

Enclosure
Combined Responses from CJTF 101 and 173rd ABCT

The following are responses to Colonel (R) Brostrom's questions prepared by both Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) 101 and the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team (ABCT). Each answer is annotated with the unit which provided it. These answers were prepared in support of the briefing provided by COL Charles Preysler to the Brostrom Family on 23-24 October 2008.

a. (U) **CJTF 101 Question #1:** *Is there a sense of complacency at the CJTF level and higher due to current command relationship and structure creating a lack of flexibility to adapt to the changing enemy situation?* There is no sense of complacency within the CJTF due to the command relationship with ISAF or CENTCOM. The command relationship and structure of the CJTF as the ISAF Regional Command-East did not create a lack of flexibility that prevented adapting to the enemy situation.

b. (U) **CJTF 101 Question #2:** *Did the CJTF and ISAF HQ's provide the 173rd Infantry Brigade with the requisite reinforcement/support that would have countered their vulnerability during a critical time of redeployment back to Italy?* The CJTF provided Task Force Bayonet (173rd ABCT) with close air support, close combat air, and MEDEVAC coverage in the same manner as the Task Force had come to expect throughout its deployment to Afghanistan. Fires support included B-1 Bombers, A-10 Warthogs, F-15 Strike Eagles, AH-64D Apaches, and an AC-130 Gunship. Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) support for 12-13 July 2008 included Guardrail, Red Ridge, Warrior-A, Low Level Voice Intercept (LLVI), and Predator.

c. (U) **CJTF 101 Question #3:** *What was the level of involvement of CJTF senior leadership in selecting Wanat as a FOB and ensuring that it was safe enough to be occupied by U.S. Forces specifically only a platoon of infantry?* The decision to locate a VPB at Wanat was made by the TF Bayonet (173rd ABCT) leadership due to the assessed vulnerability of an existing COP (COP Bella) and the need to accomplish the mission of connecting the Afghan people with their local government. Providing legitimacy to and improving partnership with the district government was determined to be a key component of the on-going counterinsurgency fight, and the Task Force determined that relocating forces near the Wanat District Center was a logical decision. The decision to relocate to Wanat was discussed by the chain of command for approximately a year, with the decision to move to Wanat finally being made in June 2008.

d. (U) **CJTF 101 Question #4:** *Had the senior leadership of the CJTF become complacent or were they forced to accept the high risk conditions that our troops were repeatedly put in due to a gross lack of resources?* The CJTF senior leadership did not become complacent, nor did the command overlook risk mitigation. Wanat was initially established as a Vehicle Patrol Base (VPB) on 8 July 2008, and the command intended to develop the location into a full Combat Outpost (COP). To meet that requirement, the command contracted for civilian construction equipment to assist with developing the location, however the equipment's arrival was delayed for several days. The Soldiers, Marines, and ANA at VPB Wanat made force protection improvements with the resources available pending the civilian construction equipment's arrival; this fact does not indicate a gross lack of resources rather it represents the challenges inherent with constructing COPs at all locations throughout the very rural and rugged terrain in Afghanistan.

e. (U) **CJTF 101 Question #5:** *Did the CJTF request additional assets through their chain of command and did this request get the proper attention of the ISAF, CENTCOM and Joint Staff Leadership?* The CJTF did not request additional assets outside of the CJTF.

f. (U) **CJTF 101 Question #6:** *At what point did the CJTF (101st Airborne Division) plan on occupying/replacing my son's platoon due to the impending redeployment?* The Relief in Place/Transfer of Responsibility (RIP/TOA) between Task Force Bayonet (173rd ABCT) and Task Force Duke (3/1 IBCT) was scheduled for 2 August 2008. Task Force Duke was scheduled to begin arriving into the Task Force Bayonet AOR from 7-28 July 08. 2/503rd Infantry (TF Rock) conducted their RIP/TOA on 28 July 2008.

g. (U) **173rd ABCT Question #7:** *Were there embedded elements of the 101st Airborne Division with my son's platoon to help engage with the Village Elders and in the preparation of the defensive perimeter?* There were five vertical construction engineers from the 62nd Engineer Battalion, a CJTF-101 asset that was attached to the 173D ABCT, embedded with the platoon when the occupation of Wanat took place. They were attached to the platoon to supervise and assist local contractors who were hired to establish the initial force protection measures with their heavy equipment. There were no embedded elements of the 101st Airborne Division with the platoon designated to assist in engaging the elders during initial occupation. There were also previous visits by the brigade engineers and they completed a detailed site survey and an initial excavation plan.

