



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES ARMY FORCES COMMAND  
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REPLY TO  
ATTENTION OF

MAY 13 2010

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MEMORANDUM THRU Lieutenant General David H. Huntoon, Jr., Director of the Army Staff, 202 Army Pentagon Room 3E663, Washington, D.C. 20310-0202

FOR The Honorable John M. McHugh, Secretary of the Army, 101 Army Pentagon, Washington, D.C. 20310-0101

SUBJECT: Army. Action on the Re-Investigation into the Combat Action at Wanat Village, Wygal District, Nuristan Province, Afghanistan on 13 July 2008

1. Reference. Secretary of the Army Memorandum, subject as before, dated 27 January 2010.
2. Tasker. On 27 January 2010, you tasked me to review a U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) report of investigation (ROI)/JAGMAN investigation and related documents concerning the 13 July 2008 combat action at Wanat and to take appropriate action with regard to the Army officers identified in the CENTCOM ROI (see the Reference). I have executed these tasks and now report back to you.
3. Tribute. At the outset, I wish to pay my own tribute to the officers, noncommissioned officers, Soldiers, and Marines stationed at Combat Outpost (COP) Kahler (Wanat) who repelled the attack of a superior enemy force consisting of approximately 200 fighters on 13 July 2008. During heroic fighting, leadership, combat skills, discipline, and esprit de corps ensured the successful defense of the COP and a tactical victory. The actions of the men of Chosen Company, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment (Airborne), 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team (BCT), and those serving with them, testify to their gallantry, courage, training, and professionalism. I salute them all, and extend special condolences to the families and friends of those who fell in the engagement.
4. Officers. In fulfilling your tasker, I considered the decisions and actions of the following officers (NOTE: Positions are those held in July 2008):
  - a. MG Jeffrey J. Schloesser, Commanding General (CG), 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault)/Combined Joint Task Force-101 (CJTF-101);
  - b. BG Mark A. Milley, Deputy CG (Operations) (DCG(O)), 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault)/CJTF-101;
  - c. (b) (6)

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d. (b) (6) 503rd Infantry Regiment (Airborne), 173rd Airborne BCT; and

e. (b) (6) 503rd Infantry Regiment (Airborne), 173rd Airborne BCT.

5. Materials. In fulfilling your tasker, I relied upon extensive documentary materials.

a. My review involved the detailed examination of (1) the CENTCOM JAGMAN investigation, to include exhibits, the executive summary (EXSUM) of the JAGMAN investigation, and the briefing slides concerning the JAGMAN investigation prepared by Lieutenant General Richard F. Natonski, Commander, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Command (MARFORCOM); (2) the endorsement of the JAGMAN investigation prepared by General David H. Petraeus, Commander, CENTCOM; and (3) the Task Force-Bayonet/Combined Joint Task Force – 101 Memorandum, Subject: A[rmy] R[egulation] 15-6 Investigation Findings and Recommendations – Vehicle Patrol Base (VPB) Wanat Complex Attack and Casualties, 13 July 2008, dated 13 August 2008, to include exhibits.

b. The Task Force-Bayonet/CJTF-101 AR 15-6 Report of Investigation (ROI) is primarily a comprehensive examination of the actual combat action on the morning of 13 July 2008. While it provided context for the move to Wanat (ROCK MOVE), it focused on the events of a single day. It is professional, thorough, comprehensive, and objective. In its narrative and exhibits, it captured the essential facts of the combat action itself. No further investigation of the combat action is warranted.

c. The JAGMAN investigation documented the decisions and actions of the commanders and staffs at the company, battalion, brigade, and joint task force/division levels. While it too provided context for the move to Wanat (ROCK MOVE), it focused primarily on the events of 7-12 July 2008. The verbatim transcripts of the witness interviews and the compilation of documents were of great assistance in developing the facts. In the course of the (b) (6) response process, extensive, additional information came before me. I do not see this as affecting the facts that the JAGMAN investigation amassed. Rather, the additional information amplified the facts, put them into context, and caused my analysis and conclusions to diverge from the JAGMAN investigation's opinions in some respects. No further investigation of the events of 7-12 July 2008 is warranted.

