

[REDACTED]

LT COL [REDACTED] It was unlimited visibility. There were some clouds in the sky, but not enough to block or restrict visibility. It was good weather.

COL [REDACTED] FSC logs and G-3 logs we'll check and see what you've got on those. Battalion Air Officer and FSC were co-located. The Air Officer's radio was damaged, and he couldn't talk to higher headquarters. Who was he talking to?

LT COL [REDACTED] He was talking to his FSC. And the FSC was talking to me on TAC. He was relaying back and forth to me on TAC net what he was doing.

COL [REDACTED] Were you talking to Bravo Company? Was the FSC talking to Bravo Company?

LT COL [REDACTED] Yeah. I believe he was. I was not monitoring the conversations on his nets with Bravo, but I was able to talk to Bravo from my radio because I was right behind his vehicle, and I could hear him. He was probably 2 or 3 vehicles up from me, but I could hear him from my vehicle on and off. There were times when we couldn't talk because he was talking on his Company TAC and having to switch back and forth, because he was fighting through the eastern side of the city trying to get all his people through to this location down here, which is a large open lot, and we ended up consolidating...

COL [REDACTED] East to the south of the north bridge.

[REDACTED]
LT COL [REDACTED] Yeah.

COL [REDACTED] What calls from DASC or Task Force Tarawa in regard to handing off of aircraft?

LT COL [REDACTED] You'd have to get up with the FSC and the Air Officer.

COL [REDACTED] OK.

LT COL [REDACTED] I do know that as we were up on the first bridge that goes over the railroad track, as we were approaching it from the southern side of the city, the FSC had requested air because we were starting to meet heavy...because we were starting to get engaged. And then when we got to that southern bridge and started engaging tanks, he was requesting as much air as he could get. It was shortly thereafter that fixed wing and rotary wing, Cobras, that showed up. Talking to the Air Officer, not the Air Officer, but the FSC, it was at that point that he said, "Hey, we don't need the fixed wing, cause we...you know...we're getting good effect with the rotary wing, and we were comfortable with that." So the fixed wing was pushed north of the northern bridge. I'm not certain at this time whether it was pushed by VIKING or if it was pushed by our FSC.

COL [REDACTED] So the Fire Support Coordinator...did he talk to higher headquarters?

[REDACTED]
LT COL [REDACTED]

He was, yes, but as we got into the city, he started losing comm with higher headquarters. Outside the city, when we're not in the built-up area, his comms were good. Once we got inside, his comms became intermittent, and in some cases was unable to talk with higher headquarters. That was one of the reasons I wanted to go around all this, so we could have a better comm shot. Our main was going to be back here, the forward was going to be up here, and we were going to have that link. Once we got into this side of the city, there was a lot of built-up sprawl around here that we weren't aware of. And that's when we began to lose comm. We had intermittent comm with the main. We were able to talk back and forth. I was talking with the XO, I was talking with VIKING on occasion from inside that area there. Because he was back, their forward was not too far behind us. In fact, they were behind my Charlie Company, not following in trace. So they were somewhere back in here by that first bridge, and we were up here. And I was able to talk to VIKING, because when we found out the second bridge had been secured, I reported that in to VIKING, and VIKING had been a little bit surprised that we had seized both bridges so rapidly. Like I said, I remember that conversation with VIKING 6, that we had the second bridge. As I told you earlier, when we got stuck in here, My first thought was I've got Alpha...I've got Charlie Company sitting out here in the middle with nowhere to go, and I was trying to get him on the net so I could push him down here, cause ther was no place for him to go but straight ahead. He read that before I could get in touch with him, and he launched for that bridge. He got down here on this bridge and I had comm with him for a little while asking him, "What's your location?" And he was telling me, "I'm on the second bridge." And I asked him...I remember clearly. I was standing beside my vehicle on the TAC and I thought, he says he's on the second bridge, but I bet he's still on that first bridge. So, I said, "Clarify was your location." And he said, "I'm on the second bridge." And I believe it was

[REDACTED]

at that time my FSC came over the TAC nets and said, "Hey, Sir, he's on the..." It was either the FSC or the Ops O. I can't remember which one it was. He said, "He's on the second bridge, the northern bridge." I remember hitting the ground saying, "Great, we're on the bridges. We got em." And then I reported that to VIKING shortly thereafter. We had both bridges secure, and I think...I'm pretty certain they got it, because we talked later about it, and they acknowledged that they had been surprised that we had both bridges, because they were going back to Gen [REDACTED] because he was asking what's the status of the second bridge? He knew we had the first bridge, but what was the status of the second bridge? And he was able to go back quickly and tell him we had both bridges.

COL [REDACTED] The Battalion Air Officer told the companies, according to the preliminary inquiry, to coordinate air as best they could. When did this occur? And, the Battalion Air Officer and the FSC were unable to contact companies until after Charlie Company's assault on the northern bridge.

LT COL [REDACTED] I think the only air, the only FAC...Charlie Company didn't have a FAC. The plan was as we got up here to establish a support by fire position on the eastern side of this bridge. Team Mech would control the indirect fires and the air if needed, and they had a FAC, which is MOUTH.

COL [REDACTED] So, MOUTH was with Team Mech?

[REDACTED]

LT COL [REDACTED] Yes, he was with Team Mech, but Charlie was going to come up and seize the bridge and then consolidate on the other side. We were going to pass through Alpha once he got relief in place by 2/8, he was going to come around the same way and go through. Then he was go up to the first objective, which was the T, and then we were going to spread out establish the forced bridge head line. So, the only FAC that the Battalion Air Officer, Capt [REDACTED] could talk to was the FAC in Bravo Company. But I think that's why he passed the air to him eventually, when he realized he still had air on station. The air had already been pushed north of the bridge and I think you're going to find this out, and you may be asking why didn't we talk about this and get together, because you're going to be getting different stories of how this unfolded. We didn't want to skew anything before this investigation. We wanted everybody to come in with what they saw and how they saw it. Let me back up there a little bit. We did talk briefly yesterday about...OK, what did you see? What did you hear? Everybody's got a different story to this in what they'd seen and heard. But I think what you're going to find out is that, in talking to MOUTH and talking to others, is that MOUTH was able to talk to the A-10s. He was the only guy able to talk with them on the TAC.

COL [REDACTED] Was MOUTH talking with the Battalion Air Officer or the FSC?

LT COL [REDACTED] He was for a while, but then he wasn't. I know that the Battalion Air Officer lost comm with everyone at a certain point, when they got bogged down over there.

COL [REDACTED] Were the FSC and the Battalion Air Officer...were there different nets or one net?

[REDACTED]

LT COL [REDACTED] Yes, the Air Officer's got his TAD...his TARHAR nets. The Battalion FSC has got the 81 conduct of fire and the arty conduct of fire. So he's got reps talking on them. He sits right next to the...he's also got a TAC net right next to him. That he can listen in on and hear what's going on. But when asked him if he was talking to Bravo Company, he was saying that had trouble getting comm with Bravo Company as well. And this again, you'll have to find out when you talk to MOUTH, that MOUTH had explained to me the first night when he brought this to my attention, that he had received a call from the pilots, the A-10 pilots saying that they could observe enemy forces moving into the city and wanted to know what they should do. And that's when...you know..MOUTH apparently cleared them, according to his words to me, to engage which was Type 3 CAS. The pilot could observe and verify the enemy target. He just ended up acting as the FSC, which in retrospect, he was not supposed to do that. Because in the order that was written, Type 3 CAS can only be authorized by the commander, which is me. And he never attempted nor did he go through his company commander to try to contact me on TAC to get that permission to do so.

COL [REDACTED] Walk me through, please, the Type 1 CAS, Type 2 CAS, and Type 3 CAS.

LT COL [REDACTED] Type 1 CAS, as I understand it is that the FAC on the ground sees the target, sees the pilot and engages the target. Type 2 CAS, and again, I've always worked with Type 1 CAS for...you know...FAC has positive control. In fact, when I heard we had three different types of CAS, I said we're only going to use the one that we're trained to, and that's what we had at the CAX (Combined Arms Exercise). But, my understanding of Type 3 was...

[REDACTED]

COL [REDACTED] What was Type 2?

LT COL [REDACTED] Type 2. I think is if, to be honest with you, I don't know what Type 2 was. The definitions, I just said we're only going with Type 1 because that's what we had trained to and that's what we knew.

COL [REDACTED] Is that what you directed down to the companies?

LT COL [REDACTED] It was in the Op order.

COL [REDACTED] It was in the Op order that you would only use Type 1 CAS?

LT COL [REDACTED] It was in the Op order that Type 3 was not authorized unless I authorized it. No one would use it unless I authorized it, and it's still in the Op order. You can see that when you get a copy of it. But uh..there was no uh...I wasn't going to mess with any of those because they were confusing, and I wanted to keep it simple, and have FAC's that could see targets and engage them. I think, I am not certain, but I think Type 2 was if you've got somebody on the ground like a STA rep or whoever sees it, and they can clear, but I am not certain, the definitions at this point.

COL [REDACTED] Did MOUTH...and MOUTH is Captain...?

[REDACTED]
LT COL [REDACTED] Capt [REDACTED]

COL [REDACTED] No, MOUTH is who? Who was MOUTH? That's the FAC, right, in Bravo Company?

LT COL [REDACTED] Oh ****t. I've got a brain fart going right now.

COL [REDACTED] Was MOUTH Capt [REDACTED]?

LT COL [REDACTED] [REDACTED] yes

COL [REDACTED] So, MOUTH is...

LT COL [REDACTED] [REDACTED] I'm sorry.

COL [REDACTED] So, MOUTH is Capt [REDACTED] and in the conversation he had with you, did he tell you that he directed Type 3 CAS?

LT COL [REDACTED] He told me that uh...that night...that he thinks he...and I'm going to paraphrase right now...but he came to me with his company commander and said, "I think I ****t something up." And I said ...

COL [REDACTED] What exactly did he tell you that night?

[REDACTED]

LT COL [REDACTED] He told me that he authorized the engagement of the A-10's and based off the situation, the confusion, that he probably didn't follow the procedures that were in place. And so I told him at that point, I said, "OK. I'm going to have to notify higher headquarters. We'll probably have an investigation. Right now, I need you to focus on what's going on around us. We make horrible mistakes in combat, and we'll just see where this goes." But right now, I need him back in the fight. And to his credit, he got back in the fight, and the next two days we were continuing to be engaged and...he did well.

COL [REDACTED] He didn't have eyes on target then, when he cleared them?

LT COL [REDACTED] I think he could see the A-10s, but he could not see the target. He was relying on the A-10s to tell him what they were seeing and they just gave him an accurate description of what was out there. There was no doubt there were Mech forces on the ground, moving back to the city. Those were medevacs trying to get back to the southern side because they trying to get air to come in the northern side. And basically we were telling them...I was telling them, hey look, it's too hot up where you're at. Because we were hearing about medevac requests. You could hear the gunfire, and I don't know if this took place before [REDACTED] conversation with me about coming over the TAC net explaining that he was being engaged by friendlies or afterwards. But, I remember saying, "You've got to get them back to the southern bridge if you can, or hold them in place because it's too hot where you're at." What I think happened was Mech vehicles that were being loaded up with casualties, I believe there were

[REDACTED]

three of them. There were a total of four vehicles that went south. Three of them had medevacs and one of them was the Company XO.

COL [REDACTED] Moving south back across the bridge were the medevacs?

LT COL [REDACTED] Across the bridge, into the city. I think that's what MOUTH heard. The A-10 pilots explaining to him that they had Mech forces moving toward the city. And that's why he probably...I think he went ahead and authorized them to go ahead and engage.

COL [REDACTED] When did you hear the call to cease air, to stop air, to abort the air?

LT COL [REDACTED] Again, the exact time, I don't have it.

COL [REDACTED] How did you hear that, over what?

LT COL [REDACTED] It was [REDACTED] He came over the net.

COL [REDACTED] [REDACTED] was with?

LT COL [REDACTED] With Charlie Company. I think he was the element, the lead platoon that went over. As soon as they got on the other side, they started receiving intense small arms again, RPG, artillery fire. There was 57 millimeter recoilless rifle on the bank that we recovered after the fight. They received fire from that as well. As you can see here by the description of

[REDACTED]

the 23rd XO, there was a battalion on this side of the bridge. You'd have to see the terrain, but on the southern side of the canal, there were bunkers and embankments that were built in there.

And that's where they were at. There were also artillery pieces, 105s, 120 millimeter mortars out in here.

COL [REDACTED] About a click and a half north of the...north, northeast of the northern bridge.

LT COL [REDACTED] Yes. And once they got over on the other side, they started taking intense fire there. That's probably where the hardest fight was at, with the exception of right here on this northwestern side of the city. Which was called the Martyr's District. An Nasiriyah was like Jacksonville. Everybody who lives there is in the military, or works for the military. There's compounds all over the surrounding area of the city, on the outskirts, that are military warehouses, headquarters, things like that. I don't think anybody knew. There certainly was no intelligence about the city as far as being, you know...I mean...Out in here where we were consolidated, there was complexes in here...

COL [REDACTED] And you're pointing to the northeastern, or just across the bridge...the northern bridge.

LT COL [REDACTED] Yes. I believe this was an old facility, but there was a fairly new facility up here on the western side of the T where the route 7 and this east-west MSR meet. There were facilities on the outskirts of the city. I mean, we had seen some of these facilities on

[REDACTED]

the maps and we were asking for clarification on them, and we never got any information as to what they were other than, hey, it's a military compound. We're not sure what's there.

[REDACTED] Getting back to the call to abort. So, you heard the call to abort. The FSC and the Battalion Air Officer heard the call to abort?

LT COL [REDACTED] The FSC heard the call. I can't remember whether he was getting it from me or he overheard [REDACTED]. But, my understanding was he was trying to turn it off. I was trying to get a hold of VIKING to get them to try to help us to turn it off, because I had no comm with the aviation.

COL [REDACTED] Did the FSC or Air Officer have comm with [REDACTED] at this time, the FAC in Bravo Company, to get him to try to turn off the air?

LT COL [REDACTED] I asked him about that and he said he did not.

COL [REDACTED] asked who?

LT COL [REDACTED] The FSC, and he did not, if I remember right, and...

COL [REDACTED] Did you talk to [REDACTED] about that? Did he receive any calls to abort the strike?

[REDACTED]

LT COL [REDACTED] No. Because at that point, we were unable to get a hold of Bravo Company. And again, I was talking to the Bravo Company TAC or not Bravo Company TAC, but Battalion TAC, and at that point was unable to talk to the Bravo Company commander. It was shortly after that request to turn it off that the air had gone off station, and it was gone.

COL [REDACTED] Did you see [REDACTED] that were fired?

LT COL [REDACTED] No, I did not.

COL [REDACTED] Where were you in relation to Charlie Company at the time?