h. (U) **CJTF 101 Question #8:** *Did the CJTF adhere to Army Doctrine that provides guidance in relieving/replacing a unit in contact with the enemy?* Yes. The CJTF/ISAF Regional Command-East was following established U.S. military doctrine for conducting a relief in place / transfer of authority (RIP/TOA) between Task Force Bayonet (173d ABCT) and Task Force Duke (3/1 IBCT) while the units were engaged in combat operations. On 13 July 2008, the CJTF/ISAF Regional Command-East followed all established doctrine and procedures for responding to support a unit in contact with the enemy, including coordinating requested medical evacuation, close combat air, and close air support aircraft.

i. (U) **CJTF 101 Question #9:** *Did the CJTF and ISAF Headquarters provide the requisite intelligence assets and analysis that could have detected a strong Taliban force before the attack on 13 July such as the current array of armed and reconnaissance UAV's and intelligence expertise available at the CJTF and ISAF Headquarters?* Allocation of CJTF airborne ISR coverage for COP Bella/VPB Wanat had been persistent and thorough throughout July leading up to the attack, both from a SIGINT and Full Motion Video (FMV) perspective. The ISR collection plan supported a focused analytic effort by the CJTF intelligence staff to determine potential risk to both the closure of COP Bella and establishment of VPB Wanat. In the 24-hour period immediately leading up to and including the attack, weather and maintenance problems severely inhibited the CJTF's ability to apply FMV as it had in the weeks prior to 13 July. In addition, weather limited detection of precursor activity typically associated with significant enemy action. Although ISR collection revealed nothing specific to VPB Wanat, it did confirm the typical presence of an opportunistic enemy in the area, an enemy we have come to know is adept at gleaning intelligence from the local populace, is in collusion with local Afghan National Police (ANP) forces, is able to move covertly through populated areas into multiple support by fire positions, and is keen on maximizing the use of volley fire of rocket propelled grenades (RPGs).

j. (U) **CJTF 101 Question #10:** *Did the CJTF and ISAF Headquarters develop complacency over time due to frequency of intelligence reports that could not be confirmed due to lack of intelligence resources?* No. The focus of the staff was on closing COP Bella, establishing the Wanat VPB, and developing enemy indicators and warnings supporting those operations. The design and execution of ISR collection plans to support this effort were deliberate, and were reviewed and updated throughout each day during the period to ensure effects of environmental factors and analytic needs were accounted for. Several reports suggested the enemy attempted to conduct attacks on COP Bella, located approximately 6 kilometers north of Wanat in the Waygul Valley. The enemy elements that eventually attacked the Wanat VPB demonstrated a level of tactical proficiency beyond that suggested by analysis of historical operating patterns.

k. (U) **CJTF 101 Question #11:** *Were the CJTF and ISAF Headquarters aware of the increasing Taliban threat in the 173rd AOR but chose to ignore this threat due to other priorities, lack of resources or poor command relationships?* No. Operational priorities, mission resources, and command relationships did not individually, or in combination, create an environment where the CJTF chose to ignore an enemy threat. While there was a significant increase in enemy activity across the CJTF Area of Operations throughout the summer of 2008, there were no specific indicators of a massed attack near Wanat, although several reports indicated an enemy attempt to conduct attacks at COP Bella. At the time of the Wanat engagement, Task Force Bayonet (173rd ABCT) was one of the most seasoned and mature brigade staffs in the Army and worked in close collaboration with the CJTF Staff. The CJTF, as the ISAF Regional Command-East, fosters a positive command climate with ISAF.

l. (U) **CJTF 101 Question #12:** *Did the 173rd Infantry Brigade request persistent overhead ISR and was this request denied by the CJTF headquarters?* Task Force Bayonet (173rd ABCT), as did all CJTF units, requested persistent overhead ISR during the period of 12-13 July 2008. Overhead collection from long endurance UAVs that was planned to support all of the CJTF's operations during that period, to include the Task Force Bayonet AOR, was adversely affected by weather. Specifically, on 12 July 2008 high winds and dust at Bagram precluded the launch of Warrior-A UAVs, while high winds at Kandahar Airfield required an early recovery of the Predator allocated to RC-East. Manned airborne SIGINT platforms were the remaining overhead ISR capability available to the CJTF/ISAF Regional Command-East, and a sortie was dedicated to the Task Force Bayonet AOR approximately 12 hours prior to the attack on Wanat. On 13 July, Red Ridge, Warrior-A and Predator ISR assets were pushed to TF Rock for support of the troops-in-contact (TIC) at VPB Wanat.

m. (U) **CJTF 101 Question #13:** *Why did the Apache Helicopters arrive on station 40 plus minutes after the insurgents had started their attack?* The closest attack helicopter support available to support the troops in contact (TIC) at VPB Wanat on 13 July was based out of FOB Fenty in Jalalabad. The altitude of the terrain, where VPB Wanat was located, restricted the attack helicopters from flying a direct route to the TIC location. Under the most favorable flying conditions, the flight time from FOB Fenty to VPB Wanat was approximately 30 minutes.

