processed.

cc. Question and Answer 28.

(1) Question: What time did the blast at Abbey Gate occur?

(2) Answer: It was late in the afternoon. We were hearing flash-bangs and gunfire. I remember hearing something louder outside. I went into the JOC and someone said that Abbey Gate was just hit.

dd. Question and Answer 29.

(1) Question: What were your actions?



ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Interview with [REDACTED] 28  
September 2021

(2) Answer: I went from the JOC to building 300 to make sure my team was present and accounted for. I verified that no one from my team was at Abbey Gate.

ee. Question and Answer 30.

(1) Question: What happened next?

(2) Answer: I put a hold on my team going to the gate to collect people. We just stayed tight for a while to see what was happening. I didn't have people to pull security. I pulled security on the airfield.

ff. Question and Answer 31.

(1) Question: When did you leave HKIA?

(2) Answer: I left during a period of darkness on the 29-30th of August.

gg. Question and Answer 32.

(1) Question: What did the leaving process look like?

(2) Answer: We stopped doing all major processing. All of the partner nations had left. There were just Americans packing up. I got accountability of my group. I wanted to verify records to pass on to the DoS. [REDACTED] was the lead on that. We packed up our equipment and got on the C-17 to leave for [REDACTED] that night.

hh. Question and Answer 33.

(1) Question: Who was in charge for the DoS?

(2) Answer: AMB Wilson and AMB Bass. AMB Bass was in charge, but AMB Wilson was the figure-head. They made sure that certain gates were used correctly. They were coordinating access to gates and authorizing groups to come through. They would vet the letters and authority and make sure no one got in that wasn't supposed to.

ii. Question and Answer 34.

(1) Question: Who was releasing the messages from DoS?

(2) Answer: [REDACTED] was drafting the messages and I think those would go out to be cleared first.

jj. Question and Answer 35.

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Interview with [redacted (b)(3)130b; (b)(6)] 28  
September 2021

(1) Question: Was there any friction with the messaging? A lack of coordination or synchronization?

(2) Answer: Yes, there were times State Main, in CONUS, got ahead of the embassy. They would push messages out too early which would cause the gates to get over-crowded. It was counter-productive when they would say "come to the gate", not knowing we had teams out there processing people already. Abbey Gate was the only real hard-stop. At the MOI gate, it was all we pulled out after Abbey Gate. There was a ton of friction with paperwork and the Taliban after Abbey Gate.

kk. Question and Answer 36.

(1) Question: Is there anything else you think there is important that I didn't ask?

(2) Answer: No. [redacted (b)(1)1.4g]

[redacted (b)(1)1.4g]

5. The point of contact for this memorandum is the undersigned at [redacted (b)(6)] and

[redacted (b)(3)130b; (b)(6)]

[redacted (b)(6)]

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ACTS-SCK-DO

8 October 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Interview with [redacted (b)(6)], 28 September 2021

1. On 28 September 2021, BG Lance Curtis, USA, and [redacted (b)(3)130b; (b)(6)] USMC, conducted an interview of the above personnel at CENTCOM FWD HQ [redacted (b)(1)1.4a] to discuss the facts and circumstances surrounding the attack on Abbey Gate on 26 August 2021.

2. Methodology: BG Curtis and [redacted (b)(3)130b; (b)(6)] asked a series of questions throughout the interview which [redacted (b)(6)] answers individually.

3. Discussion.

a. The interview began with [redacted (b)(3)130b; (b)(6)] describing the purpose of the interview.

b. Question and Answer 1.

(1) Question: Can you give us an idea of your background?

[redacted (b)(6)]

headquarters. I have been for general officers continuously in Afghanistan, but helping out at all levels, including the tactical level.

c. Question and Answer 2.

(1) Question: Have you ever worked with GEN McCrystal?

(2) Answer: No, he wasn't the Special Operations Forces commander at the time I was there.

d. Question and Answer 3.

(1) Question: How old were you when you left Kabul?

(2) Answer: [redacted (b)(6)]

e. Question and Answer 4.

(1) Question: What is your ethnicity?

(2) Answer: [redacted (b)(6)]

f. Question and Answer 5.

(1) Question: When this started, were you with GEN Miller prior to RADM Vasely?

(2) Answer: I worked directly for him in 13-14, but I worked under his subordinate commands in 09-11.

g. Question and Answer 6.

(1) Question: Were you ever in the new Kabul compound?

(2) Answer: I have visited there.

h. Question and Answer 7.

(1) Question: 2010-2011?

(2) Answer: I was there at some point during that time frame.

i. Question and Answer 8.

(1) Question: We must have overlapped and been there at the same time. So in mid-July, around the 15th, where were you?

[redacted (b)(6)]

Miller was still the commander. When GEN Miller left I officially started working for RADM Vasely.

j. Question and Answer 9.

(1) Question: Did you work with previous SOFTF commanders like BG Evans?

(2) Answer: Yes, I worked with all previous commanders.

k. Question and Answer 10.

(1) Question: What happened to the New Kabul Compound (NKC)?

(2) Answer: When the draw down began the NKC was supposed to be closed. Once we were finally leaving the Brits and Team Kabul were the last ones there.

I. Question and Answer 11.

(1) Question: Okay, so you began working for RADM Vasely? How is he employing you in the start?

(2) Answer: Most other SOFTF commanders I had known or interacted with previously. This was not the case for RADM Vasely. I only knew of him as the deputy [REDACTED] (b)(6). He had seen my resume and the continuity that I brought to the table. He asked me about my SOFTF experience. I was advising him in all aspects and at all levels from my experiences in country.

m. Question and Answer 12.

(1) Question: What is the mood in Kabul and amid Afghan forces in mid-July? What are they saying about their ability/ willingness to defend the country?

(2) Answer: Go back to April 15<sup>th</sup>, when the POTUS announcement was made. Before that things were in limbo, people were hopeful that the U.S. and NATO wouldn't leave the country. As they heard the announcement that the U.S. and NATO would pull out of country, the country had an atmosphere of disappointment and panic. I interacted with strategic level Afghan General Officers, civilian, and some tactical level commanders that I was in touch with. Immediately, I found that General Officer's and others who had the means were moving their families out of country. It was a majority of Generals.

n. Question and Answer 13.

(1) Question: Where were they moving to?

(2) Answer: Mainly to India, Turkey, Tajikistan and other countries.

Afghan National Defense Security Force (AFNDS) leadership started moving their families out, or getting prepared to move. They knew something would happen. So in mid-July we were constantly touching base, at least daily with the Corps commanders. Specifically Team Kabul, Division commanders, and provincial capital chiefs of police (PCOPs), were speaking weekly about plans for and security of Kabul. But I wasn't taking them seriously, I know that none of the officers in charge of security were professional. I was telling everyone that this would collapse like a deck of cards. I told MG Evans before he left theater. The reason is we have no professional General Officers to hold ground and organize and lead troops. They had moved their families out, they had no reason to fight.