d. During my review, I intentionally did not rely on the Combat Studies Institute (CSI), Fort Leavenworth, KS, narrative of (b) (6). It is my understanding that the narrative is a draft which has not undergone pre-publication vetting and academic review in accordance with standing CSI research protocols. LtGen Natonski incorporated

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certain of (b) (6) working papers among the exhibits of the JAGMAN investigation. These I did consider.

e. During my review, I did not rely on the SAIG-ZA Memorandum, Subject: Recommendations for Follow-On Actions – Battle of Wanat, Afghanistan, dated 29 July 2009, or on DIH 09-8031/HL # 108985, consisting of two matrices, one of 24 pages and the other of 11 pages. These materials originated with the Department of the Army Inspector General (IG) and are accordingly subject to special handling. They were provided to me with the specific understanding that I could not reproduce them, use them for adverse action, disseminate them, or use them as an exhibit or enclosure (see SAIG-ZXL Memorandum, subject: Request for Inspector General (IG) Records for Official Use – Wanat Report, dated 2 February 2010). Given these restrictions, the notice requirements of AR 600-37, and the voluminous other materials available to me, I limited my use of them as noted. As a practical matter, this decision did not reduce the information available to me – the IG materials rested largely on the Task Force Bayonet/CJTF-101 ROI which I considered carefully.

f. During my review, I learned that the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command was investigating unspecified actions by Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry, during the 2007-2008 deployment. I have received no materials that this investigation has generated. I therefore did not consider the existence of this investigation.

g. During my review, I consciously chose to not review the numerous stories, commentaries, and other discussions of the Wanat combat action that have appeared in print, on television, and on the internet.

## 6. Reprimands.

a. The JAGMAN investigation focused principally on specific actions directly related to the movement to and occupation of FOB Wanat. My review focused on the totality of circumstances that included and affected actions at Wanat. My review led me to believe that (b) (6) were neither negligent nor derelict in the performance of their duties, exercising a degree of care that a reasonably prudent person would have exercised under the same or similar circumstance. To criminalize command decisions in a theater of complex combat operations is a grave step indeed. It is also unnecessary, particularly in this case. It is possible for officers to err in judgment – and to thereby incur censure – without violating a criminal statute. This is particularly true where the errors are those of omission, where the standards come from multiple non-punitive doctrinal publications, where there is less than complete and certain knowledge of enemy capabilities and intent, and where commanders enjoy wide discretion in their exercise of their command prerogatives and responsibilities. In this connection, I note that the CENTCOM endorsement explicitly recognizes the need for “an SOP for the planning, resourcing, and supervision of the establishment, construction, and

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manning of fixed operating positions.” The commanders at the time of Wanat did not have the benefit of such guidance.

b. My review of the JAGMAN investigation, EXSUM, and slides, and the CENTCOM endorsement led to the conclusion that certain decisions and actions of (b) (6) warranted (b) (6). Accordingly, on 5 March 2010, I (b) (6) in writing. In accordance with AR 600-37, the (b) (6) together with the materials that served as the basis for them (that is, the JAGMAN investigation (less the exhibits), EXSUM, and slides, and the CENTCOM endorsement), were served on (b) (6) on 9 March 2010, and on (b) (6) on 11 March 2010.

c. Through coordination with the U.S. Army Trial Defense Service, military defense counsel for each officer was arranged. Each officer and his counsel were also given unrestricted access to the exhibits of the JAGMAN investigation and the TF Bayonet/CJTF-101 AR 15-6 ROI and its exhibits at this Headquarters. Each officer and counsel for (b) (6) availed themselves of this opportunity. Each officer was given ample time to respond to the (b) (6) the responses being received by 12 April 2010.