n. **(U) CJTF 101 Question #14:** *Did the CJTF and its organic aviation brigade take the proper measures to reduce the risk of my son's platoon due to known intelligence reports, increasing enemy engagements, building of a new FOB and redeployment?* Yes. The organic aviation brigade is task organized into four multi-functional aviation task forces. Task Force Out Front, located at FOB Fenty, was in direct support of Task Force Bayonet (173rd ABCT). Task Force Bayonet established the priorities of support and the aviation Task Force approved and supported the planned/requested missions.

o. **(U) CJTF 101 Question #15:** *Why were the Apaches not generated to fly over Wanat daily at least one hour before and one hour after sunrise?* Apaches do not fly over COPs/FOBs in this AOR in such a manner that the AAF could predict their movement and target them.

p. **(U) CJTF 101 Question #16:** *Did the senior leadership at the CJTF, ISAF, CENTCOM, Pentagon and Army Staff deliberately withhold troop deployments to Afghanistan with full knowledge of the increasing threat and unacceptable risk to U.S. and coalition soldiers in order to protect the Army's "DWELL TIME"?* As far as the CJTF/ISAF Regional Command-East senior leadership was involved, troop deployments were not withheld for any reason. On the contrary, the CJTF has been working diligently to increase the Coalition presence in ISAF Regional Command-East due to the increased trend in enemy activity. Deployment concerns involving U.S. forces are best answered by the U.S. Department of Defense as this is an issue that is well outside the responsibility of the CJTF/ISAF Regional Command-East headquarters.

q. **(U) 173rd ABCT Question #17:** *What were the reasons for my son platoon occupying such a lightly and ill prepared defensive perimeter with little intelligence to provide the necessary warning?* The platoon occupied the VPB with the intention of establishing a combat outpost near the Wanat District Center, which is the district center for the Waygal District, Nuristan Province. Although this district had proven contentious to CFs in the past, the people sought security safeguards against corrupt local officials, and development. The command made the decision to relocate Combat Outpost (COP) Bella to VPB Wanat for numerous reasons: the helicopter approach into Bella is far more dangerous than the one into Wanat; Bella is inaccessible by roads for up armored HMMWVs while Wanat is accessible on the ground; co-locating with the district center would enable TF Rock to support the local government in providing good governance and projects thereby improving the government's legitimacy; locating at Wanat would enable the Task Force to mentor the Afghan National Police at the district center as the Brigade had done successfully in numerous districts throughout AO Bayonet; there are very few people in Bella while Wanat is a district center and is relatively populated. The decision to relocate the COP was subject to other competing priorities for scarce resources such as helicopters, TSR, and land agreements from local land owners. Following the closure of COP Bella eight kilometers north of Wanat, the company co-located the VPB with the district center which had been a successful technique in other districts. This also followed counterinsurgency (COIN) doctrine of connecting the people with their government and made imminent sense. This doctrinal COIN technique of locating our Soldiers in population centers was key to the decision to put Paratroopers at risk in order to help the people of Wanat. This COP relocation to Wanat was in furtherance of the International Security Assistance Force's (ISAF) purpose to act as a security and assistance force to the people of Afghanistan.

r. (U) 173rd ABCT Question #18: *Was my son hampered or given specific orders not to properly prepare the defensive perimeter due to the impending redeployment?* No, the plan was to rapidly build up base defenses in Wanat. Local national contractors and equipment were hired to begin construction. Sand bags, concertina wire, HESCO barriers and a Bobcat were delivered by helicopter to build initial force protection structures. The redeployment had no effect on the establishment of the Wanat combat outpost.

s. (U) 173rd ABCT Question #19: *How long had his company/battalion occupied the town of Wanat or negotiated with Village Elders for land usage?* Since assuming responsibility of AO ROCK on 5 June 2007, Chosen Company leadership and the Battalion Commander and Command Sergeant Major (CSM) had made monthly visits to Wanat to assess the area. The Provincial Reconstruction Team also visited Wanat monthly to assess bridges and to monitor the progress of current projects. On 26 May 2008 and 8 June 2008, the Battalion Commander, the Battalion CSM, and the Chosen Company Commander attended multiple Shuras to settle the land agreement and determine the way ahead.

