



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

ACTS-SCK-DO

27 September 2021

MEMOANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Interview with [redacted] (b)(3) 10 U.S.C. 130b, (b)(6) 25
September 2021

1. On 25 September 2021, [redacted] (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) USA, conducted an interview with [redacted] (b)(6) (b)(3) 10 U.S.C. 130b, (b)(6) at Naval Air Station Bahrain to discuss the facts and circumstances surrounding the attack on Abbey Gate on 26 August 2021.

2. Methodology: [redacted] (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) had a conversation with [redacted] (b)(3) 10 U.S.C. 130b, (b)(6) following prepared questions, and a scribe, [redacted] (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) USA, captured the [redacted] (b)(6) questions and answers, rendered to writing below.

3. Discussion.

a. [redacted] (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) 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 was your role with JTF-CR and the NEO at HKIA?

(2) Answer: I was the [redacted] (b)(6) I was there for part of the NEO of HKIA in Afghanistan, arrived in country on 20 July. In preparation for JTF potential execution, on 24 April, we held one OPT per week, worked out of Bahrain, 51-5 HQ for two months, and the last two months was "B2," which is a secure workspace on Naval Air-station Bahrain (were the forward deployed MARCENT staff works).

c. Question and Answer 2.

(1) Question: During preparation, what did you understand was going to be on the ground in Afghanistan?

(2) Answer: We conducted a PDSS in May to Bagram Air Field. There was a Role 3, led by [redacted] (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) When BAF was closed, the Role 3 was consolidated down to HKIA. Had to work within the JMD, need to understand the billets. However, it was determined early on the surgeon wasn't vaccinated and so not de loyable. He could only support from Bahrain. Our st w make [redacted] (b)(6) [redacted] (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) He wore multiple hats as the [redacted] (b)(6) the [redacted] (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) [redacted] (b)(3) 10 U.S.C. 130b, (b)(6) was a

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huge help in shaping the medical staff COAs, ultimately helping to get RADM Vasely to approve the arrangement with [REDACTED] (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) It paid off to have a higher rank to have a smooth CMD relationship.

d. Question and Answer 3.

(1) Question: You mentioned BAF was part of your PDSS. What planning was done with BAF as a part of NEO?

(2) Answer: BAF was a source of equipment. BAF was included in the planning aspect as an evacuation point, and so was HKIA. Department of State was pushing HKIA because of the 42 mile corridor.

e. Question and Answer 4.

(1) Question: Did you have any say on equipment being transported to HKIA, from outside the theater or internally.

(2) Answer: Yes, we looked at the proposed FEPP (foreign excess personal property) lists and asked for items to be retained for use in the event of NEO. We picked what we needed. BAF had 80 pallets of medical supplies and transported them to HKIA. The bigger struggle was storage at HKIA.

f. Question and Answer 5.

(1) Question: Was it JTF-CR's plan to consolidate medical assets in HKIA after the closure of BAF?

(2) Answer: No, it was already incorporated in the plan, but limited to 250 personnel, later moved up to 650.

g. Question and Answer 6.

(1) Question: Did JTF-CR have any input on requesting and receiving additional medical capabilities?

(2) Answer: Yes, we looked at risk of injuries and illness as part of the population. We planned on 25,000 people. Looked at historical perspective ex: 15% of this 10 % of that; how many would be MEDEVAC, which all helped build the requirement. We did request a COVID assessment team of 25 personnel, but that never came. We were told that 650 BOG limit would go out the window when NEO started.

h. Question and Answer 7.

(1) Question: What capabilities did you actually have at HKIA around 20 August?

(2) Answer: The MEU and SPMAGTF had assets – Role 1 capability and corpsman assigned to the units. We asked for 40 COVID assessment corpsman, but backtracked because of CENTCOM responsibilities, and instead used 13 corpsman from the MEU to cover the missing COVID assessment team. The CG (BGen Sullivan) agreed the MEU was the solution to provide the COVID assessment capability. The MEU brought approximately 50 medical personnel as part of their Role 1 and corpsman assets. The MEU had a shock trauma platoon to provide medical support to the Battalion Landing Team (1-8 INF) and 2/4 Combat Logistic Battalion. The Shock Trauma Platoon had four providers: two Physician Assistant, and two nurses; More of a stabilization team before getting them to a higher echelon. I believed had plenty of people to support the requirement. 82nd deployed with a Field Resuscitation and Surgical Team (FRST) medical support but the organization didn't bring equipment. The Role-2E has 2 OR rooms but can move up to 4.

i. Question and Answer 8.

(1) Question: Did you get everything you asked for?

(2) Answer: We did get an aero evacuation team, 6 man team that does air evac); [REDACTED] (b)(1)1.4g. ALT was deployed and at HKIA, which has their own communications to talk with planes and TPMRC, CASVAC MEDIVAC. A lot of medical logistics personnel did not make it so I was forced to rely on hospital space in lieu of. The Role 2 was robust and knew their stuff.

j. Question and Answer 9.

(1) Question: How much did you interact with international partners?

(2) Answer: I coordinated a Joint medical ops center 1700 daily which all the international partners came in to synchronize medical support. Coordinated daily, but limited interactions. [REDACTED] (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4d, (b)(3)130b; (b)(6)

k. Question and Answer 10.

(1) Question: What was the MEDROE for treating HN Civilians?

(2) Answer: MEDROE never came from higher; so settled on old MEDROE and asked for guidance. We never got any additional MEDROE guidance and essentially

made on our own. The main condition to provide treatment was if they were inside the gate. We would only treat a civilian if they were inside the perimeter. We would not provide treatment even if we injured them outside the gate. For those we treated, they would be processed up to Role 2, to include urgent, priority, routine. Role 2 had limited capacity that was needed to be kept available; had to determine what patients could be pushed down to the Role 1. The providers were taking care of orphans.

I. Question and Answer 11.

(1) Question: Did any of the corpsmen treat HN civilians outside the gate, when they were with the Marines executing crowd control?

(2) Answer: No, they were just handing out water. Once evacuees were through the gates they would do an initial medical screening, to include checking for COVID symptoms.

The corpsman would make sure the units understand the MASCAL plan, which was developed to include a bomb at the gate. We rehearsed the MASCAL in last week of July. The MEU/SPMACTAF came up with their own plan based on the rehearsal. They executed that plan on date of the explosion

m. Question and Answer 12.

(1) Question: Did you have to provide treatment for other nations personnel?

(2) Answer: No, they had their own.

n. Question and Answer 13.

(1) Question: Did you track illness and injury trends?

(2) Answer: Yes, the HN civilians were mainly treated for malnutrition and heat injuries, etc.

o. Question and Answer 14.

(1) Question: Did you hear of people trying to hurts kids to get through the gates?

(2) Answer: No, but my area is limited to planning. We used logistical support (cars, trucks) to get supplies to people, so conducting supply runs

p. Question and Answer 15.

(1) Question: What did SPMACTAF bring for medical support?

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(2) Answer: There are 25 bodies for shock trauma platoon, but was brought by the MEU. 24th MUE planned for 32 personnel but deployed 64. The SPMAGTF planned to bring 25, but actually brought 50. They were "plussed" up

q. Question and Answer 16.

(1) Question: At the company level, how did medical assets get allocated to the ECPs?

(2) Answer: The bigger problem was the overtaxing of medical assets to cover ECC operations and evacuee treatment coverage outside the Role 2. There are nearly 80 personnel at the other 82nd Roll 2. We needed help at the north and east of the perimeter to work with evacuees in comfort areas. There were for 10000 evacuees in different areas of HKIA who were waiting for processing. It took 9 medical personnel to work this population over 24 hours. We were able to get 82nd Role 2 to provide personnel to help with this task.

r. Question and Answer 17.

(1) Question: How many corpsmen are at company level?

(2) Answer: There are 12 at BN level and they spread them out to companies.

s. Question and Answer 18.

(1) Question: About how many corpsmen at the gates?

(2) Answer: 10 at gate, 2 providers, probably 3 – 4 at the gate at a time. The hours they worked was controlled by the Battalion.

t. Question and Answer 19.

(1) Question: What did you hear on 25 to 26 about a threat?

(2) Answer: On 24th they talked about potential threat, but it was a VBIED threat against North Gate. We relooked the MASCAL plan and prep and coordinated with the 82nd. We also took a look at the supply distribution, especially with 82nd. I didn't not have any logistic help, so two NCOs from the Role 2E hospital helped shore up our logistical shortfalls. In preparation for retrograde, the Role 2E were talking about leaving. The TF Surgeon didn't support departure of the Role 2E at all, at that time. They were going The Surgeon injected his clout and turned off the retrograde for the medical capability because there wouldn't be adequate medical support.

u. Question and Answer 20.

(1) Question: Was the VBIED specific to north gate?

(2) Answer: It was two separate intel events. The threat of a SBIED was later.

v. Question and Answer 21.

(1) Question: Did you reallocate any medical assets based on the threat at North Gate?

(2) Answer: No, everything was really close. There isn't any space to move things forward. We would pick them up and move them to the Role 2E. They were roughly 200 m away so it was easy to move people. The challenge was they were planning retrograde. I left on the 25th, but the MEU medical planner stayed. We did have comms between the gates and unit, we had 12 walkie-talkies. We planned the comms out.

w. Question and Answer 22.

(1) Question: Did you complete any AARs or lesson learned?

(2) Answer: Yes, consolidated with JTF-CR AAR.

x. Question and Answer 23.

(1) Question: Anything else you wanted to mention?

(2) Answer: Plenty of capabilities, even the "Over the Horizon" capabilities. The medical and standard evacuations are on two different systems, which allowed for coordination and prioritization of the injured. Even though we didn't have vehicles but we used fallback/irregular CASEVAC – meaning we used abandoned vehicles.

4. Contact information: [redacted]

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

[redacted]



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
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Exhibit 017

ACTS-SCK-DO

27 September 2021

MEMOANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Interview with (b)(3)130b; (b)(6)
(b)(6)

1. On 24 September 2021, (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) conducted an interview of (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) USMC, at Naval Air Station Bahrain, to discuss the facts and circumstances surrounding the attack on Abbey Gate on 26 August 2021.
2. Methodology: (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) had a conversation with (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) using a previously scripted list of question. (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) captured the conversation and rendered it to writing below.
3. Discussion.
 - a. (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) opened the interview by explaining the scope of the investigation, the purpose of the interview, and the method the statement would be captured.
 - b. Question and Answer 1.
 - (1) Question. Describe you duty position.
 - (2) Answer. I'm the (b)(6)
(b)(6) Where ever he travels, I go as well. I was on both PDSSs, May and July, to Afghanistan in preparation for the NEO.
 - c. Question and Answer Two.
 - (1) Question. What is your professional background?
 - (2) Answer. I've spend most of time in Assault Amphibious Vehicle ground combat units, but then I went the planner route. I attended Maritime Advanced Warfighting School after Joint Command and Staff Naval War College. I'm on my mandatory post-training tour as a planner with (b)(1)1.4a I was the lead planner on the Somalia Retrograde operation.
 - d. Question and Answer Three.
 - (1) Question. Starting in May, what did preparation for the possible NEO look like?

(2) Answer. In April we actually got the official notification to start planning as a JTF. We had weekly meetings, constant staff updates, and two formal briefs to CENCTOM. We had briefings with Gen. Miller (USFOR-A CMD) and RADM Vasely and GO/FO Syncs. We spent most of April and May shaping the mission.

e. Question and Answer Four.

(1) Question. When did the CG insert into Afghanistan?

(2) Answer. He departed on July 19 and landed 20 July. There was a quartering party who inserted in May, as well as LNOs to USFOR-A FWD and HKIA. There was a chalk before ours in July.

f. Question and Answer Five.

(1) Question. What was the Command Structure?

(2) Answer. We were TACON for planning to USFOR-A FWD to start. We hadn't activated as JTF yet, but were working through issues with MARCENT/CENTCOM. We started to attend O/I with RADM Vasely. We had ad hoc meetings with the Embassy but they didn't want to talk about NEO. When we met with embassy staff, the RSO was most willing, the consulate general was half way in---they didn't really want to talk about it. We had to be careful about DoD "owning" it. It was a stonewall for not really being able to plan NEO with embassy. In addition to not getting embassy input about US requirements, there was a standard template MOA for our commitments for partners, but nothing that captured their requirements. It wasn't until 11 August, the assistant chief of mission changed his posture, and they asking for help.

BGen Sullivan helped in creating dialogue, wanted to sustain the Embassy mission and help everyone. The planning team went down to the Embassy a few week prior to help, probably about 1 August. The RSO switched out 2 days prior and consulate general left shortly after. The Consulate General would be in charge of screening and processing civilian evacuees. The Deputy Chief of Mission was on leave in the US at the beginning of August and took the planning meetings by VTC. It was strange because it was clear things weren't going well and Department of State was still working improvement to Camp Alvarado, where they had their compound. This is where they ran their air element, but they were built new infrastructure for people to live.

g. Question and Answer 6.

(1) Question. How much time did you actually have to plan the NEO with State Department input?

(2) Answer. Because they were so worried about spooking the heard, we couldn't talk with partners or DoS. We essentially planned the NEO with DoS and Partner input in about 5 days.

h. Question and Answer 7.

(1) Question. How much did you get out to the gates?

(2) Answer. Every single day. (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) and I did visits multiple times a day. BGen Sullivan came out 1 or 2 times per day. The (b)(6) did his walks as well. We would write up assessments or brief the CG so he had situational awareness about operations.

i. Question and Answer 8.

(1) Question. How were the gates protected

(2) Answer. At North Gate, think of when you drive through NSA Bahrain which has the metal gates. At North Gate there were two metal gates that created a sally port. There was also personnel turnstile with an access gate to provide some defense in depth. The turnstile was difficult to use because you couldn't push a family group through and keep them together. The sally port between the two metal gates was used to help with flow and crowd control. To the east there was a hill with a great vantage point on a hill. The sniper section would set up on the hill. After evacuees were screened in the sally port by the consular general representative, the evacuees would be fed through two lanes, one US and one German, for full screening and search.

At Abbey Gate, there was an initial screening/holding area where other country reps would come to escort their evacuees, and then pass through the gates. Afghans waiting to be evacuated, would wait in the holding area until the consular general could review their documents and determine if they moved on to the terminal. The Female Engagement Team was near the Consular General Rep area. If a civilian did not meet the evacuation criteria, there was turn around lane for them to exit the Abbey Gate area. Outside the initial screening and holding area, was a canal that ran down an alley. This is where everyone crowded to try to get pulled into the holding area. The Taliban was in this area providing crowd control and security. The UK was also at Abbey Gate, helping with security at the canal and at the other entrance to the holding area, the route from the Baron Hotel.

Note – (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) drew a sketch on the white board (enclosure) which was altered by (b)(6) in the very next interview. The only difference in the sketches was the flow of personnel from the canal/alley to the initial screening/holding area.

j. Question and Answer 9.

(1) Question. Were you at Abbey Gate on 26 August?

