



~~SECRET//REL TO USA, FVEY~~

UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY COMMANDER
7115 SOUTH BOUNDARY BOULEVARD
MACDILL AIR FORCE BASE, FLORIDA 33621-5101

15 September 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR COMMANDER, UNITED STATES ARMY CENTRAL

(b)(6)
FROM: Vice Admiral James J. Malloy, Deputy Commander, United States Central Command
(b)(6)
SUBJECT: (~~S//REL TO USA, FVEY~~) – Memo Directing U.S. Army Central (USARCENT) to
Conduct an Army Regulation (AR) 15-6 Investigation into the Facts and
Circumstances Surrounding the Attack at Abbey Gate, Hamid Karzai International
Airport (HKIA) on 26 August 2021

(~~S//REL TO USA, FVEY~~) I am directing the Commander, USARCENT to appoint an AR 15-6 investigation into the facts and circumstances surrounding the attack upon U.S. forces located at the Abbey Gate at HKIA, Kabul, Afghanistan on 26 August 2021. This AR 15-6 investigation will be a holistic review of the facts and circumstances surrounding the attack. USARCENT is directed to conduct an in-depth examination of all relevant aspects which gave rise to the attack. The AR 15-6 should closely examine tactical-level actions of U.S. personnel, gate operations, force protection and posture, readiness, leadership, and all other actions before, during and after the attack.

BACKGROUND

(~~S//REL TO USA, FVEY~~) Recently the Commander, USCENCOM directed his staff, Component Commands, and relevant supporting commands to conduct an after-action review (AAR) of the Afghanistan non-combatant evacuation operation (NEO). This AR 15-6 is a separate requirement from that AAR.

DISCUSSION

(~~S//REL TO USA, FVEY~~) This AR 15-6 will be conducted in accordance with Service regulations. USARCENT will provide the completed AR 15-6 to Headquarters, USCENCOM no later than 1 October 2021. If additional time is required, this request must be approved by the Commander.

(~~S//REL TO USA, FVEY~~) Finally, to thoroughly examine the facts and circumstances of this attack, Component Commands, subordinate commands and other supporting commands are directed to assist USARCENT investigators during the course of this AR 15-6 as applicable.

Classified by: VADM James J. Malloy, Deputy Commander, USCENCOM
Derived from: USCENCOM CCR 380-14 (12 April 2021)
Declassify on: 20460915

~~SECRET//REL TO USA, FVEY~~



~~SECRET//REL USA FVEY~~

Findings and Rec

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

S: 22 October 2021

ACTS-SCK-DO

22 October 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR LTG Ronald P. Clark, Commander, Third Army/U.S. Army Central, Shaw Air Force Base, SC

SUBJECT: Findings and Recommendations – Attack Against U.S. Forces Conducting NEO at Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August 2021

1. BLUF. See EXSUM at enclosure 7.

2. Background: On 26 August 2021, U.S. Marines were conducting a Non-combatant Evacuation Operation (NEO) at the Hamid Karzai International Airport (HKIA) as part of a larger joint force operation to conclude U.S. combat operations in Afghanistan. Eleven Marines, one Navy Corpsman, and one Army PSYOP Noncommissioned Officer (NCO) were killed in an attack at the entry control point (ECP) known as Abbey Gate. As a result of the deaths of U.S. Service Members in combat, LTG Ronald P. Clark, Commander, Third Army/U.S. Army Central, at the direction of Gen McKenzie, Commander, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), appointed me to investigate the surrounding facts and circumstances.

a. Scope. In accordance with (IAW) AR 15-6, I was appointed to investigate the facts and circumstances and address the following matters:

- (1) Actions before, during, and after the attack;
- (2) Force Protection, specifically including pertinent issues associated with:
 - (a) Force Posture, and
 - (b) Gate Operations.
- (3) Readiness;
- (4) Leadership;
- (5) Medical Considerations;
- (6) Chronology/Timeline of Events.

b. Time Extensions. My initial appointment order, dated 17 September 2021, required me to complete my investigation no later than 1 October 2021 (enclosure 1).

~~SECRET//REL USA FVEY~~

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Findings and Recommendation – Attack Against U.S. Forces Conducting NEO at Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August 2021

After careful analysis, I requested an extension to 22 October 2021 to ensure I could conduct sufficient interviews of widely dispersed forces and collect important products and documents to provide a complete investigation. You granted me the requested extension on 22 September 2021 (enclosure 2).

c. Methodology. The investigation follows the procedures in AR 15-6 and the appointment memorandum, with one exception. After consulting with my legal advisor, I determined the use of memorandums for record (MFRs) to capture interviews was a more appropriate method, given the subject matter and personnel involved. I spoke with my legal advisor and also resolved conflicts in the evidence, and discussed the use of any self-serving statement that I relied upon.

(1) The Commander, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Central Command (MARCENT), MajGen Paul Rock, assigned two Marine Corps Officers, (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) to perform duties as both subject matter experts and assistant investigating officers (enclosures 3 and 4).

(2) Additionally, I requested appointment of my Command Judge Advocate, (b)(6) (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) investigating officers (enclosures 4 and 5).

3. Findings of facts.

a. Task Organization. Before addressing the directed matters, it is of extreme importance to describe and clarify the task organization and command relationships (COMREL) between units executing operations at HKIA from 1-31 August 2021. The below descriptions are also enclosed in block and line charts (enclosure 8).

(1) 1-16 August 2021.

(a) RADM Pete Vasely, Commander, U.S. Forces-Afghanistan (Forward) (USFOR-A FWD), was the overall commander throughout the execution of operations in Afghanistan during the month of August. USFOR-A FWD was chartered as a Diplomatic Assurance Platform (DAP) and Joint Task Force (JTF) for operations in Afghanistan (exhibits 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 21). USFOR-A FWD was also Special Operations Joint Task Force-Afghanistan (SOJTF-A). Elements of the 3/10 Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT) augmented USFOR-A FWD staff and security forces at the Embassy (exhibits 126, 247). The Commander of 3/10 IBCT, (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) also served as Chief of Staff for USFOR-A FWD, and commander of two ground forces, Task Force (TF) Polar Bear and TF Wild Boar, which supported the Embassy and HKIA (exhibits 21, 22, 126, 247).

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Findings and Recommendation – Attack Against U.S. Forces Conducting NEO at Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August 2021

(b) JTF-Crisis Response (CR), commanded by BGen Farrell Sullivan, arrived at HKIA on 20 July 2021, to prepare for a potential NEO. Beginning in May 2021, USFOR-A FWD had tactical control (TACON) of JTF-CR for planning, and then for NEO execution in August (exhibits 10, 11, 15, 18).

(c) The 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) sent its Command Element (CE) and Battalion Landing Team (BLT), 1/8 Marines to HKIA on 14 August 2021 to set conditions for NEO (exhibits 15, 100, 102, 104). JTF-CR had TACON of the 24th MEU, which had TACON of 1/8 Marines (exhibits 100, 102, 104).

(d) Elements of 1/82 IBCT arrived at HKIA throughout 15-16 August 2021. JTF-CR initially had TACON of the 1/82 elements, received them at the flight line, and put them into defensive positions (exhibits 15, 100, 102, 121, 125).

(e) 2/1 Marines, the ground combat element (GCE) for the CENTCOM Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force (SPMAGTF), began arriving at HKIA in the early morning of 16 August 2021 (exhibits 53, 54, 55, 76, 77). The 24th MEU had TACON of 2/1 Marines (exhibits 10, 11, 53, 54, 76, 77, 100, 102).