t (U) CJTF 101 Question #20: *Did this early engagement with the Village Elders provide the insurgent forces the intelligence required to stage such a devastating attack?* Post attack intelligence indicates that both the District Police Chief and District Governor were complicit in supporting the enemy attack. It is plausible that the early engagements with the Village Elders could have provided the enemy with the reaction time to plan and execute an attack of this magnitude, however there is no information to confirm such an assumption. Due to the nature of the on-going counter insurgency campaign, early engagement with the Wanat village elders was necessary and important to legitimize the local government and connect with the local population.

u. (U) 173rd ABCT Question #21: *Was my son's platoon properly resourced for building the defensive perimeter such as engineers and additional infantry for security?* The platoon that occupied Wanat was comprised of 48 US Soldiers, three interpreters, and 24 Afghan National Army Soldiers. The Battalion attached the following assets to the platoon: a Tubular Launched Optically Sighted, Wire Guided (TOW) missile team; up armored HMMWV mounted Mark 19 Grenade Launcher and .50 caliber machine gun; a 120mm heavy mortar team; and a Long Range Acquisition System (LRAS). Based on historic enemy tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs), current threat reports, the enemy situational template, and the fact that the village elders signed an agreement to allow US forces to occupy the village, 75 Coalition Forces troops was considered adequate to occupy and establish the new outpost. The platoon was provided adequate sandbags, HESCO barriers, and concertina wire to establish initial fighting positions. Five U.S. combat engineers, local national workers and heavy equipment were also contracted to complete the initial force protection measures.

v. (U) CJTF 101 Question #22: *Why was the FOB being constructed so close to the village in low ground and not on higher more defensible terrain?* Establishing the Wanat VPB so close to the district center was intended to provide security to the district center. The location was chosen to allow for the VPB to be accessible by ground and air, while enabling the unit to mentor the Afghan National Police who were located there. Additionally, this terrain was agreed upon with the village elders. The Wanat VPB base defense was an integration of a base close to the population secured by a series of observation posts along with Afghan forces including local Afghan National Police. This allowed the Wanat VPB to accomplish the overall Afghan mission of capacity building, partnering with GIRoA leadership, and focusing on local security to allow economic development and infrastructure improvement.

w. (U) 173rd ABCT Question #23: *Did the Battalion develop a sense of complacency over time due to the close proximity of Wanat to the main Battalion FOB of Blessing?* No, the battalion was not complacent towards Wanat. The battalion conducted numerous patrols to Wanat during the previous 13 months that led up to the Wanat battle. The Provincial Reconstruction Team had designated development projects for Wanat. Additionally, the U.S. led Afghan National Police (ANP) Immersion training cadre made multiple trips to Wanat to help train the Wanat ANP and to monitor progress. The battalion staff and company responsible for Wanat understood the COIN fight and the environment in which they operated and never assumed any village was permissive to coalition forces. The Battalion Commander's ground convoy defeated ambushes in vicinity of Wanat (within two kilometers) on 26 May 2008 and 08 June 2008, ensuring that focus was maintained at all levels.

x. (U) 173rd ABCT Question #24: *Why didn't the Battalion Commander direct a more thorough intelligence preparation of Wanat before starting the permanent construction of the FOB?* The plan to occupy the village of Wanat and to establish the new combat outpost was a deliberate process and the battalion S2 conducted mission analysis to determine the enemy's most likely course of action and the most dangerous course of action. The plan was briefed and reviewed by the brigade S2 and the CJTF-101 G2. Based on human intelligence, the terrain, and enemy TTPs there was no evidence that a large scale or overwhelming attack would occur before adequate defensive preparations were made.

y. (U) 173rd ABCT Question #25: *Why did the Afghan National Army forces attached to my son's platoon take such light casualties?* The Afghan National Army (ANA) platoon occupied a sector that overlooked the southwest portion of the vehicle patrol base. The ANA defended their area but it did not come under the same level of attack as other portions of the VPB. It would not have been feasible for the ANA to reinforce OP Top Side or the rest of the VPB due to language barriers.

z. (U) 173rd ABCT Question #26: *How is it possible a battalion sized enemy force can organize, assemble, mass, and then attack with such precision and effectiveness and we don't see it coming?* I would not classify the battle of Wanat as an intelligence failure. There was plenty of notice that there would be an attack, but the enemy had always preceded major attacks with probing attacks or rocket attacks and that was the type of attack that was expected. Our intention was to co-locate with the district government and police so that we could build a trusting relationship with them in accordance with Army COIN doctrine. We then intended to develop the ANP using the Brigade's emerging district plan which complimented ISAF's focused district development plan. The Company Commander was invited to dinner the night before the attack with no mention of imminent threat. We suspect the District Governor, unlike most of the other Afghan officials, was in collusion with the enemy or at a minimum did nothing to support ANA, Coalition Forces, or the legitimate authority of the Government of Afghanistan.