I think a lot of our leaders knew about this as well. The panic was increasing in the July and August time frames. When speaking with the Corps Commanders, some would tell us that they'd fight and hold ground. But it was clear that they were just saying this.

o. Question and Answer 14.

(1) Question: Do you think Afghan senior leaders, and the Afghan people in general, had a national identification as Afghans?

(2) Answer: Absolutely not. It is one of the biggest breakdowns of the nation's security pillars. People identify with their ethnic identity, Pashtun, Tajiks, etc. not a national identity. Large scale leaders and mid-level leaders did not hold to a national identity.

p. Question and Answer 15.

(1) Question: That seems like it would make it easier for the Taliban.

(2) Answer: Absolutely. The ranks were already infiltrated. Some senior Afghan leaders were likely Taliban, and if they weren't, they were at least sympathetic.

q. Question and Answer 16.

(1) Question: What drives that?

(2) Answer: Many things do. Disenfranchisement, grievances, ethnic reasons, lack of upward mobility (no meritocracy), corruptions, all provide reasons to prefer the Taliban to the current Afghan government. That's the biggest one.

r. Question and Answer 17.

(1) Question: Do the Taliban believe in meritocracy?

(2) Answer: I don't think so, but most of the General Officers were not professionals. They made 3 or 4 stars in just a few years. Some O6s were in place for 25 years and had no chance of becoming a General Officer. Clear they had no chance. So maybe they don't believe in the Taliban, but they hate the government as it exists.

s. Question and Answer 18.

(1) Question: Do you still have contact with people in Afghanistan?

(2) Answer: Yes, I have had that number for 13 years. People still reach out to me. Some ANDSF Generals are still reaching out to me and asking to be evacuated.

t. Question and Answer 19.

(1) Question: Are the Taliban going after them?

(2) Answer: Yes. I have received pictures. Special operations commanders are being hunted down. I received pictures from individuals that I knew personally, they had their trigger fingers chopped off and were tortured to death.

u. Question and Answer 20.

(1) Question: Do others have a chance of survival?

(2) Answer: They are in hiding. Those without a chance or the resources to get out are hiding or on the run. They are moving to the country side where they can hide.

v. Question and Answer 21.

(1) Question: Can the Taliban identify former ANDSF?

(2) Answer: Yes. The sudden handover to the Taliban, the southern collapse, allowed intelligence to fall to the Taliban. Personal information was not destroyed. The national level General Staff G2 headquarters was in the east of Kabul, which was not a smart idea. It was a mostly Pashtun area, more prone to attacks, historically. I am certain they got all these files and have identified ANDSF. The Taliban are likely going after them, especially Special Forces. I helped 800-1000, spec ops and their families, get through the gate. I know them by face and name, but there are still many out there.

w. Question and Answer 22.

(1) Question: Are there any pockets of resistance left in Afghanistan? Where?

(2) Answer: My understanding is that they are in the making. From people that I know, the resistance has not gone away. I have always said that this is an ethnic war. It is a country of minorities. It will continue until the ethnic problem is resolved. This has fallen on deaf ears. The resistance will start in the north. The South and East were handed over so easily. Traditionally, resistance in Afghanistan starts in the North. Tajiks and Uzbeks are there primarily and they are more willing to fight.

x. Question and Answer 23.

(1) Question: When people look at you, can they tell that you are Tajik?

(2) Answer: It is very difficult unless I tell them. Normally, I tell them I am from Kabul, which is much respected as being neutral. I can blend as Pashtun or Tajik. My

face is hard to identify, I have used this to my advantage in the past. In the south it is unacceptable for them to work with non-Pashtuns, so I easily passed as a Pashtun.

z. Question and Answer 24.

(1) Question: Did you ever meet [REDACTED] (b)(6) He was my linguist when I was in USFOR-A?

(2) Answer: I met him, he is bald and short. He was fired, GEN Millers linguist set him up because he was threatening his job. It happened couple of years ago. GEN Millers advisors were Pashtun and politically naïve. It was not good for a 4-star to have them.

aa. Question and Answer 25.

(1) Question: Back to the 15th of July. Those were good atmospherics in April. What changes were there between April and July?

(2) Answer: There was a lot of movement of leaders. Some moves were right, some were wrong. Governors, Corps Commanders, and PCOPs were all being replaced.

bb. Question and Answer 26.

(1) Question: Why?

(2) Answer: At the time I saw this, and I said that there should be some replacements made as the U.S. were to leave the country. But those leadership changes were not more made for better. I knew the leaders in place could not fight or hold ground against Taliban. I saw panic and fear. We needed strong leaders, but leaders were replaced by weaker leaders; basically a change for worse.

cc. Question and Answer 27.

(1) Question: What was the methodology? They knew it was the end so they put in puppet leaders?

(2) Answer: There are different perceptions of this. Ghani knew what was happening. He placed individuals who were tribally Ahmadzai tribe, which is a Pashtun tribe, in positions of power. Ghani is a Pashtun. He brought in Ahmadzai and Pashtun individuals as Chiefs, Corps Commanders, PCOPS, and other leaders in strategic locations across the country. He brought in a very untrusted Pashtun leader as the Minister of the Interior. There are assumptions that he was the first to know that Ghani wanted to handover Kabul to the Taliban and that he ordered the Ministry of Interior (MOI) to lay down their arms and hand over Kabul.



dd. Question and Answer 28.

(1) Question: What is the real methodology? Was it to avoid bloodshed?

(2) Answer: That's a justification and or a scapegoat. I see it is as just a transfer of power from one Pashtun to another. The assumption was that when the U.S. and NATO left, Ghani knew he would be a lame duck as the ANDSF, the MOI, and the police were mostly non Pashtun. He and many others knew that power would shift as non-Pashtuns would likely takeover. So if the Taliban didn't take over, the non-Pashtuns would likely have conducted a military takeover within days or weeks. I used to talk with many leaders. The fear was that it is easy to take over, but how will you run the governments without funds or aid. If it weren't for that consideration, Ghani would likely have been overthrown earlier.

Words were out there that his Vice President, and some circles, were all talking about a takeover. Ghani figured he would give it to another Pashtun, the Taliban, rather than let the non-Pashtun take power. He knew the takeover would happen, because he didn't have a base of support, even among Pashtuns. Many hated him, he knew he would be pushed out, or assassinated, or kept as a puppet. He decided to give power to Pashtuns and leave. The mysterious question that has remained unanswered so far is, who was advising Ghani to do what he did?

ee. Question and Answer 29.

(1) Question: When do you see the biggest changes, by date start to occur? What are the atmospherics, and the movements of the Taliban? Do they start sensing that things will begin to change quickly?