(2) 17-28 August 2021. The Tactical Command Post (TAC) for the 82nd Airborne Division, commanded by MG Christopher Donahue, arrived to HKIA in the early morning hours of 19 August 2021 (exhibits 13, 21, 125). With the TAC's arrival, Gen McKenzie altered the task organization, granted USFOR-A FWD TACON of the 82nd Airborne Division, and gave the 82nd TACON of JTF-CR (exhibits 10, 11, 238). JTF-CR retained TACON of Marine forces until departure, while 82nd Airborne Division retained TACON of 1/82, and additional Army combat formations. However, USFOR-A FWD retained TACON of JTF-CR for NEO, and JTF-CR coordinated with 82nd Airborne Division (exhibits 125, 40). Marine units also executed an alternate COMREL, as 2/1 Marines reported directly to JTF-CR, despite the fact the 24th MEU had TACON of 2/1 (exhibits 18, 53, 100). 1/82 IBCT assumed TACON of TF Polar Bear and TF Wild Boar (exhibits 10, 126, 247).

(3) 28-30 August 2021.

(a) USFOR-A FWD departed HKIA in the early morning hours of 28 August 2021. MG Donahue, 82nd Airborne Division Commander, assumed command of all operations at HKIA until his departure at 0002 on 31 August 2021 (exhibits 13, 21, 125, 246).

(b) JTF-CR and all Marine forces departed by the morning of 30 August 2021 (exhibits 15, 18). No Marine forces subordinate to JTF-CR were task organized under the 82nd Airborne Division during the last two days of the NEO.

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Findings and Recommendation – Attack Against U.S. Forces Conducting NEO at Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August 2021

(4) Adjacent Forces.

(a) Taliban. On 16 August 2021, RADM Vasely began to coordinate with Taliban forces for additional crowd control and security of HKIA (exhibits 13, 20, 21, 23). USFOR-A FWD's primary point of contact for coordination was local Taliban Commander, (b)(6) (exhibits 13, 20, 21, 23). U.S. commanders and leaders at all echelons coordinated with Taliban forces to clarify security tasks and responsibilities (exhibits 53, 76).

(b) Turkish Military Forces. Turkish Forces were present on HKIA prior to the NEO and responsible for security of northern HKIA and working through Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) to secure the remaining perimeter (exhibits 15, 18). JTF-CR, and later USFOR-A FWD, coordinated with the Turkish Military Forces for security tasks and evacuation efforts (exhibits 15, 18).

(c) United Kingdom Forces. The U.K. had a large force presence, led by (b)(6) on HKIA and at the adjoining Barron Hotel (exhibits 13, 15, 18, 21, 126). This force consisted of three companies from 2nd Battalion, Parachute Regiment (2 PARA) and two companies from 3 PARA, for a combined force of approximately 550 troops, (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) (exhibit 126). Commanders and leaders at all levels worked with the U.K. Forces at Abbey Gate, coordinating their security and evacuation efforts (exhibits 13, 15, 18, 21, 53, 56, 65, 76, 77).

(d) Afghan National Strike Unit (NSU). This organization was affiliated with U.S. interagency activities and integrated into the security of HKIA on 16-17 August 2021 (exhibits 13, 15, 18, 21). USFOR-A FWD worked through U.S. Embassy Kabul (USEK) personnel to coordinate with NSU (exhibits 18, 21).

b. Actions before, during, and after the attack.

(1) Key Findings.

(a) By 25 August, Abbey Gate was the Main Effort for Gate Operations at HKIA.

(b) At approximately 1736 local time, 26 August 2021, a single explosion occurred at Abbey Gate.

(c) There was no complex attack; it was a single suicide bomber not accompanied by enemy small arms fire.

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Findings and Recommendation – Attack Against U.S. Forces Conducting NEO at Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August 2021

(d) How the bomber by-passed Taliban checkpoints to get to the canal is unknown. There were multiple avenues of approach to the canal continuously used by Afghans to by-pass Taliban checkpoints. The bomber likely used one of these avenues. No Marines at Abbey Gate recall any civilian using a U.S. identification to get closer to their position at the time of the attack.

(e) The attack at Abbey Gate killed between 160-170 civilians. There is no evidence the Marines' response to the attack caused further harm to civilians or fratricide. A potential civilian casualty was reported during interviews with 2/1 Marines. A Platoon Commander reported the casualty occurred during initial gate operations on 20 August and the injury, or possible death, was caused by a flash bang grenade.

(2) USFOR-A FWD.

(a) USFOR-A FWD was task organized to fill the command and staff billets of SOJTF-A, specifically NATO Special Operations Component Command-Afghanistan (NSOCC-A) (exhibits 20, 21). CENTCOM, after consulting with outgoing USFOR-A Commander, GEN Miller, established USFOR-A FWD as a DAP prior to its deployment to Afghanistan (exhibits 20, 21). The DAP's mission was to provide indications and warnings (I&W) for USEK, coordinate military activities in Afghanistan (security cooperation, targeting), and be prepared to command and control NEO (exhibits 20, 21). USFOR-A FWD developed a trigger matrix for preparation and execution of NEO, and shared it with USEK staff (exhibits 20, 21, 22). USFOR-A FWD used the trigger matrix as a tool to measure the Taliban's advancement and convince USEK staff to prepare for NEO (exhibits 20, 21, 22). However, USEK staff showed little interest in planning for NEO (exhibits 15, 18, 20, 21, 22). Despite the Taliban's rapid advance towards Kabul, on 12 August USEK only planned to evacuate 250 personnel by 31 August (exhibit 21). On 14 August, the Ambassador committed to evacuating the Embassy, but his personnel were unprepared and had taken few steps to reduce their footprint or destroy sensitive equipment/information (exhibits 20, 21, 22, 146). USEK security forces and the USFOR-A FWD [REDACTED] (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) evacuated the final personnel from the Embassy to HKIA at 0100 on 16 August. Most USEK personnel departed Afghanistan shortly thereafter (exhibits 15, 18, 20, 21, 22).

(b) At HKIA, USFOR-A FWD was responsible for up and out coordination. They communicated daily with various elements of the interagency, to include Department of State (DoS) and the White House. They also coordinated with partner nations seeking support with evacuation, and coordinated with the Turkish Military, the Taliban, and the NSU to establish and maintain security of the airfield (exhibits 13, 15, 18, 20, 21, 22).

(i) Throughout the NEO, USFOR-A FWD spent a significant amount of time coordinating special evacuation requests on behalf of the interagency, congressional

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Findings and Recommendation – Attack Against U.S. Forces Conducting NEO at Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August 2021

representatives and senators, and the White House (exhibits 13, 15, 18, 20, 21, 22). The USFOR-A FWD staff estimated they received over 4000 such requests during the nine days ECPs were operating (exhibits 13, 20, 21, 22). (b)(6) USFOR-A FWD Deputy Commanding General, referred to these evacuees as privileged personnel (exhibit 21). USFOR-A FWD's (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) and Embassy (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) worked with subordinate staffs to action many of these requests. They would coordinate with the potential evacuees for challenge and password or other identification, visit gates, seek out the evacuees, physically pull them from the crowd, and get them processed through DoS and the Evacuation Control Center (ECC) (exhibits 17, 20, 22, 100, 108, 122).