(2) Answer. I was there three times on 26 August. At 0100 I tried to get "Pope" group but the commander was not going to open the flow again because the crowd was calm. I returned at 0745 it was clam, so the commander allowed selective groups of

people through but at 0800 they h top the flow again because of threat. At 1100 the pope group went through and (b)(6) was visiting. Before 1700 the BGen, (b)(6) (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) and myself went back out to visit the Gate. We left before about the blast, which was just before 1800. Due to all the pressures from D.C., we had to keep Abbey Gate open because of the UK at Baron Hotel and State Department bringing in other coordinated groups. The UK troops and State knew on the 24th we were closing the gate on the 26th. At the time of the attack the UK was still not complete with their last movements through Abbey Gate. Due to the conditions, like US and UK evacuees coming through the gate, the date, the crowd was realizing that it was probably their last chance.

k. Question and Answer 10.

(1) Question. Whose decision was it to close the gates?

(2) Answer. Basically the Company Commanders, however the gates were never officially "closed." The flow would be stopped if there was a threat.

l. Question and Answer 11.

(1) Question. Were there Americans that were trying to get through Abbey Gate on 26 August, and was State Department involved?

(2) Answer. Yes, Americans were coming through Abbey on the 26th Augst, but I don't know if it was coordinated with the State Department. We just knew people where coming through due to the other gates being closed.

m. Question and Answer 12.

(1) Question. Were there any changes with how the marines performed at the gates at Abbey Gate on 26 August before the attack?

(2) Answer. I didn't observe any significant changes. I was talkin with a young Marine about being a fireman. He was KIA in the attack short after. (b)(6)

(b)(3)130b; (b)(6) was doing a Key Leader Engagement with the Taliban 30 mins prior to the attack. The Marines were just doing their job.

n. Question and Answer 13.

(1) Question. Did they use electronic counter-measures at the Gates?

(2) An wer. e w so utely si l t - a s (b)(1)14g

(b)(1)1.4g, (b)(3)130b; (b)(6)

The blast helped disperse the crowd over the next few days.

The shot at the tire of a car was after the blast.

o. Question and Answer 14.

(1) Question. Did you have engineer support?

(2) Answer. We borrowed a RTCH (rough terrain cargo handling), which helped develop the defensive perimeter. The engineers used the RTCH to move ICU-90 Containers to build a half mile wall to block people getting on the airfield. They also acquired vehicles to help transport materials around HKIA for various reasons. We tried to emplace HESCOs at the North Gate but it wasn't too effective. It was difficult to close off the perimeter because it was like a maze.

p. Question and Answer 15.

(1) Question. How was the Marines morale?

(2) Answer. The Marines moral was high, they were motivated to be out conducting operations, helping people and being part of something bigger themselves. They were exhausted, but in different ways. Emotionally, it was tough because you can't really train people to see what they saw: Males abandoning their families, the desperation of people to get through and get to the US. The Marines showed a lot of patience and restraint. They were constantly on edge with riot control tasks, flash bangs, gun shots, so Marines were just emotionally drained. Leaders were pull them off the line if they looked super tired and talk to them, make sure they are ok. I observed the company level leaders being very engaging to make sure Marines were good. The units had a rest cycle/sleep plan: Companies switched off the gate to rotate through the rest and refit. Leadership probably averaged 2 -3 hrs of sleep per day.

q. Question and Answer 16.

(1) Question. How did the organizations communicate with each other at the General Officer level? Was the Task Organization confusion or difficult?

(2) Answer. Honestly, the task organization was confusing, but luckily there were a bunch of great generals talking to each other and working things out. When the 82nd arrived, things changed to Marines owning the NEO, to include ECPs (North and Abbey Gate) the 82nd owning base defense. Gen Donahue was great, everyone worked it out so we get the job done. The Generals knew what needed to be done and helped work out any friction. It was good to have the 82nd there to help because we were overwhelmed with NEO and base defense. As for State Department, Ambassador Bass ran the show, but there wasn't an authority on who was specifically in charge between

him and Ambassador Wilson. An example of friction was figuring out who was going to execute airfield operations. Marines clearly had the NEO task, but it wasn't clear if the 82nd was going to run airfield operations. After some unit cross-talk, we collectively figured how to work out the airfield.

r. Question and Answer 17.

(1) Question. Was there anything you wish you would have had?

(2) Answer. Having the portal page built out to build mission requirements and facilitate stake-holder collaboration early would have been helpful.

s. Question and Answer 18.

(1) Question. Anything significant you want us to know?

(2) Answer. Doctrine is important. There is no interagency doctrine that exist for NEO. There isn't a DoS template plan that has been produced or handbook to help understand what the process is and what considerations are out there. Our doctrine has DoD secondary and DoS primary, but it difficult to work with DoS when they really don't know what to do. It brought out cultural differences between the two agencies and hurt our ability to help one another. We need a common reference point. A big frustration was the planning assumptions made at the CENTCOM level. They are facts for us at this level, we accept the higher headquarters assumptions as facts in our planning. Rock drills and TTX did not address branch planning if the assumption didn't progress into facts, and were wrong. I would also like to see more syncs at the 1-2 star level, the units really executing the operation. Many units who played a big role were not included until too late in the planning and execution process. There wasn't a focused on NEO, other planning priorities took over instead. Instead we had a JTF CDR that couldn't get things moving, agency obstacles, we couldn't talk to our other partner nations about NEO.

4. Point of Contact information:

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

5. The point of contact for this memorandum is the undersigned at

(b)(6)

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

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



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

ACTS-SCK-DO

5 October 2021

MEMOANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Interview with BGen John Sullivan, USMC, Commanding General, JTF-CR,
24 September 2021

1. On 24 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 BGen John Sullivan, USMC, Commanding General, JTF-CR, at Naval Air Station Bahrain, 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) interviewed BG Sullivan in a conversational manner. This interview was written as closely to the conversation as possible. C1 refers to questions by BG Curtis. S1 refers to answers by BGen Sullivan.

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: (C1) Describe the planning and prep of JTF-CR and the background, please?

(2) Answer: (S1) We were given the task on 10 April to initiate our Commander's Battlespace Area Evaluation (CBAE) which would feed the Commander's Assessment published by CENTCOM by late April. We had to get an estimated plan of the non-combatant evacuation operation (NEO) execution to General McKenzie on 27 April. The plan has obviously evolved since that initial timeframe. The plan evolved over time from incorporating both Bagram Airfield (BAF) & Hamad Karzai International Airport (HKIA), to just HKIA. Also, we didn't know when NEO operations would occur. Initially we were planning on BAF with USFOR-A security, as well as HKIA. Our initial planning assumed that some security could be relied upon from residual USFOR-A capability as well as GIROA. People may ask how we could assume that they would provide security, but at the time there was USFOR-A and 2,500 joint security personnel on the ground. Obviously, this changed as HKIA became the single node for the evacuation. At the time, the view was that the Turks, Afghans, and USFOR-A, could all jointly secure the evacuation point. As we got deeper into July and early August it started to become clear

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SUBJECT: Interview with BGen John Sullivan, USMC, Commanding General, JTF-CR,
24 September 2021

that this course of action may not be viable based on questionable reliability and status of ANDSF and the Turks. As we progressed through planning 24th MEU and SPMAGTF were viewed as sufficient security, but it was clear to us that we might need more. A larger package would include an additional IBCT for additional security for HKIA. This was all reflected in the RFF we developed.

People might ask: if there were 160 days of planning and only 18 days of execution why did it not go smoother? The answer is because the situation, plan, and threat were constantly evolving due to the changing situation on ground. We were familiar with the overall planning factors. Our team did a pre-deployment site survey (PDSS) in late May into early June to HKIA, Bagram, and the embassy compound. Initially we included use of the USEM compound as part of the NEO as a marshaling area & evacuation control center (ECC). We also planned to use marshaling areas and ECCs throughout the GZ/IZ. In addition, security of the USEMB was a factor we considered. I attended the PDSS in May/June and met with GEN Miller, the USEMB Country Team, UK military representatives, and Turkish leadership. We went to BAF and HKIA to see the ground and terrain with the intent to determine the security/NEO requirements. People say the Turks were able to secure HKIA, but that was never true; they never left the confines of north HKIA. The Turks never secured all of HKIA and the Afghan security was a patchwork of multiple different military and police entities...not cohesive.

c. Question and Answer 2.

(b)(1)1.4d

(b)(1)1.4d Then BAF closed on 2 July. I went for a second PDSS on 10 July. This PDSS was attended by leaders and staff members of both the 24th MEU and the SPMAGTF. As this PDSS concluded we left planners/representatives from the MEU in HKIA, embedded with the small forward coordination from my HQ that had been there since late May/early June. On this 2nd PDSS we looked at HKIA again and the surrounding hotels as marshaling areas. Myself and the subordinate leaders conducted leader's recons of across all of HKIA. We met with GEN Miller to better understand the Diplomatic Assurance Platform-Afghanistan (DAP-A) concept. We also had to consider what forces RADM Vasely needed to secure the south compound and embassy. That number ended up being 650, combined with (b)(1)1.4d, and the Afghans to the south. There was also TF Polar Bear and TF Wild Boar to help secure the USEMB and provide support to our coalition partners in the GZ/IZ.

d. Question and Answer 3.

(1) Question: (C1) At that time, you were responsible for securing US interests in the greater Kabul area?

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(2) Answer: (S1) The t-walled area defined the GZ/IZ and outlined where all other nation's embassy facilities were located, were also our responsibility. The whole area known as the GZ. We considered that entire area for NEO operations but we were never given the task to secure the GZ or areas outside of HKIA. The only exceptions would be marshalling areas that were outside the USEMB compound and any routes we might use to move evacuees.

e. Question and Answer 4.

(1) Question: (C1) So the PDSS in July went beyond HKIA?

(2) Answer: (S1) Yes, the initial plan was to keep folks in the embassy past 31 August. The 650 PAX on the ground were viewed as enough to keep the USEMB and NHKIA secured as long as ANDSF remained viable. The embassy also had a Gurkha contractor force of ~800. People talk about the embassy drawing down, but this was a challenge while also keeping the embassy running. In my opinion the USEMB did not draw down fast enough. Initially we considered our area of responsibility (AOR) encompassing support to all coalition embassies who had an established MOA with the USEMB and the ground line of communication (GLOC) to enter HKIA. We would have needed more armored vehicles to do that and to help us escort evacuees along the GLOC. It wouldn't have been a completely secure GLOC but we were planning to provide armored escort/evac if required. Again, as we got deeper into July and early August the GLOC became a much less likely option [REDACTED] (b)(1)1.4a

[REDACTED] (b)(1)1.4a RADM Vasely provided assessments weeks prior to the fall of GIROA that the trajectory of GIROA was in a down ward spiral and likely not recoverable. When USFOR-A departed and the force went from 2500 to 650...that created challenges in my opinion. As the USFOR-A (FWD) staff was very small. With that said, the USFOR-A (FWD) staff was fully engaged and quite talented. At the time RADM Vasely was focused on working with Ghani, Ministry of Defense, Brigades, Ministry of Interior, and provincial commanders to focus on holding the "7+1" provincial capitals as the country fell. This included Mazar-i-Sharif, Ghazni, Kabul, etc; the Afghan government was challenged to follow the guidance/advice that RADM Vasely provided them, and they didn't consolidate. They were trying to defend everywhere. In the end, the only viable forces and strategic reserve were in Kabul, but they kept pushing those out and few were left in Kabul.

So as RADM Vasely was doing up and out coordination with the Afghans, we were still planning on holding the embassy. On 20 July, we deployed 45 Marines into HKIA to assist in more detailed coordination and planning for NEO as well as providing a small capability to assist the embassy in processing/screening SIV applicants. We still had very little traction with the embassy on NEO planning. The embassy didn't fully participate in NEO planning until a week prior to the fall. The embassies focus was on they could maintain a presence post 31 August. Ultimately, our staff was prepared for a

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NEO and knew that interest from the USEMB and coalition partners would be last minute.

f. Question and Answer 5.

(1) Question: (C1) Were there triggers for NEO operations?

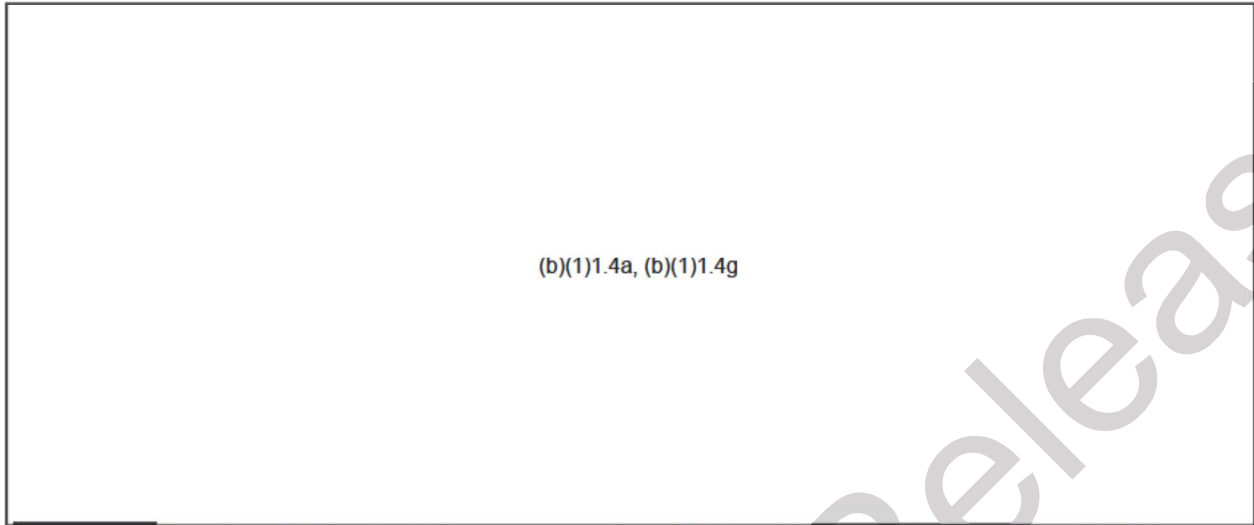
(2) Answer: (S1) Yes. We formed an assessment team early (with USFOR-A FWD and eventually with participation from the embassy) and this team built out a trigger assessment tool. This assessment team and the triggers were a priority for RADM Vasely. The team sat down and reviewed these triggers weekly, starting in early July. RADM Vasely tried to get the trigger assessment tool before the Ambassador from mid-July to early-August. The challenge was getting the embassy to even consider NEO planning. Even the embassy plan had 17 decision points which were incorporated into USFOR-A (FWD)'s plan which we had a hand in building. The triggers were clear and all constituted some form of action from the embassy if the triggers were tripped.

g. Question and Answer 6.