LT COL [REDACTED] At about the time, we were somewhere in the middle, in this built up area here.

COL [REDACTED] About how far from... about how far from the bridge?

LT COL [REDACTED] About three clicks from the bridge and probably four clicks from where Charlie was trying to consolidate at.

COL [REDACTED], about seven clicks away in the built up area?

LT COL [REDACTED] Well, no. I'm talking about from here... 1/2..

COL [REDACTED] About five clicks?

LT COL [REDACTED] About four to five clicks.

COL [REDACTED] Four to five clicks in the built up area?

LT COL [REDACTED] Yes.

COL [REDACTED] So you couldn't see the [REDACTED] or anything...?

LT COL [REDACTED] No, Sir. I could not see any [REDACTED], nor was there any mention of them on the radio that they were being fired off.

COL [REDACTED] Calls for the cease of fire. How shortly after that did the mass casualty call come?

LT COL [REDACTED] There were...I don't know how shortly after that, but we were getting calls to medevac, to get medevac birds on the northern side of the city, up here. Because of the fire fight that was going on up here, the instruction was to try to get them back to the southern bridge if at all possible and hold in place until...There was no way we were going to get aircraft in there with the fire that was going on. At that point, the small unit leaders were putting guys in mortar variants, AAVs that had mortars. They were carrying the mortar men, 60 millimeter mortar men, and began to take three tracks back to the south, four tracks back to the south, three

[REDACTED]

of which were medevacs. One of them was the company XO. I saw two of those tracks heading back to the city, and I knew they were trying to get them back at that point. Again, comm were on and off. I think a lot of the comm problems may have been from the company commander being on his company TAC and not up on the Battalion TAC. He was fighting the fight from his end. So, he was not readily available all the time on my TAC, because, he, like I said, I think he was switching back and forth to his company TAC and fighting his company at the time. But, I do know that they ended up getting two of those tracks back. One of them was a medevac, one of them was the XO of the company. Later on we found out he'd moved back. There had been some confusion on the northern side, apparently mortar men had piled back into the vehicle when they saw medevacs being put in there. And started heading back, and he went back to try to get some of those guys back on the northern side, but also...

COL [REDACTED] To secure the northern side?

LT COL [REDACTED] Well, the northern side...there was still a fight going on on the northern side, but he ended up going all the way back to Alpha Company who was on this bridge here and told the company commander, "We're going to need some help up forward." And that's when the company commander from Alpha went ahead and launched forward, which I think in hindsight was a good idea, because we would never have made a link up with 2/8. From my position, 2/8 was telling me he was on the southern side of the bridge, and he was looking for our forces and we were telling him ours are on the northern side, he's got to go over the bridge. But we didn't realize, and I think if we talk to him, he was still on the railroad bridge thinking he was on the bridge that was the objective. So [REDACTED] pushed got to the...

[REDACTED]

COL [REDACTED] was?

LT COL [REDACTED] ... Was Alpha Company CO. They got up here and that's when everything just stopped all the fire.

COL [REDACTED] the enemy fire stopped, friendly stopped?

LT COL [REDACTED] All the enemy fire and everybody went back into the city.

COL [REDACTED] so, he was the first one on site up there?

LT COL [REDACTED] On site, yes. And then...we also had tanks that went with him forward and we came in about a half and hour after that, because we had gotten all of Bravo. We were trying to get the vehicles back here unstuck. It was getting dark. We finally made the audible OK, let's push. We put a prep fire on this Martyr's District here. We came up here. We ended up stopping in the street because we had a downed track, and we recovered a KIA out of that track, and then we pushed forward to consolidate. We had the whole battalion on the other side.

COL [REDACTED] what did you see when you got on the other side, as far as damage to vehicles?

[REDACTED]

LT COL [REDACTED] We had one vehicle that was a catastrophic kill. That had been hit by, and described by Marines on the ground, the company staff out of Bravo Company, excuse me, Charlie Company Staff. It was being hit by multiple RPGs and what they thought may have been artillery. We think it may have been a 57 millimeter recoilless rifle, because it was just too accurate for artillery to have multiple hits on top of it. It was obviously...there was nothing but a shell. It wasn't even burning. It was just a gray shell left. There was another vehicle a little bit farther north that had both treads blown off, and the description was originally that they had been hit by mortar fire and RPG and blew the treads off. But...we weren't certain what had destroyed that tractor. It didn't look destroyed. It looked like it had been a mobility kill. It wasn't until later that we crawled on top of that track, after finding out about the A-10, not the first day but the second day that we saw some what appeared...I could see one hole up forward of the turret that looked like it may have been a 30 millimeter shell. And that was the only signs of visibility, and that would have went down into the engine. That was the only signs of visibility from that track that there was an A-10 strike on it. The other track that was, like I said, a catastrophic kill on the northern side. No one remembers, at least that I've talked to, that it was hit by an A-10. Everybody remembers that one being hit by something direct. Now, again, I don't think we know because that thing...the whole top of it was pretty much gone. There were three vehicles on the southern side that were...

COL [REDACTED] the southern side of?

LT COL [REDACTED] The northern bridge.

COL [REDACTED] Of the northern bridge.

LT COL [REDACTED] ...that were destroyed. The one that I told you that we stopped at to pick up the [REDACTED] that was still inside. We searched it to see if there was anybody in it. We...and there was [REDACTED] in that vehicle. We recovered [REDACTED]. I learned later that that vehicle had some indications on top that it had been hit by 30 millimeter, two or three holes. I never saw that vehicle and ...or saw the holes that were in it. There was another vehicle just farther to the north on the southern side of the bridge that had mortar ammo and it had WIAs in and also had some mortar men that got hit by RPGs. Everybody that was in those three vehicles...There were some that saw it. Lt [REDACTED] claims that he had saw it. He believed it ws an RPG round that hit that and ignited that mortar ammo, and that was...I think you saw that one. It was pretty much destr...There was no doubt about that one. It was the worst damaged vehicle we had out of all of them. And then, there was another track down on the southern bridge that had made it all the way down there, that took an RPG round once it got down there. He had also been hit by RPG enroute, which blew his back hatch off, and when he got down to the southern bridge, he got hit again as they were trying to get casualties off, to get the helicopters in to take them out, and got hit again. When that happened, the company commander from Alpha Company had called me and said he was receiving intense fire and was taking casualties. At that point I thought he was taking casualties as well. As it turned out, he thought it was his vehicle but it wasn't. It was Charlie Company's vehicle as they pulled in, and it got hit by an RPG shortly after they were trying to get people off that vehicle.

COL [REDACTED] So, there was still firing going on after the A-10s departed?

[REDACTED]

LT CO [REDACTED] Oh, yes, yes. I mean there was fire going on in that city all day long, and on the second day, out here in the northern side. But the majority of the fire was coming from this area here, the Martyr's District. It was called the Martyr's District. This was an officer's housing complex we found out later.

COL [REDACTED] Just to the south of the northern bridge.

LT COL [REDACTED] Just to the south of the northern bridge.

COL [REDACTED] Southwest of the northern bridge.

LT CO [REDACTED] We came over the southern bridge with the 1st Company pretty much unscathed and Charlie also passed through those to continue north. Alpha got here shortly after they had consolidated. It may been...it would have been minutes. It may have been 10 or 15 minutes.

COL [REDACTED] Just over the southern bridge?

LT CO [REDACTED] Over the southern bridge. He started coming under heavy intense fire from here, on this side of the street.

COL [REDACTED] To the west of the...

[REDACTED]

LT COL [REDACTED] The northwest of the southern bridge.

COL [REDACTED] northwest of the southern bridge.

LT COL [REDACTED] We got back in here. We started coming under fire from buildings that were in here, and like I said, there were five enemy soldiers killed here, and...we began to move up here. That took us a couple of hours to get through to this spot here.

COL [REDACTED] Moving to the north, just to the east of the MSR?

LT COL [REDACTED] Right. What's known as Ambush Alley, and this is what it was termed. But, we got up here, and that's where we were able to talk to everyone. We were trying to ensure that we had everybody on the northern side, and then we had planned an artillery prep...not a prep, but a group on this Martyr's District, cause that's where we were taking all the RPG rounds, and ...or the majority of the RPG. And we knew that we had a vehicle down here that...was not sure whether there were still Marines in it. So, because we had most of Bravo Company's tracks and a lot of our own thin skin vehicles, we formed up two columns. We were going to use the tracks on the western side of the MSR. We were going to put the thin skin vehicles on the eastern side, use the tracks to cover, and...and move down. We were going to stop in front of the track that was here, that was down. Trackers would get out, check that. Marines would get out and check that to see if there were any remaining Marines in there still alive or wounded. As it turned out, the Marines that had been in this track went to the second

[REDACTED]

floor of a building that was right beside them, with the exception of one dead. They went to the top with their wounded, and they were picked up by tanks who came through with Alpha Company earlier.

COL [REDACTED] Let's talk about the dead and wounded. What were the...do you know the number KIA?

LT COL [REDACTED] At that point, we had what we believed were 12 KIAs and MIAs for a total of 18. And, as it turned out, our KIAs dropped to 9 and then we had 9 missing. And, it wasn't until after the third day when the fighting had stopped pretty much around us, and the north, that...we were able to get back in here and [REDACTED] in that vehicle I told you had been hit by RPGs and was carrying mortar round ammunition. There were [REDACTED] in there. The second day, we went back, based off of a local man who lived in An Nasiriyah who knew where there were a couple of [REDACTED] not too far from that track. He led us down there and we found them. We were beginning to search the vehicle again, and we could still find [REDACTED] what we believed [REDACTED] that were in there. We're not certain if they may have been part of the [REDACTED] that were recovered the day before or additional [REDACTED] but...right now we're waiting for the [REDACTED] to come back and confirm that we had recovered all [REDACTED] But we're just not certain right now. I think we got most of them, definitely [REDACTED] But at this point, [REDACTED]

COL [REDACTED] So, confirmed KIAs right now are, killed in action, are 9?

[REDACTED]

LT COL [REDACTED] No, right now 12.

COL [REDACTED] So, 12 people.

LT COL [REDACTED] But, we're still waiting.

COL [REDACTED]: 12 confirmed, we're still waiting because there are another 6 that haven't been accounted for?

LT COL [REDACTED] We're waiting for the [REDACTED] to come back for the remaining, the remaining KIAs.

COL [REDACTED] You have any final thoughts [REDACTED]

LT COL [REDACTED]: Well, you know, everyday we go back and we try to think of how we would do this again, over. And I don't think there was any way to get in there, unless we would have done as the ...three days later when we started passing remnants of the first Marines through there, putting in series right down that street. They had a series plotted right down the middle of the street. And as units came through, they just opened up on the left and right, suppressing everything as they drove through. We know that because saw it and heard it and had we been able to have done that on the first day, which we wouldn't have been able to do that because it was a....An Nasiriyah was a restricted fire area when we went up there. I think intel...everything played into the fact that...you know, most of the regular army had...you

[REDACTED]

know, was trying to capitulate or they had already deserted, and that...there may be small arms up there. The bridges weren't rigged to be blown. It looked like they were lightly defended, and the intent was to rapidly get up there and seize the bridges. Our indications were that if we had to go up there, it was going to be in a non-permissive environment, that bridges were not going to be defended, that were going to go in there and just seize them and we were going to open that route. That intel I don't think was accurate. And I'm not throwing stones or spears at any individuals or any specific level of command, but I think there's a lot of people above us that would admit, and I've talked to a lot of those people that have admitted that the intel picture was not probably as good or as accurate as everyone thought. No one expected that level of a fight in An Nasiriyah. No one. And the other thing that stands out is, as we were making our way through the center of the city on the eastern side of that MSR, and later in the evening, talking to the company commanders, and to this day...What I saw and getting feedback from others to what they saw, not one Marine or sailor broke under fear, or...you know...panic. If they had panicked we would have had a hell of a lot more problems than we did. But, everyone of them...it was...I remember up there on this corner, looking around at the Marines as we were gathering up, there were women and children in the streets walking in front of us knowing that we were receiving fire from two to three buildings back on the western side. They were part of this defense. They were walking through the streets and looking at us, and smiling and waving and they knew what they were doing. They were being used as shields. The Marines were holding their fire because they could not see targets, and they were calm...there was no sign of panic on any of them. It was like, you know...they were too busy thinking about surviving, but they weren't panicking. My first thought as we got into that is, "Jesus Christ, you know. If we have guys starting to panic, we're going to have a real problem on our hands." And I was talking

[REDACTED] who was visibly upset on the radio, trying to calm him down, and he had reason to be upset, because he was catching hell up there. And...everybody was trying to stay calm and collected and they did. That will stay with me for the rest of our life, is how those Marines responded under that condition. And, like I said, I don't think anybody realizes the fire fight that was up there. I think a lot of people have speculated that it was something else, and that maybe this was all blown over and what not. You need to go down there and walk that terrain. This bridge here...the girders, handrails, the steel railings on the side of that bridge, underneath it, there's not one railing that does not have the impact of small arms fire, or the bullet impacts coming up through it. You can see that clearly. And...so if anybody out there tries to say that this wasn't a serious engagement or that this was a cakewalk that went bad, they're buffoons, because they weren't here. They didn't see it. They didn't live through it, and...

COL [REDACTED] Well, you guys did a hell of a job and it's a real tribute to your leadership. In closing here...

LT COL [REDACTED] It's not a tribute to my leadership. It's a tribute to the small unit leaders here, because that was a small unit leader fight, and that was the last thing. There were no big blue arrows here. We had a plan, the plan changed dramatically once we crossed the line of departure, because there was no place to put our support by fire positions. Everything that we wanted to do, we couldn't do. This turned into a small unit leader. Corporals putting wounded or dead Marines on tracks and taking the initiative to get them back. Company commanders deciding, Hey, the intent was to rapidly seize the bridges and pushing on their own. There was a lot of small unit leader battles out there, and that's the story that needs to come out here, not

[REDACTED]

what the company or battalion did, but what the Marines that were fighting their way through these streets. And what Charlie did on the far side up there was a lot of heroes on that day from those Marines that were up there.

COL [REDACTED] I'm sure that will all come out, but it's still a tribute to you.

M [REDACTED] Sir, before you close, this is [REDACTED] Sir, I don't believe we initially had this on tape. You had mentioned earlier that you had learned from the XO of the enemy brigade that something may have inspired the Iraqis to fight, Sir?