(ii) (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) along with members of the JTF-CR staff, were primarily responsible for coordinating multi-national activities and requests through the Multi-National Coordination Cell (MNCC) (exhibits 15, 18, 20, 21, 22). The MNCC met daily, along with other Ambassador groups, to coordinate air and lift requirements for partner nations, and Afghans sponsored by those nations to depart (exhibits 20, 21, 22). Many of the other nations working out of HKIA and conducting NEO were completely dependent on the U.S. for airlift (exhibit 21). USFOR-A FWD, with JTF-CR, formed the International Coordination Cell (ICC), which was a broader forum for handling the extensive privileged persons' requests from partner nations (exhibit 21). (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) USFOR-A FWD Chief of Staff, and Commander, 3/10 IBCT, was responsible for working these issues (exhibits 21, 126). The ICC also provided a forum to synchronize bulk movement and arrival of passport holders or cleared individuals from all nations through South Gate (exhibit 126). This included building and allocating movement tables and coordinating with Taliban commanders for passage of vehicles (exhibit 126). (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) coordinated with 1/82 IBCT's (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) to request TF Wild Boar support for receiving these coordinated arrivals at the various gates (exhibit 247). TF Polar Bear was a force on the ground at HKIA scheduled to conduct relief in place/transfer of authority (RIP/TOA) with TF Wild Boar. The RIP was delayed based on conditions, to retain both forces for the approaching NEO (exhibit 126). After 17 August, both forces were at HKIA and made TACON to 1/82 IBCT during the NEO (exhibits 126, 247). TF Polar Bear operated as the HKIA quick reaction force (QRF) and had liaison officers (LNO) in the JTF-CR Joint Operations Center (JOC) (exhibit 247). TF Wild Boar also served as a QRF, but executed targeted recovery missions with the MNCC and ICC when operations permitted (exhibits 10, 126, 247).

(iii) USFOR-A FWD was responsible for coordination with adjacent military, paramilitary, and former adversary forces (exhibits 13, 20, 21, 22, 23). On 16 August, RADM Vasely coordinated with other governmental agencies (OGA) for NSU assistance with airfield security. NSU took over large swaths of the perimeter on the South, West, and North of HKIA (exhibits 13, 15, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23). Shortly after, RADM Vasely began coordinating with (b)(6) the regional Taliban Commander and Taliban-designated LNO, for Taliban assistance with clearing the airfield and providing

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Findings and Recommendation – Attack Against U.S. Forces Conducting NEO at Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August 2021

security along the southern perimeter of HKIA (exhibits 13, 15, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23). Finally, RADM Vasely and his staff coordinated with the Turkish Military to relieve them of security and airfield operations responsibilities (exhibits 13, 15, 18, 21).

(iv) USFOR-A FWD, and subordinate units, continued to coordinate with the Taliban throughout the NEO, however, only USFOR-A FWD and MG Donahue had authority to release threat reporting to the Taliban (exhibits 13, 15, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23). Prior to the Abbey Gate attack, on 25-26 August, USFOR-A FWD was continuously updating the Taliban with information necessary to improve their security posture and provide effective screening for exposed forces at the gates (exhibits 13, 15, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23). USFOR-A FWD and MG Donahue frequently provided updates in person to the Taliban at the South Terminal and by phone (exhibits 13, 21, 23, 125).

(3) Task Force – Medical (TF MED).

(a) TF MED was initially located at Bagram Air Base and served as the most capable US Role III medical facility in Afghanistan (exhibits 14, 131). On approximately 15 June, the facility at Bagram closed and TF MED moved to North HKIA to continue to provide medical support to remaining U.S. Forces, but with a reduced capability (exhibits 14, 128, 131). TF MED co-located with Norwegian medical personnel at the HKIA Role II military treatment facility (exhibit 14, 128, 131). (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) USAF, commanded TF MED during the period of the move to HKIA and throughout the NEO (exhibits 14, 131). The facility at HKIA was a Role II Enhanced (Role II-E), with lab, pharmacy, two operating rooms (ORs), and computed tomography (CT) scan capability (exhibits 14, 128, 131).

(b) During the NEO, the capabilities of this facility swelled, eventually supported by nine surgical teams arriving 20-23 August (exhibits 131). These teams came from various locations and nations: one Norwegian Special Operations Surgical Team (SOST), two U.S. SOSTs, two U.S. Forward Resuscitative Surgical Detachments (FRSD), surgical teams organic to TF MED, one U.K. Military surgical team, and those organic to the 82nd, which operated from the Role II at Camp Alvarado (exhibits 14, 128, 131, 149). In addition to surgical teams, TF MED also had an Aeromedical Evacuation Liaison Team (AELT), responsible for medical airlift from HKIA rearward. To synchronize efforts, (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) conducted daily huddles with the various contingents to discuss threat reporting, posturing medical assets and supplies, and patient flow (exhibits 131, 149). TF MED created and exercised a mass casualty (MASCAL) plan for medical response in June 2021, which included Norwegian capabilities and participation (exhibits 14, 131). During the NEO, (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) made the decision to consolidate higher-level medical care at the Role II-E and not push any assets to the gates (exhibit 131). The units at the gates had medics/corpsmen and the Role I capability had already pushed forward (exhibits 66, 100, 104).

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Findings and Recommendation – Attack Against U.S. Forces Conducting NEO at Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August 2021

(c) On 25-26 August, Role II-E personnel were aware of increased credible reporting for a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) or suicide vest IED (SVIED) at a gate (exhibits 14, 131). The USFOR-A FWD (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) contacted (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) at approximately 1300 on 26 August and warned him a MASCAL event was imminent (exhibit 131). (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) placed medics and surgical teams on stand-by until 1700, and then released them on immediate recall (exhibit 14, 131). At the time of the blast, (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) was in the Joint Operations Center (JOC) and a Role I facility reported significant numbers of casualties, which triggered the MASCAL response (exhibit 131). (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) Trauma Team Leader, was in the emergency room (ER) and did not hear the blast, but was notified within minutes to prepare for a MASCAL (exhibit 128). TF MED received its first patient within 12 minutes and treated patients for the next 10-12 hours (exhibits 14, 128, 131, 149). The most seriously wounded patients arrived first, a result of proper triage at the Role I facilities and casualty collection points (CCPs) (exhibits 14, 128, 131, 149). The Role II-E expanded its operating room to accommodate four patients at a time and used hallway space to provide additional required care (exhibits 128, 131, 149). Patients with less severe injuries, not requiring immediate care, were staged outside or in ambulances with medics to stabilize injuries (exhibits 14, 128, 131, 149). Of the 13 killed in action (KIA), every medical professional interviewed concluded that no amount of additional measures, equipment, or treatment could have saved their lives (exhibits 14, 128, 131, 149). By approximately 0700 on 27 August, the Role II-E was empty of patients, with three flights taking personnel to Qatar or Germany, to include 19 U.S. casualties (exhibit 14, 131, 236). The Role II-E had a small morgue, capable of handling only eight deceased (exhibits 68, 131). Because the MASCAL overwhelmed the hospital morgue capacity, the KIA were moved to a pre-coordinated refrigerated shipping container for preparation and movement back to continental U.S. (CONUS) (exhibit 68, 131).

(4) JTF-CR.