(b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4g

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(b)(1)1. (b)(1)1. Each units had a fully resourced and trained capability to support NEO operations including running the NEO Tracking Systems (NTS). I've done crisis response and hurricane reliefs before, but this was different, much more challenging, and more dangerous. These 18 days were harder and more complex at every level. No training could truly cover the tasks MEU and SPMAGTF executed based on the unique conditions we faced.

j. Question and Answer 9.

(1) Question: (C1) But you think they were well-trained going in?

(2) Answer: (S1) Absolutely, but for our steady state, we were augmented. There were elements of 3/10 IBCT attached to us in execution. I walked their commander through our plans in July 2021 as we were both in HKIA together, but they were not integrated into our training as we did not have a [redacted] EL w h r i o t x t n. In the end though, we got 1-82 IBCT instead. My [redacted] (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) embedded with us in the end of May as the JTF-CR be an to be established at our HQ in Bahrain. [redacted] (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) I initially wanted the MEU, the SPAMGTF, and then the 3-10 IBCT since we had done some level of planning and training with these elements. But based on the conditions when NEO was directed 1-82 IBCT was tasked (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) in with (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) as soon as 1-82nd received their tasking and we started coordination with 1-82 as they were staging/departing for Kabul. 1-82 IBCT was the IRF, but they hadn't trained or planned with us prior to NEO execution. Our conversations with LTG Kurilla during NEO planning had been more BAF focused in terms of seizing an airfield with the potential of reinforcing HKIA. When we did our second PDSS in July, we looked at everything with the MEU and SPMAGTF commanders/ lanners, so we all had knowledge of the area and the requirements. [redacted] (b)(1)1.4a

[redacted] (b)(1)1.4a Their scenarios were shape by w at hey saw on t e PD . n a d on, he MEU and the

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SPMAGTF conducted NEO certification of elements or the entirety of that mission set before they deployed to theater as part of their service level certification.

k. Question and Answer 10.

(1) Question: (C1) At the time it seemed like the belief was that the Embassy would be working well into September?

(2) Answer: (S1) Yes, that was the thought behind the Diplomatic Assurance Platform Afghanistan (DAP-A) concept. DAP-A was designed to serve as an assurance platform in order to provide security at the USEMB and NHKIA and they were tasked with providing other enabling support to the USEM mission and coalition missions (e.g. keeping HKIA open, Role II, QRF, etc.)

l. Question and Answer 11.

(1) Question: (C1) Was this due to the hesitancy affiliated with not "spooking the herd" and start of NEO?

(2) Answer: (S1) Yes. Trying to get the embassy to discuss NEO was like pulling teeth until early August. After that it became more collaborative. On both PDSS trips we met with the Chief of Mission and his team. Our command and control (C2) node deployed in early June to BLDG 300 which we identified as a requirement on the first PDSS. We fell into that C2 node when I showed up on 20 July. Also at the time, as of 12 May, we could only coordinate with the UK 1-Star, their Standing JFHQ, for Afghanistan NEO planning. No other multination cooperation was approved, including with the Turkish 1-Star on HKIA. The thought was that openly discussing NEO would send the wrong message to our Allies and GIROA...and it might have a precipitating effect.

m. Question and Answer 12.

(1) Question: (C1) Why?

(2) Answer: (S1) The guidance we received was to only coordinate with the UK and to coordinate with other CENTCOM Components and USG entities. We were not authorized to plan or discuss NEO with other coalition partners. At this point in mid-July I wanted to get enough supplies to hold 5,000 evacuees for 48 hours on HKIA. We had fenced in yards on the eastern side to hold evacuees. We had limited pre-staged food and water in the storage yard on HKIA. Not enough. Initially we could attend the Kabul security group meeting but we could not discuss evacuation planning. The KSG was a weekly meeting with representatives from other coalition embassies. As we got into late July and early August I/we were allowed to start engaging with coalition partners/embassies on their NEO requirements based on the MOAs the USEM in Kabul had will coalition/allied missions. Throughout planning from May 2021 onward we

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identified the coalition and multinational force cooperation as a concern. We met with the defense attachés and the coalition embassy security officials/military reps in early August, but collaboration was still slow moving, as Kabul was estimated to hold another 3-6 months and interest in NEO planning was lukewarm

Around 10 August I went to the coalition ambassador's conference with BG Day, the USFOR-A (FWD) Deputy, and we were asked by many ambassadors if they should leave or prepare to leave the country. BG Day said "if you don't think you should have plans, you don't know what's going on". So that first week of August was the first time multinational coordination began to become an interest item for our coalition/allied partners, because people didn't want to prompt an exfiltration prior to that. The Brits had Kandahar falling as their NEO tripwire. The U.S. had a number of significant trip wires but the fall of Ghani seemed like a key tripwire. After we had permission to speak with the Brits starting in May, BG Dan Blanchford and I had weekly phone conversations. In June we started staff integration. We did the 2nd PDSS together and engaged with RADM Vasely together. Afterward, he came to Bahrain for a few days and we continued to build a relationship and conduct detailed planning. It was important to have this relationship, as they planned on evacuating personnel through the gates we were operating. We spent time making plans with them, but we never had to logistically support them as we did the rest of the multination force.

n. Question and Answer 13.

(1) Question: (C1) To go back, the 24th MEU NEO mission set was validated by the Expeditionary Operations Training Group (EOTG)?

(2) Answer: (S1) Yes, EOTG is an O-6 led entity from 2nd Marine Expeditionary Force out of Lejeune that validates/certifies MEUs. MEUs go through a 6-month pre-deployment training period where they are trained and certified to execute the 13 MEU METS including NEO. The MEUs will spend ~6 weeks at sea, EOTG will set up scenario based training environs on shore and at sea, then the unit will be inserted ashore and execute a NEO, raid, etc. It's very similar to the National Training Center (NTC) as a culminating training event. The O-6 head of EOTG is supervising and assessing the MEU commander and unit throughout the process. The IIMEF Commander, a 3-star, ultimately certifies the unit before they deploy.

o. Question and Answer 14.

(1) Question: (C1) *Shows the JTF-CR J3 created task organization timeline* Is this accurate?

(2) Answer: It is accurate, but it could use additional details. We were activated for planning on 21 May, and we were TACON for planning to USFORA FWD. When the NEO was called on 14 Aug, we were TACON to USFORA FWD for execution. From around 14-20 August, when the 82nd HQ set up their JOC, this held true. We shifted

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TACON to the 82nd when they were FOC. COMREL was never a contentious issue between myself, RADM Vasely, and MG Donahue. We never had COMREL issues. I don't remember an email, but I remember getting a diagram like this from my staff at the time. I don't think we had any issues stemming from COMREL. I embedded myself with RADM Vasely and MG Donahue daily and I always got the same guidance from both. They were on the same page. My (b)(6) also had a great relationship with (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) as well the (b)(3)130b; (b)(6). If we ever needed anything we had full cooperation from that team. There was no negative impact or friction from the task origination.

p. Question and Answer 15.

(1) Question: (C1) So there was no friction and everything worked well, there was open communication and cooperation between the general officer headquarters?

(2) Answer: (S1) Yes. We struggled with other entities. For example- who deals with Ambassador Bass, Taliban, etc? I was never told not to coordinate with the Taliban, but I usually did not get involved with them directly. RADM Vasely and MG Donahue had a relationship with the Taliban and coordinated with them. I'd tell them my concerns, and they would coordinate with the Taliban. I had more challenges with Ambassador Bass and US Embassy Kabul. This stems from the fact that we needed support from the DOS on evacuee priorities, Consular Affairs Officer Support, etc. With Ambassador Wilson and Ambassador Bass both on deck it was not initially clear who was the lead for providing us the support we required to execute the NEO.

On 06 August there an NSC NEO ROC Drill. ACOM Scott Weinhold was in the Pentagon, and Ambassador Wilson was in Kabul. The DOS folks briefed a plan that was vague on the priority of evacuees and the temporary safe haven plan. This discussion during their ROC Drill was concerning as there seemed to be a disconnect between what we were seeing on the ground and the urgency they were displaying.

As the NEO commenced my primary concern at the time was tactical security. Of course, after the President's speech the guidance was to accelerate and get more people out of HKIA but, the DOS priorities were unclear. During the ROC Drill I mentioned, a National Security Council (NSC) Rep said "if we execute NEO, we have failed". In my opinion, the NSC was not seriously planning for evacuation. At this 06 August tabletop exercise (TTX), it was the first time Ambassador Wilson painted a picture that lined up with what RADM Vasely had been saying about the worsening condition and the number of trip wires being hit fully or partially.. But still, at the NSC level the focus on NEO was nascent and lacked a sense of urgency in my opinion. CENTCOM had clearly been planning since late April.

Ten days prior to NEO starting, State Department started commercial flight to get SIVs out. Prior to NEO, only about 750 got out.

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q. Question and Answer 16.

(1) Question: (C1) Due to COVID, was the embassy operating at 50% strength for NEO and the ambassador was on leave?

(2) Answer: (S1) Can't say for sure on that, maybe.

r. Question and Answer 17.

(1) Question: (C1) We heard there was a call saying NEO could only go badly, very badly, or terrible? Do you know anything about that and is it why they didn't want to talk about NEO?

(2) Answer: (S1) I wasn't on a call like that, I only heard what I described from the NSC ROC Drill/ TTX. Most likely they didn't want to talk about it because they didn't want to spook the herd or precipitate a NEO by discussing it or preparing for it in a perceptible way. But to clarify, the DOS priority for evacuees was unclear at the beginning and it changed throughout execution. Early on in the evacuation there was clear expectation that we needed to accelerate the movement of evacuees out of Kabul. Eventually we achieved an impressive level of throughput but initially we were balancing how to manage risk with achieving a higher flow rate. When Ambassador Bass' team arrived that helped with prioritization and support from the DOS on the ground but it took time to understand their role versus the remaining USEM Kabul Team. But after the President's speech there was clear pressure to speed up the evacuation and concern that planes initially were departing with empty seats. There were empty seats initially because we were trying to refine the best way to screen and process evacuees while reducing risk to the force. I do not think it was to those that were not in HKIA how much risk we had to assume to effect this evacuation.

s. Question and Answer 18.

(1) Question: (C1) Why?

(2) Answer: (S1) Part of it was a safe haven issue. Planes with evacuees embarked could only go to certain locations, depending on the type of evacuees they would allow to enter. Kuwait only took American civilians or legal permanent residents. There was no point in the NEO that we had a full plane load of that population available at once so this contributed to the empty seats. We never had a lack of evacuees, but the safe havens were an issue just due to who exactly countries would agree to take.

It was easier to identify Americans, US legal permanent residents, and embassy local staff. They had very clear identification. But after that it was much harder for SIVs and others. Initially the embassy sent an email to the SIV population they had in their data base saying something to the effect "You are an SIV or SIV applicant and you can leave if you show this email at a HKIA Gate". I did not find this to be helpful as it was difficult

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to confirm what else qualified someone with this email from evacuation. It also opened up the opportunity for this email to be shared around to 'unqualified evacuees' which would create a concerning vector for threats to enter HKIA. This created its own risk. Additionally, the DOS guidance did not initially define what was meant by families, and some people would show up with a group of family members that were very large. Many of these people were not qualified evacuees but friends and fellow villagers. Or they were not part of the 'nuclear' family which is what the DOS ultimately settled on. This caused some qualified evacuees to decide not to depart because they did not want to leave an adult brother or sister behind. Initially there were not enough consular officers to process everyone and it remained an issue throughout. I was not comfortable in the ability of Marines to identify who qualified for evacuation, when it came to SIVs or 'At-Risk' Afghans' although we often used Marines to do this. 72 hours into the evacuation we lost C-17 support for almost 24-hours. This corresponded with the pressure to increase our rate of screening. This resulted in us having a population of ~15,000 evacuees on HKIA...from security and life support perspective this was more than we had planned for.

t. Question and Answer 19.

(1) Question: (C1) That's a threat to mission right?

(2) Answer: (S1) My number one priority was securing the airstrip. On the night of the 15th, we had 5,000 evacuees storm on the airfield and only 350 marines and one Army company to control this mass. We couldn't keep them off the airfield and secure the gates simultaneously. At this point there were large, desperate crowds at North, East, and Abbey Gates. At this time, the Afghan Security Forces left the south gate unmanned. Managing the number of evacuees on HKIA at any given time was an issue of risk as the longer they remained on HKIA waiting for a flight the more unruly they became. We did have to execute crowd control on HKIA on several occasions IOT protect the terminal as well as the apron/airstrip from this internal evacuee population.

u. Question and Answer 20.

(b)(1)1.4g

There were leakers on the eastern and western sides as well. After their arrival 1-82 had

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a hard time on the western side and Afghans were coming through some of the western access points and gates. 1-82 was a superb unit but they were moved right into the line upon de-barking their C-17s and it took some time for them to become familiar with their assigned areas. During the period of darkness on the 15th into the 16th, our security on the north side of HKIA was nearly compromised. We were forced to fall back to the north terminal based on the size of the unruly mob that had entered from the south. We were able to hold the mass back from the NHKIA terminal, but they did get as close as 150 meters to our JOC. It was all hands on deck for security, everyone not essential to manning the JOC was on the line.

Our Marines killed 2 armed individuals displaying hostile action and intent on the morning of the 16th. I think it was the right call. It took incredible discipline and poise from our Marines to show the restraint they demonstrated early on and throughout. . It was a high threat situation, they were being taunted, were overmanned and vulnerable. Eventually, with the arrival of additional 1-82 units, additional elements of the SPMAGTF, and the Afghan NSU we, together, pushed through and cleared the airfield fully.

v. Question and Answer 21.

(1) Question: (C1) That strikes me as extremely professional. They were outnumbered, with no reserves, and their back against the wall. That's impressive.

(2) Answer: (S1) Absolutely. They kept their composure. We also didn't know our relationship with the Taliban at this time and they had already taken some positions in the southern parts of HKIA. Meanwhile, we ended up having 2 C-17s take off with unknown personnel/portions of the desperate crowd on board as they were on ramp 9 when the large crowd crossed the airfield. After this, the OGA brought the NSU to the airfield. They breached the perimeter in the west, then moved to ramp 9, and we used them to bolster security. Then, from the 16-17th to the Marines, NSU, Brits (now in the east), Taliban (now in the south), and Army pushed the crowd off HKIA and cleared the airfield. This allowed C-17s to start flowing in again on the 17th. So, as I said earlier, the airstrip was my priority. So every decision I made was keeping this viable. Without it, there was no NEO. So Taliban agreed to get the crowd out and secure the southern gate, the international domestic terminal. The NSU augmented the North Gate. Eventually the Taliban helped with providing some semblance of security outside the perimeter of HKIA.

w. Question and Answer 22.

(1) Question: (C1) How are you preventing the powder keg that is the NSU and the Taliban from blowing up?

(2) Answer: (S1) Mostly through conversations between RADM Vasely and the Taliban. It was in the Taliban's interest to get us out by the 31st. At some points,

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individual Taliban were threatening our Marines at the gates on HKIA. The Taliban foot soldiers were always a concern for me and my subordinate commanders. We had to view them as a potential threat. The Taliban commanders that RADM Vasely and MG Donahue dealt with seemed somewhat responsive. Once MG Donahue got in he coordinated with all Taliban elements working the perimeter.

x. Question and Answer 23.