(2) Answer: Personally, I was ready for it. I had mailed everything out. Convincing everyone else was more difficult, they saw things differently. When I saw the handover of key provinces to the Taliban, specifically Herat, I knew it was over. The vast majority of Herat's population hated the Taliban and their rules. When I saw that the Corps Commander there was replaced by an Ahmadzai just a few days prior I knew that it was over. I saw resistance in Herat, Mazar-i-Sharif, and other provinces were gaining momentum. I know this because they were calling me and trying to fight the Taliban. The government would not provide them the arms to fight. I knew it was over. Ghani and the government would not support the tens of thousands of resistances across the country that wanted to fight. The actual security forces were demoralized by the U.S. leaving, their lack of air support, and their terrible leaders. The north, west, and central provinces had militias rising up, not associated with the military, asking for arms and willing to fight the Taliban, but the government would play delaying tactics.

ff. Question and Answer 30.

(1) Question: Could Ghani have provided them?

(2) Answer: Absolutely. He offered to bring them under the security forces, but why would they accept that. They were a combatant force, why would they fall under a demoralized corrupt force. Finally when Mazar-i-Sharif fell they were given M16s, but no rounds. This was authorized by Ghani. They had weapons but no ammunition. Ghani knew they wouldn't be able to shoot them since an M16 needs 5.56, not AK rounds which may have been available. Overall, a well-coordinated efforts, executed by Ghani and his circle, to handover the country to the Taliban and abandon everyone at their mercy.

gg. Question and Answer 31.

(1) Question: Separately, there are 4 green pickup trucks with Taliban flags driving around Kabul and walking into ministries?

(2) Answer: Yes, but the ministries were empty. Earlier Ghani had asked the MOI to have their men stand down, and told the Air Force to stand down. The MOI was the first to know. There were Taliban on motorcycles riding around to checkpoints and installations to check for forces. Everyone had deserted, despite there being almost no Taliban in city. No one was confronting them.

To give you an example, [redacted (b)(6)] 3 star. He was imposed as the [redacted (b)(6)] days prior to the collapse. I watched 52-53 people get airlifted from the palace when Ghani left. [redacted (b)(6)] calls me after Ghani left and asks me what he and [redacted (b)(6)] should do. I said "You're asking me?" [redacted (b)(6)] [redacted (b)(6)] He didn't know what to do. [redacted (b)(6)] [redacted (b)(6)] at the end. He calls and asks if the U.S. had a way for him to be evacuated. I ask RADM Vasely what to do with all these leaders who don't know what to do. He says send them to HKIA. These guys are all the first to leave their offices. They leave their forces and subordinates and drove to HKIA.

hh. Question and Answer 32.

(1) Question: If they wanted to fight, could they have won?

(2) Answer: Maybe not win, but if the security forces stood they would have definitely held Kabul. The majority of Kabul residents would have supported the fight. Each house and building would have been a barricade. The Taliban would not have been able to take Kabul. Assessments from 2016 estimate that there were over 4 hundred thousands AK-47s and pistols illegally owned in Kabul. It would have been a fight. That's why the incompetent leaders were put in, in order to break down morale.

ii. Question and Answer 33.

(1) Question: Did you know MG Donahue previously?

(2) Answer: I had worked for him previously, he is a commander with a good style of leadership.

jj. Question and Answer 34.

(1) Question: Were any of those leadership changes, we previously talked about, orchestrated in order to get key personnel out with a smooth transition?

(2) Answer: Yes, I agree with that.

kk. Question and Answer 35.

(1) Question: Were there actually enough forces in Kabul?

(2) Answer: There were more than enough forces in Kabul. We met the PCOP, and the NDS chief, around 900-11000 on August 15<sup>th</sup>. By 1300 on the 15<sup>th</sup>, things changed. The NDS Chief calls me, panicking, and says that the Taliban have entered east of Kabul to attack the prison and release prisoners. After that, we get conflicting reports about where the Taliban are.

ll. Question and Answer 36.

(1) Question: In terms of the prison break, are there a mix of ISIS and Taliban in the prisons? Do the Taliban care about ISIS?

(2) Answer: Most prisoners were not ISIS. ISIS members were kept in isolated areas. I don't have a good sense of this. Maybe they would go after known ISIS leaders. More ISIS were kept in Bagram, or in NDS 241 facilities.

mm. Question and Answer 37.

(1) Question: On the 15th, what are you advising to RADM Vasely?

(2) Answer: On the 15th there was a meeting. NDS and PCOP are saying they have 40,000 forces and that there were groups uprising to support the fight. I never bought this plan, their commitment and competence were in question. The [REDACTED] (b)(6) [REDACTED] (b)(6) was young and not a strategic thinker. Like, I said he called me later panicking and petrified. When I was escorting him out of the meeting he was already asking if we had an evacuation plan for them him. He was already defeated mentally, him and the PCOP as a whole.

nn. Question and Answer 38.

(1) Question: Why not take up defensive positions and put up obstacles in the city? Was it ever even considered?

(2) Answer: The easy answer, is they were not the right leaders. They never moved up through the ranks. They went straight to the top, so they couldn't do the calculus of making a command decision in times of crisis. Almost every leaders put at the strategic/macro level had no command experience. Subordinate commanders wanted to fight. The KK Commander, a true commander who rose through the ranks, moved weapons and sensitive resources (US provided weapons and NVDS) into strategic position. He had a brigade of 1000-1200 men who wanted to fight. He was told to stand down by his leaders, the city is gone. He didn't listen. Moved men resources and equipment to Panjshir.

oo. Question and Answer 39.

(1) Question: Did Panjshir fall as the Taliban said it did?

(2) Answer: They are still fighting. The whole province is a road through a valley with high mountains on the side. The Taliban has taken the main road and the district center. But the resistance controls the terrain and conducts guerilla warfare from the mountains. I doubt the Taliban will take it over if there is still resistance.

pp. Question and Answer 40.

(1) Question: So on August 15th, you are preparing to leave the compound and move to HKIA?

(2) Answer: On the morning of the 15th, we had meetings with the Afghan security pillars about Kabul. They told us that they are okay and willing to fight. This was not the case. We get word that the Taliban had entered the Eastern Police District towards Policharki Prison. I run to the [REDACTED] (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) I told him the Taliban have entered Kabul, and will attack the prison and release the prisoners. He told RADM Vasely. Then things start to unfold and NEO planning truly begins. I moved to the JOC with RADM Vasely. He immediately starts evacuating the embassy, starting with U.S. personnel, then third country nationals, then the military contractors, and civilians. We were on the 2nd to the last flight out. It was around 2000. I moved with RADM Vasely and his core staff to HKIA. The JOC was already set up there due to team Kabul and the JTF-CR. We watch the rest of the evacuation from there. When word spread, and people could see helicopters flying from the embassy compound to HKIA, they knew that we were evacuating. Once they saw this, people started pouring onto HKIA in the thousands. Many of these individuals were public officials, Generals, or just regular citizens.

\*\*transitions to speaking off the map of HKIA

We were by 9B in north HKIA, that's where the JOC is. The gates in the North and East were closed. The gate in the Northwest, later the NSU gate by RP17, was also closed. The terminal side south gate, Abbey Gate a bit further East, then even further east of that is East Gate. To the North, by Tower 11, is the Black Gate. [REDACTED] (b)(1)1.4 mostly operated this gate. There were very few people going through this gate. There was

another [REDACTED] (b)(1) gate Southwest by RP12. I used the NSU Gate some times to get specific officers through.

qq. Question and Answer 41.