(a) JTF-CR is a command and control organization derived from a joint manning document, manned by TF 51/5th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) personnel, stationed in Bahrain, and augmented with personnel from the CENTCOM area of responsibility (AOR) (exhibits 15, 17, 18). TF 51/5th MEB began initial planning in April for the potential NEO, convened two operational planning teams, coordinated with USFOR-A, CENTCOM, and MARCENT, and attended operations and intelligence updates with USFOR-A FWD (exhibits 15, 17, 18). JTF-CR activated in May and was TACON to USFOR-A FWD for NEO planning (exhibits 15, 17, 18). In May and June, JTF-CR conducted a pre-deployment site survey (PDSS) to Afghanistan to assess possible evacuation sites and coordinate with stakeholders, specifically USEK (exhibits 15, 17, 18). Initial planning accounted for two aerial ports of embarkation (APOEs), HKIA and Bagram Air Base. In early June, Bagram transitioned to ANDSF control and was no longer considered for planning (exhibits 15, 17, 18). JTF-CR deployed three

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Findings and Recommendation – Attack Against U.S. Forces Conducting NEO at Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August 2021

LNOs forward in May, along with a small three person quartering party to HKIA in late May to set conditions for a possible NEO (exhibit 15, 18).

(b) JTF-CR deployed to HKIA on 19 July, starting with the Early Entry Assistance Team (EEAT), followed by the JTF-CR staff as a robust quartering party (exhibit 15). The staff continued to coordinate with USEK while in Afghanistan, in an attempt to plan the NEO, but to little effect (exhibit 18). With the fall of Afghanistan districts to the Taliban throughout July and August, the JTF-CR continuously took steps to prepare HKIA for NEO, such as building supply stocks on HKIA to handle evacuees' basic needs (exhibit 18). During early August, DoS began processing Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs) and sending out evacuees by commercial air. They evacuated approximately 750 before the NEO was called on 13 August (exhibits 18, 8, 24).

(c) During execution of the NEO, JTF-CR had initial responsibility for securing HKIA and processing evacuees designated eligible by DoS (exhibits 15, 17, 18). In the early morning hours of 14 August, 24th MEU arrived with nearly 200 personnel that included some of the headquarters staff, snipers, ECC personnel, and a single rifle company (exhibits 15, 100, 102, 104). At this time, elements of TF Polar Bear and TF Wild Boar, who were subordinate elements of 3/10 IBCT providing security for USEK and HKIA, arrived to HKIA (exhibits 15, 126, 247). 24th MEU later closed additional capability during 14 August, with a similar mix of personnel as the first lift (exhibits 15, 100, 102, 104). The Turkish Military was providing security on North HKIA, with approximately 400 troops, and the ANDSF were securing the southern perimeter of HKIA, specifically the routes into the commercial terminals (exhibit 15). Approximately a battalion of U.K. Forces was also facilitating their own evacuation operations out of the airport (exhibits 15, 18, 126). U.S. Air Force C-17s were slow to arrive throughout 14-15 August (exhibit 15). By the end of 14 August, there were approximately 1600 U.S. and coalition forces at HKIA (exhibits 13, 15, 18).

(i) On 15 August, Afghanistan's President Ghani departed Kabul in a helicopter, abandoning the capital and the government. Soon after, ANDSF leaders also fled (exhibits 13, 15, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23). This precipitated the dissolution of the ANDSF, leaving the southern perimeter of the airport unsecured. Simultaneously, USEK was evacuating personnel to HKIA (exhibits 13, 15, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23). Ghani's departure and the Embassy evacuation created a panic in the Kabul population, and civilians began to rush the airfield in an attempt to board departing or stationary aircraft (exhibits 13, 15, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23). On three separate occasions, on 15 August and into the hours of darkness of 16 August, large crowds pushed across the HKIA flight line and near the North HKIA footprint, forcing JTF-CR to empty their operations center of personnel to push back the crowds (exhibits 15, 18). The presence of large crowds of civilians on the runways halted air operations continuously throughout 16 August.

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Findings and Recommendation – Attack Against U.S. Forces Conducting NEO at Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August 2021

(ii) Three solutions to the airfield security problem manifested during the next 24-48 hours. 1/82 IBCT forces arrived on C-17s during the hours of darkness on 15-16 August, and JTF-CR immediately tasked them with airfield security (exhibit 15). On 16 August, an OGA offered to bring the NSU's approximately 1200-1300 personnel to provide security at HKIA (on the condition of evacuating NSU families) (exhibits 13, 15, 18, 21, 23). Later on 16 August, the Taliban offered to help remove civilians from the airfield. RADM Vasely accepted the Taliban's offer, and Taliban forces began clearing and securing the airfield (exhibits 15, 18, 21, 23). The addition of these three forces was sufficient to clear the runway and resume flight operations (exhibits 15, 18).

(iii) Once the perimeter was reestablished on 16 and 17 August, the Taliban took the South, the NSU took the North and West, and 1/82nd took the West and overall security responsibilities (exhibits 15, 18, 53, 103). JTF-CR continued to manage the flow of combat forces into HKIA and into the line to hold the tenuous status quo (exhibits 15, 18, 53, 103). Force flow over the next two days delivered the remainder of the 1/82 IBCT, all of the 24th MEU Command Element, the remainder of 1/8 Marines, the MEU Combat Logistics Battalion (CLB), 2/1 Marines with enablers from the CENTCOM SPMAGTF, and the TAC of the 82nd Airborne Division (exhibits 15, 18, 53, 100, 102, 104, 121, 125). JTF-CR had TACON of all forces providing security of HKIA until 17 August, when Gen McKenzie, CENTCOM Commander, tasked the 82nd Airborne Division with security of HKIA (exhibits 8, 10, 11, 13, 15, 18, 21, 238). The JTF-CR retained sole responsibility of NEO tasks and duties (exhibits 10, 11, 15, 18, 138, 238).

(d) During the execution of NEO, the JTF-CR managed three critical tasks at the JTF level or through its subordinate units: Gate Operations, ECC, and the Multi-National Coordination Cell (exhibits 15, 17, 18).

(i) After being relieved of airfield security duties, 1/8 Marines (24th MEU) occupied North and East Gates, and 2/1 Marines (SPMAGTF) occupied Abbey Gate (exhibits 53, 103). From 19-26 August, these gates were used to process and screen tens of thousands of civilian evacuees (exhibits 15, 18). Commanders at each gate exercised their authority to open or close their respective gates, as they deemed appropriate, according to the situation on the ground (exhibits 15, 53, 103). The JTF-CR Commander retained the authority to reopen a gate if the gate commander had closed it due to the threat environment or possible attack (exhibits 15, 18, 103). However, there was tremendous pressure from the strategic level (Combatant Command (CCMD), Joint Staff (JS), White House) to continue to process and evacuate civilians to the maximum extent possible, so gate closures were done rarely, locally, and temporarily (exhibits 15, 18, 53, 56, 77, 103, 121). For example, Abbey Gate did not physically close until the night of 26 August (exhibit 53). JTF-CR's management of gate operations also entailed reacting to the overwhelming number of special requests to secure specific evacuees from gates (exhibits 13, 15, 17, 20, 21, 22). Members of the USFOR-A FWD, JTF-CR, MEU, 1/8, and 2/1 staffs were constantly engaged in

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Findings and Recommendation – Attack Against U.S. Forces Conducting NEO at Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August 2021

retrieving specially requested individuals from the gates, with the lower echelons doing so on behalf of JTF-CR (exhibits 13, 15, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 76, 108, 122).