(1) Question: (C1) How do you keep the NSU on the team as the U.S. is preparing to leave?

(2) Answer: (S1) The NSU and the [redacted] (b)(1)1.4c were hard to work with. The NSU had [redacted] (b)(1)1. mentors with them, but these units weren't reliable. They would leave gaps in coverage or leave their post before their replacements got there. We welcomed them though, because we needed them. They were instrumental in clearing the airfield and they proved helpful at the gates. They deterred the crowds more than they controlled them, using butt strokes and warning shots that got very close. It wasn't until the 20th or the 21st that we found out the deal was to get 38,800 NSU fighters and family members out. Initially we was tracking 6,000, so that was a huge jump that could have put our outflow estimates at risk in terms of meeting the 31 August timeline.

z. Question and Answer 24.

(1) Question: (C1) An increase like that would cause risk to mission to skyrocket exponentially wouldn't it?

(2) Answer: (S1) Absolutely. When I found out I sent a note to RADM Vasely saying that we couldn't rely on C-17s to exfil that volume. We needed to get the Civilian Reserve Air Fleet (CRAF) involved. We had to get these evacuees to Germany, because that volume would also overwhelm the temporary safe havens.

aa. Question and Answer 25.

(1) Question: (C1) The risk to force would also go up from the NSU if we don't fulfill this agreement, right?

(2) Answer: (S1) Yes, the risk of not getting the NSU and their families out was that they would turn on us as we approached the end of the evacuation. One complicating factor was a green on blue fire fight that broke out IVO of North gate. One night the NSU fired on our Marines who were manning the North Gate. The NSU would park 6-10 technical vehicles behind North Gate but internal to NHKIA. The MEU was at that gate as well as a German military contingent. On the 22nd-23rd, the NSU received small arms fire into one of their technical vehicles from outside the wire which killed 1 NSU. The fire came from outside of HKIA. The NSU responded by engaging the MEU

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as the NSU did not know where the fire had come from. The Marines returned fire, killing 1 and wounding 6 NSU. I saw it on the cameras in the JOC. The Marines were textbook in their response and I have no regrets. They responded exactly as they should have.

bb. Question and Answer 26.

(1) Question: (C1) How did you keep it from escalating from there?

(2) Answer: (S1) I called RADM Vasely, he called the Chief of Station, and they coordinated with the NSU who accepted liability and admitted that it was their mistake. After that, though, there wasn't much NSU support, especially at North Gate. We were lucky to not lose any Marines there.

cc. Question and Answer 27.

(1) Question: (C1) Can we transition to indicators on the 25th of events on the 26th?

(2) Answer: (S1) As we get to that, I would just like to note that the threat streams from the beginning to the end were consistent. Every day we were dealing with multiple threat streams and attempting to mitigate the threat as we continued to screen and process evacuees. They revolved around VBIEDS towards the gates, specifically North Gate, suicide vests, IDF, and IED bags. There was also a large threat stream of ISIS infiltration onto NHKIA and onto C-17s. We actually thought that a bomb made it onto a plane several times, which forced us to offload the planes and search all military age males. This happened numerous times. The bag IED was a big threat in the terminals and at the gates, people were desperate and would throw their bags over the fence before trying to climb it themselves. People are saying that Abbey Gate was predictable, but that's only because the threat was everywhere, any of the gates would have looked predictable in hindsight.

cc. Question and Answer 28.

(1) Question: (C1) You were forced to split your focus between three mission sets of the NEO, the Humanitarian Support to Evacuees on HKIA, and essentially the combat mission, correct?

(2) Answer: (S1) Correct, we also had to cover the BOSS-I for all the multinational forces and evacuees. We were supporting over 30k people and doing that with a small motor pool of NTVs. We also had the power plant, the sewage system, and water pump station problems. We were able to keep some NSPA contractors working by promising to get their families out and paying them additional money. At any given time, we had less than 1 day of supply for 30k folks. Also at any given time, we had 7,000 people in staging and 5,000 in the waiting areas to get on the planes. There was a significant

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internal security issue we had to maintain on NHKIA. We had to dedicate significant manpower to guard this evacuee population who were discontent after spending days in the sun with little food, water, or rest and uncertain about their futures.

So yes, there were significant external and internal threats. Not to mention, these days were hot. The evacuees were sitting in the sun with not enough water. People were dehydrated. It was a humanitarian disaster waiting to happen. No one died from it, I did have Marines sweep through the holding areas and check for bodies though.

Additionally, we were getting tons of high profile requests to get individuals out. We had congressman and other senior leaders from across the USG texting directly to my watch floor, to my staff members, to Marines/Sailors guarding the gates to admit certain people. Eventually, RADM Vasely started a team led by (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) to handle these requests. Many of those requests didn't line up with the priority of evacuees. At best, some of these folks were high risk Afghans.

dd. Question and Answer 29.

(1) Question: (C1) We have heard these calls were from everyone from the First Lady to the Pope?

(2) Answer: (S1) That's accurate. I was being contacted by representatives from the Holy See to assist the Italian military contingent to assist them in getting through groups that was of special interest to the Vatican. That is just one of many examples. I cannot stress enough how these high profile request ate up bandwidth and created a competition for already stressed resources.

ee. Question and Answer 30.

(1) Question: (C1) What exactly was (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) role?

(2) Answer: (S1) (b)(6) starting on the 23rd, but it was impossible to keep up with. I'd like to step back to Abbey Gate though. The Brits used that gate exclusively, they were operating out of the Barron Hotel which was about 100 meters outside of Abbey Gate. Camp Sullivan was to the South and also outside of the Abbey Gate, which we had initially considered as a marshaling area but it was too large to secure, in addition to having a large thoroughfare running between it and the Abbey Gate itself. It turned out not to be a great option. By the time the 15th occurred, the desperate crowds were too large, and extended hundreds of meters leading up to Abbey Gate. In the first few days the crowd was pushed all the way up to the inner Abbey Gate. Before the Brits could establish themselves in the Barron and in order to establish a more manageable situation at Abbey, we jointly pushed the crowd back to let our engineers build a container chevron/obstacle ahead of the outer gate in order to canalize the crowds. Pushing the crowd back to enable this obstacle emplacement took an entire day. The Taliban screened the people getting to and past

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the chevron. By the 21st Abbey Gate was a fully viable gate. Before that it was more limited, we were only able to get a more limited number through for screening because it was very difficult based on the size, unruliness of the crowd. On the 21st, us and the Brits had it somewhat organized...by somewhat I mean it was still a bit chaotic and the risk was never completely mitigated. We could not fully mitigate the risks at any gate based on the conditions. From the 23 to 26 August, the North and East Gates were still open. The South Gate, run by the 82nd, was good for bringing through 'high profile' evacuees and some AMCITS but it was never produced high numbers compared to Abbey Gate and North & East Gates. North and East were very productive early on. Abbey Gate became more productive over time. From the 21-26, Abbey Gate was definitely the primary gate for getting people through as the other gates were more difficult to manage.

ff. Question and Answer 31.

(1) Question: (C1) Abbey Gate became the primary gate?

(2) Answer: (S1) Yes. During the latter half of the NEO Abbey Gate was the most productive gate and with the emplacement of the chevron obstacle as well as the canal it allowed for better crowd control compared with North and East Gates. At the time the North Gate felt like it had the highest threat being from a VBIED. At Abbey Gate, we had much better control of the people flowing in. At the North and East Gates the crowds were growing too large on the 24th, so I shut East and North Gates since we had anywhere from ~10,000 already on HKIA. The crowds continued to grow, and they started to move down the canal to Abbey Gate. By the morning of the 26th, we had a very large number of desperate people seeking evacuation in front of the chevron and in the canal. The canal funneled them naturally, and the canal ran parallel with the outer and inner gate, along the fence line. We kept one hole in that fence open to allow some people in or out through the canal. At the time, the Brits were doing their screening in the Barron. The U.S. was screening inside the outer gate with consular affairs officers. We had 2 towers at that gate with snipers. Later on the 25th, we felt that there was an increased threat, ISIS-K was continuing to plan and would eventually move into execution prior to 31 Aug we had multiple VBIED and suicide vest threats but these threat streams were not limited to Abbey. The threats we had about Abbey Gate were not specific to the canal or chevron.

On the night of the 24th I had spoken with Brig Blanchford, and I asked when the UK contingent was leaving. He said that they was leaving on the 28th and to close the gate then. I wanted to close the gate sooner based on the increasing threat and so as to not undermine the retrograde and the JTE which was on a deliberate timeline based on the requirement to depart on 31 Aug. Brig Blanchford agreed, and we planned to close Abbey Gate on the evening of the 26th.

SPMAGTF had been workin Abbey Gate almost the entire time. (b)(6)
(b)(3)130b; (b)(6) The MEU had BLT 1/8, which was organic to the

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MEU, and 2/1 a, which was attached. 2/1 was part of the SPMAGTF. The SMAGTF, and 2/1 specifically, had previously worked with the British Paras in Jordan, 2nd Para specifically. So a portion of the UK contingent working IVO of Abbey Gate had worked with 2/1 only a few weeks earlier in Jordan. I directed (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) to push the crowd further north up the canal on the night of the 25th as the crowd was growing. The gate ECPs were 24/7 and were all lit at night, so throughout the night of the 25th U.S. and coalition forces were still processing evacuees through Abbey Gate. It was the main gate for all coalition forces for the majority of the NEO. On the night of the 25th I spoke with MG Donahue about getting more Taliban to help control and screen those in the crowd at Abbey Gate. So on the mornin of the 26th I visited Abbey Gate. I spoke with (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) After visiting, I spoke wit (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) (b)(3)130b; (b)(6), at 300 who were of the opinion that the crowd was too large to push back from the gate and own the canal, because there was nowhere for them to go based on the narrowness of the canal. I concurred, but we were able to get them to the far side of the canal. We just couldn't get an obstacle up to keep the crowd static along the canal.

The crowds were large, and they had their own momentum pushing them forward. There were deaths by crushing that occurred outside the gate. When you see the picture of evacuees handing Marines their babies, it's usually because they were being crushed and were trying to protect their children. But, on the morning of the 26th there was slightly more Taliban presence in the canal, maybe about a squad size element. I actually heard, from speaking with MG Donahue who had spoken with the Taliban after the blast that the Taliban took had also taken significant casualties IVO Abbey Gate. On that morning of the 26th, the Brits had shared the threat stream with the Taliban which was why, I believe the Taliban were increasing their activity. The intent of requesting more Taliban presence IVO of Abbey Gate and the canal was to serve as a deterrent.

gg. Question and Answer 32.

(1) Question: (C1) Wasn't it difficult for them to move due to the crowd?

(2) Answer: (S1) It was doable in the canal, there was a little more space because people didn't like standing in the ankle deep water. Additionally, the Taliban had more freedom of maneuver as they were more aggressive in how they deterred and interacted with the crowds. That was a significant deterrent. We saw that at other gates where the Taliban were active (b)(1)1.4g

(b)(1)1.4g We brought the PSYOP vehicles to the outer gate with their speakers to help try and move the crowd back. We bolstered the gate with the remainder of 2/1, so we had upward of 3 companies working the gate or in an alert posture IVO of Abbey Gate. I was worried about the crowd overrunning the airfield again. We moved the shock trauma platoon to Abbey Gate, from their previous position between the East and Abbey Gate. We had constant intelligence surveillance reconnaissance (ISR) on Abbey Gate due to the threat. We were trying to

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buy time to close Abbey Gate on the night of the 26th while the UK/coalition forces were attempting to accelerate their passage of lines from the Barron Hotel back onto HKIA.

The South and West Gates were effective but the throughput for evacuees at these locations was less than what came through Abbey as the Taliban fully controlled the approaches to South and West Gates. The Taliban was very particular to how and who they allowed to process through the South and West Gates and I believe that some evacuees were not comfortable going through a gate controlled by the Taliban. The Taliban did not like dealing with the crowds. At Abbey Gate, it was necessary to have some Marines outside the physical gate in order to effectively screen and process. I visited again that afternoon and I could see that the front group in the crowds were getting crushed, at times the Marines had to push out with shields to prevent crushing of people. I was trying to buy space and time for the UK JTF and their paras as well as their evacuees to retrograde. There were several hundred UK soldiers and their evacuees at the Barron Hotel when the blast occurred. On the 26th we processed over 1000 US evacuees through Abbey Gate. If I had closed that gate at that point, I was concerned that the increasingly large and desperate crowd would have pushed the Taliban out and left the Brits isolated in addition that would significantly increase risk to holding the gate. . If the gate had been closed before the UK retrograded I believe that the Taliban would have been unable to control the crowd based on its size. In my opinion it would have taken 24-48hrs to reestablish the gate and get access back to the Brits which would have thrown off the retrograde and subsequent JTE not to mention that the risk from ISIS-K would remain. I was not comfortable leaving the UK isolated. Overall, closing the gate was a larger risk to the Brits and the airfield. I was trying to accelerate the Brits, but in my opinion they tried to process too many evacuees as they approached the end of their operations.

Once the blast occurred, we were able to re-secure the area, and we were finally able to get the Brits back through during the period of darkness from the 26-27th. After the explosion itself, the crowds at all gates shrunk significantly.

hh. Question and Answer 33.

(b)(1)1.4c, (b)(1)1.4g

ii. Question and Answer 34.

(1) Question: (C1) How many gates are open?

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(2) Answer: (S1) Abbey Gate, South Gate, West Gate, NSU gate, and Black Gate. South gate had busses coming in screened by the Taliban. West Gate was controlled by the Taliban as well but evacuees would enter the gate on foot. At both South and West Gates evacuees were initially screened by the Taliban before being handed over to 1-82. . NSU gate would screen at a gas station across from the gate and the NSU would then bring evacuees in from across the street. Intermittently the Black gate, east of north HKIA by tower 3 and operated by the 82nd, would open as well. But all of these were direct requests and AMCITs only. Except for the NSU Gate, which would accept bribes to let people in, which increased our insider threat.

jj. Question and Answer 35.

(1) Question: (C1) What's the center of gravity for evacuees?

(2) Answer: (S1) During the second half NEO operations Abbey Gate became the focal point for the evacuation.

kk. Question and Answer 36.

(1) Question: (C1) And your intent is to complete operations at Abbey Gate on the night of the 26th?

(2) Answer: (S1) Yes.

ll. Question and Answer 37.

(1) Question: (C1) So this is a risk to force and mission because if you lose the gate at this time you would need burn 48 hours to reopen it and get the Brits through?

(2) Answer: (S1) That's accurate, and we had an obstacle plan in place to block it off once it closed. If we had closed it earlier, we wouldn't have had the engineering/obstacles prepared in order to maintain the integrity of the gate closure and keep it closed.

mm. Question and Answer 38.