You know...we had an opportunity to sit down for two or three hours with the Brigade XO from the 23rd Brigade who was, had these three battalions up here to the north, and again, this is just his word, but I had the HET team and the interpreters there, and we asked him what they were thinking when they saw us come through. And, he told us that when you first came through...you came through..."looked like you were disorganized, you didn't even know we were there. You didn't fight back and you were easily overpowered and you came in weak." And I was looking at my XO, and I'm thinking, "Weak. I mean shit, we couldn't come in any harder than we did short of firing artillery prep and suppressing the whole city." And then I thought, "You know what, I bet he's talking about the maintenance convoy that came through earlier. The Army convoy that had gotten ambushed in An Nasiriyah. And I asked him, "Are you talking about the maintenance convoy that came through?" And he kind of shook his head through the interpreter. He said, "Yeah, they had refuelers and they had trucks, but they didn't fight when they got engaged, and they were trying to get out of the city. And they finally

[REDACTED]

stopped most of them back at the railroad bridge. I think like two or three vehicles got out."

Which was accurate. It was an accurate description. And then he told us Fedayeen took the ones that were alive prisoners and he didn't know what happened to them after that. What he said though what made this interesting was that when that happened later that morning, it emboldened all his soldiers that he still had in the fight, and the Fedayeen and the Baath party reps, as well as the tribal leaders that were in An Nasiriyah. This is what he's saying, not what I'm saying...one officer, and the head guys were there capturing all this. It emboldened even the tribal leaders to fight the Americans, because if this is the best they've got, then why not be on the winning side. I'm kind of paraphrasing what he said...And I asked him about that, and he said, "When you are fighting the Regular Army. Always come in hard and heavy, because they will break and they will run. In this case, they came in weak." But, understand, it was a maintenance convoy that was lost. They didn't know they were in An Nasiriyah until they started getting shot at I think. And, according to him, they made it all the way up to that T. They had turned around and started getting fire.

COL [REDACTED] To the north of the southern or the northern bridge?

North of the southern bridge, and we found gear, gas masks and helmets up there when we were consolidating, and we turned it into the HET. We took it back to the rear of the guys who were in that convoy. One of them had gotten out alive, of the convoy, and we found gear up there on the side of the road. And, initially, we thought they may have taken them northeast, because a lot of the Baath party guys were coming up here to a village that was up here to the northeast outside our sector. But...as it turned out, I think it was just falling off the vehicles as they were

[REDACTED]

trying to get out of there. But...they obviously got too far North, turned around and...He felt it gave his soldiers confidence to take on the Americans. And...

MAJ [REDACTED] He had, Sir, about three brigades of troops at about 1600 a piece?

LT COL [REDACTED] Yes, according to his estimates, he had the 23rd Brigade, which was in the north. He had the 504th Brigade, which was in the city. That wasn't his brigade, but it was another brigade commander and then they had the 47th. I believe is what he had down here in the southeast. He also had a regiment of artillery and mortars, heavy mortars that were dispersed throughout the city. They had tanks dispersed throughout the city, but mostly to the south of the city. I asked him about all the T55s in the south, because visibly, you could see some of them, T55s looked like they were inoperable. And he confirmed that. He basically said most of them, though were usable, and later on, you were able to get into the turrets and see that there was still ammo in the turrets. And I think they were using some of them by that southern bridge, the railroad bridge. There were two on each side of those bridges. They were basically dug in like pill boxes. But we had visibles on four tanks that were physically moving that were engaged and destroyed. And there were also tanks that were observed, turrets rotating. So, somebody was in them. We're not certain who, but the CAAT guys and the tankers just took them out.

[REDACTED] Did he talk about the paramilitaries, Sir, that were in the city?

LT COL [REDACTED] Yes. He said that...OK, I think I wrote that down here...he said Fedayeen, there were between 500 to 800 Fedayeen Freedom Fighters in the city. He was not

[REDACTED]

sure how many of the Baath. And he did tell us that he didn't think there were any Republican Guard officers in the city. We knew that wasn't true because we were catching Republican Guard trying to get back into the city, because they had their IDs in their uniforms. We had killed five, two of them which I saw, on the eastern side, three more in front of the tank that got stuck. That was apparently engaged by the tank. One of their machine guns here 7.62 killed them, cut them down as they were running across in front of them. There were later on five Republican Guard across the berm up here, on the second day of the fight, and...we were being engaged by what appeared to be these two battalions on the left and right probing. These guys pretty much went into the city. But these two guys stayed out where they were at, and they were hitting us on the second and third day. And we killed five Republican Guard officers up here in the north. And at least that's what I have now. I never saw those guys, physically, but...the HET had confirmed that they were Republican Guard. But, we were catching Republican Guard officers going back through here, and we were catching them...actually, this is where most of the thick traffic was going.

COL [REDACTED] Where was that?

LT COL [REDACTED] Right here, Sir. Coming through here.

COL [REDACTED] Through the T north.

LT COL [REDACTED] Through the east west and north T...of the route 7. And we put a road block over here guarding this bridge. We had a roadblock guarding the northern bridge. We had

[REDACTED]

a road block to the east. Most of our EPWs were intercepted here, at this eastern road block and here and they were trying to get back into the city.

COL [REDACTED] This was after the incident?

LT COL [REDACTED] This was after the incident, yes, Sir. This was on the second and third day. The first day, we captured the Brigade CO, who was coming back in an ambulance along this eastern MSR, and then he turned left and got stopped right at the bridge by our tanks.

COL [REDACTED] Let me close this, before I run out of tape here. And then we can talk. In closing, I want to remind you that this is an official interview and direct that you not to discuss your testimony with anyone without the board's permission or until the report has been officially released to the public. Do you understand?

LT COL [REDACTED] Yes, Sir, I do.

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11 April 2003, 1426 L

Interview with Maj [REDACTED]

COL [REDACTED] Your name?

MAJ [REDACTED]

COL [REDACTED] Social Security number?

MAJ [REDACTED] XXX-XX-XXXX.

COL [REDACTED] And your billet?

MAJ [REDACTED] My billet is the Operations Officer for 1st Battalion, 2nd Marines.

COL [REDACTED] My name is Colonel [REDACTED] and under the direction of the board president, Brigadier General William F. Hodgkins, we're investigating a friendly fire incident that occurred on 23 March 03 near An Nasiriyah, Iraq. This investigation, conducted under DOD Instruction 6055.7 is separate and apart from any other investigation that may have been conducted concerning this incident. The purpose of this investigation is to produce a publicly releasable report on the facts and circumstances surrounding this incident and gather and preserve evidence for use in claims, litigation, disciplinary actions, adverse administrative proceedings and for all other purposes. Your sworn testimony to me may be used for any proper purpose and may be released to the public. Additionally, the chain of command will review the final report. Do you understand what I have just read to you?

[REDACTED]

MAJ [REDACTED] Yes, Sir.

COL [REDACTED] Finally, do you also understand that you are being interviewed as a witness in this friendly fire incident and acknowledge that no promise of confidentiality has been extended to you?

MAJ [REDACTED]: Yes, Sir, I do.

COL [REDACTED] Do you solemnly swear or affirm that the testimony you are about to give in the matter now under investigation shall be the truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

MAJ [REDACTED] Yes, Sir.

COL [REDACTED] would you please walk me through your knowledge of what transpired on the 23rd of March?

MAJ [REDACTED] Yes Sir. We were using a 1 to 15,000 graphic map of An Nasiriyah.

COL [REDACTED] As we go through this, if you would use terms that could be understood when we transcribe the tape as much as possible.

MAJ [REDACTED] We had driven all night from Jalibah, which is approximately 60 kilometers south of An Nasiriyah with the purpose of securing two bridges, one crossing the Euphrates and one [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

crossing the Saddam canal. As we moved up toward An Nasiriyah, several kilometers south of the city, we started taking indirect fire from what we believed at the time were enemy mortars. At that time, we engaged with our 81 millimeter mortars. What we observed on a building in the distance we thought to be an FO. And then closer in there were several buildings that we started receiving sporadic small arms fire from. That we sent our CAT Teams, and that's comprised of our anti armor systems, our tows and our heavy machine gun team, which are M-19s and 50 caliber machine guns. They engaged individuals in several of the buildings, individuals who then withdrew, and we continued to receive sporadic indirect fire and small arms fire. We continued moving north along route 7/8 up toward An Nasiriyah, and we received more indirect fire. At that time we received a report from our lead company, at that time was Team Tank. Team Tank was comprised of Alpha Company 8th Tanks, with the addition of a platoon of infantry from Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 2nd Marines. One platoon of tanks and Alpha Company 8th tanks had also been sent over to Bravo Company to form what was known as Team Mech. So, at the time, the battalion had four maneuver units, up inside the maneuver units, there was Alpha Company, a mechanized infantry company, Charlie Company a mechanized infantry company. Alpha Company 8th tanks, now know as Team Tank, and Bravo Company 1/2 now known as Team Mech and that's how I'll refer to them. We were leading with Team Tank. Team Tank was notified that came upon individuals from the Army who said that their column had been ambushed and that they still had individuals left in or near the city. At that point Team Tank was engaged, and we had also pushed up Alpha company, which was second in order of movement...excuse me...Bravo Company, Team Mech, who was in second in order of movement, to engage the hostile forces. Team Tank pushed the individuals from the Army to the rear, and they came up to us and told us that they still had friendlies within the city. So, that while we were engaging with Team Mech and Team Tank I also push Alpha Company forward

[REDACTED]

and then Team Mech and Alpha Company primarily handled the engagement closest to us while Team Tank pushed forward and extracted, I believe, four individuals from what I later learned was a site right by the railroad bridge, which led into An Nasiriyah. Now those individuals were, some of them had been shot. They were brought back to our CP, which had been established just south of An Nasiriyah, and from there I was coordinating movement of the companies. What happened at that point was, because of all the racing back and forward, most of the tanks ran out of fuel, or were low on fuel. So, we had to send them back to refuel. Sometime during that Gen [REDACTED] and Col [REDACTED] arrived at the CP. At this time [REDACTED] was forward of the battalion, was forward with I believe Company A and Team Mech. He asked me what was going on, if I had recommendations. I recommended that one of the other battalions come up on our left and that we push forward using route 7/8 as a boundary between the two units, and that we push south into the city. The General then said that it was important that we seize the bridges, and I informed Col [REDACTED] of that. I got up with Col [REDACTED] I pushed forward. I let him know what the General said. He told me he had spoken with the General and that a determination was made that we had to push forward with our plan to seize the bridges. One thing of note is that we had always been briefed both by Regiment and by MEB that we would not seize the bridges if we were engaged. We would only seize the bridges if there was no hostile fire and we were able to go across the river.

COL [REDACTED] Who briefed that?

M [REDACTED] That was briefed by RCT, and I believe it was also briefed by MEB. This was several weeks prior, and during all of our planning at no time were we told that we would seize the bridges. In fact, it was stressed that we could not seize the bridges if we were receiving fire.

[REDACTED]

And that, instead, we would establish defensive positions south of the river and block enemy forces so that the Army and Marine forces could use Route 1 moving along the south.

COI [REDACTED] So that was briefed by the Regimental Commander or the 2nd Regiment, and the Task Force Tarawa Commander?

MAJ [REDACTED] I know for a fact, we were briefed by RCT 2, by the Regiment Commander, and the Operations Officer. The Operations Officer from RCT2 told me that he had been specifically briefed that by Task Force Tarawa and their higher. I'd have to check my notes, but I believe that was also briefed at a meeting that I was at, and that was briefed by Task Force Tarawa higher. As a result of the engagement we had earlier, I now had Bravo Company leading, minus their tanks because they had gone back to refuel. I had Alpha Company following in trace of Bravo Company, and because we'd seen some movement off to our left flank, I had pushed Charlie Company to our left flank and Alpha and Charlie were moving forward in a bounding over watch, in trace of Bravo. Our intent then was to go with our original order of movement and bring Charlie in behind Bravo. But, because of the terrain, we ended up leaving Alpha behind Bravo so that as we approached the railroad bridge, Bravo was in the lead, Alpha immediately behind them, and Charlie still on the left flank of Alpha. So, what ended up happening was...we ended going in Bravo, Alpha, Charlie. The original mission called for Team Tank to establish a support by fire position south of the Euphrates River, so that Alpha Company could seize the bridge. At which point, Bravo Company would pass through Alpha, push north and establish a support by fire position and pass through objective 2, or provide support by fire for Charlie Company as they seized objective 2, and then Bravo would push through and seize objective 3 at the T intersection north of the northern bridge.

COL [REDACTED] Where was Team Tank then?

MA [REDACTED] Team Tank, all the platoons were back refueling. So they weren't forward to establish the support by fire because of the earlier engagement. We pushed Bravo Company up, and as we approached the railroad bridge, we started receiving more and more direct fire, and that was also when we started receiving reports of tanks to our front. I witnessed TOWs engage. I think at least three engagements on tanks, and I saw one Javelin engagement on a tank. It was at the railroad bridge, I came upon the wreckage 2021 grid square, 2031 to the northeast corner of the 2031 grid square. At that point I saw the wreckage of what I believe was an LVS that was burning. It belonged to the Army. The Bravo Company was receiving fire on the bridge. They had passed forward of the bridge, and they still had some vehicles on the bridge. We were there several minutes engaging several tanks. I believe they were receiving direct fire from heavy machine guns. We pushed over the bridge. I was just in trace of Bravo Company. So I was just to the south side of the bridge, and the battalion gunner was with me, my vehicle was right next to the Battalion Commander's vehicle, so we were able to witness most of this engagement. I followed in trace of them over the railroad bridge, then the fire is slackened somewhat as we moved to the Euphrates River bridge, the southern bridge. Alpha Company followed in trace and as Alpha Company cleared out of the way, Charlie Company came up in trace behind left. We pushed over the southern bridge with Bravo Company. They halted for a short time on the southern bridge because they were receiving fire, mainly direct small arms fire and heavy machine gun fire. I think primarily from their west. We continued pushing up the street, some of those vehicles were halted. I was driving my driver and I were in a Humvee and I also had Lt [REDACTED] in there. There was a considerable amount of small arms fire passing from both sides of the street. My impression at the time and afterwards was that there was a lot of small arms fire,

[REDACTED]

but it was inaccurate. I think that was the only saving grace, was that whoever was shooting at us was very inaccurate with their fires. I witnessed at least one RPG land and bounce about 10 feet in front of my vehicle as we were moving down the road. The original plan was to have Bravo Company establish a support by fire to the eastern side of the northern bridge. So, what they did was they came up and moved north past the first apartment buildings on the left. We took a right hand turn and moved adjacent to some buildings and our goal being to push up to the open area to the eastern side and establish support by fire to support Charlie Company's seizure of the second bridge. Or originally Bravo Company provides their own support by fire and they seize the second bridge. Or, the alternate plan was, they provide the support by fire for Charlie Company to seize the second bridge. At grid 2-2-1, 3-5-7. That's where we encountered the mud. There was no ground reconnaissance at any level prior to going in here. There had been no ground reconnaissance of the city, itself, or of the canals. We had previously submitted a request for information PIRS and IRs pertaining to crossing sites on the Euphrates River, crossing sites on the south canal, enemy positions within An Nasiriyah, enemy positions south of An Nasiriyah on the canal and on the Euphrates river. None of those requests for information were ever filled. The only information we received was that there were several tanks within the city and that a battalion headquarters for artillery was located somewhere to the north vicinity of the T intersection. There was no detailed information on enemy disposition, other than they believed several battalions were in the area, and that they were Fedayeen and other irregular forces within the city. The emphasis at every level and every briefing that we went to was that the enemy forces within the city were capitulating. When we got to 2-2-1-3-5-7, as I came up, I saw that there were several tracs stuck in the mud at almost half the trac level. I dismounted my Humvee, and that's when I also started experiencing comm problems. There were several power lines in there so it was difficult getting comm. I walked through to where the tanks were, and

[REDACTED]

walked my vehicle and CDI vehicle on a path so we could try to get around. We then started receiving fire from within the quadrant of where we were. It was sporadic small arms fire. In an effort to get the tracks out, because we had our C-7, our P-7. the chase P-7 for the C-7 were both stuck in the mud, and there were two tanks and I believe one Humvee stuck in the mud. They attempted to extricate them. It was taking awhile. I talked with the Battalion Commander and made a decision that we needed to pull his vehicle and my vehicle out of there to a place where we could establish comm. We only had sporadic comm at that point within the battalion. We pushed up and then went down several side streets, and I'm not sure of the exact grid where we ended up. I think it was probably, either here, either in the _____ about 2-1-6-3-7-6 or 2-1-6-3-7-8, but on a corner by an intersection where there were some buildings in an open field. We had a number of other vehicles with us, by that point a mix of tracks and most of the forward vehicles forward Humvees. We waited in that position, we got some better comm. Most of the comm we had at that point was with Alpha Company, sporadic comm with the main. He was enroute to that position, as we were moving between 2-2-1-3-5-7 in a position where I could get better comm and I heard L [REDACTED] on the radio calling for an abort on air. I repeated that call, but I'm unsure if anybody heard me.