(ii) The JTF-CR Commander was responsible for deciding when to close Abbey Gate to facilitate the Joint Tactical Exfiltration (JTE) (exhibits 13, 15, 17, 18, 22). Initially, the JTF-CR sought to close the gate on the evening of 25 August (exhibits 18, 53, 77, 89, 126). However, U.K. Forces were still operating at the Barron Hotel and could not meet this timeline (exhibits 15, 18, 53, 77, 89, 126). If the JTF-CR Commander decided to close Abbey Gate while U.K. Forces were still processing evacuees, it would have isolated them at the Barron Hotel. This would have affected the JTE, as the JTF-CR Commander estimated it would take 24-48 hours to clear the outer corridor and facilitate U.K. Forces' passage of lines into HKIA (exhibits 15, 18). Additionally, if the JTF-CR closed Abbey Gate early, the crowds likely would have breached the airfield, which posed a significant risk to mission and risk to force (exhibits 15, 18).

(iii) The 24th MEU established the ECC at the passenger (PAX) Terminal in North HKIA (exhibits 15, 18, 100, 101, 102). Evacuees waiting for flights consistently saturated this area, creating a security concern (exhibits 100, 101). As a result, JTF-CR tasked subordinate units to provide security forces at the PAX Terminal to ensure evacuees did not attempt to board the wrong flights or move into the compounds on North HKIA (exhibits 15, 18, 101).

(iv) As the lead for NEO, JTF-CR hosted the MNCC (exhibits 18, 21, 145). At the MNCC, JTF-CR coordinated the requirements of the multi-national partners to evacuate personnel (exhibits 18, 21). This usually included manifesting flights and coordinating appropriate arrival destinations based on the status of evacuees (exhibits 18, 21).

(5) 82nd Airborne Division and 1/82 IBCT.

(a) The 82nd Airborne and 1/82 IBCT, (as the designated Immediate Response Force (IRF)), were notified for deployment at the request of Gen McKenzie (exhibits 10, 13, 21). 1/82 IBCT and 2/504 Parachute Infantry Regiment (PIR) began the flow of forces to HKIA on 15 August at 2200, and arrived with approximately 300 personnel (exhibit 121). This force coordinated with JTF-CR and occupied Camp Alvarado in the northwest corner of HKIA (exhibit 121). During the period of darkness on 16-17 August, 2/501 PIR arrived to HKIA (exhibit 123). Elements of the brigade's artillery battalion arrived with the infantry battalion, making the total force about 1000 (exhibit 121). Shortly after their arrival, 2/504 began securing the airfield, as civilians had breached the South Terminal and were on the runway (exhibit 121). 2/501 were immediately put into the line at the South Terminal when they arrived a little over 24 hours later (exhibit 121). Both units took up security positions on the South and West of HKIA, and expanded to relieve Marines on the perimeter so they could begin opening gates on 19

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Findings and Recommendation – Attack Against U.S. Forces Conducting NEO at Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August 2021

August (exhibits 121, 123). By 18 August, 1/82 had security responsibility for all of the West side of HKIA. 2/501 had responsibility for security from the perimeter at Abbey Gate westward to the International Terminal (exhibit 123).

(b) The 82nd Airborne TAC, commanded by MG Donahue, arrived on 18 August at approximately 1200 (exhibits 121, 125). Upon arrival, MG Donahue conducted a leader's reconnaissance, assessed the perimeter and gates, met with RADM Vasely to shore up the task organization, and began initial planning for withdrawal and JTE (exhibit 125). The 82nd started clearing the HKIA road system to prepare for MASCAL events and quick reaction force (QRF) movements (exhibit 125). As part of their security task, the 82nd detained 40-50 people each night who jumped the airfield fence (exhibit 125). Additionally, 1/82 operated two gates and flowed in evacuees via the South and West Gates (exhibit 121). From 19-25 August, 2/501 processed and directed convoys of evacuees the Taliban had allowed to pass through the outer cordon at South Gate (exhibit 121). 1/82 opened West Gate periodically to allow precision evacuation passages of lines, which were coordinated movements (exhibits 121, 125). During the latter half of the NEO, South and West Gates accounted for a significant number of daily evacuees, averaging greater than 200 daily from 24-30 August, with 1600 coming through on 26 August (exhibits 125, 143). The DoS Consular rarely worked with 1/82 personnel at South Gate, so the convoys had to be American citizens (AMCITs) or Lawful Permanent Residents (LPRs) to get through (exhibit 123). Starting 19 August, MG Donahue served as the primary coordinator with the Taliban LNO, (b)(6) and spoke with him on a near daily basis (exhibit 23, 125). 1/82 IBCT subordinate unit commanders coordinated directly with the Taliban local gate commanders for security and to facilitate evacuee movements (exhibits 121, 123, 125).

(c) As part of withdrawal and JTE planning, the 82nd TAC developed a plan for a relief in place (RIP) at the gates and established timelines to facilitate withdrawal of the Marines from HKIA (exhibit 125). U.S. and U.K. Forces negotiated the timeline for closing Abbey Gate, and after changing the timeline multiple times, eventually settled on 0900 on 27 August. While the U.S. Forces wanted to close the gate as early as 24 August, the U.K. Forces needed more time to finish processing their evacuees (exhibits 121, 125). On 25 August, Bravo Company, 2/501 PIR moved behind Abbey Gate to facilitate the RIP, however the timeline moved to the right (exhibits 123, 124). (b)(6) (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) 2/501 PIR, attended a meeting at 1600 on 26 August with the Taliban, the U.K., and 2/1 Marines to discuss the RIP and passage of lines for the U.K. (exhibit 123). They agreed the U.K. would pass through Abbey Gate in the early morning hours of 27 August, the Marines would shut the gate, and Bravo Company, 2/501 PIR would take over security of Abbey Gate (exhibit 124). Shortly after the meeting, the attack on Abbey Gate occurred (exhibits 66, 123, 125). (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) sent his QRF, Delta Company, over to Abbey Gate, and dispatched his field litter ambulances (FLAs) to assist in the casualty evacuation (CASEVAC) (exhibit 123). Additionally, he set up his Role I facility inside Abbey Gate to assist in treating the

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Findings and Recommendation – Attack Against U.S. Forces Conducting NEO at Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August 2021

wounded (exhibit 123). The Marines closed the gate immediately after the attack and conducted the RIP with Bravo Company, 2/501 PIR at approximately 0500 on 27 August (exhibit 124). The U.K. Forces passed through Abbey Gate at approximately 0700 on 27 August (exhibits 124, 127). Bravo Company maintained security at Abbey Gate until their departure from HKIA at approximately 2355 on 30 August.

(d) As part of JTE execution, 82nd Airborne took responsibility for demilitarization efforts at HKIA (exhibits 125, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162). Millions of rounds of ammunition, weapons, numerous military vehicles and aircraft, and U.S. Government property had to be destroyed or rendered inoperable (exhibit 125). The 82nd Airborne assigned zones of responsibility to the various units occupying HKIA to ensure they executed a methodical demilitarization plan and no information or equipment was missed (exhibits 125, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162). Cyber element subject matter experts ensured computer systems were corrupted or destroyed, and engineers dug trenches to cover equipment with cement and bury it before departure from HKIA (exhibits 125, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162).

(e) The 82nd Airborne departed HKIA and completed the JTE at approximately 0002 local on 31 August (exhibit 246).

(6) 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit.

(a) The 24th MEU was a II Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF)/Camp Lejeune based unit, aligned to U.S. European Command (EUCOM) for the first half of their deployment (exhibits 100, 102). In June 2021, the Secretary of Defense Orders Book realigned the MEU to CENTCOM in anticipation of a NEO (exhibits 100, 102). Throughout May and June, the MEU conducted NEO planning with JTF-CR, and executed a PDSS to HKIA in July (exhibits 100, 102). The MEU postured Marines ashore at Ahmed al-Jaber Air Base, Kuwait (Al-Jaber) in July to prepare for the potential NEO (exhibits 100, 102). Preparation included multiple rehearsals for a NEO, ECC operations, airfield security, and gate operations (exhibits 100, 101). These rehearsals continued throughout July, into August, until the MEU received notification they would deploy to HKIA on 13 August (exhibits 100, 101, 102).