d. I also afforded each officer an opportunity to appear before me personally. All three officers availed themselves of this opportunity, (b) (6) on 15 April 2010 and (b) (6) on 16 April 2010. My sessions with (b) (6) (b) (6) included extended reviews of their actions prior to, during, and after the combat action at Wanat. In my effort to understand the combat action at Wanat with each of these officers, I began my review with each of these officers from the time of their pre-deployment site survey (PDSS) of the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry (TF Rock), and extended this review until transfer of authority (TOA) to the 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry, the successor unit occupying the battlespace. I was aided in this review by detailed topographic maps covering the multiple provinces and smaller sub-governmental units in which TF Rock conducted combat operations, contained in (b) (6) response.

7. Disposition of the (b) (6) I considered carefully the officers' written responses and their oral presentation of matters during their personal appearances. The extensive, additional information that they provided expanded the facts that the JAGMAN investigation contained. I do not see this as affecting the facts that the JAGMAN investigation amassed. Rather, the additional information amplified the facts, put them into context, and caused my analysis and conclusions to diverge from the JAGMAN investigation's opinions in some respects. You can say that my interpretation of the decisions and actions evolved. My interpretation rests upon forty years' of service in the U.S. Army, and draws extensively from my experience of the past four years as U.S.

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Army Forces Command has trained and deployed approximately (b) (2) BCT's for combat operations.

a. During my review of all the materials available to me, I kept several broad principles in mind. First, if a commander makes a decision after reasoned consideration of the facts and circumstances, the existence of alternatives does not make the decision erroneous. Stated otherwise, a commander has broad discretion and, absent an egregious disregard of significant facts, his reasonably considered decision should be presumed to be valid. Second, in evaluating any decision, it is critical to focus on the facts and circumstances as they were known at the time of the decision. With hindsight, with knowledge of later events, it is always possible to arrive at a different decision. If, however, the commander prudently acted on the basis of what he knew and what he reasonably should have known, subsequent events or information, that is developed or interpreted differently at a later time, does not make the original decision unsound or incorrect. Third, if there is evidence of a decision or action that is later considered less than optimal (or even poor), one must ask whether it actually contributed in some meaningful way to a negative outcome. Fourth, and finally, one must understand there is no such thing as a perfect decision in war, where complexity, friction, uncertainty, the interlocking effects of the actions of independent individuals, and the enemy all affect the outcome of events.

b. During my review of all the materials available to me, I adopted three main lines of inquiry. First, there was a conscious effort to avoid any personal biases and preconceptions in order to understand the decisions and actions under review in the context that they actually occurred. Next, I examined the battle command framework that existed during the deployment of the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry, in 2007-2008. This included the roles and tasks of the commanders in the environment of the brigade's area of responsibility (AOR), the use of staffs, and the imperatives of counterinsurgency (COIN) doctrine. Closely tied to this was consideration of commanders' battlefield circulation as practiced in Nuristan and Kunar provinces.

c. The AOR presented an array of complex challenges and tasks.

(1) There is its sheer geographical size. For example, the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry, was responsible for an area the size of the state of Connecticut, containing at the outset 15 platoon-sized COP's. This resulted in the dispersion of the battalion's companies, their fragmentation into platoons to man the isolated COP's, and the inability to maintain a battalion reserve. The extremely rugged, austere terrain imposed great limitations on movement and the selection of U.S. positions.

(2) As to ground movement, improved roads were few and the use of any road in some combination required the employment of scarce route clearance package assets,

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assembly of tactical convoys, combat rehearsals, and significant numbers of Soldiers in order to reduce the threat posed by the enemy.

(3) Air movement was no more certain. This uncertainty arose from a shortage of aviation assets, the physical limitations imposed on rotary-wing aviation by high-altitude, and the danger inherent in employing aviation in the mountains in the presence of an enemy with extensive expertise in combating forces that place a high degree of reliance on air movement.