COL [REDACTED]: Who did you repeat it to?

MA [REDACTED] I repeated it over battalion TAC 1, net ID 694 several times. I did not get a response. And that was part of the problem the entire day. As far as command and control went, our original plan called for the forward to be established south of the southern bridge, and then move in trace of Bravo Company. When the C-7, P-7 with the main would take their place in order to facilitate the relief in place. That way we would have a command and control element

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

forward and one back, and ideally that would facilitate command and control at the bridge, and we would be able to talk to each other, and over the 4 kilometers we'd have taken no more than 2 kilometers from command and control vehicles. Comm just wasn't there. We really weren't able to talk to each other. I stand several hours, next to that field, while we coordinated. We, at that point, knew that Charlie Company had secured the northern bridge. I'd heard that there were casualties, but I was unsure how many. I did not know that an A-10 had presumably attacked them. I only knew that there had been a call for an abort on air. As I looked down the street to the north, towards the southern bridge, I could see an Amtrack in the middle of the road. I heard that one had been hit and presumed destroyed. I also heard, I think, that another one had been hit, but I wasn't quite sure. And, I'm not quite sure what time, several hours before dark, I saw a number of vehicles from...we had coordinated with Alpha Company because we wanted them to move forward and reinforce Charlie, but once again, sporadic comm. I know at some point they did, and they were able to reinforce Charlie Company on the northern bridge, which is what I and the battalion commander wanted...but we, I don't know if, at that time, they received that message, and I don't think they did. And then several of the forces from our area went and then rejoined them. Then the issue was extracting our force...having been there for several hours, we had started receiving some sporadic heavy machine gun fire from our southwest. The other thing we heard up in the northern portion of the city, coming from the northwest...everytime a vehicle went by there, there was heavy small arms fire coming from what we later learned was the Martyr's building area. We developed a plan to employ artillery fire on the Martyr's building area. As we moved up, we created a shield of AAVs that the Humvees could stage behind. We pushed up to the Amtracks because we had heard that there was several Marines that had been seen on top of a building and we saw the Amtrack there, so we wanted to take a look and see what was in there. I think there was more than one Amtrack

[REDACTED]

there. One was burning. We looked in one. We extracted one wounded and one dead. We did not receive fire when we went up there, at that point. They checked the top of the building, did not see any Marines up there, and then we pushed across the northern bridge. As we approached the northern bridge, we had used artillery fire to prep the Martyr's building area before going in there. We had Marines go out and search the two Amtracks recovered, [REDACTED] and pushed across the northern bridge. As we crossed the northern bridge, I looked to my front and I saw out on the bank of the canal, there were several dug in positions, one of which had a, I believe an 82 millimeter mortar, another which had a 14.75 machine gun. As I looked to my rear, I saw other dug in positions with the same. They were clearly visible as we pushed across. I later learned that the entire bank on either side, the north and south side of the Saddam canal, extending all the way down on either side, just had dug in positions throughout the entire length, and that the enemy's main defensive area was just forward of the northern bridge. We pushed beyond the northern bridge. I got up with Charlie Company. We pulled the rest of the battalion through, established them in a hasty defense, basically a 360. Most of them within the 2240 grid square. The T to the north, we were several hundred meters south of the T, and we were on both sides of what had been the 23rd Command post. The following morning, we reoriented our defenses. We pushed Team Tank, Panzer south to cover the northern bridge. Company A was pushed to cover an intersection within the 1941 grid square. Charlie Company and Bravo Company pushed out from either side of the T intersection. Throughout the day, we received direct fire from enemy force in the area, and indirect fire. Alpha Company...I'll have to check the exact time that they secured that intersection. The purpose for that was to ensure that the route from the northern bridge up to the T where we established a traffic control point down to the next T, which is where Alpha Company established another traffic control point was clear so that we could push our 1st Marines forward. The first night we did spend there, a British recon [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

team of, I think, two vehicles came up to us and requested passage through our lines because they wanted to recon Route 7. They were gone several hours, came back and they said they had pushed north on Route 7 and been fired at. Everytime they stopped by a village, they said very heavy small arms fire the entire way. And they came back and stayed with us that night, and then pushed south to link back up with their unit. We established control of the route and then pushed the 1st Marines through us, at which point, they fired at us and inflicted another casualty on us. And that's pretty much it, Sir.

COL [REDACTED] OK, when Charlie came across the bridge here, they turned left. Is that correct?

MA [REDACTED] Yeah, I know they had some forces that pushed to the west. But that was...

COL [REDACTED] Along the canal?

M [REDACTED] The canal is here, and that was just tributaries. I think that was mainly just to find a place to get out of the indirect fire. It's my understanding that they were receiving very heavy indirect fire.

COL [REDACTED] Was it possibly this along here?

MA [REDACTED] Yes, Sir.

COL [REDACTED] OK, anything else?

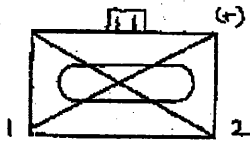
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MA [REDACTED] No, Sir. That's about it.

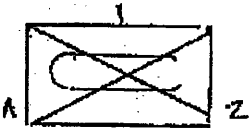
COL [REDACTED] Thank you [REDACTED] I've got a closing that I need to review. In closing, I want to remind you that this is an official interview, and direct that you not discuss your testimony without the board's permission or until the report has been officially released to the public. Do you understand?

MA [REDACTED] I understand.



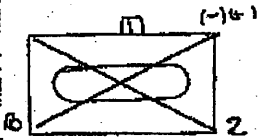
MO = 64 ME = 1064 NO = 3 NE = 55

1ST Bn 2d Mar: 3 Line Companies (A, B, C) 1 WPN CO & HAS CO. Reinforced with A CO 8TH IV, A CO 2d ANV BN, 1 HET TM, 1 SST TM, 1 BAG TM. While at AN NUSY FIA WE CROSS-ATTACHED UNITS BETWEEN A CO 8th (1 PLT) and B CO 1/2 (1 PLT) TO FORM A TEAM MECH & A TEAM TANK



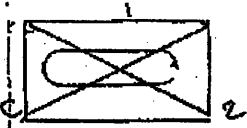
MO = 7 ME = 135 NO = 0 NE = 6

A CO 1/2: Mech Pure company. Seized Southern Bridge and the returned to C at Northern Bridge FAC Attached



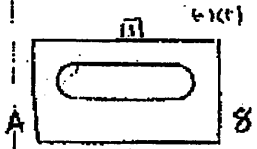
MO = 7 ME = 155 NO = 0 NE = 6

B CO 1/2: TEAM MECH. Had one Tank Platoon (from A CO 8th IV) not attached. Detached one Mech INF PLT TO A CO, 8th IV, FAC Attached

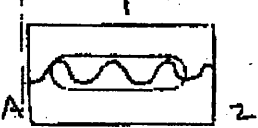


MO = 7 ME = 165 NO = 0 NE = 8

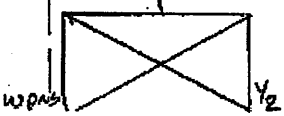
C CO 1/2: Mech Pure CO. Followed in trace of CO B across Southern Bridge. Seized Northern Bridge after A CO became bogged down in city



A CO 8th IV: Team Tank. One ^{Mech} ~~mech~~ plt attached one tank plt detached to B 1/2. FAC attached



A CO 2 AAU BN: 1 PLT Attached to each inf co
 AAU mo = 1 ME = 38 NO = 1
 AAU mo = 8 ME = 9 NO = 0



Composed of 81 PLT, 8ART - 1 MB/TOW, AA PLT - Trench
 81 mo 1 ME 61 NE 3

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12 April 2003
Interview with Cap [REDACTED]

COL [REDACTED] Please state your name, rank, social security number and your organization.

CAPT [REDACTED] Captain [REDACTED] US Marine Corps, Social Security number is XXX-XX-XXXX, 1st Battalion, 2nd Marines, Air Officer.

COL [REDACTED] My name is Colonel [REDACTED] and under the direction of board president, Brigadier General William F. Hodgkins, we're investigating a friendly fire incident that occurred on 23 March 03 near An Nasiriyah, Iraq. This investigation, conducted under DOD Instruction 6055.7 is separate and apart from any other investigation which may have been conducted concerning this incident. The purpose of this investigation is to produce a publicly releasable report on the facts and circumstances surrounding this incident and gather and preserve evidence for use in claims, litigation, disciplinary actions, administrative proceedings and for all other purposes. Your sworn testimony to me may be used for any proper purpose and may be released to the public. Additionally, the chain of command will review the final report. Do you understand what I have just read to you?

CAPT [REDACTED] Yes, Sir.

COL [REDACTED] Finally, do you understand that you're being interviewed as a witness in this friendly fire investigation and acknowledge that no promise of confidentiality has been extended to you?

[REDACTED]

CAP [REDACTED] Yes, Sir. I do.

COL [REDACTED] Do you solemnly swear or affirm that the testimony you are about to give in the matter under investigation shall be the truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

CAP [REDACTED] I do.

COL [REDACTED] Where were you located on the 23rd of March 03?

CAP [REDACTED] I was located in the Command and Control variant in the C-7 in the forward command post.

COL [REDACTED] Whereabouts in relation to Nasiriyah?

CAPT [REDACTED] We were in the vicinity of Phase line Slim at the point when we first took fire and that would be the first indirect fire that we took at that point.

COL [REDACTED] I understand out here that you're using three types of Close Air Support. Would you please describe these for me?

CAPT [REDACTED] Yes, Sir. Type 1 is pilot direct control, which used to be a pilot forward control. I could see the aircraft. I could see the target, make sure he's not pointed at me, make

[REDACTED]
sure he's pointed at the target, and then I can clear him hot to engage those targets. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] That's Type 2. Type 3 we, essentially, give the pilot an area to work in to give him a clear to engage call based on the targets in that area.

COL [REDACTED] understand that there's a battalion ops order that has indicated that the only type of CAS that you're authorized to use is Type 1, unless the commanding officer directs Type 2 or Type 3 CAS to be directed. Is that true?

CAPT [REDACTED] Yes, Sir. The way the order is written is Type 1 pilots direct control can be used on approval and has to go through me and the fire support coordinator. The Type 2 can also be approved by me and the fire support coordinator. And then Type 3 requires battalion commander's approval.

COL [REDACTED] OK. We'll get right to the heart of this. On ...the incident on the 23rd. Well, let's step back a minute. This ops order, was this verbally briefed to yourself and to all the FACs?

CAPT [REDACTED] Yes, Sir. I was briefed in the operations order which they were all present at.

[REDACTED]
COL [REDACTED] So, they were all present when... [REDACTED] present when this ops order was briefed?

CAPT [REDACTED] Yes, Sir. All the officers in the battalion and all the staffs were present when the ops order was given. The only exception may be was Ma [REDACTED] because he was late join FAC that was going with Tank Company later on. I had briefed him separately on the procedures that were in the approval process that takes place for Types 1, 2, and 3.

COL [REDACTED] OK [REDACTED] in there on the 23rd of March. Do you know the call sign of the aircraft that he called in?

CAPT [REDACTED] No, I don't.

COL [REDACTED] Do you know what type of CAS [REDACTED]

CAPT [REDACTED] No, I don't, Sir.

COL [REDACTED] You were currently located with the FSC, and your radio was damaged and you couldn't talk with higher headquarters on the 23rd of March. Is that correct?

CAPT [REDACTED] Yes, Sir.

COL [REDACTED] Who could you talk to?

[REDACTED]

CAP [REDACTED] The only person I could talk to was...I had comm with my FACs initially. After the first T55 engagement that we engaged with Cobras, I had lost comm with all my FACs.

COL [REDACTED] What were the call signs of the Cobras?

CAPT [REDACTED] I don't recall, Sir. I didn't know the information that was getting from higher at that point was we had a section of Cobras coming. I had no UHF capability, so I didn't hear them coming. They said they didn't know the call sign, I said have them contact MOUTH on the TAD net that we were working on that day, and....they pushed them in automatically. I had no idea what the call signs were of the aircraft that showed up all day.

COL [REDACTED] So, you didn't have communications with MOUTH during this. Did you have communications at different times?

CAPT [REDACTED] Initially, I had up to the first mortar engagement, and then slightly after Bravo Company took the lead for the battalion. As I continued to move up just after the southern railroad bridge. Before we got to the bridge over the Euphrates, I lost comm with MOUTH or [REDACTED] and I had never got comm with again after that.

COL [REDACTED] So you didn't talk to the A-10s that came on station.

[REDACTED]

CAPT [REDACTED] No, Sir. I didn't talk to any aircraft from the....actually, I couldn't talk to any aircraft at all with the exception of one huey that showed up just after the tanks took indirect fire, and the very first engagement that we got when went troops in contact. I contacted a huey that happened to be on the net ID. I think the net ID was [REDACTED] I can't remember off hand. They came in. I think they were a C-2 variant. I didn't have very good comm with them, and MOUTH was actually talking for a little bit on that same net.