(1) Question: Were there Taliban around there?

(2) Answer: The Taliban were only around NSU Gate in the last few days. I used it when I wanted to bring officers through and not have them identified. About 200 meters west of this gate, the Taliban, at the MOI, did have a tower where two were killed almost leading to an incident. But at the inner gates to the terminal along the airfield, this gate was only manned by the NSU. The South Gate, however, was left open and tons of people pushed in and swept north along the airfield. Initially, it was only about 750 people. Some of these people were just trying to catch a scheduled flight. [REDACTED] (b)(6) hijacked a plane with his whole family. The air control tower let me know that the plane was hijacked and was attempting to divert away from its flight plan. I called [REDACTED] (b)(6) to attempt to talk him out of it. He asked me to help get permission for him to take off. We stopped that plane from taking off, but mainly because it needed fuel. We didn't give them fuel, so they dismounted and [REDACTED] (b)(6) goes missing for a few days in Kabul. Probably somewhere a few kilometers south where he had a house. He was manifested a few days later and evacuated.

RADM Vasely told me to have the Afghan leaders go consolidate at the Afghan Air Force Headquarters in section 10, in the northwest of the air field. The long story short is that, word was spreading that an evacuation was happening and the only secure place to be was HKIA. The Generals who have already made it to HKIA are pushing it out. Their PSD and their details, who they left behind, spread the word that the Generals have fled to there. When the Afghans hear about this, they truly start to flood the air field.

We had lists of priorities for which Generals, which staff, etc. to get out by priority. But in the south the gate was breached and people started hooping over the walls as well.

rr. Question and Answer 42.

(1) Question: How do you keep the NSU and the Taliban from clashing?

(2) Answer: After the breach is when we get NSU support.

ss. Question and Answer 43.

(1) Question: We have heard about 210 vehicles with fighters. Then there is a second event on the 17th, so how do you keep them from fighting each other.

(2) Answer: The Taliban were only on HKIA once. When they entered I asked them to leave. RADM Vasely gave me a contact to speak with the Taliban and I was the only one who spoke directly to them from our level.

tt. Question and Answer 44.

(1) Question: Do they know you're an American? Do they work with you? How do you keep them on the team?

(2) Answer: They offered me a job! The Taliban around HKIA, I honestly had them in my pocket. I got them to do what RADM Vasely or MG Donahue wanted. When I asked them to do something, they did it, no problems. After the breach on the 15th, the NSU arrive from [REDACTED] (b)(1)1.4a in the north east. They take over security on the northern perimeter and the NSU Gate. I asked the Taliban to hold the southern perimeter and outside the South, Eastern, and Abbey Gates.

uu. Question and Answer 45.

(1) Question: Why are they cooperating? Is it because they want the U.S. out so badly?

(2) Answer: Absolutely. They heard that the Americans were leaving. They were trying to prevent an incident that would force the U.S. to stay longer, per top guidance from Doha.

vv. Question and Answer 46.

(1) Question: Why? Look at past departures of the British, when they slaughtered 10,000? Is it a code of safe passage, is it them not wanting to anger America, is it the international credibility of facilitating a peaceful retrograde?

(2) Answer: It was a couple of things, but there are elements of truth in all of that. Mainly, they were scared that if they didn't cooperate, the U.S. would hurt them and increase their military presence. They understand that everything they wanted was coming to fruition and all they had to do was wait a couple of more weeks after 21 years of war. They had their victory, there was no need to spoil it. Their lower ranking commanders were very antagonistic, however, and I advised our leaders that they not be engaged as an incident was likely. I only regularly interacted with 2 of the commanders and the LNO from Qatar. My main contact, the POC that RADM Vasely gave me, was [REDACTED] (b)(6) who was a religious leader.

ww. Question and Answer 47.

(1) Question: Is he educated?

(2) Answer: He didn't sound like it; he was likely a religious leader from Musah Klai. The main military commander in the region was [REDACTED] (b)(6) had a good relationship and obeyed [REDACTED] (b)(6). They are likely from the same area. There were other commanders in the west and east who were probably Haqqani. Haqqani definitely brought their elements in and were much more difficult to control and coordinate with.

xx. Question and Answer 48.

(1) Question: What is their command and control? It's not like there was a regular Taliban meeting coordinating all of these elements.

(2) Answer [REDACTED] (b)(6) at south gate helped, but it was not a command and control relationship. It is cajoling, and asking. [REDACTED] (b)(6) can't call all of them and tell them what to do, as it is many different elements of Taliban. It is a unity of effort, not a unity of command. [REDACTED] (b)(6) at the South Gate had some sway over other gates, but it was not command and control.

yy. Question and Answer 49.

(1) Question: Could Doha call and tell a specific gate or element what to do?

(2) Answer: They could, but it didn't really happen. [REDACTED] (b)(6) would try. He explained to all of the units that this is an agreement from Doha and Doha gave him the authority to make coordinations. It was a struggle to get them to obey. The MOI in southwest was difficult and was led by [REDACTED] (b)(6) who was Haqqani. The Taliban at the Baron Hotel were terrible and the tactical commander at South Gate was very antagonistic. His name was [REDACTED] (b)(6). He was Haqqani and well educated, but very hostile toward U.S. He said to RADM Vasely face that he and all other U.S. leaders were liars. I immediately advised RADM Vasely to disengage him and after that I decided to try and interact only with [REDACTED] (b)(6).

zz. Question and Answer 50.

(1) Question: On the 17th, the night of the zombies, how do you keep the NSU from fighting with the Taliban?

(2) Answer: We had Marines and the 82nd. People had moved onto the flight line, only a couple hundred meters away from our headquarters. The Taliban were not on the airfield yet. On the 17th, more than 10,000 people walked from the south onto the flight line. The Marines tried to push them back, but there were too many people. The NSU pushed them back a little, but it was ebb and flow. The Taliban could see that, [REDACTED] (b)(6) could see that. He called me and said "if you allow us, we will come and control them". I ask RADM Vasely if he wanted that to assist and he initially said no. Later RADM Vasely decided that he wanted that, so I tell [REDACTED] (b)(6) that their assistance was needed and I explicitly made it clear to him that violence against must not be used. There were pickup trucks with Taliban flag driving in from MOI side on the west, They

were driving around the crowds with their weapons out. People were afraid and ran away. The Taliban were there for a very short period of time, and then we became worried that the 01 NSU and Taliban may fight. The two units saw each other, but did not fight because they weren't trying to give a reason for US to stay longer.

aaa. Question and Answer 51.

(1) Question: Did the Taliban think the NSU would beat them?

(2) Answer: Yes, they were a better force with better weapons.