(4) 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry, was assigned an economy of force mission within the battlespace of the 173rd Airborne BCT, and in turn that BCT was assigned an economy of force mission within the battlespace of CJTF-101. The fact that this unit was engaged in an economy of force operation meant constant shortages of engineer and aviation assets.

(5) Site selection must be understood in the context of the topography of eastern Afghanistan and within the framework of COIN doctrine. As to selection of combat positions for Coalition forces in eastern Afghanistan, it is a truism that at virtually every site, there is high ground above one. This is particularly true when the COIN-based need to interact with the Afghan population leads to the co-location of U.S. positions with Afghan villages.

(6) Civil engagement requirements imposed significant demands on Commanders at all levels. Afghan civil and military officials tend to equate the rank of their U.S. and Coalition counterparts, and the frequency and duration of contact with their sincerity and credibility. Therefore, maintenance of relationships with Afghan officials, in furtherance of the COIN focus on building governance, required the constant personal attention of commanders at every level. The same was true for U.S. information operations (IO), which placed a premium on face-to-face contact between U.S. officers and Afghan officials.

(7) Battlefield circulation requirements dictated the manner in which command and control (C2) was exercised. The requirement that commanders constantly circulate through their respective AOR's necessitated their heavy reliance on radio communications with their staffs and subordinates, dependence upon shared experience, and development of the requisite initiative to deal with a kaleidoscopically changing battlefield situation.

d. A distinct approach to command had developed within the 173rd Airborne BCT, and in particular within the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry, during the 14 month deployment. It put a premium on mutual trust between commanders at each level and between commanders and their staffs. Essential to the success of this approach was a

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common understanding of tasks and priorities, flexibility in the face of recurring transportation and logistics shortages, and confidence in the ability of subordinates to execute without on-the-spot supervision. Because the commanders at each level had learned, embraced, and confidently applied this approach, their units had consistently demonstrated agility and achieved mission success. This approach to command is fully consistent with our current command and COIN doctrines which allow, indeed require, commanders to tailor their plans, decisions, and actions to the situation as it actually exists and to adapt constantly. No single template for planning or execution is always correct. As has always been true, but is especially applicable in the battles in which we are currently engaged, the essence of successful command is the identification of the methodology and course(s) of action that best fit the challenge of the moment. Rote use of a particular planning technique merely because "the book says so" is dangerous. Leaders must "think" and they must lead "thinking" Soldiers. "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth light."

e. The TF Bayonet/CJTF-101 AR 15-6 ROI and the JAGMAN investigation concluded that the closure of COP Bella and the establishment of a COP at Wanat were correct, given the exposure of COP Bella and the importance of Wanat. Likewise, they concur that the selection of the actual COP site at Wanat was appropriate in light of the terrain and the desirability of interacting with the Afghans. Finally, they conclude that the timing – prior to the TOA between the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry, and the 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry – was reasonable in light of the difficult challenges that the 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry, would encounter if it had "inherited" COP Bella (for example, lack of in-theater experience, a new force with fewer Soldiers). With these conclusions, I concur.

f. In discussing the facts underpinning the (b) (6) and my disposition of them, I do not intend to repeat everything contained in the materials before me. In particular, only a close reading of the responses to the (b) (6) will illuminate the additional information which, supplementing the JAGMAN investigation and synthesizing with it, led to my conclusions. Below, I shall highlight information that I deemed to be of particular importance.

g. (b) (6) was the pivotal figure in the decision to close COP Bella and to establish a COP at Wanat. It is reasonable to say that, had he not proposed these actions, they would not have occurred during the deployment of the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry.

(1) I (b) (6) because, based on the materials initially available to me, he (b) (6) the establishment of the COP at Wanat with sufficient attention to detail and oversight; he (b) (6) during the operation (for example, attending meetings (shuras) with Afghan officials); he (b) (6) his Soldiers at Wanat in the period 8-12

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July 2008; and he (b) (6) risk assessment and risk mitigation determination.