COL [REDACTED] and MOUTH is [REDACTED]

CAPT [REDACTED] Yes, Sir. And I didn't have comm with any other aircraft after that. At least not talking to the aircraft directly. My UHF radio wasn't working. The TARHAR was working back to VIKING and CHIEFTAIN at that time.

COL [REDACTED] VIKING is Task Force Tarawa?

CAPT [REDACTED] VIKING is the regiment and then...they were actually helping me request the air since I didn't have good comm with CHIEFTAIN all the time. I had good comm with VIKING for a while.

COL [REDACTED] What was CHIEFTAIN?

CAPT [REDACTED] CHIEFTAIN is the AFC that's co-located with Task Force Tarawa. That is who you request the air from. As we continued to push up after Bravo Company took the lead

[REDACTED]

and Charlie Company and moved up next to them. As we continued to move up, I had comm with MOUTH. I had no comm with the aircraft. The information that I was getting over the TARHAR net at that point, since I still had comm with VIKING, was that hey, we got a section of aircraft ... the section of aircraft coming in happened to be a section or division of Cobras coming up at the time. At that point, they were doing some engagements. Bravo Company actually had a face to face with [REDACTED] to tell him the plan, and that the deconfliction plan is to engage targets that you see that are hostile, a click and beyond us so that we could have some deconfliction with the tracks and things like that. That's right when Charlie was basically handling both companies since we didn't have a FAC with Charlie Company handling the fire support for the air piece of this as we were moving up. As they moved into, over this railroad bridge, at least based on the posid that I was getting on my maps since I didn't have much visibility outside because I was inside the C-7. As they moved over the railroad bridge, I had lost comm with CHIEFTAIN, or with VIKING on my TARHAR net, and I called MOUTH and said hey MOUTH I need you to get on guard and contact any aircraft you can and get us some help, because I can't do anything for you right now. Shortly after that, I lost comm with him, and obviously I had no UHF capability, so I don't know what air showed up on station after that. I have no recollection of it. I have no knowledge of the aircraft showing up on station after that point. Other than what I saw flying around when we were stuck in the city in the mud.

COL [REDACTED] Fire support coordination, the fire support coordination officer didn't have contact with anybody...

[REDACTED]

CAPT [REDACTED] He was talking with VIKING fires, and they were telling us intermittently when aircraft were coming, but I'm not sure if they were giving us the full air picture. Like I said, I have no knowledge of what was showing up at that point.

COL [REDACTED] When did you first become aware that there was a problem with A-10s on Charlie Company?

CAPT [REDACTED] I didn't, Sir. I didn't know until after we got evacuated out of the city that night, and we actually stayed at Bravo Company's position. And I had talked him out, and ...he was pretty heart broken from what I could tell. I asked him what was wrong and he thought there might have been a Blue on Blue, and that was the first time I had heard of it.

COL [REDACTED] What did [REDACTED] say to you? Did he say anything to you about the incident?

CAPT [REDACTED] I don't recall, Sir. We were both kind of dumbfounded from the whole incident. I was really taken back. He said that...that, you know...I saw the A-10 and ...he got some intelligence that there might be a mechanized unit coming down from the north and had them engaged, and that was pretty much all I remember from the conversation. It was pretty tiresome and...I hadn't slept much the night before, and I'm not sure if he had either, but...

COL [REDACTED] That's a tough situation. When did you start getting cas-evac calls?

[REDACTED]

CAPT [REDACTED] When we were stuck in the mud, I actually started picking up comm on the TARHAR net from CHIEFTAIN and I heard people talking over the fires net requesting fires to VIKING, or requesting medevacs. I heard that over one of the nets using battalion TAC 1 or Regimental TAC 1 or Regimental fires or the TARHAR. But that's when we started hearing the medevac calls for Charlie Company. I wasn't sure that there had been any incident with aviation hitting anybody at that point. I just knew we had casualties. I was trying as hard as I could to try to get comm up and to at least facilitate getting medevacs in with the information that I knew.

COL [REDACTED] Do you have anything else that you want to add?

CAPT [REDACTED] I'm not sure what else I can say about the incident, Sir. I didn't really have much knowledge of what happened that day. Once I lost my radios, I really didn't...couldn't really talk to anybody, and everything else is hearsay. The things that I've heard, from my knowledge of that day, everything that I knew basically stopped as soon as I lost comm, and I have no knowledge of any other aircraft other than what [REDACTED] had told me about a section of Cobras and a section of A-10s checking in on station. I did have contact with [REDACTED] who is the assistant FSC and I told him that hey, we've got a section of Cobras and a section of A-10s checking in on station. I don't know what time it was. We were taking fire, and I think an RPG hit nearby us. So at that point, I think we were more concerned...we didn't have the fight at that point in terms of fires and the FSC...with the FSC, I'm not certain that we were actually doing anything. I think we mainly had to fight at that point, and we were really trying to get out of the city, and we were looking for recovery.

[REDACTED]

COL [REDACTED] In closing, I want to remind you that this is an official interview and direct not to discuss your testimony with anyone without the board's permission or until the report has been officially released to the public. Do you understand?

CAPT [REDACTED] Yes, Sir. I do.

[REDACTED]
Interview with Maj [REDACTED]

COL [REDACTED] Please state your name, rank, social security number and your billet.

MAJ [REDACTED]: My name is [REDACTED], Major, XXX-XX-XXXX. I'm currently assigned as a Forward Air Controller to Alpha Company Tanks, who is currently attached to 1/2.

COL [REDACTED] My name is Colonel [REDACTED] under the direction of the board president, Brigadier General William F. Hodgkins, we're investigating a friendly fire incident that occurred on 23 March 03 near An Nasiriyah, Iraq. This investigation, conducted under DOD Instruction 6055.7 is separate and apart from any other investigation which may have been conducted concerning this incident. The purpose of this investigation is to produce a publicly releasable report on the facts and circumstances surrounding this incident and gather and preserve evidence for use in claims, litigation, disciplinary actions, adverse administrative proceedings and for all other purposes. Your sworn testimony to me may be used for any proper purpose and may be released to the public. Additionally, the chain of command will review the final report. Do you understand what I have just read to you?

MAJ [REDACTED] Yes, Sir. I do.

COL [REDACTED] Finally, do you also understand that you're being interviewed as a witness in this friendly fire incident and acknowledge that no promise of confidentiality has been extended to you?

MA [REDACTED] Yes, Sir. I do.

COL [REDACTED] Do you solemnly swear or affirm that the testimony you are about to give in the matter now under investigation shall be the truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

MA [REDACTED] So help me God.

COL [REDACTED] I understand that there's an operations order covering the three types of CAS that will be used out here. Is that correct?

M [REDACTED] Yes, Sir, there is.

COL [REDACTED] Can you explain those types of CAS please?

M [REDACTED] Yes, Sir. Type 1 CAS is eyes-on, traditional CAS as I call it. Type 2 CAS is reasonable assurance, such as they have the target, they have the SA, they can describe the target. I may not have the exact eyes-on, but they can drop. Type 3 is they're basically on their own to conduct CAS.

COL [REDACTED] I understand according to the operations order that the Type 1 CAS was primarily to be used. Type 2 CAS, direction for that use had to be by the fire support coordination center, and Type 3 CAS was only going to be released by the commanding officer...Is that true, to your knowledge?

[REDACTED]

MAJ [REDACTED] That was verbally briefed to me. You have to understand, Sir, that I joined two days before we stepped across the line. I had none of the briefings prior to that. It was pretty much grab your stuff, get on the tank and let's get going type of...

COL [REDACTED] Who was it that briefed that to you?

MAJ [REDACTED] It was briefed to me by COCO.

COL [REDACTED] And who is COCO?

MAJ [REDACTED]: COCO is the Air Officer.

COL [REDACTED] OK, so you were verbally briefed on that. To your knowledge, were all the other FACs briefed on it?

MAJ [REDACTED]: It would be an assumption.

COL [REDACTED] Where were you on the 23rd of March relative to the An Nasiriyah fight?

MAJ [REDACTED] Well, Sir, I'll start...the fight for me, it was...a start well south of An Nasiriyah. Our exact location, I'll call it south of the garbage dump. Probably 4 clicks south of the garbage dump. We were leading a road march which we had not refueled the tanks, and we

[REDACTED]

were going to move straight from the road march, straight into an attack on An Nasiriyah. We had requested rotary wing support. We requested rotary wing support to provide an overwatch and rotary wing was supposed to have shown up, I believe, if memory serves me, 0300 Z. We were in the road march moving across the LLV and the rotary wing support was not there. We continued to press, and I was riding in the XO's tank, which is the FAC tank for our company. I noticed off the left side that there was a white pickup truck, with some man ushering women and children into it, and they were quickly getting into the pickup truck to take off. About 30 or 40 seconds later as we pulled up a little bit closer to along side a small dwelling or dwelling complex, we began taking mortar fire and small arms fire. We went into...it was an ambush...we then actioned and returned fire first with the 240s and then the coaxial gun and then with main gun. As we...as that was concluding, we basically, we're off...the tanks were coming back on the road, take a deep breath, about ready to step off again and then press with the attack. A Humvee came screaming up at us. It was literally smoking. I mean the tires were on fire. It came up and as we got a little bit closer, we could tell it was all shot up, and a soldier came out yelling that they had been ambushed up further north. At that time, one of the sections of the tanks sprinted forward. I told the XO I had to get to lead trace to support. Because we had gone troops in contact, we now had air showing up. So about the time we started to sprint forward, the air was showing up, because we had...

COL [REDACTED] What air showed up?

MA [REDACTED] Two Cobras.

COL [REDACTED] Do you remember the call signs?

MA [REDACTED] No, Sir. I'll be honest with you, we had so much air show up, I had to revert to Cobra, Harrier. I mean that's a debrief all in itself. So...Cobra showed up and we pressed forward, set up the blocking position north of the Army convoy and that was in the garbage dump area. We rolled up just right behind them and set up the blocking position. I then began running air against another small housing complex, and then deeper air against a treeline and T55 and two ZSUs and basically we were starting to run into their defensive positions. I don't know how detailed you want me to be as far as...

COL [REDACTED] Let's go ahead a little bit. Did you hear, on your radios, any calls from [REDACTED]

MA [REDACTED]: OK. I mean, let me, I guess I do need to proceed on the timeline. We sat there and prosecuted air targets and while we prosecuted targets with air, with rotary wing and with some Harriers until we were able to extract the soldiers. And there were some medical issues and other...the tracks moved up, so that took some time. At this time, we're now going low on fuel...I mean now we were in a critical state of fuel. So, we then...pull the tanks back to the head of the column, and we're informed that our tanks can only get [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] So, we start cycling tanks and tanks through this process. I don't know how the decision...I mean, the decision I guess was then made to go ahead and press the attack. And now we're not following. It's not the Team Tank in the lead. It's Team

[REDACTED]

Mech going to the lead. And so Team Mech proceeds forward and I'm kind of plugged in on what's going on. We're trying to get the debrief...

COL [REDACTED] Who was the FAC for Team Mech?

MAJ [REDACTED] I believe that would be COCO....

COL [REDACTED] And COCO is?

MAJ [REDACTED] Alpha Company. I don't know my call signs.

COL [REDACTED] OK.

MAJ [REDACTED] So, Team Mech proceeds in, they action right down the street. They come over the bridge. They go to the right, and they go right into a sewage bog area. I mean, literally bog down 3 tanks immediately. I guess they were called by the C-7. So, they're now in a problem. I don't know about that at this time. I'm still back waiting to get fuel. And then, Charlie Company goes. Team Tank is sitting back here still waiting to get fuel while the rest of the battalion is moving forward. I don't have the details. I understand Charlie Company then went straight across and not Alpha Company, and they lost a tank. The tanks and their infantry dismounted. That was the first time I'd seen the FAC on the ground. They then came under fire. Then, Charlie Company presses forward to go take the northern bridge. There's still no Team Tank. And they come under fire and they dismount their FAC as well. It was an ambush...

[REDACTED]

became a victim of the firefight. We're getting word at that time, and I'm not on the tank, we're getting word now, we hear basically a desperate call. You guys gotta get in there. I can't tell you time, or even who was talking to who at that point in time. So, I'm back up on the tank, we're moving forward and I'm trying to talk to the Air Officer. He's not on the net. Somehow, I get information from...I mean nobody's on the net, and then Battalion TAC 1 is just a, for all sense of the word there was no Battalion TAC 1 was just a bunch of chatter, not making any sense. So, I get word, somehow we're...grid coordinates pop out to me of the location where everybody's in the bog. And it just keeps mounting, like who's in there. I see a section of Cobras that are approaching the city, and I just basically flagged them down, and I told them I wanted them to go and position themselves on top of the tanks that were...on top of them. I asked if they had a FAC-A on board, and they did have a FAC-A on board. At that time I basically....

COL [REDACTED] m sorry, they did or they didn't?

MA [REDACTED] They did. They did have a FAC-A on board. To be quite frank with you, Sir, even if they didn't have a FAC-A on board, we were in a mess. So I positioned the Cobras on top of the bog. Pretty much for the rest of the fight, the rest of the day, no matter what else I was doing, I was ensuring we had Cobras on top. It was kind of a ...we kind of used that as an entry point for divisions that were checking in. They'd go there and find that first, and then we'd siphon them off, one or two to go into the city. So, we're still approaching. As soon as we started to march, CO's tank went down, so I had to jump tanks and that was an additional delay. We're approaching at about 5 KPH but we're building our SA as the CO catches up. We

[REDACTED]
bumped up [REDACTED] then [REDACTED] then [REDACTED] Now we're coming to the northern part of the garbage dump. As soon as we turned the corner, now we're engaging T55s. So, we're on the main gun battling T55s. We'd come across the first bridge, north of the garbage dump, I guess. We're continuing to engage targets. We come over the south bridge of An Nasiriyah. As soon as pulled over the south bridge of An Nasiriyah, at this point the only thing talking to me is the Cobras on top of everything else that was going on. I can hear MOUTH and COCO or KOOLAID. I was able ascertain that they were dismounted. They were in the streets and they were in a firefight. We came over the bridge, the south bridge, and we could see a lot on fire, you could see burned out tracks. You could see Alpha Company, first you could see parts of Charlie Company further down. You could see...you know...lots of things going on. Once we were over the bridge, the first street and just hard left and just planted it right in the street. I'm still talking to the section over the bog, and there was aI do recall an A-10 that informed me that he was in the area, and this is as I was approaching the city. And I already had Cobras there that I didn't have any use for the A-10. Basically, I think I told him to stay up there if we need you...

COL [REDACTED] Do you remember the call sign?