(b) The MEU originally planned to frontload its ECC forces for deployment, but the dynamic situation at HKIA forced the MEU to prioritize 1/8 Marines to ensure they had the necessary combat power on the ground (exhibit 102). On 14 August at approximately 0200, one rifle company from 1/8 Marines, a 1/8 Marines HQ element, to include 1/8 Battalion (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) and one logistics company from CLB-24 (CLB from 24th MEU) arrived at HKIA (exhibit 102). The size of the force on the ground increased with the arrival of two more rifle companies, 1/8 Marines battalion enablers (snipers, engineers, scouts), and some MEU CE personnel, to include the MEU (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) that evening (exhibit 102). The 1/8

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Findings and Recommendation – Attack Against U.S. Forces Conducting NEO at Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August 2021

Marines elements secured North Gate and sought to begin processing evacuees through the ECC, but civilians came through the South Terminal area and flooded the runway (exhibits 102, 104). This MEU force rebuffed the breach of the airfield on the night of 15 August and throughout the day of 16 August (exhibits 15, 18, 100, 102, 104). Echo Company, 2/1 Marines reinforced 1/8 early in the morning of 16 August, and after they forced the crowds off the runway, another breach occurred at a new opening in the southern perimeter (exhibit 104). The Marines spent all of 16 August controlling crowds and clearing runways as more forces, specifically Taliban and NSU, became available (exhibit 104).

(c) On 17 August, 1/8 Marines began establishing security at the North and East Gates and attempted to begin processing evacuees (exhibit 104). North and East Gates had approximately 3000-5000 people outside at any given time starting on 17 August (exhibit 102). JTF-CR maintained TACON of the MEU throughout the NEO, even after the change to COMREL on 17 August (exhibits 10, 11). 24th MEU retained TACON of 1/8 Marines, but only nominally had TACON of 2/1 Marines, whose Battalion Commander reported directly to the JTF-CR Commander (exhibit 53, 77, 100).

(d) From 17 August until departure on 30 August, 24th MEU managed tactical execution of the NEO, which primarily included security and initial screening at North, East, and Abbey Gates and processing evacuees at the ECC (exhibits 100, 104). 1/8 received nearly all of its combat power by the end of 18 August (exhibit 104). CLB-24 established the ECC at the PAX Terminal in North HKIA and was processing evacuees as early as 15 August (exhibit 101). During the NEO, CLB-24 Marines also conducted various support activities to resupply the gates, and assisted with base life support operations (exhibit 101). CLB-24 planned for contractors to continue providing base support throughout the NEO, but many contractors departed early on, forcing the CLB to absorb those support responsibilities, in addition to operating the ECC (exhibit 101). The SPMAGTF's Combat Logistics Detachment assisted CLB-24 with providing combat service support to units at HKIA (exhibit 101).

(e) BLT 1/8 Marines assumed responsibility for security of North and East Gates, and the perimeter around the East side of HKIA after the 82nd Airborne arrived (exhibit 104, 155). Gate operations for North and East Gates were difficult and sporadic (exhibits 100, 102, 104). North Gate was vulnerable to attack due to a lack of standoff, an absence of obstacles or barriers, and proximity to civilian roads (exhibits 100, 102, 104). North Gate quickly became the hardest gate to control (exhibit 100). East Gate was a single gate, which was always at risk of being forced open by the crowd, because there was no standoff (exhibits 100, 102, 104). Marines at East Gate dealt with crowds crushing people against the perimeter wall, making it difficult to open the gate (exhibit 102). The Taliban provided support at both North and East Gates, but the Taliban commander at North Gate was the least helpful (exhibits 125, 146). North, East, and Abbey Gates closed from 20-22 August due to a lack of flights and capacity within

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Findings and Recommendation – Attack Against U.S. Forces Conducting NEO at Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August 2021

HKIA. In total, there were 18000 evacuees waiting to fly out, which created a humanitarian and security problem (exhibits 102, 104). The JTF-CR Commander closed North Gate from 23-25 August, except for some targeted entries, because of the VBIED threat (exhibits 100, 102). East Gate closed permanently on 24 August because of the threat of mortars from the Taliban, and an inability to process evacuees without losing control of the gate (exhibits 100, 102, 104). By 25 August, Abbey Gate was the only gate operating in the MEU's sector of HKIA (exhibit 102).

(f) Aside from 1/8 Marines' rifle companies, additional MEU elements supported gate operations. BLT 1/8's (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) tasked his engineer platoon to support North, East, and Abbey Gates (exhibits 103, 104). The engineers spent a disproportionate amount of time improving East Gate, shoring up gaps in the perimeter to prevent fence jumpers, and removing towers on the exterior of the perimeter (exhibit 103). The engineers emplaced shipping containers to form the obstacle at the southern end of Abbey Gate, later known as the Chevron, on the morning of 20 August (exhibit 103). Otherwise, support to Abbey Gate was limited (exhibit 103). CLB-24 provided the bulk of the personnel assigned to the Female Search Team (FST), and tasked them to support the gates and the ECC (exhibit 101). The FST began with searching women and children prior to DoS screening, then transitioned to conducting initial searches outside the gates, escorting rejected females out through the gates, and helping identify eligible evacuees in the crowds (exhibit 107). The MEU Commander re-task organized the 2nd Reconnaissance (Recon) element to work directly for him later in the NEO, specifically to conduct targeted recovery of privileged personnel (exhibit 108). Recon element personnel were at the gates constantly, working with 1/8 and 2/1 Marine leaders to identify and pull specific people from the crowd for processing (exhibit 108). The MEU also organized PSYOP and cyber assets under the direction of the MEU (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) for employment at the gates (exhibit 105). The PSYOP teams employed capabilities at the gates to communicate with the crowds, and provided updates on required documents or gate closures (exhibit 105).

(g) On 26 August, all the gates in the MEU sector of HKIA were closed, with the exception of Abbey Gate and occasional targeted recoveries at North Gate (exhibits 102, 104). The IED threat was well known across the MEU, but threats lacked specifics on times and locations (exhibits 100, 102, 104, 105, 106, 107). MEU leadership ensured electronic countermeasures (ECM) were active at the gates, dispersion of personnel was enforced to the greatest extent possible, snipers were in overwatch, PSYOP personnel communicated the threat to the crowd and asked people to leave, and medical assets were repositioned (exhibit 100). At the time of the blast, only the PSYOP, FST, and Recon elements of the MEU were at Abbey Gate (exhibits 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108). The paragraphs below detail the actions of these personnel. The MEU JOC immediately put additional intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) assets over Abbey Gate, scanning for additional threats (exhibit 102). Post-blast, 1/8 Marines shifted security elements to Abbey Gate to help fill gaps,

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Findings and Recommendation – Attack Against U.S. Forces Conducting NEO at Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August 2021

and provided numerous vehicles for CASEVAC, assisting in movement to the HKIA Role II-E. CLB-24 also provided numerous CASEVAC vehicles to support the MASCAL (exhibit 101).