(2) There was in fact extensive planning for the establishment and development of the COP at Wanat and for its transfer to the 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry, after the TOA. This planning can be traced, in varying forms, from the original occupation of the battlespace by 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry. For example, the engineering requirements received extensive attention over time. The requirements of the incoming battalion were fully considered. Liaison with that battalion, to include coordination with the commander and advance party and (b) (6) unprecedented detachment of experienced Soldiers of his battalion to assist the 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry, at NTC, was superior. (b) (6) ensured that (b) (6) understood his intent and expectations with respect to Wanat. They shared a common understanding of the priorities and the means of achieving them. (b) (6) also met personally with the (b) (6) who was to be the first officer on-site at Wanat, (b) (6). This ensured that he too was fully informed concerning the upcoming operation. That challenges arose during the initial development of the COP at Wanat was typical of every operation in the previous 14 months. (b) (6) and his staff took them in stride and overcame them.

(3) During the closure of COP Bella, the movement to Wanat, and the initial establishment of the COP at Wanat, (b) (6) was almost frenetically busy. Specific events which required his time and attention include:

i. His battlefield circulation and activities demonstrate the complexity and demands of the full spectrum COIN environment. On 8-10 July 2008, he attended multiple shuras and key leader engagements (KLE) with local officials. While this was critical in maintaining their confidence and dealing with their grievances, it inevitably took him away from his command post (CP) to an extent that would be viewed as unprecedented by those who have not engaged in a COIN-driven operational environment.

ii. Within this context, it is crucial that the second-order consequences of a combat incident at COP Bella on 4 July in which aerial platforms engaged and killed multiple people is recognized. The enemy's IO, in an effort to split the coalition, portrayed legitimate U.S. actions as the callous killing of Afghan civilians (see below for a fuller discussion under (b) (6)). Both (b) (6) and his superior Commanders identified the need to immediately counter the enemy IO through a thorough investigation that rapidly and forthrightly addressed the misperceptions that were engendering anti-coalition and government sentiments.

iii. On 11 July, (b) (6) escorted the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) to his positions in the Korengal Valley. Enemy activity prevented the Chairman

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from leaving in his own aircraft as planned. The CJCS used (b) (6) aircraft, effectively stranding him for a time and necessitating a difficult, dangerous, and time-consuming road extraction. He returned to the Camp Blessing (CP) early on 12 July.

iv. While the establishment of the COP at Wanat was the battalion's main effort, it is significant that, from 8 July until 13 July, there was no hostile fire there, whereas elsewhere in the AOR – in the Chowkay and Korengal Valleys – the battalion's troops were in contact with the enemy. (b) (6) was required to immediately respond to these active combat engagements at a time when there was no combat occurring at Wanat and no indications of imminent attack.

These events, however, are of less significance when one reflects that (b) (6) was in constant communication with his CP at Camp Blessing and had trained his key staff officers to keep him informed while monitoring and responding to events throughout the battalion's AOR.

(4) While (b) (6) location and activities in the period between closure of Bell and his return to Wanat will be detailed in the section pertaining to him, (b) (6) concurrence in (b) (6) choice of locations and actions was justified by the circumstances.

(5) The enemy's most likely course of action was sniping and sporadic indirect fire. Between the evening of 8 July and the morning of 13 July, these types of attack did not occur at Wanat. The enemy's most dangerous course of action was an attack on the COP before the positions were constructed to a degree that they afforded protection to the U.S. defenders. Again, this did not occur.