MAJ [REDACTED] No, Sir. There are no call signs that I remember. Call signs were...first off they were hard to understand, they were constantly changing and didn't mean anything to me, and it was my entire day. I'm going to have to apologize, Sir, because I can't remember your call sign. So, we end up now it's a tank fight against dismounted troops. We're ...RPGs are getting shot at us, small arms getting shot at us. We're trying to figure out what the troops need.

[REDACTED]

So, we're trying to yell to the troops and they start pulling out of places, and we just start putting impact rounds and collapsing buildings. In that particular area,...started to...that was the initial action, and we had Charlie Company further down and that was having a problem. We pulled out...this was the CO and the XO's tank. We pushed further down to Charlie, and the section that was right behind us supported Alpha. So, we went down basically, did the same thing for Charlie. I'm still only talking to the helicopters, and I'm starting to talk to MOUTH again, MOUTH and KOOLAID more, because they're now needing helicopter support. My vantage point, from on top of the tank. I knew what we had around. So we're syphoning some off, and in that time we had 3 FACs, one TAD net, multiple sections of Cobra in there. We were using Cobras...they all went home Winchester...before they ran out of gas. In fact, there were times when we...I had Cobras who I would say are heroes. Cobras were going back over the bog when they were Winchester just to keep the sound of rotor blades, because when everybody would leave, people would start to close in on that. We...at this time, I still had no battalion guidance on the net and any type of anything out of that. The fight's at a company level. It's pretty much a fight for survival at the company level and lower. We pushed on down to Charlie and pretty much start doing the same thing. And Charlie gets enough people into, gathered back into tracks and then we go for the northern bridge. The CO hung back a little bit. So, we had tanks, tracks and the CO. We pushed up the northern side of the bridge, halfway between the bridge and the T. And we stopped in the middle, some of Charlie we could see as we come over the bridge, there was another burned out track from Charlie in the ground area, and we just...we pushed forward, and set up basically the FiST team.

COL [REDACTED] The FiST team was?

[REDACTED]

MA [REDACTED] Well, we set up a FAC and the XO. And we didn't have the FO with us. The FO and CO were busy going back, traversing and putting wounded Marines on their tank, and basically ambulancing them out of the city. So we're sitting in the middle of the road...and it's just like...best described like swatting flies. There were mortar rounds landing, artillery rounds landing, small arms fire. I could not, for the life of me, figure out where it was coming from. I mean, it was...I couldn't see any...it was frustrating. But you could hear the report...There was an A-10 on top who checked in with me, and, that A-10...he had 1.5 hours time on station, so I think he was new to the game. So, best thing to me was the A-10 all day long. So, he was very helpful, because he was helping me start to spot flashes. He was helping me find the places where we're getting arms fire. Now he was too high to see the mortar positions that were in the fields to our left and right, but he could see in the treeline. He picked those up. And let's see if I can remember the sequence of events there...we bombed the treeline, which as it turned out was artillery positions and we had a van going back and forth dropping off combatants and ammunition. And we hit him with the coaxial gun, and he just started to go across a field. He took off to the north and I rolled the A-10 on him, and he was still with weapons. He blew up. I used the A-10 to get some Harrier and Hornet pilots SA up while I was...I mean I'm still talking back to the guys that are over the bog, and then the Cobras started pushing forward as well. So we ran air on the treeline to the west. We ran air on some mortar positions. He got shot at by triple A. He dropped [REDACTED] in that. So, but that was...you know...We took out the van. We dropped on the treeline at the end of the T. Cobras came on station and we started hitting point targets, some of their mortar positions. And, there's a whole row where they had dug in mortar positions. What I think these mortar positions were just pre-dialed in. All people had to do was

[REDACTED]

just go pick up the ammo that was pre-stationed and just drop it. They weren't adjusting. There was nobody spotting or adjusting or anything like that. So the Cobras came in and did a lot of work. It was just target, clear, target. And then, all of a sudden, everything went quiet. It was just, you know, you hear that, people say that, sound, that deafening sound of silence. It was just quiet all of a sudden. There was still some arms fire from back in the city, but in our particular area, it was just quiet. We started to get some tracks roll through. I had one track roll past me, so I was no longer a lead trace, and we had to get that coordinated. I knew I had a bunch of mortar positions still out in the fields, but they weren't exactly...they weren't engaging. And I had Harriers and F-18s on station, but really at that time, I didn't see a need to continue. I could've used a lot of ordinance out there, but it was...we were very much trying to go by the rules of engagement. We even talked about, the XO and I, talked about the van. Hostile intent, you know. When he discharged the first 4 people in black get out. Women, they're not shooting at all. And then they start putting,...the gunner could see what he said were weapons in, ammo in the middle of the street, so that's when we engaged him. So, we were very much concerned about the rules of engagement. We didn't want...I knew there were probably farm houses out there and things like that. But, everything went quiet. And that was pretty much the extent of it. I mean..

COL [REDACTED] That's a great summary, [REDACTED] In closing, I want to remind you that this is an official interview and direct that you not to discuss your testimony with anyone without the board's permission or until the report has been officially released to the public. Do you understand?

[REDACTED]

11 April 03 12:46

Interview with [REDACTED]

COL [REDACTED] Go ahead and please state your name, rank, social security number and your billet.

CAPT [REDACTED] Captain [REDACTED] Social Security number is XXX-XX-XXXX. I'm a forward air controller for Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 2nd Marines.

COL [REDACTED] OK [REDACTED] my name is Colonel [REDACTED] and under the direction of the board president, Brigadier General William F. Hodgkins, we're investigating a friendly fire incident that occurred on 23 March 03 near An Nasiriyah, Iraq. This investigation, conducted under DOD Instruction 6055.7 is separate and apart from any other investigation which may have been conducted concerning this incident. The purpose of this investigation is to produce a publicly releasable report on the facts and circumstances surrounding this incident and gather and preserve evidence for use in claims, litigation, disciplinary actions, adverse administrative proceedings and for all other purposes. Your sworn testimony to me may be used for any proper purpose and may be released to the public. Additionally, the chain of command will review the final report. Do you understand what I have just read to you?

CAPT [REDACTED] Yes, Sir.

[REDACTED]

COL [REDACTED] Finally, do you also understand that you're being interviewed as a witness in this friendly fire incident and acknowledge that no promise of confidentiality has been extended to you?

CAP [REDACTED] Yes, Sir.

COL [REDACTED] Do you solemnly swear or affirm that the testimony you are about to give in the matter under investigation shall be the truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

CAP [REDACTED] I do, Sir.

COL [REDACTED] OK [REDACTED] I understand that there's an op order out here, that delineates specifically three types of close air support. Would you go over those for me please?

CAPT [REDACTED] Yeah, you've got your Type 1, which is what we're all used to, which is forward air control where you can see them. They can see the target; I mean that's what we practice at TACP school and all that. Then, you've got your Type 2, which is more for where you have a problem acquiring the aircraft, or a... the Type 2 is much like the first, except you can't pick up the aircraft, but you see the target as the forward air controller. And then, Type 3, being the final one, which is way deep in the battle space where you actually can't see the target, and probably can't see the aircraft and you're just pushing it forward into like a kill box and maybe forward to the FSCL to attack the target up there.

[REDACTED]

COL [REDACTED] Now this operations order has been briefed verbally, and it's a written ops order that's been briefed verbally to all the FACs and the Air Observers.

CAPT [REDACTED] Yes.

COL [REDACTED] Was [REDACTED] present at the brief when this is given?

CAPT [REDACTED] Yes.

COL [REDACTED] Was there any discussion between you and any of the other FACs regarding type control, Type 1, Type 2, and Type 3?

CAPT [REDACTED] Yeah, we all talked about it in general. The big thing is we kind of got like an impromptu brief really with the types of control, because the order wasn't out when we were getting ready to deploy. So that was a big thing with the Air Officer...you know...he started saying, we didn't even know, you know, if they're going to be calling Type 1, 2, or 3 when we first came out, until we were actually on the boat coming out, and you know, stopped at Camp Shoop, and we stayed there for several weeks. At one point, the air guys came down and said, hey, have you guys gotten this brief on Type 1, 2, 3 that's what we're going to in kill boxes, which is more of an Air Force style of doing it. We were like, hey, we've been talking about it amongst ourselves and we all had a good understanding of what it was. But as far as getting a formalized brief, we hadn't done that yet. And they did it quick at that time, you know, just kind

[REDACTED]

of ran through it. That was how we got to know about Type 1, 2, 3, mostly on our own, and a quick review when all the wing guys and the MANTS guys came out to Camp Shoop.

COL [REDACTED] I understand in the ops order, it has Type 2 CAS can only be directed by the Battalion Air Officer, and Type 3 CAS can only be directed by the Commanding Officer. Is that correct?

CAPT [REDACTED] By the Battalion CO.

COL [REDACTED] And everybody understood that? Is that how you've been operating?

CAPT [REDACTED] That's how we've been operating, as far as, I mean, when you say, "Is that how we've been operating?" It wasn't really an issue. I mean it was something that, you know, they came out with this ops order that they did, and we were all briefed on it and knew about it, but it didn't really become an issue until An Nasiriyah as far as...we hadn't done any CAS until that point. But that is how we operate now.

COL [REDACTED] What can you tell me about the events that happened at An Nasiriyah? If you would walk me through where you were during the battle? What comm you heard over the radios, what aircraft you heard, and any calls as the battle progressed.

CAPT [REDACTED] As far as where I was, in the lead were the tankers, with Maj [REDACTED] up front, HAWK, and then [REDACTED], MOUTH was the next FAC in line, being with the Bravo

[REDACTED]

Company, and then I was in the next battalion with Alpha Company as their FAC and we were pushing up into the city. Initially we had been told, hey it's going to be a permissive environment, you know, blah, blah, blah... We started pushing into kind of the southern areas of An Nasiriyah, and at that point we started getting....we heard something about an Army unit kind of coming through here. The comms were pretty good initially, but they continued to break down as the day went on. But, we heard about an Army unit that was pinned down. At that point we requested some air, and actually...I think that was kind of what got the air started pushed in our direction, because at first they had kind of been thinking that maybe there wasn't going to be that much going through, and so air was going to be like an on-call thing. I think that was actually a good thing, because it got the air coming our direction. I mean it wasn't a good thing that they got hit, but...it got the air coming our direction. Then we continued to roll up, and I could hear once the air started getting on station, I could hear HAWK and MOUTH kind of controlling it. I was further back in the column. HAWK was like the primary lead trace. He had like the...the...

COL [REDACTED] Where was HAWK?

CAPT [REDACTED] He was in a tank. He was in the other tank. So he had kind of the lead trace as we were south of the city. So he was like the lead FAC, if you will, to kind of control the air as we were heading up. They started prosecuting targets, hitting...

COL [REDACTED] What company was he with?

[REDACTED]

CAPT [REDACTED] He was with tanks, now he's with Charlie Company, but now he's with tanks. He's still officially with tanks, but now they've broken us into three Mech. Before it was Team Tank and Team Mech, now it's just a regular Amtrack company.

COL [REDACTED] You said you heard them working the air. What were the call signs and types of aircraft that they were working, do you remember?

CAPT [REDACTED]: I remember the types of aircraft and some of the call signs. To be truthful, by the end of the day, it was probably 200, or I mean it seems that way anyway. Thinking back on it, I actually thought those 2 days were 3 days when they were over with, just they seemed so long. Initially, it was Cobras on station.

COL [REDACTED] Do you remember their call signs?

CAPT [REDACTED] Uh....

COL [REDACTED] Do you have it written down anywhere?

CAPT [REDACTED] I don't think I have it written down. I'll have to look and see. No, call signs just elude me. We had a lot of call signs.

COL [REDACTED] Do you remember the A-10s call signs?

[REDACTED]

CAP [REDACTED] I don't. I did hear the A-10s flying around, but don't remember what the call sign was.

COL [REDACTED] Did you hear the call that [REDACTED] made to the A-10s?

CAP [REDACTED] I heard an A-10 check in, and I heard like one call with the A-10 when it first checked in looking for work, looking for COCO. Actually, maybe he wasn't looking COCO, I just heard him check in looking for work and after that I don't recall any other, just....you know what I mean...comm with him. That was at the point where we kinda when we pushed forward into the city and the lead got stuck in mud on the east side of the road there, and then we pushed forward, and I couldn't get comm with anyone except the helicopters. Actually, I had good comm with HAWK in the front. He was actually in the tank and he came back. He was pretty close to our positions, and maybe that had something to do with it, as far as distance. But, there were a lot of, ...some powerlines in the area and stuff, and I don't know if that was contributing to it or what.

COL [REDACTED] Did you have comm with MOUTH at all?

CAPT [REDACTED] had comm with MOUTH for about...for probably half the time that we were in there, because we were all working the same TAD net on the 113s and 148s. We were working all the rotary wing together. Initially, at that point, we had like maybe two sections on station and they were trying to cover HAWK's tanks that were stuck in the mud and they were getting

[REDACTED]

sporadic fire on those and then coming over to help us, because we were on kind of the main mall that went down into An Nasiriyah.

COL [REDACTED] Did you hear MOUTH talk to the A-10s?

CAP [REDACTED] I heard the one call when they first checked in. They said, hey, we're here on station, and I heard him say, hey it's street to street fighting up here, and we can't really use you here. I remember hearing that call, but that's the only call that I...I might have heard other calls, but I don't recollect them under all the other ones, because we were, at that point, we were busy with the fighting that was going on right in front of us.

COL [REDACTED] Did you talk to Capt [REDACTED] after this?

CAPT [REDACTED] Briefly. I actually didn't see...we set up our position, and then after we pushed through, we kind of went to the T at the end of the road there. I took the west half, and he took the east half, and then, it got really busy all the next day. Then around noon or 2 o'clock the next day, we moved all the way to the west into the other intersection and covered that other bridge, and I really didn't see him again for another week

COL [REDACTED] Have you talked to him since then?

CAP [REDACTED] I have talked to him since then, but not about this incident. I know that [REDACTED] [REDACTED] said that you guys were conducting interviews about it, so I really didn't talk to [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] about this. I didn't know if...I assumed that I probably would be interviewed, but I didn't talk to [REDACTED] about this specific...And at the time...I hadn't even really know that there had been a friendly fire incident until late in the day on March 23rd. Or, you mean we came in and to do the medevac for Charlie?

COL [REDACTED] Yeah, Did you hear the mass casualties called?

CAP [REDACTED] The mass casualty? Which call? No. The...the big thing...my...with, where we're at, I was only monitoring the UHF frequencies, because the TACP local...I didn't have any good comm with [REDACTED] the Air Officer on TACP local. The big thing with Charlie is that they didn't have any UHF radios, but they would have had...I think they would have a least had had a forward air controller with them, and it would have been totally avoided.

COL [REDACTED] Did you hear the cease fire call or abort the air call? Probably didn't then, that Charlie Company made?