(h) On 27 August, all gates were essentially shut in the MEU sector and 1/82 IBCT secured Abbey Gate (exhibits 53, 56, 57, 100, 102, 104). CLB-24 continued to operate the ECC until 30 August, processing evacuees until two hours before their departure from HKIA. The MEU retrograded back to Kuwait primarily on 29-30 August, with the last elements departing at approximately 1000 on 30 August (exhibit 100).

(7) Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force, Ground Combat Element (GCE), 2/1 Marines.

(a) 2/1 Marines were the GCE for the CENTCOM SPMAGTF, located primarily in Camps across Kuwait and Prince Sultan Airbase (PSAB) in Saudi Arabia (exhibit 53). In July 2021, the SPMAGTF received notice it would potentially participate in NEO in Afghanistan (exhibit 53). The SPMAGTF initially task organized a "NEO Light" package, consisting of elements of Combat Logistics Detachment (CLD) and the crisis response company (Echo Company, 2/1) (exhibits 53, 54, 55). The "Light" package elements executed two mission rehearsals testing their ECC and gate operations, prior to deployment to HKIA (exhibits 53, 54, 55). In August, the SPMAGTF would task organize and deploy a "Heavy" package, that included the rest of 2/1 Marines' rifle companies (exhibits 53, 54, 55).

(b) 2/1 first arrived to HKIA at approximately 0100-0200 on 16 August (exhibits 53, 54, 55, 56, 57). The first flight included the Battalion HQ, Echo Company leadership, and one platoon from Echo Company (exhibits 54, 56). Upon arrival, the unit found the airfield breached by civilians, who were moving onto the runways (exhibits 54, 56). The Battalion (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) immediately tasked Echo Company to assist with clearing the runway, in hopes of resuming flight operations (exhibit 54). Over the next 24 hours, Echo Company was part of the line holding the southern perimeter with 3/10 IBCT, 1/82 IBCT, and 1/8 Marines (exhibit 56). There were several breaches of the perimeter and crowds gained access to the runway, attempted to board C-17s, and pushed towards the North HKIA compounds (exhibits 56, 76). Forces pushed the crowds back after NSU units joined the line, and the crowds recognized there were no more flights to board (exhibits 56, 76). 2/1 Marines, specifically Echo Company, were part of the security perimeter at HKIA from approximately 0600 on 16 August until 19 August, when they were relieved by units from 1/82 IBCT (exhibit 53).

(c) Force flow over the next two days brought in parts of the 2/1 Battalion HQ, Fox Company (-), Golf Company, Weapons Company, Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) teams, the Shock Trauma Platoon (STP), and finally the remainder of Echo Company

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Findings and Recommendation – Attack Against U.S. Forces Conducting NEO at Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August 2021

(exhibits 56, 76, 65, 66). These units focused on securing the southern perimeter from the Domestic Terminal to Abbey Gate from 17-19 August (exhibit 76). Once 1/82's relief of the perimeter began, Golf Company, Fox Company (-), Combined Anti-Armor Team (CAAT) platoons, and Battalion Snipers moved to Abbey Gate (exhibits 53, 76, 77, 81, 83, 89). U.K.'s 2 PARA were at the outer Abbey Gate, as well as Air Force Pararescue (PJ) personnel and small partner nation elements (exhibits 53, 76, 77, 89). After initially planning to push from Abbey Gate to Camp Sullivan, 2/1 Marines opted not to execute due to the size of the crowds and lack of Taliban support to extend the perimeter (exhibits 53, 76, 81). Instead, (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) tasked the battalion to open the outer gate to begin processing evacuees (exhibits 53, 76, 81, 89). Opening the gate required an entire platoon, sometimes reinforced, to keep the crowds from breaching the outer gate and accessing the Abbey Gate's inner corridor (exhibits 53, 76, 77, 81, 89). 2/1 Marines processed approximately 750 evacuees through Abbey Gate on 19 August, but only after tremendous effort to hold the gate (exhibits 53, 76, 77, 81, 89).

(d) In order to enable safe and efficient gate operations, (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) Golf Company, 2/1 (b)(6) decided to push the crowds back to an area beyond the Barron Hotel egress lane. This would ensure U.K. Forces had better access to the gate from their evacuee staging area (exhibits 53, 77, 89). In the early morning hours of 20 August, platoons from Golf and Fox Companies opened the outer gate, and methodically forced the smaller crowd back nearly 200 meters (exhibits 53, 76, 77, 81, 89). (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) coordinated with U.K. Forces and MEU Engineers to emplace six shipping containers in the main south to north roadway leading to Abbey Gate to form a disrupting obstacle and aid in crowd control (exhibits 53, 76, 77, 81, 88, 89). The Taliban agreed to provide outer security beyond the containers, and the U.K. Forces and 2/1 provided security inside the containers, guarding the Barron Hotel egress route and canal areas (exhibits 53, 76, 77, 81, 88, 89). The containers became known as the "Chevron" (exhibits 18, 21, 53, 76, 77, 81, 88, 89). The emplacement of the Chevron on 20 August established the structural layout of Abbey Gate for the duration of the NEO, as depicted in enclosures 12 and 13.

(e) Abbey Gate was structured from North to South, with the inner Abbey Gate at the north end opening to the actual airfield. There was a 265-meter corridor between the inner gate and the outer gate, to the south, known as the inner corridor. This area served as a sally port for searching and processing vehicles. Two lanes divided by jersey barriers were beyond the outer gate. The egress lane from the Barron Hotel, which joined the gate road from the southeast, was approximately 120 meters south of the outer gate. The Chevron obstacle was approximately 155 meters south of the outer gate. The area between the outer gate and the Chevron was known as the outer corridor. A sewage canal ran generally east to west parallel to the inner and outer corridors, on the east side of the perimeter wall and fence. During operations of Abbey Gate, 2/1 established a holding area in the outer corridor lanes, a search and DoS processing location in the inner corridor, and security/crowd control positions at the

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Findings and Recommendation – Attack Against U.S. Forces Conducting NEO at Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August 2021

canal and Chevron. Additionally, the sniper section established an overwatch position in the tower at the outer gate. Marines escorted evacuees through a break in the canal fence or around the Chevron, and ushered them into the outer corridor holding area for an initial search. Outside the Chevron, the Taliban conducted crowd control and initial screening. U.K. Forces processed their evacuees at the Barron Hotel and drove them through the outer corridor lanes, through the Abbey Gate, to the airfield (see all exhibits from 2/1 Marines, Echo Company, Golf Company, and enclosure 11-13). Companies rotated responsibility for gate operations, with Golf Company initially taking the canal security positions, Fox Company taking the Chevron area, and dividing the inner gate search and escort duties (exhibits 53, 76, 77, 79, 81, 89). Echo Company rotated into gate operations later in the NEO to enable a rest cycle for all companies (exhibits 53, 56, 76).

(f) Between 20 and 25 August, gate operations took on a structured and predictable battle rhythm. Crowds were desperate but manageable, able to be kept calm at Abbey Gate because Marines interacted with the people continuously and used the PSYOP capability to communicate (exhibits 57, 79, 80, 83, 85, 88). Early in the NEO, crowds at Abbey Gate numbered around 1500 between the canal and the Chevron entrance, and another 500-1000 in the outer gate holding area. There was a concern throughout 2/1 that the crowds could riot and force the gate open at any time (exhibits 57, 83). The JTF-CR J2 described the crowd as the greatest threat to mission, because at any time they could have forced their way past Marines and onto the airfield, stopping air operations, and ultimately the evacuation (exhibit 15). Several factors undermined the Marines' and U.K. Forces' efforts to keep the crowds calm.