So, RADM Vasely tells me to call [REDACTED] (b)(6) and get the Taliban out. Within minutes, without incident, the Taliban leave after helping to push people south toward the terminal. After that the Marines, the 82nd, and the NSU were able to contain and push the crowd out of the terminal. At this time, no one was tracking that the south gate was unmanned. The NSU finished clearing and NSU 01 postures at north corner of KGC and ABP to control the south gate. Taliban postures nearby and controls outer gate to south terminal.

The wave of people coming to the gates was exponentially increasing. State department was sending out fake, nameless visas. These were passed around Afghans. North, Abbey, East, and South gates were all flooded. The NSU gate was still okay, we used it for night operations quietly. The Taliban were frustrated by fake visas, they made it impossible to control the crowd.

bbb. Question and Answer 52.

(1) Question: From 17-25 August, what are the Taliban saying about the threat?

(2) Answer: When we started communications with the Taliban, there were a couple of message from RADM Vasely and MG Donahue that we were trying to make clear. We told them on the phone and in person when we met in the Southgate terminal. The first message was that we needed their help to hold the outer security and that the Taliban would not come in. Second, we needed their cooperation on the withdrawal to not stop anybody who should come in, not to beat anyone who needed to come in, and not physically harass civilians when controlling the flow to the gate.

ccc. Question and Answer 53.

(1) Question: Did they obey this? Did they beat any Americans?

(2) Answer: They did obey. No, they were too scared. We had to be very clear with them not to physically hit people. The third message, was that if we had intelligence from DAESH or whoever else about, as a threat to Taliban or U.S. forces, the US would pass that information to the Taliban and the Taliban would act on precise intelligence.



ddd. Question and Answer 54.

(1) Question: Did you get any threat info from them? Could they tell ISIS-K on sight?

(2) Answer: No, we didn't receive any info from them. You couldn't tell ISIS-K when you see them, they could very well be in the Taliban. It's all about money, they can be bought or bribed.

Ultimately, I think the Taliban downplaying the threats, combined with overestimating their own capability, may have led to the attack at Abbey Gate. On multiple occasions, I was authorized to pass information to the Taliban about ISIS threat at any gate. There would be no action associated with received intelligence. The Taliban probably grew complacent and thought that since there had been no action from previous intelligence, there would be no need to act on future intelligence. They said things along the lines of "we got it, we will take care of it" in regards to the Abbey Gate threat.

eee. Question and Answer 55.

(1) Question: Were there any Taliban killed at Abbey Gate? And what other information were we giving them?

(2) Answer: None that I know of. We would tell them the vehicle types, names, estimated timeline and sizes of groups. We weren't giving them precise information or too much fidelity until the very end. I believe the other factor that may have led to the attack is conspiring with the Taliban. The Taliban commander at Abbey Gate was a Haqqani, he was very uncooperative. At one point, I wanted to bring a commando brigade commander with his family in through Abbey Gate. There were thousands of people at Abbey Gate at this time. Hundreds of Marines were stacked back to back at this gate. Right at the front, the Taliban and the Marines were face to face. I came to ask their commander to let my guy through, the large Haqqani commander instantly acted hostile. I asked my navy seal escorts not to get close to and to avoid engaging with the Taliban. I can handle Afghans on my own. The gate commander is entirely uncooperative as I tell him that this commando is "my family". He tells me that he won't let the commando through. I say they are American in order to get them in, but he won't budge. I call [REDACTED] (b)(6) at the South Gate to try and get the gate commander on board. Abbey Gate commander won't listen to [REDACTED] (b)(6) and walks away so I can't hear his conversation. Abbey Gate commander still won't cooperate with me after the phone call. I end up sending the commando to South Gate where I was able to get him and his family in. I'm just trying to illustrate that the Haqqani Taliban Commander at Abbey gate was uncooperative and that subordinate Taliban will not listen to their senior commanders. That may have led to the attack as well.

fff. Question and Answer 56.

(1) Question: You can't really lump the Taliban together as a whole and say they agreed to cooperate, can you?

(2) Answer: No. Even [REDACTED] (b)(6) had to try to cajole as a peer, as a friend. There was not a control element.

ggg. Question and Answer 57.

(1) Question: In summary the Taliban downplayed the threat, overestimated their ability, had no command and control, and the local Taliban may have been willing to work with ISIS-K. Did RADM Vasely and MG Donahue understand that the Taliban weren't unified?

(2) Answer: In all honesty they did. I didn't push up the one Taliban commander's lack of cooperation to them. It wasn't important at the time. The incident at the gate may have just been because that Taliban commander didn't like me as an American. I never went to the Abbey Gate again. I used South and NSU Gate because they were easier to use.

hhh. Question and Answer 58.

(1) Question: Are the Taliban at Abbey Gate taunting the Marines?

(2) Answer: I can't say for sure. When I was there I was shocked to see hundreds of marines, 5 or 6 layers deep. It looked unacceptable.

iii. Question and Answer 59.

(1) Question: About when do you think the visit was?

(2) Answer: I can't say for sure. It was before the attack, at least a couple days prior. I can't say for sure, between the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 23<sup>rd</sup> most likely. It was apparent to me that Abbey Gate was the most crowded and would have caused the most damage if there was an attack.

iii. Question and Answer 60.

(1) Question: You didn't go to Abbey Gate on the 26th?

(2) Answer: No I never went in there again and I never brought anyone in there. I brought people in through the East Gate sometimes, but I never recommended evacuees to drive through East Kabul. The area was too threatening. I pulled evacuees out of South Gate or the NSU Gate.

jjj. Question and Answer 61.

(1) Question: How do you think the bomber was able to get so close?

(2) Answer: It must have been very difficult. The road from South Gate to Abbey Gate was over a kilometer and it was packed. It would have been difficult to move up. It's possible that the attack was an insider job and that the Taliban brought him closer. The Taliban at that gate were more hostile.

kkk. Question and Answer 62.

(1) Question: Did you ever hear anything from the Taliban about the bomber?

(2) Answer: No, they were quiet. RADM Vasely met with them on the 27th, and he pressed them. They were quiet about it. After the attack, two Taliban were killed in the northwest while sitting in their vehicle. The Taliban were very upset about it, we don't know who did it. It may have been the NSU 01 who work for [REDACTED] (b)(1)1.4d

lll. Question and Answer 63.

(1) Question: How did you keep that under control?

(2) Answer: It was difficult. RADM Vasely and I were in south gate getting busses in from, when I got a call from the MOI Haqqani Commander telling me that two of his Taliban were just killed by Americans. I had just established contact with the MOI commander about two days prior. At first RADM Vasely didn't believe any Taliban were killed, but the commander was saying these two were shot in the face in their vehicle from the towers nearby. The commander called me and told me that he would start killing Americans. I told him not to do anything and I will call him back after we investigate. I informed RADM Vasely of the predicament and advised we should call [REDACTED] (b)(6) immediately and RADM concurred. Then I called [REDACTED] (b)(6) and RADM Vasely, informed MG Donahue. Meanwhile, the [REDACTED] (b)(1)1.4d said that no one had been shooting.

mmm. Question and Answer 64.