(1) Question: (C1) Can you speak to rumors about the attacking individual getting closer by flashing US identification?

(2) Answer: S1 I had not heard that. 24th MEU has EOD embedded. (b)(1)1.4g

(b)(1)1.4g They think it was detonated from the path on the far side of the canal as was indicated in the post blast analysis. There were reports of casualties with gunshot wounds, but our theory is that a ball bearing wound appears very similar to a gunshot wound. There were reports

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of some shots fired after the explosion. We didn't hear about lengthy gunfire after the blast, the Taliban may have been firing to disperse the crowd.

nn. Question and Answer 39.

(1) Question: (C1) Any indicators that it was a complex attack?

(2) Answer: (S1) Threat streams at the time indicated a complex attack would happen, most were referencing a blast followed by foot soldiers. That was the general assessment throughout the NEO as, again, the IED threat was not just to Abbey gate. The general assessment from the beginning was that an IED followed by ground fighters was a likely enemy approach. I am not completely clear that this was a complex attack. The reporting I've seen was not clear that there were gunmen, and reports of gunfire were inconsistent.

oo. Question and Answer 40.

(1) Question: (C1) Could you hear the blast?

(2) Answer: (S1) Yes.

pp. Question and Answer 41.

(1) Question: (C1) One blast?

(2) Answer: (S1) Yes, reports of multiple blasts are likely duplicated reporting.

qq. Question and Answer 42.

(1) Question: (C1) Who has the best sector sketch of this area?

(2) Answer: (S1) (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) I believe his sketch was in the AAR.

rr. Question and Answer 43.

(1) Question: (C1) Tell me about after the blast.

(2) Answer: (S1) Those not affected were focused on pulling the wounded in past the outer gate. The shock trauma platoon responded, and we had all vehicles pulling up to the gate to serve as CASEVACs. It was less than 30 minutes until the first casualty was receiving care at the Role 2 facility. (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) and he spoke positively of the triage conducted prior to arrival. We also brought H-4's to the airfield to move some of the casualties to the Role 2 at Alvarado. There was additional Role 1 medical care in the main terminal where the walking wounded were directed. It several hours before we had an accurate picture of our KIA, critical, and wounded. It

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was also difficult to identify who was killed, it was extremely challenging. We had conducted rehearsals with the shock trauma platoon in regards to CASEVAC and we had that unit spend time in the Role 2 to see the process there. I think our effectiveness of the MASCAS response was attributable to this. The number of casualties was too high for the NHKIA Role 2 to process fully, but no one lacked for care as we used the R2 established by 1-82 at Alvarado. Additionally, there were some Special Forces medics assisting and overall it seemed chaotic but it was managed chaos. I think the reaction to the event was as good as it could have been, and it was due to the rehearsals we, and the rest of the USFOR-A team, conducted.

ss. Question and Answer 44.

(1) Question: (C1) Can you identify where individuals got hit?

(2) Answer: (S1) *marks on his sketch* On the high side of the canal, parallel to the outer gate, killing those along the canal fence line and outer gate.

tt. Question and Answer 45.

(1) Question: (C1) How many Afghan KIA do you think?

(2) Answer: (S1) I've only seen the open source reporting 130-150 people.

uu. Question and Answer 46.

(1) Question: (C1) What time did the blast occur?

(2) Answer: (S1) About 1730 Local.

vv. Question and Answer 47.

(1) Question: (C1) How long until the final medical evacuation was completed? By the 27th at 0700 local was everyone out of the Role 2?

(2) Answer: (S1) Correct, we had 2-3 aerial medevac flights go out that night.

ww. Question and Answer 48.

(1) Question: (C1) Did anyone affected by the blast return to duty?

(2) Answer: (S1) Yes, we attempted initial TBI screening within 24 hours. Some of these individuals weren't medically evacuated and they left with the main body. Some of the walking wounded did go back to their duties on HKIA as we still had a mission to accomplish. But anyone with a physical wound, beyond superficial, was medically evacuated.

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xx. Question and Answer 49.

(1) Question: (C1) Anything else post event?

(2) Answer: (S1) Not that comes to mind

yy. Question and Answer 50.

(1) Question: (C1) How did you retrograde your HQ between the 27th and 30th?

(2) Answer: (S1) I was at Abbey Gate on the morning of the 27th. The 82nd and 2/1 were conducting their relief in place. 2/1 engineers were moving up to emplace the blocking obstacle/plan that would support the 1-82 retrograde and JTE.

zz. Question and Answer 51.

(1) Question: (C1) Step back, when and how did Abbey Gate close?

(2) Answer: (S1) As soon as all of our wounded were brought through the gate, we closed it. On the night of the 26th we opened it again to facilitate the passage of lines for the UK and their evacuees to safely get onto HKIA. After that, during the POD 26/27 Aug, the gate was closed and it never opened again. Then to block it, we moved heavy obstacles and complex wire obstacle plan in place. We emplaced a series of successive obstacles to allow the unit on the gate to retrograde for the final JTE. The threat outside the gate was significantly reduced because the blast dispersed the large crowds outside the gate.

aaa. Question and Answer 52.

(1) Question: (C1) What did turning over the gate look like?

(b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4g

SPMAGTF started to fly out on the evening of the 27th. The MEU departed on the 28th-29th. On the evening of the 29th, I was left with a small C2 element and an element from 24th MEU including a small ECC capability with security as well as a small MEU C2 node. I was the last one out by 1030 on the 30th. We were still processing evacuees on the morning of the 30th as we were leaving and while ISIS-K conducted an IDF attack

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onto HKIA IVO of Ramp 8 where we were conducting ECC and retrograde operations. There was a clear/detailed plan, we knew what plane everyone was going on. Also, before we departed the Marines conducted team clear and team sweep of NHKIA. They had to clear all buildings on north HKIA to make sure that there was no threat left for the 82nd. They cleared warehouses and hangar bays as well barracks and all other structures, de-militarizin an thing the could and identif in anything the 82nd would need to de-militarize.

(b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4g

(b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4g

I called Maj Gen Rock on the 24th saying that we needed our equivalent of Behavioral Health to speak to these Marines after we retrograded from HKIA. I am not particularly soft as adversity comes with our duties, but this was an extremely challenging situation. The operational stress was high at the gates throughout the operation, and these guys worked nonstop. They left the gates, immediately cleared buildings, and then got on a plane. The retrograde was a closely timed thing and we needed to hit our marks. One of the most stressful and challenging environments I have seen in my life.

Question and Answer 53.

(1) Question: (C1) Did evacuations occur after the closure of the gates?

(2) Answer: (S1) Yes. And people may ask, why we didn't evacuate people to the very end. The answer is we did. MG Donahue had C-17s and consular affairs teams to get anyone out who got in until the very end. The ability was definitely left in place all the way up to their exfil during the period of the darkness on the 30th into the 31st. I believe planning the primary JTE window during the POD 30/31 was the right call given how vulnerable they were.

ccc. Question and Answer 54.

(1) Question: (C1) Final comments, anyone else we should speak with?

(2) Answer: (S1) You should speak with

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

(b)(3)130b, (b)(6)

We also ran the multinational coordination cell. It wasn't a specific tasking but we did it. This was a significant undertaking as there were 20+ allied and other entities that were all trying the conduct their own evacuations through the limited throughput node known as HKIA. HKIA and its supporting infrastructure was equivalent to a small/medium

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sized airport by US standards. These 20+ entities were all relying on our ability to provide security, to provide all critical airfield functions, and in many cases they were relying on us to provide BOS-I and logistical support to their diplomatic/military contingents as well as their evacuees throughout the operation. The extent of these requirements were not fully appreciated during planning and created significant challenges in execution since discussing/jointly planning for NEO with our allies and partners did not start in earnest until early August. Again, this was significant. When we were on ground on July 20th, to the degree we could, we started to plan with our partners on the ground but this was challenges for reasons I explained earlier. In August, Ambassador Portecova, the NATO SNR supporting USFOR_A, met with ambassadors to coordinate their evacuations with our team. We did all this with only about half the staff we had planned to move forward into HKIA. Once the operation began we could close the remainder of our staff. We planned on 120 in our JMD for staff, but only had 60 due to the PAX limit. We coordinated the evacuation, logistical support, and PPR windows for the multinational force.

ddd. Question and Answer 55.

(1) Question: (C1) COMSTRAT, organic or otherwise? Anyone with pictures?

(2) Answer: (S1) There are pictures, can't say exactly from which dates. (b)(6) (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) can better address this. Also I'd like to note that on the 24th we spent most of our day corralling a plane of journalists who weren't supposed to have landed per Gen McKenzie's guidance. That was one of those things that popped up and we had to spend time resolving.

5. The point of contact for this memorandum is the undersigned at (b)(6) or

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

(b)(6)

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ACTS-SCK-DO

27 September 2021

MEMOANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Interview with [redacted] (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) 25 September 2021

1. On 25 September 2021, [redacted] (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) USA, conducted an interview with [redacted] (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) at Naval Air Station Bahrain to discuss the facts and circumstances surrounding the attack on Abbey Gate on 26 August 2021.

2. Methodology: [redacted] (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) had a conversation with [redacted] (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) following prepared questions, and a scribe, [redacted] (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) USA, captured the [redacted] (b)(6) questions and answers, rendered to writing below.

3. Discussion.

a. [redacted] (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) 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 interactions with multi-national partners did you observe during ECP/Gate operations?

(2) Answer: The UK was the only partner who assisted with security at the gates. They were at Abbey Gate throughout the HKIA NEO. Other national counter-parts did not provide security at the gates. The UK forces seemed to be the only ones doing it. A few UK military personnel were on the canal outside Abbey Gate and at the very front of Abbey Gate entrance, on the route from the Baron hotel. US Marines were at the other end, the middle portion, on both sides of the fence divider. Cooperation with the UK military personnel was really good and they integrated into the gate plan easily.

Abbey Gate throughput was to funnel the potential evacuees down the canal to the dead end, Marines would identify persons based on criteria given to them by the consular general at the gate or through the chain of command. The Marines would pull them out of the canal or bring them forward, push them through the fence gate to the first screening area. There was a US lane, and other nation's lane. Marines would conduct an initial search and quick medical screening. Potential evacuees were then brought through the main Abbey Gate to the consular general representative, who would determine if they would be evacuated or returned to the population. Four marines were stationed in the return lane, and would facilitate the return of Afghans or other third country nationals who did not meet criteria.

The UK was operating out of the Baron Hotel, and would use a vehicle convoy to bring their evacuees through Abbey Gate. They used a different entrance to the first screening area. The UK Soldiers were guarding the Baron Hotel entrance, adjacent to the canal. The Marines at the gate would help facilitate the convoys coming through the gate.

Abbey Gate stayed open the most because of the UK and the efficiency of the gate. The north gate was closed a ton because the crowds could not be managed.

The CG (BGen Sullivan) visited the gates every day, maybe not all of them, but at least a couple everyday. Myself, the aide [REDACTED] (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) [REDACTED] (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) visited all the gates every day. The CG was at Abbey Gate about 30 minutes before the attack. The Psyop's truck was usually parked behind the actual gate, but moved up into the first screening area after we left.

- See whiteboard drawing (enclosure 3)

c. Question and Answer 2.

(1) Question: What was the biggest threat?

(2) Answer: USFOR-A (FWD) briefed IDF was the biggest risk to force. I thought the bigger risk was an IED at the gates and someone would blow something up. With the crowds at the gates and the Marines exposed to the crowds to help screen and identify, it seemed like a big risk.

d. Question and Answer 3.

(1) Question: Did you know what type of engineer assets were on HKIA?

(2) Answer: The engineers deployed with the 24th MEU. They mostly worked on improving gates and shoring up the perimeter fence. They sealed the gate with T-walls and containers, then welded them together or the gate, shut. That's what they did at Abbey Gate, after the attack. The decision to shut Abbey was actually made well before the attack. The UK was still bringing in evacuees and the US consular teams were still working passage of US Citizens and other parties.

e. Question and Answer 4.

(1) Question: What about MPs?

(2) Answer: There were MPs but I did not see them utilized much. The only time they might have been was when the evacuees were in the holding areas and flights had stopped. The evacuees moved to go to the chow hall and the MPs stopped them at the terminal. This was when the gates had 20,000 people and we had nearly the same number inside, waiting on flights.

(b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4g

g. Question and Answer 6.

(b)(1)1.4a

h. Question and Answer 7.

(b)(1)1.4d

i. Question and Answer 8.

(1) Question: How much interaction did you have with the State Department?

(2) Answer: They worked across from my office, but I didn't have much interaction with them professionally. During planning they were saying "Don't say NEO" and "This is not a NEO for Afghanistan." They provided an estimate that 40,000 evacuees would be the requirement, which was clearly very low. At gates we didn't screen for anyone for eligibility, we would bring in how many we were told, based on DoS criteria, and the counsel officer would make the call. At the gates, the State Department and Marines worked well together; everyone was a team player.

j. Question and Answer 9.

(1) Question: Were you aware or observe any problems created by having two Ambassadors on the ground?

(2) Answer: Ambassador Wilson was there for the planning at the US Embassy and came to HKIA when the Embassy was evacuated. However, Ambassador Bass was the main person in charge when he arrived after 16 August. Ambassador Bass made the decision on what documentation got people through screening and evacuated.

k. Question and Answer 10.

(1) Question: Describe the entire fence line?

(2) Answer: The fence line was almost entirely T-Wall. There were gates in between some of the T-Walls sections which were topped with barbed wire. Additionally, the Southern portion of HKIA had no fence, and it was completely open. That was the commercial/public terminal. When we initially planned the NEO, but didn't anticipate our ANSF and partners wouldn't help secure the flight line. When ANSF left their posts on 15 August, that's when everyone came into the airport and flooded the flight line. Even with the T-Walls, there were a lot of people slipping through. They either came over the T-Wall in spots we couldn't watch all the time, over the small gates and barbed wire, or through the South un-fenced area.

l. Question and Answer 11.

(1) Question: How did Marines execute crowd control?

(2) Answer: At first Marines had to push individual back by hands. Once equipment arrived, we used shields to get on line and move the crowds. We did not use warning shots. The NSU, an Afghan unit fired a lot of warning shots. We brought non-lethal and we used a lot of CS/Smoke, both from helicopters and on the ground. We also brought in helicopters to fly low as a show of force to keep people back.

m. Question and Answer 12.

(1) Question: How were Snipers used?

(2) Answer: Snipers were used in over-watch positions. There were Marine Snipers out in open at North Gate. The German sniper was in the tower at North Gate. We had a sniper team in the tower at Abbey Gate, positioned in overwatch of the canal area and first screening area.

n. Question and Answer 13.

(1) Question: How exhausted were the Marines working the gates?

(2) Answer: The soldiers were fresh, under the circumstances. The Marines at Abbey Gate on 26 August had just executed the rotation plan and a rested company took over. They would rotate companies regularly.

o. Question and Answer 14.