(6) (b) (6) in conjunction with (b) (6) made a conscious decision to focus on protection (that is, construction of the COP's defenses) rather than on security. This does not mean that security was neglected. While counter reconnaissance patrols were not conducted owing to the focus on the COP's construction, technology (for example, the Long Range Advanced Scout Surveillance System, the Improved Target Acquisition System, the Low Level Voice Intercept Team, a variety of night vision devices, and sophisticated communications systems) and weapon systems (for example, the mortars and the TOW missile system) had proven effective in providing security during the previous 14 months and they were deployed to Wanat to augment the platoon's capabilities.

i. LP/OP's are valuable elements of security. When I served as a junior officer in Vietnam, LP/OP's were virtually the only means of obtaining standoff warning of the approach of the enemy. Based on my experience, the lack of distant positions at Wanat was initially a significant issue for me. However, as I considered the response materials

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and reflected on the specific battlespace occupied by Chosen Company, my perspective was modified. I came to believe that there was significant risk in supporting lightly held, distant, exposed positions, especially before the COP's initial defenses were prepared. They would have absorbed manpower, which was urgently needed at the COP itself. They would have been difficult to re-enforce in a crisis. The presence of U.S. personnel at other locations would have required de-confliction and, as was subsequently established, would have slowed the responsiveness of fires from Camp Blessing and other sources. I also modified my perspective as I considered the capacities of the ground-based ISR systems which were used at Wanat. I came to believe that, subject to line of sight limitations, they significantly added to this unit's ability to understand and control their battlespace. These ISR systems provided a suitable degree of security.

ii. The same holds true for patrols. I cannot fault the deliberate decision to commit resources to protection of the COP and to rely on our technical dominance for security. It is significant that neither the force at Wanat nor any other source raised a credible alarm concerning an imminent or overwhelming threat to the position at Wanat in the period 8-13 July.

(7) In evaluating (b) (6) explanation of his decisions and actions, I have given weight to the support that he has received from commanders with recent experience in Afghanistan. Of particular importance are memoranda from GEN Stanley A. McChrystal, GEN (ret.), David D. McKiernan, LTG David M. Rodriguez, and MG Joseph L. Votel. Each of these battle-seasoned leaders has recent combat experience in Afghanistan and directly experienced the challenges that (b) (6) faced.

(8) To sum up with respect to (b) (6) I have considered his decisions and actions in the light of the actual circumstances that existed at the time. I have asked myself, whether viewed in this light, did (b) (6) knowing what he knew, act reasonably? Under all the circumstances, I conclude that he did.

h. Based on the materials initially available to me, I (b) (6) (b) (6) the establishment of the COP at Wanat with sufficient detail; (b) (6) to go to Wanat in the period 8-12 July 2008 because he was a witness in an AR 15-6 investigation; and for his (b) (6) for the enemy's most dangerous course of action at Wanat.

(1) With respect to the planning and execution of the Wanat operation, it is apparent that (b) (6) was fully engaged with his subordinates, particularly the (b) (6) (b) (6) at Wanat, (b) (6) understood fully what was expected of him and of the NCO's and Soldiers with him at Wanat. The establishment of the COP had long been in contemplation. (b) (6) and (b) (6) had considered carefully and often the location of positions and related matters. During the operation's execution,

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(b) (6) was in radio contact with (b) (6) before the company commander's arrival at Wanat. (b) (6) detailed survey of the fighting positions and of the defensive work that had been completed prior to his arrival established that they fully met his expectations. Likewise, officers who examined the fighting positions and the defensive work after the engagement were also satisfied with them. That the positions were properly designed, prepared, and manned is in large measure supported by the fact that a numerically superior enemy's attack was defeated. Likewise, the (b) (6) and his Soldiers successfully overcame various challenges (for example, logistics delays) because (b) (6) had fully absorbed his commander's intent and was flexible enough to adjust his actions to the circumstances that prevailed at the time.