(1) Question: Who do you think did it? And how did you stop this from escalating?

(2) Answer: I think it was either [REDACTED] (b)(1)1.4d or NSU, but really there is no difference since the NSU works for [REDACTED] (b)(1)1.4d I was just trying to buy time for [REDACTED] (b)(6) to call the MOI commander and tell him to hold off as they investigate. It was all just a tactic to buy time. [REDACTED] (b)(6) MG Donahue & I went to meet with the MOI Taliban the next day, I think it was the 28th. There are about 20 Taliban fighters at the meeting.

nnn. Question and Answer 65.

(1) Question: Do they know who MG Donahue is? Do they have weapons out?

(2) Answer: They are young, they don't really know who he is. They have their weapons pointed at us. I yelled at one of them who was pointing his gun directly at me. The MOI commander tells them to point down their guns after I yelled. The Taliban were not backing down, demanding that whoever did it was to be turned over to them.

ooo. Question and Answer 66.

(1) Question: What did you tell them?

(2) Answer: MG Donahue is telling them that his guys didn't do it. He explained that his soldiers weren't shooting. The MOI commander said that even if he lost 1000 men he would attack the NSU & HKIA. Meanwhile, [REDACTED] (b)(6) was just trying to make himself busy. It was clear that [REDACTED] (b)(6) had no real authority and couldn't control the guy.

ppp. Question and Answer 67.

(1) Question: How did you resolve this? What's the end of the conversation?

(2) Answer: I have been doing this for 13 years. I just kept delaying. At the end of the conversation I tell the MOI commander that we are leaving in a couple days. I tell him not to ruin a good thing. I know it happened, but nothing would bring these two dead men back. I promised that we would investigate and find out who killed them and that we would keep him updated. He was satisfied to an extent, but wasn't convinced. After this, we had to leave because there was a meeting with the SECDEF and the chairman. The Taliban didn't attack us, but after that they stopped cooperating with us at that gate.

qqq. Question and Answer 68.

(1) Question: When do you physically leave HKIA?

(2) Answer: I left on the last plane with MG Donahue. I was working directly for RADM Vasely who left two days prior, but I stayed as MG Donahue asked me and that he needed me to communicate with Taliban.

rrr. Question and Answer 69.

(1) Question: Do you think the Taliban knew you were leaving on the last aircraft?

(2) Answer: We told them we would have a lot of flights that night. MG Donahue had me send a message saying we would meet them the next morning and give them control of the airport. I sent that message as soon as our plane took off. This kept them from entering the airfield as we left.

sss. Question and Answer 70.

(1) Question: Did they ever respond to that?

(2) Answer: [REDACTED] (b)(6) asked me what time the U.S. was leaving and when he should come take over the airfield. I didn't respond, I just told him tomorrow morning. After that he would call, and I wouldn't respond since RADM Vasely wasn't around. One evening [REDACTED] (b)(6) called again. RADM Vasely told me to answer with specific guidance not to say too much and just receive any information. I told [REDACTED] (b)(6) just to send a text or voice message. [REDACTED] (b)(6) asked when the U.S. was coming back to Kabul.

ttt. Question and Answer 71.

(1) Question: They think we are coming back to Kabul?

(2) Answer: When we left, MG Donahue asked them not to enter the KAC as we may establish the embassy there.

uuu. Question and Answer 72.

(1) Question: Do you still have people contact you to get out? What do you tell them? Do you think Taliban will let people out?

(2) Answer: Yes, I still have people contacting me, but there is not much that I can tell them. I don't have much leverage. The Taliban will only let people out with a visa.

vvv. Question and Answer 73.

(1) Question: I have noticed that a lot of the evacuees are military aged males, why is that?

(2) Answer: There are two main reasons for that. The first is that they were running for their lives. Many of those men were government officials running for their lives and they didn't have time to get families. It would be easier to get them out after and the families aren't at the same risk from Taliban. Secondly, the crowds were thick. Women, children, and the elderly would have a very difficult time at the gate. Another, smaller reason, is that some portion of the population are very conservative and don't want to bring their women to the west. I know for a fact that some Taliban came in as well. I personally turned away two from South Gate. They looked like Taliban, they had no women or children with them. I asked the commander at the gate to get the two out from the US side of the terminal back to the Taliban. They are brought to me and they have no passport, no ID, no VISA. I kicked them out. As they walked out, the Taliban commander called their name, they got in a truck and were driven away.

www. Question and Answer 74.

(1) Question: Why were the Taliban trying to get in? Was it malicious? Do you think their commander knew they were trying to get in?

(2) Answer: Maybe, they may have just wanted to leave. Maybe the commander knew, maybe not. I think it is likely that other Taliban got in since I saw two in just that small time frame.

xxx. Question and Answer 75.

(1) Question: Are the Taliban screening or patting anyone down at all?

(2) Answer: No they are not, they are only doing crowd control. There were anywhere from five to ten thousand people sleeping on the street, not moving at all. They were defecating, sleeping, and eating all in one place. No one was being checked. Abbey Gate was mayhem compared to the other gates.

yyy. Question and Answer 76.

(1) Question: The first time anyone is checked is by Marines or Soldiers, that's why they can get so close?

(2) Answer: That is absolutely true.

zzz. Question and Answer 77.

(1) Question: To recap all of this together: The Taliban had no command and control since it was only a unity of effort, the Taliban were acting as crowd control not force protection, and the Taliban downplayed any threat while overestimated their own ability?

(2) Answer: Yes, that is true.

aaaa. Question and Answer 78.

(1) Question: Are the Taliban checking for VISAs and IDs prior to the gate?

(2) Answer: Yes they were doing that. We made it clear to the Taliban that AMCITs, greens card holders, SIVs, and anyone with legit paper work is priority. We tell them if they have anything like that, they come to the American side to confirm if it's legitimate. Again though, the influx at these gates was overwhelming. I had called [REDACTED] (b)(6) and asked to help manage the crowds at the gates, that's when he harvested the other Taliban units to work the gates.

We started to bus people up from other locations, no more than 35 passengers, through the South gate as it was more manageable. I also heard that money was a

factor. Networks began to pop up in Kabul. People were contacting 01 NSU, linguists, and even Taliban, to offer and pay to be let into KHIA. The NSU commander told us that the lower levels were offered and not taken, and that anyone who took money would be punished. I know for a fact that the Taliban and NSU were accepting money and letting people onto HKIA. It was taking advantage of desperation and had the potential to become an international incident. RADM Vasely put a stop to it. Linguists were pulled off the gates, which left only the Taliban who likely took bribes.

bbbb. Question and Answer 79.

(1) Question: Was Unit 313 Haqqani?

(2) Answer: Yes, it was a Haqqani controlled brigade. They were trained the way our special operations are trained. They wouldn't talk to you or give you any information. Most of 313 was visible at the South Gate, the NSU Gate Area, and the North Gate. They were visibly distinguishable from the Taliban.

cccc. Question and Answer 80.

(1) Question: Can you provide your contact information?