(1) Question: Any unique TTPs developed to execute Gate operations?

(2) Answer: We were expecting a controlled NEO, and weren't expecting a ton of people being brought through one small hole. The marines would help people through the gate, which was only opened slightly. They would usually fall through the gate because of the press of people behind them. The Marines would get in a line, single file, in front of the opening. When the gate was opened, the Marine would grab the stumbling potential evacuee, hand them a bottle of water, and move them rearward to clear the open gate. Basically one Marine per person to help the flow. Corpsman were on standby to help with any medical problems.

p. Question and Answer 15.

(1) Question: What was the situation with the Taliban?

(2) Answer: By August 23/24th, we saw Taliban on the perimeter controlling the crowd pretty much everywhere. They were pretty rough with people. They were on the outside of the gates. They took over the outside security on the North and East Gates by 20 August. By the 27th of August they were in the canal with the crowd at Abbey Gate. They may have been in the crowd early but it was hard to tell them apart from all the people.

q. Question and Answer 16.

(1) Question: How were the interactions between the Marines and the Taliban?

(2) Answer: Professional, the Taliban did crowd control outside, and at a short distance from gates and Marines worked the interior and immediate outside some gates. I'm not aware of any instances when the Taliban and Marines got in arguments or physical.

r. Question and Answer 17.

(1) Question: What was the Taliban's task?

(2) Answer: The Taliban were controlling who would make it to the gates and crowd control.

s. Question and Answer 18.

(1) Question: Were they targeting or keeping certain people away from the gates, at least that you could tell?

(2) Answer: Not that we could tell.

t. Question and Answer 19.

(1) Question: How was the Taliban passed information?

(2) Answer: It started early on in the NEO, after Aug 16, with the two star and then worked its way down to the Soldier/Marine level. NCOs and Platoon Commanders at the gate were coordinating directly with the Taliban early on in the NEO. It was clear that Taliban was friendly at the time.

u. Question and Answer 20.

(1) Question: How credible was the threat on 26th and how many credible threats did you receive during the NEO?

(2) Answer: We had multiple threats every day for all the gates. A lot of them were credible. On the 24th and 27th our snipers engaged potential VBIEDs at North Gate. The threat on the 26th was taken seriously.

v. Question and Answer 21.

(1) Question: How were threats communicated down to the Marines at the Gates?

(2) Answer: The O-6 (MEU Commander) sends word down. The commanders were at the JTF-CR JOC on a regular basis. The JOC would also notify the subordinate COCs (Combat Operations Centers) of the threats through normal comms. I felt confident Marines were getting the information. When I would travel from the JOC to the gates, new threats would be put out and I wouldn't hear them on my radio, but walking down the line the Marines knew before I did.

w. Question and Answer 22.

(1) Question: You said earlier you left Abbey Gate about 30 minutes before the attack. Did you go back down to Abbey Gate immediately after?

(2) Answer: I walked down to the Gate the day after. I ran to the Roll 2 to receive KIAs and WIAs.

x. Question and Answer 23.

(1) Question: Did you observe the injuries?

(2) Answer: I did. Once we identified the KIAs, I went back to see the wounded. They were serious injuries, but not critical. The dead had round holes that some thought were small arms fire. A lot of them had concussion trauma, for example some had their eyes pushed back into their heads. EOD found the ball bearings and that seemed consistent with the holes in the wounded and KIA. The trauma was generally from neck up, back of the head, and extremities. None went through the plate carrier.

z. Question and Answer 24.

(1) Question: Do you know where the WIA are currently?

(2) Answer: They should be at Camp Pendleton, mostly back in home station. The most serious should have been transferred there by now.

aa. Question and Answer 25.

(1) Question: There was a report of small arms fire after the attack. Was this a complex attack?

(2) Answer: We didn't see much small arms fire or injuries, but heard about it on the line. There were people, Brits, Marines, Taliban, NSU, shooting after the blast but not in a specific direction. I did not think it was part of the attack, just people reacting.

bb. Question and Answer 26.

(1) Question: When was the gate locked?

(2) Answer: The gate was closed the same night as the attack, 26 Aug.

cc. Question and Answer 27.

(1) Question: Were you able to observe the medical treatment rendered by first responders/buddy aid?

(2) Answer: The surgeons commented to me all triage conducted by the units was great. The doctors noticed the worst went in first, those that were critical; then the tourniquets went second; finally the walking wounded went last.

cc. Question and Answer 28.

(1) Question: Did the triage include host nation civilians?

(2) Answer: Yes, they were at the hospital at the same and seem to come in based on their injuries, just like the Marines. There were a few kids that we pulled from the canal who were critical. We moved the worst injuries first.

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dd. Question and Answer 29.

(1) Question: Did you have anything else you wanted to add?

(2) Answer: No, I think we covered everything.

5. The point of contact for this memorandum is the undersigned at [REDACTED] and

(b)(6)

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

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



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

ACTS-SCK-DO

10 October 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Interview with [REDACTED] (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) USFOR-A FWD,
27 September 2021

1. On 27 September 2021, BG Lance Curtis, USA, Commander, [REDACTED] (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) USMC, and [REDACTED] (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) USA, 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 on 26 August 2021.

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

3. Discussion.

a. The interview began with BG Curtis and [REDACTED] (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) describing the purpose of the interview, the scope of the investigation, and the manner in which the conversation would be captured and rendered to writing. [REDACTED] (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) was present to record and transcribe the statement.

b. Question and Answer 1.

(1) Question: What was your position at USFOR-A, and what responsibilities did your team have?

(2) Answer: [REDACTED] (b)(6) We had a typical SOJTF structure for CENTCOM, in anticipation of the NSOC mission. We were initially in Tampa from 17 May to 10 June 2021, building towards NSOC. This changed to DAP-A since a military package was needed to support the embassy in Kabul. USFOR-A flew into Kabul 12-13 June 2021 during a period of darkness. I have been with RADM Vasely since.

c. Question and Answer 2.

(1) Question: What was the shift in mission set as you transitioned from NSOC to DAP-A?

(2) Answer: DAP-A shifted the mission set more towards aligning the medical, flight, and security packages to the embassy needs. There was also a focus on the green zone, the understanding that we would help partner nations and embassies. We

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had to build new products as we moved along new, emerging lines of effort. In country, DAP-A changed in July. We stayed in limbo at Resolute Support (RS) HQ near the Embassy for about a month. Initially RIP/TOA with BG Evans in NSOC SOJTF HQ was supposed to be at Bagram. BG Evans organization was required to retrograde from Bagram since it was slated to close, and fall back to Kabul. They were going to relocate to a compound adjacent to the embassy compound, which is where we were. So we stayed there, expecting BG Evans to fall back to us. We were looking at how DAP-A and NSOC would need to blend. After 3 weeks, it was clear NSOC was not the mission. Replacing RS was the mission. This was right around end of June, on the 28th or 29th.

d. Question and Answer 3.

(1) Question: So the first location that USFOR-A went to was the RS HQ in Kabul?

(2) Answer: Yes, during a period of darkness from 12-13 June.

e. Question and Answer 4.

(1) Question: So on 29 June, you're realizing that it's not going to be NSOC-A and you're focused on replacing GEN Miller and his staff?

(2) Answer: Yes, but those conversations began as soon as we hit the ground on the 13th of June. GEN Miller and RADM Vasely started talking about this right away. It did take until around the 28th for the staff and HQ as a whole, to understand and move to this (RS) as our mission.

f. Question and Answer 5.

(1) Question: The staff had about 650 personnel at this time?

(2) Answer: It was down to about 350 at this time, then we came in and brought our staff of about 60. We did have some additional subordinate attachments as well.

g. Question and Answer 6.

(1) Question: Explain that a bit more, please.

(2) Answer: We inherited 3 Platoons of 2nd BCT, 10th MTN. Two of these platoons were at HKIA, and one was at RS HQ in Kabul. 3/10 MTN replaced them soon after. The

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(b)(6)

when he arrived. Prior to his arrival, the

(b)(6)

duties had been divided

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between myself, [redacted (b)(3)130b; (b)(6)] also had a battalion on ground that was the FWD, so he had supervisory responsibility over them, as well as being the [redacted (b)(6)]. Some of the staff came from the Bagram NSOC mission that we inherited. The [redacted (b)(6)], and some of the [redacted (b)(6)] hops. Not sure exactly how many personnel we received from the [redacted (b)(6)]. We never got bigger than 350 as a full replacement for NSOC.

h. Question and Answer 7.

(1) Question: If you had to provide a rough ballpark, how many people did you have at your highest number?

(2) Answer: I'd say never more than about 100. The BOG cap was 650. Around 13 July there was the official handoff with GEN McKenzie where he took the guide-on from GEN Miller. At that event, he announced that USFOR-A FWD would take over the mission at the embassy. That's when the mission was handed to us officially. The BOG cap then was 650, with the number floating around 700. Through RIP/TOA and people leaving country it came down to about 610. Then things escalated, so the BOG cap was released.

i. Question and Answer 8.

(1) Question: Was that a huge fight to exceed the BOG, especially as you're realizing that you will need to execute a NEO?

(2) Answer: Initially, it was a horrific challenge. There were so many restrictions on capability. In most cases, it was one person covering for the work of five. We were all working 20 hours a day. This is even prior to the start of August, before a NEO is in full swing. We were just covering down on requirements, building relationships, and trying to learn about the embassy and emergency procedures. We were also trying to learn about embassy assets and figure out what they had on ground. [redacted (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4g]

[redacted (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4g]

Initially, it was just figuring out how to work together. Since we were fighting to get under the BOG cap, we were also trying to decide which essential people we could cut and still maintain our full operations with the embassy. It was nagging RADM Vasely as he had to look at the PERSTAT daily and tell commanders to get smaller. He wouldn't cut medical or rotary maintainers.

j. Question and Answer 9.

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(1) Question: How many people were in the SFAB at this point?

(2) Answer: It was under 100, pretty small at this time. It was an HQ element for sure. We can pull those PERSTATs if you like.

k. Question and Answer 10.

(1) Question: At this point, it is 13 July. You realize you're USFOR-A forward. PAX on ground is 700 and shrinking toward the BOG cap of 650. That shrunk down to 610 for a period. What kind of communications are you having with the Department of State, the White House, and (b)(1)1.4c about making all this work?

(2) Answer: RADM Vasely had personal relationships with (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) upon arrival. That includes the embassy RSO, RAO, (b)(3)130b, (b)(6). The Ambassador set up weekly touch points with his principals and RADM Vasely. RADM Vasely would then talk to the principals one on one, following the meetings. That was his embassy day, it would take up most of his Wednesday. Our (b)(6) also had meetings with the principals of those sections. (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) had many relationships beyond that. The consular affairs became important, especially moving into August.

We were trying to figure out how long it took to get a visa, the background of operations, the impacts of COVID, etc. We learned that COVID had shut down the entire visa application process. The embassy was teleworking. The embassy had a massive COVID problem, almost none of them or their contractors were vaccinated and COVID swept through the embassy. Ambassador Wilson shut down consular affairs and all visa processing. There was an extremely minimal presence physically in the office at this time. That state of affairs continued for a week or two in July.

So, as the President makes his announcement about getting special visa requirements in July, the embassy was entirely unresponsive. They couldn't see reality for what it was. They were not helpful or responsive at the time.

l. Question and Answer 11.

(1) Question: (b)(3) b (b)(6) Separately, did the delegation of authority cause COMREL issues?

(2) Answer: Yes. In the end, it came down to the relationships between RADM Vasely, MG Donahue, and BG Sullivan. The COMREL was established in loose order.

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As the situation progressed in HKIA, decisions were being made at the speed of thought so it was very personality driven.

m. Question and Answer 12.

(1) Question: (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) And throughout all of this the embassy still isn't seeing the big picture, they aren't thinking about NEO?

(2) Answer: Correct, the embassy is about 4,000 people at this time. It is the largest in the world. RADM Vasely was trying to get the Ambassador to see the security threat for what it really was. There were as many as 10 districts falling every day, getting closer and closer to Kabul. The embassy needed to position for withdrawal, and the Ambassador didn't get it.

n. Question and Answer 13.

(1) Question: Did you hear someone in the embassy say a statement along the lines of "if we have to execute a NEO, we have failed"? Who made that statement, Ambassador Wilson?

(2) Answer: I heard that statement made initially in a NEO Tabletop Exercise. It was a National Security Counsel TTX the statement may have been made by (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) I believe this was on 06 August.

- (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) grabs 7 notebooks of his notes during this operation, one every 2 weeks

o. Question and Answer 14.

(1) Question: As a side note, the new Kabul compound, the one with high walls and C-wire on top, located across from Massoud Circle, what is that now? It is about 10 acres.

(2) Answer: That sounds like the embassy annex. It is where the Chief and the main staff worked. They held a weekly dinner with principals and RADM Vasely there. It had been cancelled for a while due to COVID, but started up again while we were there.

Back to the point of the 06 Aug TTX. I don't know exactly who made that statement. It was definitely a conversation about NEO, revolving around who we should NEO and if was really a threat. A male said "if we get to a neo we have failed". Ambassador Wilson later echoed this sentiment by insinuating that executing a NEO was indicative of a lack of diplomatic success. So the first time we heard something like

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that was at the 06 August TTX, but it wasn't initially made by Ambassador Wilson. I don't know exactly who said it first, but it definitely at the 06 August TTX.

p. Question and Answer 15.

(1) Question: Can you talk more about that meeting and what was said there?

(2) Answer: Sure, it was the interagency NEO TTX. We were confused, based off the name we thought that the NSA would lead. It became clear that the NSC wouldn't lead, it was only called that because everyone was invited.

q. Question and Answer 16.

(1) Question: Who was in that meeting?

(2) Answer: There were senior reps from the DOD. It was no one that I recognized, so there were not any principals like the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs or SECDEF. The majority of principals were NSC civilian seniors. There were some military and civilians in the background. A key point of this discussion was the reduction of intelligence capability due to decreased US capabilities as districts fell. The US ability to detect trends and threats was decreasing. There was an increased risk of strategic surprise.

They also discussed the US Embassy Kabul footprint shrinking down to 2000 bodies by 11 August. This was their intent, but they weren't working toward it yet. From there, it would be cut by another 400 to get down to 1600 total. That was their minimum force capability. If they reduced any further than that, they would need to shut down essential life support systems. The NEO family of plans slide laid out how many days it would take to evacuate people at each category and the category size. Priorities as a whole were discussed including Afghans at risk, embassy employees, approved SIV, SIVs in process, a whole list of categories. They dove into whether seats in or seats out for the aircraft used for the evacuation as you could fly a lot more evacuees with the seats out. It was a very tactical detail after a hand wave and the long discussion about categories. It was interesting to us as we always thought the priority would be the embassy, then the military, then AMCITs as time allowed. This slide indicated that, even at this time, they were thinking that we would bring everyone with any ties out.

r. Question and Answer 17.

(1) Question: It sounds like they thought they had a lot of time to continue executing all of this.