CAP [REDACTED]: No, not until, no, I heard a ...I do recall now hearing an abort, abort, abort call, and the aircraft did abort. Uh...I can't remember what the circumstance, but I believe it was an A-10.

COL [REDACTED] It was an A-10, or...?

[REDACTED]

CAP [REDACTED] It seems like there was an A-10 call; they said abort, abort, abort. But then they reset and continued, you know what I mean? I don't remember. But, I remember that it wasn't...It was just for...it was something...I'm not sure what the deal was. But I do remember hearing abort, abort, abort. But it wasn't in relation to Charlie Company that I heard of. It wasn't in response to Charlie Company making the call.

COL [REDACTED] You and your company moved up to the bridge and across and went east...west I believe, right?

CAP [REDACTED] Yes, west.

COL [REDACTED] What did you see when you got up there and climbed over the bridge as far as damage and injuries?

CAPT [REDACTED] I know we had been waiting for 2/8 to come and relieve us is why we were in the city so long, and at a certain point, [REDACTED] said hey, you know... We had a track that was burning right behind us from Charlie Company that had come back and we'd actually medevaced them. I think...I don't know...JODA 53 was one of the 46s that came through. That's not something we'd worried about, they did the medevac of the Marine that was in the city right by us. We pushed north, so we had the burning track that was right behind us, which was closer to the south bridge. We pushed through. I saw a couple of Humvees. I think they were weapons company Humvees, and another track burning on the road south of the bridge. I don't know...maybe 500 meters south, I want to say. I can't remember exactly.

COL [REDACTED] South of the north bridge?

CAP [REDACTED] Yeah, and then, right when we came over the top there was another AAV just a short distance on the north side of the north bridge, burning. It was still smoking and stuff as we pulled off and took a block position on the eastern side. And that's when I saw all the casualties at that point. That's when we started working the medevac again.

COL [REDACTED] How many casualties did you see?

CAP [REDACTED] There were...I mean...I know now it was close to 25 or 30 Marines total, but they were all just lined up, you know what I mean. It was hard to tell. I know they came...I think it was the first load that came through were 14, and then we did an additional group right after that, so...

COL [REDACTED] Anything else you want to add?

CAP [REDACTED] I would like to add that...kind of...we spent a lot of time on the ship planning...We kind of knew that An Nasiriyah was going to be our first step, first possible tasking. We went through a lot of courses of action and everything, and it seemed like...We had a big push—just to go. To push through the city, I mean, there was a point where hey the heavy tanks need to refuel, and you know, there was like a big push that...Hey, in all our planning was like tanks going to go first, go through, then it's going to be Bravo Company...Alpha

[REDACTED]

Company's going to go through the southern bridge. Southern bridge, which is where I'd be at. Bravo Company was going to push forward, and eventually Charlie Company was going to come up once the southern bridge was secure and go up and take the northern bridge. At some point it came..I mean...I don't have the whole big picture because I've been down in Alpha Company for a while, but it seemed to me that everything kind of fell apart as far as like our planning goes, the tanks needed gas so, so we pushed forward without the tanks. I don't know the whole reason for that, but rather than waiting however long as it takes to refuel, and there was a big push to go and take the bridges. Even though going from the southern end of the city up to the first southern bridge was not the permissive environment we....I mean, they told us before, they said, hey, if you go in there, you're not going to send one regiment into a city of 300,000 people. You know, if it's not going to be a permissive environment. And so, I don't know what happened, but it seemed like we were pushing really fast, and I don't know why...all the planning we did, detailed planning for months...a month...was, hey tanks you're going to go first, you're going to do this, then we're going to roll in once we secure the bridge. It seemed like, once we got close, it all just went out the window, and they're like hey we're going to roll, roll, roll. Get the bridges, you know, hurry up kind of thing. You know, tanks were sitting back there and we were in the city for, again, time-compression, I don't know, but it seemed like an hour and a half with no tanks...you know...tracks getting blown up and all this stuff, and then the tanks finally show up and I truthfully didn't even know that Charlie had gone past us. We were still focused on that western...you know...where we were taking fire from. I mean, I was surprised that Charlie was up there. I didn't even realize that they had gone on up there. You know...our plan was to secure the bridge, and then Charlie would go up. At least, that was my understanding of it. I don't know. It was a surprise to me anyway, that they were that far north.

[REDACTED]

COL [REDACTED] I've got a closing statement. In closing, I want to remind you that this is an official interview and direct you to not to discuss your testimony with anyone without the board's permission or until the report has been officially released to the public. Do you understand?

CAPT [REDACTED] Yes, Sir.

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[REDACTED]

12 April 2003, 1530

Interview with Cap [REDACTED]

COL [REDACTED] I'm interviewing Capt [REDACTED] the CO of Bravo Company. Go ahead and state your name [REDACTED] for the record, your rank, social security number and your billet.

CAPT [REDACTED] Captain, US Marine Corps, XXX-XX-XXXX, Bravo Company Commander, 1st Battalion, 2nd Marines.

COL [REDACTED] My name is Colonel [REDACTED] and under the direction of board president, Brigadier General William F. Hodgkins, we're investigating a friendly fire incident that occurred on 23 March 03 near An Nasiriyah, Iraq. This investigation, conducted under DOD Instruction 6055.7 is separate and apart from any other investigation which may have been conducted concerning this incident. The purpose of this investigation is to produce a publicly releasable report on the facts and circumstances surrounding this incident and gather and preserve evidence for use in claims, litigation, disciplinary actions, adverse administrative proceedings and for all other purposes. Your sworn testimony to me may be used for any proper purpose and may be released to the public. Additionally, the chain of command will review the final report. Do you understand what I have just told you?

CAP [REDACTED] Yes, Sir.

[REDACTED]

COL [REDACTED] Finally, do you also understand that you're being interviewed as a witness in this friendly fire incident and acknowledge that no promise of confidentiality has been extended to you?

CAP [REDACTED] Yes, Sir.

COL [REDACTED] Do you solemnly swear or affirm that the testimony you are about to give in the matter now under investigation shall be the truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

CAP [REDACTED] I do.

COL [REDACTED] OK [REDACTED] on the 23rd of March, Bravo Company CO, I understand that coming through the town your folks made a right hand turn and got bogged down. Where exactly were you?

CA [REDACTED] Sir, we went through An Nasiriyah, we went over the railroad bridge, we went over the southern bridge, which goes over the river, the Euphrates. Immediately over the bridge, we were to head east and take a route out to the east and swing up toward the northern bridge so we didn't go straight up Ambush Alley. Shortly after we took that right, we got into an urban type area and we got stuck. We had 2 P-7s stuck, a couple of M-1s, C-7/P-7 chase got stuck in the battalion forward and there were a lot of vehicles stuck.

[REDACTED]

COL [REDACTED] Now Charlie Company had pressed ahead in the attack and they had gone over the bridge and they were on the northern side. Did you receive any calls indicating that Charlie Company was on the northern side of the bridge?

CAPT [REDACTED] No, Sir. I didn't. No, Sir, but you have to keep in mind that battalion TAC 1 was clobbered. I think a lot of information that probably should have been passed that day, never made it on the TAC 1.

COL [REDACTED] Where was your FAC when you were in this position? Was he with you?

CAPT [REDACTED] Sir, he was in the back of my P-7.

COL [REDACTED] And your FAC is?

CAPT [REDACTED] MOUTH [REDACTED]

COL [REDACTED] Did [REDACTED] get any air to work during the time that you were bogged down there?

CAPT [REDACTED] He did, Sir. He got a, I know he got a, pulled an A-10 in, and some Cobras earlier, prior to that.

COL [REDACTED] Do you know what the call sign of the A-10 was?

[REDACTED]

CAPT [REDACTED] No, Sir.

COL [REDACTED] Was it one A-10 or two?

CAPT [REDACTED] I think it was one.

COL [REDACTED] Did he, when that A-10 came in, did he talk to you about where he should run that A-10?

CAPT [REDACTED] Yes, Sir. Absolutely.

COL [REDACTED] And where did he want to run the A-10?

CAPT [REDACTED] We wanted to run it...what we knew of the enemy situation initially, that there were four, we were given four grids, they were all north of the bridge, mainly up at the T corner. We had fire support plan in place to cause some destruction up there, but we wanted to be up closer to the northern bridge to be able to run that, but we didn't expect to be under so much fire in An Nasiriyah, either. As soon as he could get A-10, I told him to start working north of the bridge.

COL [REDACTED] OK. Now he didn't have. What type of CAS was he going to run north of the bridge? Type 1, Type 2, Type 3?

[REDACTED]

COL [REDACTED] So you were near him, but you didn't have an opportunity to talk to him.

You were unaware there were friendly forces north of the bridge.

CAP [REDACTED] Yes, Sir.

COL [REDACTED] There were calls that were made to cease the air, to stop the fires. Did any of those come into your pos?

CAPT [REDACTED] They did not, Sir. I didn't hear that all day.

COL [REDACTED] So [REDACTED] ran the air and the air checked off station without any idea where he was running?

CAP [REDACTED] You, know, Sir, when that A-10 was done, I think that MOUTH said something about there was possibly some friendlies in the area. At the time, it didn't make a lot of sense. Later that day when we eventually did get the battalion to the north side of the bridge, the CO pulled all the commanders together and I stood there looking at Capt [REDACTED] and he was real dirty and bloody and I...you know, it was confusing cause I didn't know what he had gone through. And then they had direct and indirect fires basically all around them on the northern side of the bridge. They were stuck in the middle of a fire sack. Then, even later in the day, sun was down by this time, different things that I started to hear people say like Charlie Company got shot by an A-10. Different comments by various folks. It wasn't until probably midnight that night, that I realized...it started coming together, thinking I'm the one that's responsible for that.

[REDACTED]

CAPT [REDACTED] Basically, Sir, that's the way I look at it. I wouldn't...that's the way I look at it. I don't know that I really cleared him to fire. But I gave him lead trace for the battalion, and he gave that to the aircraft.

COL [REDACTED] You were co-located with the battalion CO at the time?

CAPT [REDACTED] Sir, we were kind of in a convoy type...in the same...we were relatively close to each other.

COL [REDACTED] In closing, I want to remind you that this is an official interview and direct that you not discuss your testimony with anyone without the board's permission or until the report has been officially released to the public. Do you understand?

CAPT [REDACTED] Yes, Sir.



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J-148

[REDACTED]

12 April 2003, 21:46 L

Interview with Capt [REDACTED]

COL [REDACTED] State your name, rank, social security number and your billet.

CAPT [REDACTED] Captain [REDACTED] XXX-XX-XXXX. I'm with 1st Battalion, 2nd Marines, Charlie Company, CO "C" Company.

COL [REDACTED] My name is Colonel [REDACTED] and under the direction of board president, Brigadier General William F. Hodgkins, we're investigating a friendly fire incident that occurred on 23 March 03 near An Nasiriyah, Iraq. This investigation, conducted under DOD Instruction 6055.7 is separate and apart from any other investigation which may have been conducted concerning this incident. The purpose of this investigation is to produce a publicly releasable report on the facts and circumstances surrounding this incident and gather and preserve evidence for use in claims, litigation, disciplinary actions, adverse administrative proceedings and for all other purposes. Your sworn testimony to me may be used for any proper purpose and may be released to the public. Additionally, the chain of command will review the final report. Do you understand what I have just read to you?

CAPT [REDACTED] Yes, Sir.

COL [REDACTED] Finally, do you also understand that you're being interviewed as a witness in this friendly fire investigation and acknowledge that no promise of confidentiality has been extended to you?

[REDACTED]

CAPT [REDACTED] Yes, Sir.

COL [REDACTED] Do you solemnly swear or affirm that the testimony you are about to give in the matter now under investigation shall be the truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

CAPT [REDACTED] Yes, Sir. I do.

COL [REDACTED] OK, [REDACTED] would you please relate to me the incidents as you remember them. You're CO of Charlie Company on the 23rd of March in An Nasiriyah, Iraq?

CAPT [REDACTED] Alright, Sir. Where do you want me to begin? I mean...the beginning of the attack, or north of the bridge, or where do you want me to start, Sir?

COL [REDACTED] Why don't you start at the beginning of the attack when you...you originally were supposed to be a follow-on force and you were supposed to proceed in trace of the tanks. What transpired to get you in a position to where now you were lead?

CAPT [REDACTED] So what we had was, we had two objectives. There was a southern bridge and a northern bridge. Alpha Company, which Capt [REDACTED] is in charge of, had the southern bridge. Their task was to seize to allow follow-on forces, being ourself and Mustang, which is Bravo Company, to get around and to seize the northern bridge. Alpha Company was the main effort to the south. Team Mech, which consists of a tank platoon and a mechanized company was to go around to the eastern side of the city, to go up and set up support by fire position on

[REDACTED]

the northern side of the bridge. And we were going to attack and seize the northern bridge securing the southern and the northern part to allow Mustang to go through, Bravo Company, that would go through to the north and to refuse our northern flank. From there were supposed to be two battalions that were to our north were briefed enroute up there. So, that was...we'd war gamed that, talked about that, and acknowledged them on the 30 days leading up to...I'm sorry...the 30 days on ship. What actually had transpired that day was our tanks had gotten in a fight early on, and had used a lot of gasoline during the road march. They got called back to refuel. So, at that time, Alpha Company and Bravo Company were sent forward, and there was still firing that was going on near our ___ to the south of the city. Alpha Company started to clear some buildings. They called us to go up and support Bravo Company. As we started doing a movement to contact south toward the southern bridges. We're all...both companies were all on line. We didn't have any contact and we continued to push to the south. Lt Col [REDACTED] came over the net, hey, we need to start pushing. We started going quicker because we were doing a bounding overwatch, moving up towards the southern bridge, which we're southwest of the southern bridge, at this point. So he said, I want you guys to get out. We're going cross-country at this point. He said, I want you guys to get on the main MSR, and be prepared to go north. We're in a hurry here. We need to keep pushing forward. I think he was worried the LAR was going to push up and go around us rather than allow us to be able to accomplish our mission. So we pushed over the main MSR. The order of march was Bravo Company was the first in order. They didn't have any tanks at this point. Alpha Company had followed in behind them. It took us a while to get off the train and so we had three mechanized companies in a row, stacked and ready to go over the southern bridge. We held up to wait for the tanks refuel. We weren't sure how long that was going to be, but all our tanks were to the rear. At that point was when Mustang, Bravo Company, first...saw a T55 in front of them and engaged. We also had

[REDACTED]

aircraft that were flying, but first saw the tanks that were coming at them. They fired a Javelin and killed the T55 in front of them. At that point, the tank battalion commander called back to Team Tank and asked when the tanks were going to be refueled. They were pushed up to the front. I believe Mustang stepped off, Bravo Company stepped off with 3 or 4 tanks, rushed to the front of our column, and we started pushing for that southern bridge. The original plan was all of Team Tank was going to have a support by fire position to the south and going to provide that support by fire for Alpha Company seizing the southern bridge. But all that went out the window because we had to push. So, we basically had 3 tanks. I may be wrong, it was 3 or 4 tanks that were up front with Mustang that were pushing up towards that southern bridge and they killed, I believe, 2 or 3 T55s as they were moving up there. And, it was chaotic on battalion net trying to figure out exactly what was going on. Everybody was jamming it because we had multiple units that were in contact with us. Bravo Company was being fired upon. Alpha Company, behind them was taking small arms fire from the left and right, and we were behind them. I was just in receive mode trying to figure out what was going on. So, Mustang pushed up and went over the bridge. I heard that on the TAC, and...