(2) Answer: [redacted (b)(6)]  
[redacted (b)(6)]

5. The point of contact for this memorandum is the undersigned at [redacted (b)(6)] and

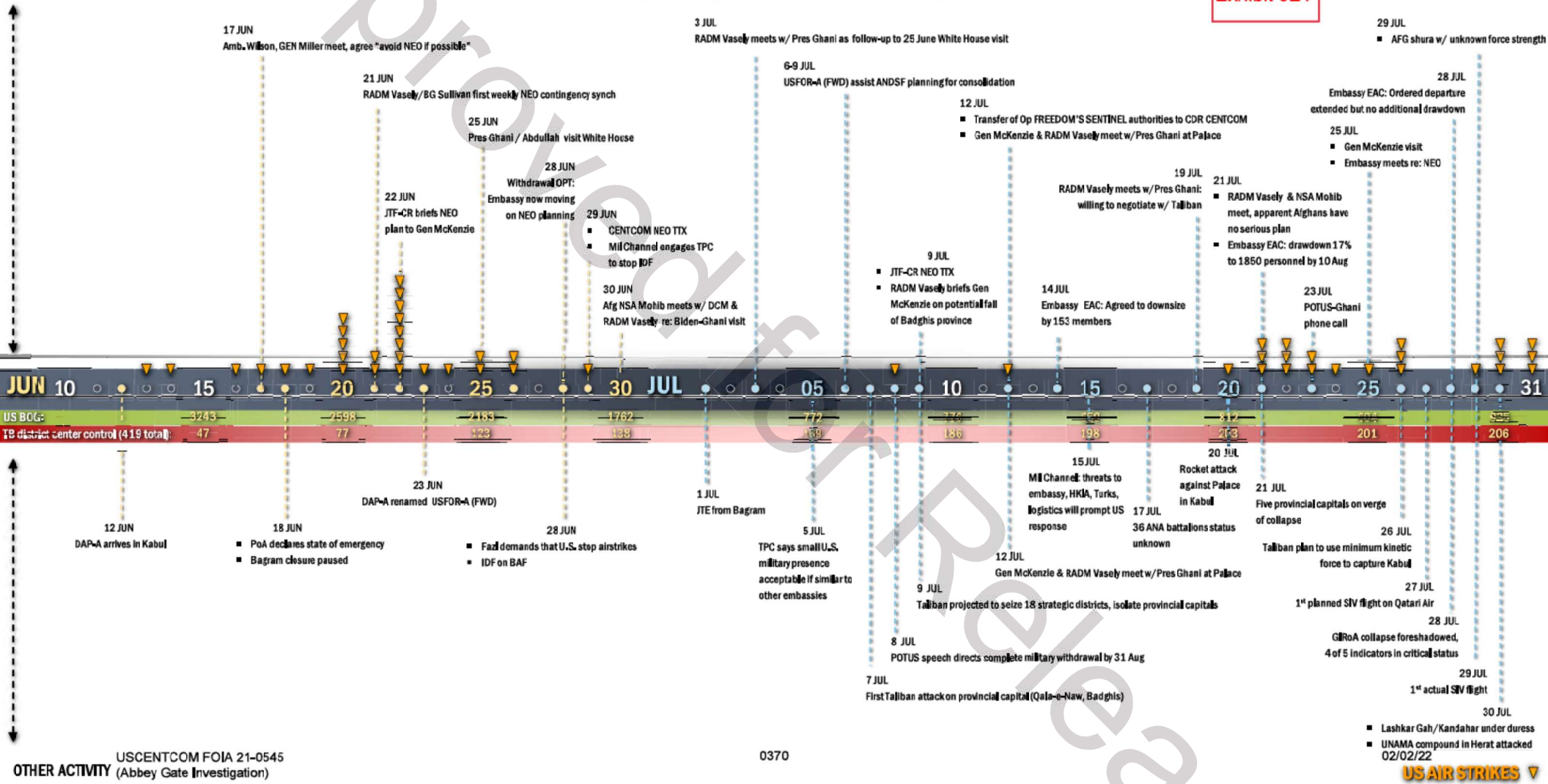
[redacted (b)(3)130b; (b)(6)]

[redacted (b)(3)130b; (b)(6)]