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(2) Answer: That's absolutely true, there was no acknowledgement of the threat on the horizon. The military and civilian thought within the NSC was that the ANDSF was getting beat up but would recover. They were thinking that the ANDSF could hold for at least two years.

s. Question and Answer 18.

(1) Question: Why would they think that, where were they getting that information?

(2) Answer: It was a situation where policy was stated publicly. The POTUS was publicly making it clear that this was a priority. Ambassador Wilson began stating that "I am maniacal about the embassy remaining in Kabul" in direct support of the Afghan government. The LNO heard him say this multiple times.

t. Question and Answer 19.

(1) Question: What is driving him saying that?

(2) Answer: It was policy. The State Department and the President were saying it. Consequently, he and others start saying it, thinking that they will make it work.

u. Question and Answer 20.

(1) Question: What is the military saying?

(2) Answer: GEN Miller was extremely worried from 02 May onward, especially as he was seeing key districts fall.

v. Question and Answer 21.

(1) Question: That makes sense, he has an in depth understanding of the strength of districts as well as the personalities of certain Afghan leaders?

(2) Answer: Absolutely, GEN Miller knew the districts and their leaders like his own mother's face. He understood every move of the Taliban, the fall of every district, and the implication of that. He was tied in. He kept saying things like "you must stay tied in, watch these districts". He would predict Taliban moves. He would make statements saying that if a certain district falls, that should become a "klaxon siren."

At the time, he was reportedly writing a lot of traffic to the SECDEF and members of influence, even Congress, discussing trends in country and the ANDSF. The issue

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was the perceived strength of the ANDSF versus the reality. Yes the ANDSF is all paid but we aren't sure that they are physically present. So why weren't the State Department and the NSC tracking the fragilit in countr ? The first issue was that the policy was setting the timelines. [redacted] (b)(1)1.4c

[redacted] (b)(1)1.4c

[redacted] (b)(1)1.4c Then as districts fell, things began moving too fast to see ANDSF's strength or the population's sentiment. In early August, there were 36 battalions of ANDSF that no one had any accountability of. No one had any clue where they were. They weren't reporting in, they were not available, and no one from the units were answering their phones.

We found this out as the [redacted] (b)(6) [redacted] (b)(6) and other security elements began planning with us. They were careful not to reveal the dire nature of the ANDSF before they met with us in early August. Then they finally revealed the 36 absentee battalions. It was very revealing of both the populations' lack of willingness to fight, and also the government's desperation to tell us. To GEN Miller that would have been the klaxon alarm, specifically the willingness of the government to admit that vulnerability.

w. Question and Answer 22.

(1) Question: Who specifically said that?

(2) Answer: I'm not certain, [redacted] (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) could say best.

x. Question and Answer 23.

(1) Question: [redacted] (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) At this point, Kabul is close to isolated. Could you see how the Taliban were moving toward Kabul?

(2) Answer: Yes, we need to study this campaign. The Taliban used the cease fire to move into position, much like the Viet Cong in Vietnam. For the most part they weren't focused on threatening the ANDSF. They began negotiating with elders and people of interest. They convinced them to step back and stay out of the way. They were isolating Kabul and provincial capitals in silence, keeping their signatures of movement low enough not to get picked up by CONUS. GEN Miller and RADM Vasely were seeing it.

[redacted] (b)(1)1.4c MG Buzzar wou d say at o N Mc enz e, ey us a no cue w ere people were showing up in the outlying provinces. It was better to pay the ANDSF and hope that they

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were showing up to their posts, rather than not paying them and guaranteeing they wouldn't be at their post. The TASHKIL, the afghan PERSTAT, was broadcasting that the ANDSF had 300,000 paid positions

z. Question and Answer 24.

(1) Question: [redacted (b)(3) U.S.C. 3024(i)] The reality is the leaders got paid and the soldiers didn't?

(2) Answer: Later, on 15 August, there was a phone call with the Chairman. He mentioned that on the TASHKIL for Kabul there were 180,000 paid positions. The Chairman said if only 10% of those show up, that's 18,000 people and more than enough to hold. RADM Vasely explained that he didn't think that was accurate, he estimated the number willing to fight as under 3,000 people. Around that time, the Afghan Command Sergeant Major tells us not to expect more than about 750 actually willing to fight. They had a six digit TASHKIL and only 750 people willing to fight. It was remarkable, and once again even more telling for their CSM to admit that to the Americans. When Kabul fell, it turned out he was right. The GCPSU and the Triple-2s were only two unit that ended up fighting back. These were their special police forces, aligned with NSU, who is aligned with [redacted (b)(1) 1.4d]. The Triple 2 fought in north Kabul and the fought GCPSU in the south.

aa. Question and Answer 25.

(1) Question: Alright to quickly recap all of, on 06 Aug there was the interagency NEO TTX mostly conducted with NSC civilians. There was increasing risk of strategic surprise, the Kabul embassy intended to cut down to its minimum force of 1600, and the categories of evacuees had been discussed. Ambassador Wilson is adamant about wanting to stay in Kabul. Among the ANDSF, you're starting to see klaxons and indicators, including 36 battalions not reporting, the district centers around provincial centers starting to collapse. Overall, you still have poor sensors on these areas. And, at the end of the day, the Afghan CSM, the equivalent of the SMA, admits that his force likely won't fight.

- BG Curtis, [redacted (b)(3)130b; (b)(6)] begin looking at the USFOR-A timeline and centered the conversation around it (exhibit 24).

On 04 August, President Ghani admits that he has no faith in the ANDSF. That feels like it should have been a trigger?

(2) Answer: It should have, but people didn't really pay attention to Ghani. POTUS spoke to him, as did GEN McKenzie. I will say, of all the leadership we had, GEN McKenzie was on it. He did so much to make DC aware, to help us, protect us,

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and help us communicate. As we did force protection and force evacuation, things we weren't trained specifically to do, he communicated to the President directly. He did a lot for us.

bb. Question and Answer 26.

(1) Question: Moving on from 06 August, what do you think is key on this timeline?

(2) Answer: On 01 August, Taliban negotiators in Doha, Qatar stated that "total victory more is important than legitimacy". It was apparent when we heard that, that it was game on. They were going full speed, winning militarily, and were coming for Kabul. There was nothing we could do, but that was our gut feeling paired with the rapidly falling districts.

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

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

Moving from the 1st to the 10th August, the Taliban were poised to seize Bagram and release the 5000 prisoners there. We always said that when the prison got hit it was a tide that couldn't be turned. It would add thousands to the Taliban ranks. Once this happens, we know that there was no turning back. They were not just ready to fight.

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

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

cc. Question and Answer 27.

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

Speaking of triggers, the embassy had 17 indicators which were supposed to initiate action when tripped. The embassy allowed them to trip with no action. If an indicator was met, there was no action other than pushing it to the next meeting.

Additionally, Ambassador Wilson was on leave in early July. President Ghani had flown to the US to meet with the President on 25 June and Ambassador Wilson went with him. Ambassador Wilson stayed in CONUS for two weeks of vacation after Ghani

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returned to Afghanistan. There were no decisions made in the Embassy until he returned in mid-July. This made action impossible. Then overlap that with the embassy teleworking from their rooms and not processing any visas. [REDACTED] (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) could accelerate the information flow to State, but he didn't believe in the fall. Ground could have been gained at this time if the Embassy had been able to do anything.

dd. Question and Answer 28.

(1) Question: What does the information flow between the embassy and USFOR-A FWD [REDACTED] (b)(6) look like? Are they synched? Do you think the ground level embassy saw the writing on the walls and didn't pass it up?

(2) Answer: Absolutely. Our [REDACTED] (b)(6) was tied in with the RSO on their staff. The RSO was writing the embassy statement and assessment on the country. It said provincial capitals failing was imminent and that the ANDSF would fail. The writer of that statement was told to change the statement, likely by the DCM. The writer would not change the statement. It was therefore sidelined and buried. A watered down timeline was eventually pushed out. It was a total clash of policy and things not being done. When Ambassador Wilson returned he changed from a "maniacal desire to stay" to sharing our concerns. It was apparent when he returned. We started doing weekly emergency meeting and eventually multiple EACs a week. The primary meeting was on Wednesdays at 0900. [REDACTED] (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) also attended.

[REDACTED] (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) would attend to provide the reality of the situation in the meetings. He would talk about how many districts and provincial capital had fallen. He would describe the rapid advancement and talk through the trend for the next five days. The meeting would then turn into a dialogue about what actions to take. Usually, that action was wait until the next EAC to make a decision.

ee. Question and Answer 29.

(1) Question: Frankly, is Ghazni our trigger?

(2) Answer: Yes. At the end of July, Ghazni and Gardez were our main indicators. At this time, in the start of August, we were tracking a group of 1,000 Taliban fighters just across the border. We knew they were likely coming straight for Kabul once they had the opportunity. We thought they may bypass Ghazni altogether. At the time, we were saying if Lash Karga and Kandahar fell, there would be nothing to stop the flow. When those two cities did fall, we knew that Ghazni and Gardez would also fall either with or without those postured fighters. After that it was so rapid, it wasn't days. It was minutes and hours. Clearly preprogrammed and prepositioned.

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ff. Question and Answer 30.

(1) Question: Is there any other key event in July or August? Then I would like to move to boots on the ground at HKIA and the task organization there.

(2) Answer: I think we have covered July. I do want to highlight 28 June. We had an OPT at the embassy on pre-neo planning. It was the first time the embassy acknowledged looking at the possibility of neo. They were willin to entertain the idea, not make an decision or take an actions.

(b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4g

(b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4g

Jumping to 15 August, GEN McKenzie met with the Taliban leader (b)(6) in Doha, Qatar. In this meeting, on the same day that the Taliban is moving on Kabul, Gen McKenzie was trying to de-conflict and tell the Taliban to stay out of the city. The Taliban told him that they were already in Kabul, and that they wouldn't pull 30 km out of the city as Gen McKenzie wanted. However, the Taliban did give Gen McKenzie a POC for the ground commander in Kabul. The Taliban told Gen McKenzie that the ground commander would "give you anything you need".

At about 0530 on the 15th I was woken up by the night shift guard. I run to the HQ, and Gen McKenzie is on the line to speak with RADM Vasely. RADM Vasely gets on the line with him and Gen McKenzie tells him that he received an intelligence phone call from the (b)(3)130b, (b)(6). There were indicators that the Taliban were moving from all directions to Kabul. Gen McKenzie tells RADM Vasely to get all assets in the air to verify or dispel this information. RADM Vasely calls in the J2 and J3. AH-64s and the PTIDs get in the air. Everything they see shows that the city is a ghost town and there is no activity of any kind. The USFOR-A team starts to lean into their intelligence sources and reaches out to ANDSF leaders to inquire about anything unusual. For about 3 hours, there is nothing of note. Then information beings to flow in indicating that the prison has been liberated and that the prisoners are joining a column of Taliban advancing from the north. Hundreds of prisoners were released. There were another 2 columns advancing from the south and south west as well.

The state department had ordered a withdrawal from the embassy to HKIA on the 13th/14th. The embassy was burning all the classified documents that they couldn't move and were trying to demilitarize all of their vehicles. They weren't panicking at that point, but were under pressure.

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gg. Question and Answer 31.

(1) Question: Are they at all prepared to move to HKIA and retrograde?

(2) Answer: No, they had finally managed to drawn down about 1600-2000 people by the 15th. They were still out of position in regards to their vehicles, ammunition (some of which they had flown out), and they still had massive amounts of classified paper documents that they are trying to burn.

Three hours after that phone call from Gen McKenzie, Parwan prison is broke and liberated, and the Taliban forces are seen approaching. They had prepositioned elements around and in Kabul. Therefore, the fighting wasn't conducted in a massive frontal assault. There were some clashes in the north and southeast with the two ANDSF elements willing to fight. Uncontested, there were green trucks with Taliban flags driving around the city center. They were going to every ministry, and they were accepting the surrender of those ministries. The surrender may have been negotiated prior to the 15th. Then Ghani leaves in his helicopter with \$165 million in cash. We watch his helicopter take off on PTIDS and it confirmed shortly after.

But these trucks are moving from ministries to police precincts. All in small numbers to accept surrender. The main combat forces were hitting the two ANDSF units. For the most part the Taliban are just drifting into the city, and soon are only one kilometer away from the embassy.

hh. Question and Answer 32.

(1) Question: As they get closer, is the embassy escalating or deescalating? Where are you at this time, physically?

(2) Answer: From our side, anxiety is going up. On the 15th we are in the headquarters, the yellow building at the south compound and the CJOC nearby. The CJOC had tons of work stations, strike bridge, PTIDS. The annex had closed several weeks earlier. We were floating between yellow building and the CJOC. Helicopters are flying non-stop for 23 hours to move people off the footprint. There were no major battles, just some scuffles and gun fire which could be heard by JTF-CR Marines at HKIA. But all these reports are fragmented. The ministries are all gone, except the MoD which wanted to fall back with the core staff to HKIA. As the helicopter pushed to help the embassy, USFOR-A is complete on their destruction and exfil plan. We are trying to help the embassy account for all their people. The embassy was just pushing anyone out on a helicopter. The USFOR-A CSM was trying to create a net and account for folks as they arrive in HKIA.

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We don't know how long until the Taliban will come to the embassy or what the plan will be when they arrive. We were trying to weigh whether we could make it out before they arrive, whether they would attempt to besiege, etc. HKIA is doing the same, hardening and reinforcing themselves. At the compound (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) is laying out the plan to get the last 700 out, at the pace of 100 an hour. The plan was to be out before 0500 on the 16th. RADM Vasely, Myself, (b)(6) rolled out at 2240 on the 15th to HKIA. I was able to pack a roller bag with phones, SIPR computer, and other communications equipment in a roller bag.

Meanwhile, most bags that aren't hand carried are not being taken, bags are being thrown off helicopters to make space. The bags are being left and littering the HLZ so guys are working to clear the HLZ to make room for more flights. Some workers are still hiding throughout the embassy and living space. USFOR-A had to bust down doors and find people who say they didn't know where to go despite the guidance on the intercom for hours saying to move to the HLZ. The LNO did this mostly with a battle buddy. He would find Gurkhas and other contract guards still at their post around the embassy even towards the last flight. One Gurkha wouldn't leave his post without calling it up. He tried to call it up, no one answers, and then he agreed to evacuate.

ii. Question and Answer 33.

(1) Question: What airframes are you using?

(2) Answer: We used everything available CH-47s, AH-60s, anything that was available for lifts.

jj. Question and Answer 34.

(1) Question: Who is responsible for full destruction of embassy?

(2) Answer: The RSO. He was destroying things and sending people out. RSO did the best job he could with a peacetime, skeleton staff. Documents were burned in a large courtyard bonfire.