(2) (b) (6) satisfactorily explained his actions before his arrival at Wanat. On 8 July 2008, he was at COP Bella supervising its closure. Late on 9 July, he was among the last to leave COP Bella. On 10 July, he was at Camp Blessing providing evidence concerning the engagement at COP Bella on 4 July. He had cleared ("approved") the fires that resulted in false enemy claims of civilian casualties. It was of the utmost importance to both document the true facts and to refute the enemy IO offensive. On 11 July, he waited in vain for aviation transportation to Wanat. Due to aircraft shortages and the imprudence of using the road between Camp Blessing and Wanat, he was unable to leave Camp Blessing. On 12 July, he arrived at Wanat and assumed in-person leadership of his company's mission. Under these circumstances, his actions between 8 and 12 July were entirely reasonable.

(3) I have addressed the issue of risk assessment and risk mitigation in the discussion of (b) (6) decisions and actions. (b) (6) views nested within those of his battalion commander. Time has borne out the correctness of those views.

i. I (b) (6) because, on the materials initially available to me, he failed to oversee the planning and execution of the Wanat operation by the battalion and company. It is apparent to me that (b) (6) handled (b) (6) with the "lightest rein". (b) (6) was an officer who, in 14 months of combat in the complex environment of Nuristan and Kunar Provinces, had proven himself a skillful and effective commander. This is consistent with his record of extraordinary achievement that goes back as far as his time as a platoon leader. Whether judged by his combat operations, or by successful population-centric COIN engagement of the Afghans, or by troop leading success (for example, no deaths from improvised explosive devices, no friendly fire incidents, no suicides), (b) (6) had successfully (b) (6) battalion under extremely challenging circumstances. Likewise, (b) (6) had justified confidence in (b) (6). Because decisions and actions of the battalion and company commanders, when fully explained, were proper, (b) (6) did not fail in his (b) (6) responsibility to oversee them.

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j. On the basis of all the information available to me, I concluded that the (b) (6) did not reflect the totality of the facts as they were known to me after receipt and assimilation of the responses to the (b) (6). I therefore withdrew, cancelled, and annulled the (b) (6). Further, I have provided to each officer a memorandum that memorialized the process through which we had gone and captured the key lessons which I have drawn from it. With respect to the three officers, these include the following.

- (1) The importance of taking responsibility for one's decisions and actions;
- (2) The expectation of accountability to the Army as an institution; to the Soldiers who are in your charge; to your leaders; and to the families of those who died in the combat engagement at Wanat;
- (3) The institutional and cultural imperative to be a life-long learner within a learning institution; and
- (4) The affirmation of the need to grow from the experience of Wanat and its aftermath.

Each of these officers, unbidden and in his own way, articulated these key lessons and his profound commitment to them.

8. General Officers. I also reviewed the Wanat-related decisions and actions of MG Schloesser and BG Milley, as established by the JAGMAN investigation, EXSUM, and slides, the CENTCOM endorsement, and the TF Bayonet/CJTF-101 AR 15-6 ROI.

a. This memorandum has already laid out the analysis of the Wanat-related decisions and actions of (b) (6). No censure attaches to these officers because their decisions and actions were reasonable and proper under the circumstances. The recommendations and information that passed from these subordinates to the division level reflected the reasonableness and propriety of their decisions and actions. These recommendations and information therefore did not result in erroneous decisions and actions on the part of the division commander, his deputy, or his staff. I therefore conclude that no censure attaches to MG Schloesser or BG Milley in connection with the combat engagement at Wanat.

b. The JAGMAN investigation, EXSUM, and slides, and the CENTCOM endorsement reached a similar conclusion, albeit through the prism of Article 92, UCMJ. They concluded that, "based on the information reported to, and known by, MG Schloesser and his Division staff, due care was exercised in the supervision of and support of Operation Rock Move and the planned construction of COP Wanat" (JAGMAN investigation, opinion 2, page 56).