COL [REDACTED]: The southern bridge?

CAPT [REDACTED]: The southern bridge. And then Alpha Company went up and they did exactly what they were supposed to do. They seized that southern bridge, and they set up in the western, just west...north and west of the southern bridge in a blocking position to ensure that the rest of our forces could get up and around. There's a decision point that was there that was going to be decided by the battalion commander. In our original plan where we were going to do one of two things. If there was not a whole lot of contact, we were going to go straight through

[REDACTED]

what we call Ambush Alley, which is right through the middle of the town. So, if there was light contact, we were going to do that. If there was heavy contact at that point, we were going to go around to the east, which is where Bravo Company ended up going. As I came up and over that bridge, you couldn't see the far side of that river. I saw Alpha Company was in place. They were supposed to be in one block that was to the northwest. Well, they were spread well into the city. So, I was looking at that, trying to call and figure out what the status of Bravo Company was. The TAC was completely filled. I couldn't get a word in edgewise. I looked to the east to see if I could see Bravo Company start to move around to the east and we're talking, it was supposed to be about a click to the east and then moving out to the north, and then coming around with an envelopment. I couldn't see Bravo Company anywhere. I tried to call MOUTH on the net, and basically we had to make a call, because we were under fire. So, I saw Alpha Company pushed all the way in there. I thought, OK, we're going with the sequel or the branch of the sequel in this. Bravo Company must have pushed up right behind Alpha Company, and they're pushing straight to that northern bridge with those tanks in the front. They're going to seize that northern bridge. So, I went under the impression that Bravo Company was already in front of me. I couldn't get them on the net, so I started pushing right through Ambush Alley. We started taking heavy fire. RPGs, I visually saw 2 RPGs whiz by my track. I was the fourth tractor back. A lot of small arms fire. Our Marines were engaging with everything they had, short of small _____ on top of the track. But, we were [REDACTED] [REDACTED] going through that area. We hadn't lost any tracks...I could see the northern bridge. We're pushing across. We're still looking for Bravo Company. I couldn't see them, but at this point, I had assumed that they had pushed to the northern part of the bridge. And all we were going to do was secure that...the north bridge from the south and the north, and then the rest of Team Tank was going to come through and would be able to pass the rest of the

[REDACTED]

battalion at this point. I got up on the bridge and our first tractor got hit by an RPG. How I knew that was...I didn't know it at the time, but I saw a tractor on fire, and we all pulled up on line at the 392 northing, which was about 300 to 400 kilometers north of the north bridge.

_____ gave the signal for our entire company to get on line and all my company had pushed to the northern side of the bridge, because we were trying to get out the frag pattern that was back there in the city. So, we got everybody out in a line, didn't really realize we were taking a whole lot of rounds at that point. We weren't taking a whole lot of rounds at that point, so everybody's starting to get out. I knew that the one track had been hit, and we started dealing with four medevacs. I called up to Lt Col [REDACTED] and spoke to him personally. I said Charlie Company has seized the northern bridge at the 392 northing and we're halting. I said I have four medevacs. I got the roger back from Lt Col. My company starts to get on line, because we thought the main focus of...the biggest thing we were worried about from the intel was two battalions...

COL [REDACTED] You didn't see Bravo Company at this point?

CAPT [REDACTED] Didn't see them.

COL [REDACTED] You had figured out they were behind you?

CAPT [REDACTED] Yeah. At this point, they were behind us. But the biggest thing I was concerned about was these two battalions or brigades rolling from the north and to the south, and one was commando which was supposed to be extremely well trained. The other was a mechanized, I believe. So we were focused on the north. So we got our mortars set up. We're

[REDACTED]

on both sides of the road. We had the one track that was on fire and having secondary explosions in the middle of the road, north of the bridge, 300 meters north of the bridge and we're dealing with those medevacs. I tried to call an air medevac in, and it was too hairy. They asked whether they could get a 46 in and I said no. So, I said, hey, we're going to hold up and we're going to be in a casualty collection point up here and we'll be waiting for the lead traces for Bravo Company coming up behind us. And I mean...what we have right now is, we had three units that were in contact. We had us that was in contact. We had Bravo Company that, little did I know, had gone around to the east and was stuck in the mud and what-not, but were also in contact. Alpha Company was in for the fight of their life. And the main, I have no idea where the main or the forward was right now.

COL [REDACTED] Where was Alpha Company in relation to the bridge?

CAPT [REDACTED] They were on the southern bridge.

COL [REDACTED] On the southern bridge?

CAPT [REDACTED] But they had pushed up further north than they had initially, that we had always talked about, you know, we thought they were going to go on the one block, because they want to get decisively engaged in an urban fight. But they had pushed up probably another, I would say, 1,000 meters or maybe 5 or 600 meters north of that southern bridge. They're trying to get dispersion between their tractors and what-not. So they were quite a ways up into the city themselves. So got started getting everybody off on line, got our mortars fire capped and there was a 23rd ID building, was about 7 or 800 meters to the north of us, and we could see people on

[REDACTED]

top of those buildings and we could see that they were firing at us, and that was the only place I could tell that we were taking fire at that time. Although, obviously we were getting some from the backside too. Our mortars started setting up, started firing. I dismounted out of our track, because the last place I wanted to be was with these RPGs and what-not was in the track, and most of the company got on line at that point. Got...we started controlling fires up there on the 23rd ID building calling for artillery. Continued to try to call back to the battalion and asking, where's lead trace behind us, because we're taking heavy fire from the Martyr District, is what it's called southwest of the bridge. And, we were wanting to run a fire mission into there, but I was unsure of where everybody else was, and whether we could do that or not. So, I continued to call and like I said they were in a fight and they couldn't...

COL [REDACTED] Small arms fire this time? RPGs? Mortars?

CAPT [REDACTED] We're taking artillery, RPGs. We're taking mortar rounds. They're hitting as close as 15 meters behind. We've got the four medevacs that are in bad shape. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Basically all from that RPG. We're taking a lot of direct fire across this road. The road is elevated. I don't know if you've been there, Sir. What you have is a kill stack that they made. They had two berms on either side of the road there. They were approximately 100 meters, maybe 150 meters on either side of the road. So, you couldn't get off and maneuver. These berms were probably 15 or 20 meters high, so you couldn't go over them in an Amtrack. The road was elevated, so there was some low ground, which was good for us, because we could actually get in the low ground and not be engaged by small arms fire. But if you tried to run over that road, there would be pretty well aired 5.5, 7.62, whatever they were firing at us coming from back inside the city to where we were at. So, we're set up there, we're

[REDACTED]

fighting, trying to get comm. with the other platoons. They're in the fight of their lives, because they're taking fire from the north and the west, and we're split up as a company on both sides. To be honest, the only way we could get effective fires on them 5.56, they were out of range. 7.62, maybe we could suppress a little bit, but we couldn't do anything effective on them. So our mortars and our FSC team were the only thing we could effect the fight with.

COL [REDACTED] The FSC team is?

CAPT [REDACTED] Fire Support and Coordination team. Our Fire Support Team. Consisting of an 81s FO and artillery FO, FAC, which we did not have. We did not have a FAC, because we were not expected to push up that far. There are only two FACs in the battalion and I'm 3rd Company. And then we had a 60s FO mortars in there. My FSC Team Leader was a 1st Lieutenant, who was a weapons platoon command, myself was an air FAC, as well to control those fires. We were starting to get some pretty decent suppression on there, still taking a lot of fire, and this happened...when we called this in it was right around 10:30 in the morning, was when we first were engaged or when we first go to the northern side of the bridge. And when this entire ordeal ended is was about 14:30. So we were there for about 4 hours fighting. Continued to try to call back and see where lead trace was, getting absolutely nothing back from the battalion. And I don't think that they knew at the time where they were, and I don't blame them. But they were all in a different fight. We had three different areas. Alpha was here, Bravo was here, and we were up there. But...continued trying to call back and was getting nothing, and we had to...the VT was starting to adjust on us pretty effectively, and I had a couple of Marines that were hit by shrapnel. So, we pushed up from one side of the road, from the eastern side of the road, to the western side of the road. The lowest ground that was over on the

[REDACTED]

western side of the road was like a river, or an irrigation ditch. We slipped into the irrigation ditch because it was the lowest part that we could find and mortars, everybody jumped up and jumped to that other side of the road. By the grace of God, we didn't have anybody hit by direct fire when we're pushing up and over. So, we're in there and a lot of our radios are now failing because we're in water with radios. Not a good thing, but that was the lowest point we could get to. Basically, they kept controlling fires. There was obviously someone observing us, which we couldn't figure out where it was from. But you sit here, and you see one hit off to the left, one hit to right and then you immediately know you have to move to the other side of the road. We're like ants moving around this battlefield. So at that point, some people went back over the road. We're split as a company, and I'm sitting there next to the FSC Team Leader, and a couple of our tracks pick up and go on the road and they start moving south across the bridge. As it turns out, unbeknown to me, was...I saw two tractors do it, went back over with the casualties, some casualties that were in it, and it went back south to try to link up with one of the forces coming north through there.

COL [REDACTED] How many dismounted troops did you have with you?

CAPT [REDACTED] We were about 176, Sir. 176 in the company when we went across the bridge. I know of the four casualties that were...would have been urgent medevac.

COL [REDACTED] When the tracks were going south, they would have had medevacs on them, or casualties on them?

[REDACTED]

CAPT [REDACTED]: They did. They did, Sir. And I didn't have comm. with them. It's embarrassing to say as company commander, but what was made was a small unit leader made a decision that we couldn't get an air medevac and these guys were not going to live long enough to be there...and like I said, I was sitting there next to FSC Team Leader and I turn around and I see these vehicles going back south across the bridge. And I'm thinking oh, my God. Because we're trying to call for fire back there, and there's no way in hell I would ever want to send any of my guys back across the bridge. Not mention that our mission is to hold the northern bridge. So, now in hindsight, I know that five tracks went over there, and of those five tracks, three of them were catastrophically killed by RPGs, A-10s, whatever hit them. I can't speak to that because I was on the northern side of the bridge. What I do know, Sir, is laying on the side of the road there, taking VT, I mean we're taking all sorts of stuff, I didn't hear an A-10 flying in or anything, but I do know what an A-10 sounds like. I went to school at the University of Arizona. I've dealt with and...and Davis Mothan's there, the A-10s there. The big range is down there. I've worked with A-10s as an FSC Team Leader. I know what that main gun sounds like on an A-10. I hear an A-10, that distinctive noise of an A-10 going off, and in my mind, I'm thinking, thank God. A-10s are here and they're going to take out that entire Martyr's block back in there, and we're finally going to get some good suppression on there. Almost the same time I heard that go, the entire world goes black on me. All I see is dirt fly everywhere, all around us on the side of the road. And, I just remember I had my hands in front of my face, and I couldn't believe that I wasn't hit or killed. I was just trying to do a self-assessment. And I had a sergeant that was my...machine gun section leader who got [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] At that second, if you would of said, hey, we just got strafed by an A-10, I wouldn't have been able to tell you that. And I can't tell you that to this day, because I heard it go, I saw a reaction that I'd never seen before, you know. I've never

[REDACTED]

seen so much dirt kicked up in my entire life. And we started assessing. SSgt [REDACTED] who was there, who was seriously hit. We were dealing with that, and at that point, I was trying to continue calling back and trying to get any type of comm. as possible, Sir. That's all, that's definitively all I know about the A-10. They said that he had made multiple runs by. I can't speak anything to that, Sir. I know that another one of our tractors was hit by an A-10. I heard that people pulled out a 30 caliber. I did not go up there and do that myself, but they actually pulled it out of there. But...all I know was I had another track that exploded up there on the road and I heard that there were two others that were hit about the same time when they were crossing, south across the bridge.

COL [REDACTED] While they were crossing south?

CAPT [REDACTED] Yeah, well, they were going back into the city. After talking to people...I don't want to comment on it...what I've heard is that...is that...Mustang's FAC did not get the word that we were up at the 392...

COL [REDACTED] Mustang's FAC was?

CAPT [REDACTED]: Cap [REDACTED] And...the only thing you can do as a Marine in a situation that's chaotic like this is, you can do the best that you can with the information you have at the time. And I knew that I'd passed that back to the battalion commander and knew that he had that information, and I didn't have comm. with anybody else. So, I assumed everybody knew that we were at the 392. Capt [REDACTED] made the best call with what he had, and apparently the A-10 said that he saw an armored column, which would make sense with the intel report, moving south

[REDACTED]

toward the road cause some of our tractors had turned around and were rolling back south into the city, was moving in to reinforce and he made the best call possible, saying I need you...there's nobody north of the bridge. That's when he got from his company commander, Capt [REDACTED] when he got a posrep from the FSC or whoever Capt [REDACTED] talked to. And the A-10 pilot said he was taking anti-aircraft fire, and he saw a column moving back in. So Capt [REDACTED] said, hey, run on those guys. That's the people who are coming to reinforce, and to hit the rest of the battalion. So, that's all I have to say on it, Sir.

COL [REDACTED] Let me just read the closing statement...but before I close, it was said that [REDACTED] Was that by any of your folks?

CAPT [REDACTED] It was not by me, Sir. I believe 1Lt [REDACTED] was the one who [REDACTED] As I said, as embarrassing as this is, I expect to be held accountable for this, Sir. I did not realize at the time that those A-10s were running on us. I heard it going, I saw something I had never seen before. I immediately started dealing with Sgt [REDACTED] on the ground there, but until it was all over, and you had everybody's input in there, and Lt [REDACTED] who was a bronze star winner in the Gulf War, and had A-10s run on him before, and he came up to me and said, you know that those A-10s...that was friendly fire, Sir. And when he said that to me, that's one of those things that hindsight's 20-20, when you look back you put 2 and 2 together you say Holy Christ. I cannot believe I didn't know that at the time. But I can definitely say that I did not know that at the time.

[REDACTED]

COL [REDACTED] In closing, I want to remind you that this is an official interview and direct that you not discuss your testimony with anyone without the board's permission or until the report has been officially released to the public. Do you understand?

CAPT [REDACTED]: I do, Sir.