# USFOR-A (FWD) Timeline of Key Events

Exhibit 024

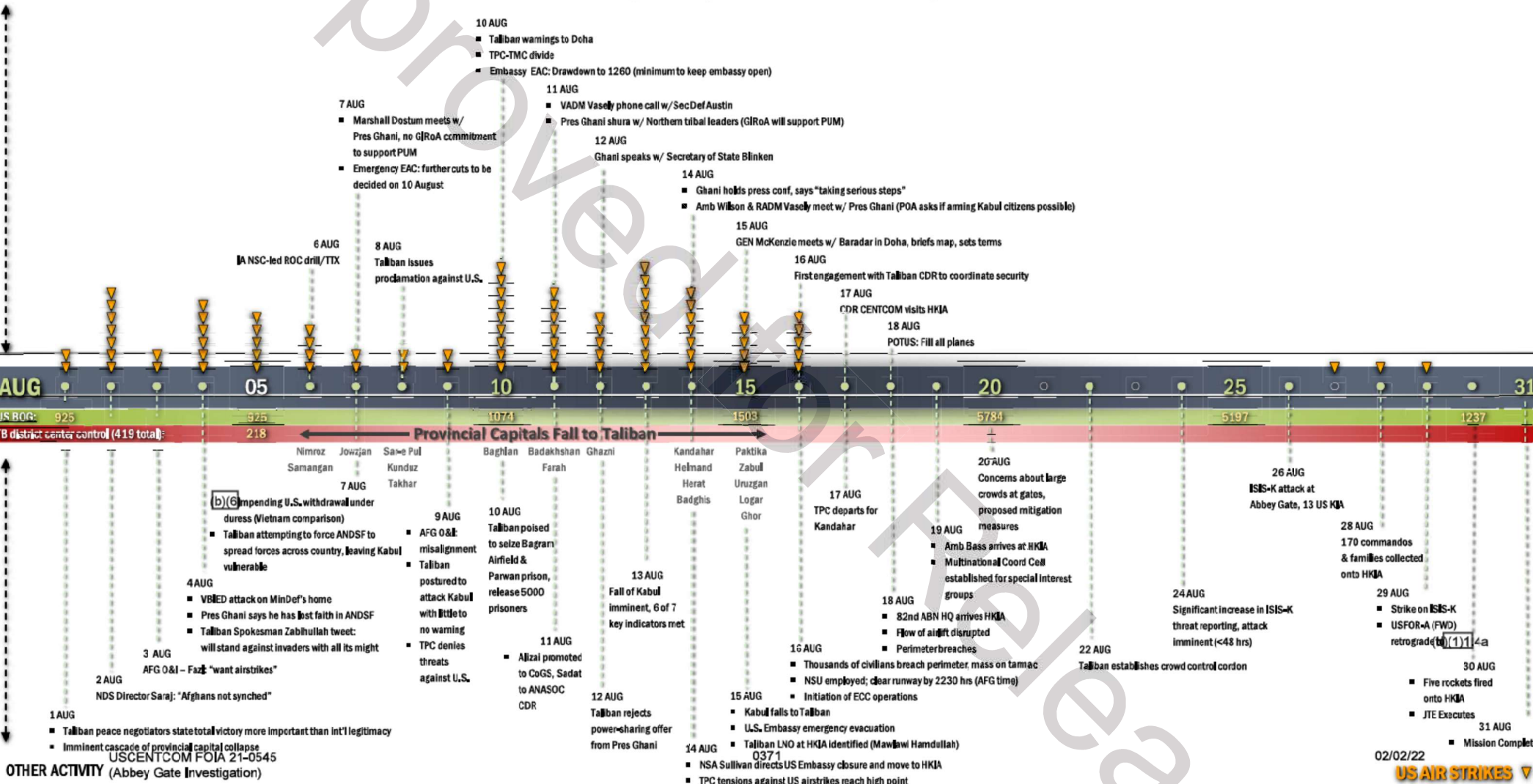
## MEETINGS & ENGAGEMENTS





# USFOR-A (FWD) Timeline of Key Events

## MEETINGS & ENGAGEMENTS




Page 58 redacted for the following reason:  
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Exhibit 025 (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g

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## Abbey Gate Attack – 26 1748D AUG 21

~~(S//REL TO USA, FVEA)~~ Marines were positioned at the entry control point of Abbey Gate assisting with sorting & processing, crowd control, with a female engagement team (FET) assisting with searches, and pre-positioned U.S. and Taliban security element. Our PSYOP team was broadcasting from the white truck and the crowd was becoming restless. Marines moved in to assist with the restless crowd IVO the blast location. It was at this point that an ISIS-K executed a complex attack initiated with backpack blast followed by SAF from Northeast, killing 13 US service members and injuring 18. We assess that there were 60+ civilians killed and 75+ injured in the attack. First reports of a suicide attack are now understood to be a complex attack. The below photographs show pre and post blast of the site. Patients and casualties were moved to the Role II hospital.

### Roll Up

 26 AUG 1748 Backpack IED detonated causing multiple casualties IVO Abbey Gate

- 1749D- Assessed small arms fire from the Northeast while treating casualties lasted approx. 60 sec. Unable to determine firing location.
- MEDEVAC flights moved patients to follow on care
- 13 x US KIA
- 18 x US WIA

-  USMC Approx. locations
-  UK Forces were on site

(b)(1)1.4c

**Post Blast Analysis:** The IED consisted of a backpack with a main charge, ball bearings, RC Components. EOD assesses the individual set the device down and disappeared into the crowd.

(b)(1)1.4c

~~SECRET//NOFORN~~  
Abby Gate Blast Site



**Afghanistan: Attack on Evacuees Near HKIA Abbey Gate**  
Kabul District, Kabul Province

~~SECRET//NOFORN~~  
EE: 0431RT3201 | GEO: 343351N/6981312E | MGRS: 42SMD2016324124 | Geographic coordinates are approximate and should not be used for navigation or targeting purposes.

(b)(1)1.4c

~~SECRET//NOFORN~~  
CL BY: 111747 • DRV FROM: CoNSA, SCB • DECL ON: 20481231

This product is not to be used as a source for domestic classification  
2 of 3 | Aug 2021 | GST - 21 RFI 10854

## Abby Gate Blast Site

(b)(1)1.4c

- IED detonated at Abby gate remains unclear if SVEST or bag dropped with IED (conflicting reporting)
- Initial estimates at least 30-40 WIA/KIA

Page 62 redacted for the following reason:

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Exhibit 027 (b)(1)1.4c

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Page 63 redacted for the following reason:

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Exhibit 028 (b)(1)1.4c

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Page 64 redacted for the following reason:

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Exhibit 029 (b)(5)

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Page 65 redacted for the following reason:

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Exhibit 029 (b)(5)

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Page 66 redacted for the following reason:

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Exhibit 30 (b)(5)

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Page 67 redacted for the following reason:

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Exhibit 031 (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c

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Page 68 redacted for the following reason:

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Exhibit 031 (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c

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Page 69 redacted for the following reason:

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Exhibit 032 (b)(1)1.4, (b)(1)1.4g, (b)(5)

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Exhibit 032 (b)(1)1.4, (b)(1)1.4g, (b)(5)

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Page 71 redacted for the following reason:

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Exhibit 032 (b)(1)1.4, (b)(1)1.4g, (b)(5)

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Page 72 redacted for the following reason:

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Exhibit 033 (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g, (b)(5)

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Page 73 redacted for the following reason:

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Exhibit 033 (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g, (b)(5)

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Exhibit 034 (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g

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Exhibit 034 (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g

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Exhibit 034 (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g

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Exhibit 034 (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g

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Exhibit 034 (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g

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Exhibit 034 (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g

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Exhibit 035 (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g

Approved for Release



Page 81 redacted for the following reason:

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Exhibit 035 (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g

Approved for Release

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Exhibit 035 (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g

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Exhibit 035 (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g

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Exhibit 035 (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g

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Exhibit 035 (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g

Approved for Release

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Exhibit 035 (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g

Approved for Release

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Exhibit 035 (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g

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Exhibit 035 (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g

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Exhibit 035 (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g

Approved for Release

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Exhibit 035 (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g

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Exhibit 035 (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g

Approved for Release

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Exhibit 035 (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g

Approved for Release

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Exhibit 035 (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g

Approved for Release

Page 94 redacted for the following reason:

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Exhibit 035 (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g

Approved for Release

Page 95 redacted for the following reason:

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Exhibit 035 (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g

Approved for Release

Page 96 redacted for the following reason:

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Exhibit 035 (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g

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Page 97 redacted for the following reason:

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Exhibit 035 (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g

Approved for Release

Page 98 redacted for the following reason:

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Exhibit 035 (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g

Approved for Release

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Exhibit 035 (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g

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Page 100 redacted for the following reason:

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Exhibit 035 (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g

Approved for Release

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Exhibit 035 (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g

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Page 102 redacted for the following reason:

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Exhibit 035 (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g

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Exhibit 035 (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g

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Exhibit 035 (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g

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Exhibit 035 (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g

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Exhibit 036 (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g

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(b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g, (b)(3)130b, (b)(6)

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Exhibit 037 (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g

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Page 113 redacted for the following reason:

(b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g, (b)(3)130b, (b)(6)

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Page 114 redacted for the following reason:  
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Exhibit 038 (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g

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Page 117 redacted for the following reason:

(b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g, (b)(3)130b, (b)(6)

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Page 118 redacted for the following reason:

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Exhibit 039 (b)(5)

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Page 119 redacted for the following reason:

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Exhibit 040 (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g, (b)(3)130b, (b)(6)

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Page 120 redacted for the following reason:

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(b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g, (b)(3)130b, (b)(6)

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