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c. The JAGMAN investigation and I, by different routes, have arrived at the same conclusion with respect to MG Schloesser and BG Milley. Whether examined as an issue of judgment or a violation of legal standard drawn from the UCMJ, their Wanat-related decisions and actions are not open to censure.

d. In analyzing the decisions and actions of the two general officers, one additional point should be noted. As MG Schloesser commanded the division and the CJTF, he bore the responsibility for its actions. One cannot say the same of BG Milley. As a DCG, he exercised no command authority in his own right. His decisions and actions flowed from the commander's delineation of his responsibilities. While errors in fulfillment of these responsibilities would open him to censure and, under grave circumstances, to punishment, one would have to evaluate them in light of his subordinate role.

e. In closing the discussion of the general officers, I also note MG Schloesser's selfless and repeated acceptance of responsibility for any shortcomings that occurred before and during the combat engagement at Wanat. As a matter of conscience, and without an external request, he addressed himself to me on behalf of his subordinates.

(b) (6) in a similar and very profound manner, did the same with respect to (b) (6) (b) (6) and in turn (b) (6) took full responsibility for the actions of (b) (6). These honorable actions are precisely what we expect of our Army leaders.

#### 9. Other Matters.

a. The (b) (6) received the Silver Star for his "perseverance under fire and leadership in the face of mortal danger..." At the end of March 2010, it was conveyed to me through technical channels that you had requested my observations on the award of the Silver Star to (b) (6) for his actions during the Wanat engagement. At that time, I advised you that I had found no information which would trigger a review of the award to this officer. My principal source of information for this assessment was the TF Bayonet/CJTF-101 AR 15-6 ROI which, as I have noted, had as a primary focus the combat action itself. Now, at the conclusion of my review, and based on all information available to me, I again advise you that I have found no basis for a review of the Silver Star to (b) (6). The information indicates that his gallantry in action earned its award.

b. (b) (6)

(b) (6)

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c. (b) (6)

(b) (6)

d. (b) (6)

(b) (6)

e. On-going efforts to disseminate the lessons that can be drawn from the conduct of the combat action at Wanat, such as the current leadership study being conducted at the Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth, must be informed by not only the earlier JAGMAN investigation, EXSUM, and slides, the CENTCOM endorsement, and the TF Bayonet/CJTF-101 AR 15-6 ROI, but also by the materials that were provided to me by (b) (6) as part of their response. To do otherwise would provide an incomplete picture of the leadership actions that were taken and the context in which the combat action occurred.

f. I am especially indebted to LtGen Natonski, Commanding General, MARFORCOM, and MG David G. Perkins, Commanding General, 4th infantry Division, for their in-depth review of the JAGMAN investigation. Their insights were invaluable to me during the initial stages of my review.

g. In fulfilling your tasker, I received unstinting support from the Army Staff, from CENTCOM, and from MARFORCOM. I have written to the Commanders of CENTCOM and MARFORCOM to acknowledge the support which members of their staffs provided to me.

10. CONCLUSION. Battle is the supreme test of any unit. The U.S. officers, NCO's, Soldiers, and Marines at Wanat on 13 July 2008 met this test and passed it with flying colors. By their valor and their skill, they successfully defended their positions and defeated a determined, skillful, and adaptable enemy who masses and attacks at times, ways, and places of his own choosing. That U.S. casualties occurred at Wanat is true. However, they did not occur as a result of deficient decisions, planning, and actions of the chain of command – running from (b) (6) to MG Schloesser. The U.S. casualties occurred because the enemy decided to attack the COP at Wanat and battle

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resulted. It is critical that we not mechanically equate U.S. casualties with professional error or misconduct. In war, battle is the mechanism by which we defeat the enemy. In battle, casualties are inevitable. Regrettably, they are often the price of victory. When U.S. casualties occur, as at Wanat, we must examine the facts and circumstances to determine whether our Officers, NCO's, and Soldiers have performed properly. When, as at Wanat, they have done so, we should learn any lessons that the battle teaches and move forward. This judicious, reasoned review process, without anger or partiality, is the true meaning of accountability. This is what I have endeavored to accomplish in fulfillment of your tasker.



CHARLES C. CAMPBELL  
General, U.S. Army  
Commanding

3 Enclosures

(b) (6) response

response

(b) (6) response