Soon after landing, by around 0100 on the 16th, the first breach on the wire occurs. It was at the south wire, through the southern terminal as the Afghans move towards the north terminal where the aircraft are. The Marines are trying to contain the crowd, but they are limited in numbers. There were roughly 700-800 actual military and contract security trying to hold a large perimeter. We had done a security walkthrough a month and a half prior, but that plan overcome by events. At 1030 and 1355 there were more major breaches as evacuees came in by the thousands. This is the period that is infamous on social media as individual's flooded aircraft and are hanging in the wheel

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wells as they take off. We began talking with the embassy and [REDACTED] (b)(1)1.4c as about to bring 1200 NSU on the 16th through the North West gate to immediately begin helping to sweep off the airfield. The Taliban, unilaterally and uncoordinated, also show up and start beating people with canes to get them off the runway. We were worried this would become a firefight with civilians on the runway in the middle. The Marines try to form a buffer between the Taliban and NSU. RADM Vasely asks the Taliban to move off the airfield. As we see this happen, before nightfall, RADM Vasely calls [REDACTED] (b)(6) [REDACTED] (b)(6) from GEN McKenzie. This starts a multi conversation per day coordination with him in order to eliminate friction points.

kk. Question and Answer 35.

(1) Question: He is fully empowered to discuss in this area? If he says it, it goes?

(2) Answer: Yes, by all indicators when we needed something on ground he made it happen, to a limit. On that first call, [REDACTED] (b)(6) who had been there for 13 years for ever NSOC commander, was translating for RADM Vasely. He explains to [REDACTED] (b)(6) that there are thousands on the airfield. [REDACTED] (b)(6) states that he is there to help and will help with evacuation. RADM Vasely explains assistance is needed with security on the south side and that the Taliban needs to seal all the breaches. [REDACTED] (b)(6) says he will bring 400 to south side and seal and to call if RADM Vasely needs anything else. Within 2 hours, he had 400 guards protecting the south side. RADM Vasely made another phone call to get the Taliban off the airfield to prevent any conflict between them and the NSU.

ll. Question and Answer 36.

(1) Question: The firefight between the NSU and the Taliban is prevented through him then?

(2) Answer: Yes, BGen Sullivan is getting the Marines to create buffer and protect the aircraft as well as create a buffer between the NSU and the Taliban. At this time, RADM Vasely is the only POC between US and Taliban. Once MG Donahue is on ground, MG Donahue and RADM VASELY meet face to face with [REDACTED] (b)(6) in south terminal which is neutral ground at the time. That group met face to face a few more times.

mm. Question and Answer 37.

(1) Question: Did you ever see [REDACTED] (b)(6)

(2) Answer: No, I was never there for face to face interactions.

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nn. Question and Answer 38.

(1) Question: When did the 400 NSU fighters show up?

(2) Answer: The airfield was completed cleared by 2230 on the 16th and by 0030 on the 17th there were aircraft landing again. There is no firm time on when the fighters showed up. There were 4 aircraft that landed back to back on the 17th and the airfield is never closed due to breaches again. Air flow turns off one point as there are issues with refugees landing at AUAB and sprinting off as soon as they land.

On the 17 the TPC, the Taliban Political Commission, fly into Afghanistan. An Afghan aircraft picks them up in coordination with GEN Klein at Doha, Qatar. (b)(6) leads the TPC, he is the deputy to supreme leader of TMC and has full ability to negotiate on behalf of the Taliban.

oo. Question and Answer 39.

(1) Question: How did the deadline move from the 11th of September to the 31st of August?

(2) Answer: It changed after the President's speech. From our viewpoint, we thought that was when the military signature needed to be out, but not when we needed to end the evacuation. It caught us off guard.

pp. Question and Answer 40.

(1) Question: Did this come through the orders process at all?

(2) Answer: No, I only ever heard it verbally. Daily, from the 14th on, there were phone calls which RADM Vasely had to make. From the 15th -31st, McKenzie, the SECDEF, and POTUS spoke daily. I sat in on these calls to run down any RFIs. During those conversations, the theme was that the 31st wasn't firm. GEN McKenzie was doing a good job communicating threat and providing recommendations to higher.

qq. Question and Answer 41.

(1) Question: Even though the 31st was mentioned in the POTUS' speech, the idea existed that it may still change?

(2) Answer: Yes, but not from Taliban standpoint. They heard the 31st in the speech, and the 31st became the red line. It became so important to them that they

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brought in the 313th Taliban Special Operation unit for more security, but also so that they could try to take HKIA by force if they needed to attempt it. They wanted to take HKIA peacefully and would work through [REDACTED] (b)(6) but they were willing to take by force if necessary. This was communicated by Gen McKenzie to POTUS. [REDACTED] (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) came to negotiate with [REDACTED] (b)(6). He attempted to broach staying past the 31st. The Taliban got angry and left because they would not entertain going past 31st. RADM Vasely communicated to POTUS how this meeting went and in definitive terms how opposed to this the Taliban were.

rr. Question and Answer 42.

(1) Question: Can you clarify [REDACTED] (b)(6) role?

(2) Answer: [REDACTED] (b)(6) as the wingman, he was probably 2nd only to [REDACTED] (b)(6). Two other Taliban would also come to the meeting, but that was my perspective. On the 18th, there were still these daily phone calls. There was a discussion on why we were unable to get people through the gates. Higher didn't understand the massive human compacting that was occurring at these gates as 10,000 people were massed outside.

ss. Question and Answer 43.

(1) Question: Do you have any estimate on the number of people that were outside the perimeter?

(2) Answer: Definitely more than 10,000. At one point there were more than 12,000 at North Gate. On the 17th, there were about 1,000 at North Gate because the Afghans initially didn't know which gates we would open. We end up opening North, East, and Abbey Gates. When the Afghans realized which three gates to consolidate at, the crowds grew exponentially.

tt. Question and Answer 44.

(1) Question: How did you pick which gates to open? Security Analysis? Volume?

(2) Answer: I didn't make that decision, but I think it was focused on where we had the most sound security systems available to screen people and meter the inflow. Abbey Gate had the chevron with the outer and inner gate. There was also a consideration on where the evacuees were.

uu. Question and Answer 45.

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(1) Question: At North Gate could you potentially drive a vehicle up to the Gate?

(2) Answer: You could drive up if it weren't for all the people, much less so for Abbey due to the obstructions.

vv. Question and Answer 46.

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

ww. Question and Answer 47.

(1) Question: (b)(3)130b; (b)(6) Is the state department yet communicating with AMCITs about which gates to go to?

(2) Answer: Yes, starting on the 16th.

xx. Question and Answer 48.

(1) Question: So the Department of State is directing which gates to use?

(2) Answer: The General Officers had a joint daily sync with the State Department. They coordinated where to let AMCITs through. Early on, they would send messages out. They would send messages that didn't agree with the advice they received, not sure why.

yy. Question and Answer 49.

(1) Question: Was this due to the confusion of authority between Ambassadors Bass and Wilson? Were those conflicting streams of guidance?

(2) Answer: AMB Wilson wanted to be intensively involved, as did AMB Bass. They both sat down with General Officers. They squared times and locations away. Then the State Department would push the message that went out to AMCITs. Every message that went out was in error in some way. It would be the wrong gate or the wrong offsite location. Sometimes they were directed to unopened Taliban controlled gates. The Taliban would call and ask RADM Vasely to open the wrong gate to let

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people in. It got more organized as time progressed, but we would still have issues. Messages were often being pushed out too late for AMCITs to make pickup. At one point, in the last few days, we were supposed to send mass message to all AMCITs to all get out. State didn't push out that message. They were trying to send 500 chawks at a time. State was worried about clogging the gates, while ignoring that coordination had been done with the Taliban to let mass AMCITs through.

Back to the 18th, we were trying to figure out how to get the priorities of evacuation and the AMCITs through. On the 18th, all key leaders were on the line with POTUS. The Deputy Chief of Mission doesn't understand the human element compacting at gates. The POTUS says to open the gates and get as many people on planes as possible. Any American ID and their families was to be let in. We had to make sure every aircraft is full. Then we also received a statement saying women and children were at risk and should be brought through as priority like AMCITs. This increased the inflow of personnel massively. This set the stage for the 26th.

zz. Question and Answer 50.

(1) Question: Was there ever a point in time where the US was tracking a specific person or a few individuals as a threat stream?

(2) Answer: We got word that the threat was four to six guys, possibly a VBIED with fighters. We received another threat that they were motorcyclists who may drop off bag IEDs or ma themselves be the bomber. (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c

(b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c. We sent that information to the gates, but that was at 1250. There was still no direct specificity. There was a huge mass of threats. We knew the attack was coming, but not by who or where. There was a massive threat stream every day.

aaa. Question and Answer 51.

(1) Question: Was there ever a time that you can track all 4 of these PAX? Or just know they are with media?

(2) Answer: No, we just know they were picked up by the cell. We don't necessarily know they were picked up by the bombers. And directions and locations were constantly shifting. Any time there was a definitive threat, all the gates would react to it and close. On the 26th all gates were closed, except for Abbey. Abbey couldn't close as the Brits were still pulling people out. It was supposed to shut on the 25th, but there was a 24hr extension. BGen Blanchford was told to keep going directly.

bbb. Question and Answer 52.

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(1) Question: How did you come to the agreement to make that 24hr shift?

(2) Answer: I'm not exactly sure, that was a GO to GO conversation. I'm not sure exactly how that conversation went, with both the British and the Marines operating the gate.

ccc. Question and Answer 53.

(1) Question: So the Brits control part of the gate, certain portions of it, and the U.S. controls most of the inner section? It traditionally was a mix even prior to the 26th?

(2) Answer: Yes, there were three portions of the gate. The inner gate held by the Marines, the chevron, and the hotel both ran by the Brits.

ddd. Question and Answer 54.

(1) Question: The Marines were concerned about a closure of Abbey Gate. They were concerned that if it was closed, it would have taken another 48 hours to open and get the Brits back through. This was mainly due to the flood of people?

(2) Answer: It was like that at many gates. At North Gate, you'd pull some people through and the crowd would go crazy. You couldn't open for three hours.

eee. Question and Answer 55.

(1) Question: So at Abbey Gate, there was no specific threat stream. When exactly did the explosion happen?

(2) Answer: I was sitting in the CJOC, the blast was called out at 1743.

fff. Question and Answer 56.

(1) Question: Could you hear it?

(2) Answer: [REDACTED] (b)(1)1.4a We saw the flash happen at Abbey Gate and it was called out in the O. I ns an y wrote down that a blast had occurred at Abbey Gate at 1743. RADM Vasely was on speaker phone, waiting to get called in with POTUS. Gen McKenzie was on hold as well. After the explosion, RADM Vasely was focused on the blast. I asked if Gen McKenzie was on the line and told him directly there was a blast. Gen McKenzie called us directly. I told him the basic details and told

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him why RADM Vasely wouldn't be on the POTUS call. A short while later, RADM Vasely called and updated Gen McKenzie on the situation.

ggg. Question and Answer 57.

(1) Question: About how long until Gen McKenzie got the initial bare bones report?

(2) Answer: Yes, that initial report was very spotty. At 1743, there was the blast and small arms attack reported. At 1759, everyone was on the bridge and I let Gen McKenzie know. Prior to 1813 Gen McKenzie was updated by RADM Vasely. At 1815 Gen McKenzie updated POTUS that there were 4 KIA USMC, 2 expectant USMC, 18 total USMC casualties, and 4 civilian casualties.

hhh. Question and Answer 58.

(1) Question: What are the actions in the HQ at this time?

(2) Answer: Broadly, I became glued to the phone for any RFIs or GO phone calls. Gen McKenzie and his staff were calling. The call with the POTUS lasted until 1902. The call had the principal small groups, the POTUS VP, Director of National Intelligence, the Secretary of Defense, (b)(3)130b, (b)(6), Ambassador Bass, and Ambassador Wilson.

iii. Question and Answer 59.

(1) Question: Was anyone on the line from your location?

(2) Answer: The Ambassador w e t 300m down in JTF-CR, in that location. While we were on the phone (b)(6) were handling medical support, coordination, and getting personnel to Role 2. From Abbey Gate they either had to get around the airfield or across the airfield.

jjj. Question and Answer 60.

(1) Question: So a CH47 could be used?

(2) Answer: I'm not sure if one ever was.

kkk. Question and Answer 61.

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(1) Question: That is the info that we have. A CH-47 moved from Alvarado to an HLZ near Abbey Gate to move casualties directly to the Role 2E and Role 2 at Camp Alvarado. What's your understanding of the task organization at this time? You've got RADM Vasely, MG Donahue, and BG Sullivan. What drove that? Also, what is the time and sequence for USFOR-A leaving from the 27th-31st.

(2) Answer: In regard to the task organization, JTF-CR was subordinate to RADM Vasely and USFOR-A. When MG Donahue showed up, there were some questions about task organization. Slides were being sent back and forth between us and CENTCOM. In the end, USFOR-A was at the top, with two direct lines down to 82nd and to JTF-CR.

III. Question and Answer 62.

(1) Question: Was this ever codified in an order?

(2) Answer: I never saw an order. I saw a slide deck that laid it out in this manner, designating USFOR-A as the highest headquarters. The forces on ground all had different COMREL. Not every unit on ground was necessarily OPCON to us, like the national forces.

mmm. Question and Answer 63.

(1) Question: What did you call the 82nd? JTF-82nd?

(2) Answer: I think technically XVIII ABN Corps JTF-CR, but we just called them the 82nd. But that's how it functioned; MG Donahue and BG Sullivan were subordinate to RADM Vasely. RADM Vasely and MG Donahue had a great relationship. RADM Vasely pulled MG Donahue into calls with SECDEF and the POTUS. He gave MG Donahue the direct line to (b)(6) around the 19th to work with him and complete that handoff. MG Donahue still used the same translator, (b)(6) to speak with him. (b)(6) is here now as well.

nnn. Question and Answer 64.

(1) Question: When do you and RADM Vasely actually leave from HKIA?

(2) Answer: At about 0400 on 29 August on a C-130 with USFOR-A core staff to (b)(1)1.4a. The J2, J3, JAG, J4, the PSD, the RTOs, ADC, RADM Vasely, and the CSM were all on the flight. About 30-40 people.

ooo. Question and Answer 65.

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(1) Question: The handoff was between RADM Vasely and MG Donahue?

(2) Answer: Yes, we left (b)(1)1.4a to have target engagement authority to cover them as they began their JTE. It had to happen, the only question was when. We went with the earlier time on the POD from the 28th-29th.

ppp. Question and Answer 66.

(1) Question: (b)(3)130b; (b)(6); Were you aware of the State Department running any plans to get Americans through Abbey Gate on the 26th of August?

(2) Answer: I'm unaware of that. I know AMCITs came through Abbey Gate. At one point there may have been a message about getting AMCITs through. But for the most part, we tried to steer clear of Abbey Gate as it was too packed and the Brits were getting too many people through there.

qqq. Question and Answer 67.

(1) Question: Is there anyone else we must talk to? And what is your contact info?

(b)(6)

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

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

(b)(6)

LANCE G. CURTIS
BG, USA
Investigating Officer