(i) The Taliban used excessive force outside the Chevron, which created the incentive for civilians to avoid the main road entrance and move to Abbey Gate via the canal (exhibits 53, 77, 79, 80). Over time, the canal became extremely crowded and people were being crushed and injured (exhibits 53, 77, 79, 80, 214, 220).

(ii) DoS Consular officers provided inconsistent support at Abbey Gate, and the required documentation for evacuation changed hourly (exhibits 53, 77, 79, 80, 81, 83, 85, 88). Marines often had to halt gate processing and flow, because the Consular officers were not present to screen and approve evacuees for movement to the PAX Terminal (exhibits 53, 77, 79, 80, 81, 83, 85, 88). It is possible Consular officers were absent from the gate because of threat reporting and to better meter the flow of evacuees and not overcrowd the airfield (exhibit 146). However, the crowd would eventually notice the halt in processing and become highly agitated (exhibits 53, 77, 79, 80, 81, 83, 85, 88).

(iii) Partner nation representatives/forces consistently conducted uncoordinated evacuee extractions at Abbey Gate. Partner nation forces frequently left potential evacuees unsecured within 2/1 Marines' perimeter, or relied upon Marines to escort

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Findings and Recommendation – Attack Against U.S. Forces Conducting NEO at Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August 2021

their rejected evacuees back to the canal (exhibits 53, 77, 83, 88). Partner nation representatives/forces often pulled out large groups of people, usually families (exhibits 53, 77, 83, 88). The crowd would see the disparate treatment of select personnel and become agitated (exhibits 53, 77, 83, 88).

(g) Threat reporting during the NEO was continuous and generally non-specific. The USFOR-A FWD and JTF-CR staffs estimated the threat streams to be 60 credible reports during the 10-day NEO (exhibits 13, 15, 18, 21). The threats varied from VBIED attacks and Suicide Vest Improvised Explosive Devices (SVIEDs) against gates, to bags in the crowds or aircraft hijackings with evacuees concealing bombs and weapons on flights (exhibits 13, 15, 18, 21, 102, 115). 2/1 Marines believed their only means to counter these threats, without degrading the mission, was to increase overwatch and actively search for civilians meeting the descriptions provided (exhibits 15, 53, 56, 57, 77, 80). 2/1 Marines attempted to balance the need to continue to interact with the crowd to pull potential evacuees into the outer gate and increase force protection (exhibits 53, 56, 77). On several occasions, both prior to and throughout 26 August, 2/1 Marines providing security along the canal pulled back from the crowd, took a knee behind jersey barriers, and stopped the flow of processing based on reports indicating specific times of attack (exhibits 53, 77, 89).

(h) **By 25 August, Abbey Gate was the Main Effort for Gate Operations at HKIA.** The terrain and infrastructure at East and North Gates, coupled with threats to force and large, unruly crowds, made these gates untenable for evacuation operations (exhibits 15, 18, 100, 102, 104). Both gates were effectively closed between 20-25 August (exhibits 15, 18, 100, 102, 104). The West and South Gates were still operational, but both were used for coordinated arrivals and openings (exhibits 125, 126). The decreased access to evacuation processing points at HKIA forced DoS and partner nations to direct most small groups and individual evacuees to Abbey Gate (exhibit 15, 125, 126, 127, 146). The canal at Abbey Gate facilitated crowd control and provided some standoff, and the Chevron minimized the VBIED threat (exhibits 53, 56, 76, 77, 83, 84). There were effective overwatch positions, and the Taliban screened the main approach (exhibits 53, 56, 76, 77, 83, 84). Over time, crowds bypassed Taliban checkpoints to get to the canal and seek access to HKIA (exhibits 77-88).

(i) On 25 August, the crowd in the canal outside Abbey Gate was noticeably larger than the days prior, numbering around 2000-3000 (exhibits 53, 55, 77, 80). In addition to the Taliban activity at the Chevron, Marines attributed this swell in civilians at the canal to the closure of many of the other gates at HKIA and the impending withdrawal date of 31 August (exhibits 53, 55, 77, 80). The 2 PARA Commander observed the efficiency and accessibility of Abbey Gate had become publicly known, drawing more people (exhibit 127). The crowd was also noticeably more desperate (exhibits 53, 55, 77, 80). Echo Company operated the gate during the day on 25 August, and conducted a RIP at 1600 with Golf Company (exhibits 56, 77). During

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Findings and Recommendation – Attack Against U.S. Forces Conducting NEO at Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August 2021

Echo Company's time on the gate, they pushed the crowd back from the sniper tower and jersey barriers on the nearside of the canal to create standoff (exhibit 56). With the assistance of U.K. Forces, Echo Company pushed the crowds 150-meters down the nearside of the canal, and Marines maintained control of the terrain between the jersey barriers and newly established perimeter (exhibits 56, 59, 60, 61). After conducting his RIP, (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) Golf Company (b)(6) was concerned the Marines and U.K. Forces were overextended based on recent threat reporting, and decided to collapse the position back to the base of the sniper tower at the outer gate (exhibit 77).

(j) During the evening of 25 August and into the morning of 26 August, the crowds in the canal continued to grow and became increasingly desperate (exhibits 53, 77, 80, 89). Threat reporting on 25 and 26 August indicated Islamic State of Iraq and Syria-Khorasan (ISIS-K) would execute an attack at a gate using a SVIED (exhibits 13, 15, 76, 77). Nearly every Marine interviewed in 2/1 was aware of the reported threat, but did not find the information to be out of the ordinary compared to other earlier threats (exhibits 57, 59, 60, 61, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 83, 84, 85, 86, 88, 89). Many noted the information was more specific, but changed regularly (different bags and descriptions of the bomber) (exhibit 88). At approximately 2330 on 25 August, after collapsing the nearside canal security down to the sniper tower, (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) had all Marines take a knee and reduce their posture behind the canal wall and jersey barriers. This lasted until daylight on 26 August (exhibits 77, 88). (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) had the unit take the same force posture at approximately 1400 for 30 minutes, based on additional threat reporting (exhibits 77, 88, 89). After the brief stand-down, 2/1 Marines continued to process evacuees, having what some considered to be their most productive day on 26 August (exhibit 80).

(k) Throughout the evening of 25 August, into the morning of 26 August, units prepared for the planned closure of Abbey Gate to enable the JTE of Marine forces (exhibits 15, 18, 53, 56, 57, 76, 77). The U.K. Forces were unable to meet the planned closure time of 1800 on 25 August, and subsequently were unable to meet the new time of 0700 on 26 August (exhibits 15, 18, 53, 56, 76, 77). During the afternoon of 25 August, the U.K. PARA units operating from the Barron Hotel had nearly 1000 evacuees to process (exhibit 127). The 2 PARA Commander on the ground received two timelines for completion of evacuation operations, with the initial completion date of 25 August and the adjusted timeline of period of darkness 27 August (exhibit 127). The U.K. met this second completion time (exhibits 124, 127). A higher authority within the U.K. Forces, not present at HKIA, was responsible for the change in the timeline, not the 2 PARA Commander (exhibit 127).

(l) On 26 August, at approximately 1600, Golf Company rotated the platoons on the line an hour early due to 4th Platoon growing fatigued, and 1st Platoon took over canal security (exhibits 77, 89). Most of Golf Company worked the outer gate because the crowds were growing desperate (exhibit 77). People were being crushed and

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Findings and Recommendation – Attack Against U.S. Forces Conducting NEO at Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August 2021

injured at the jersey barriers at the base of the sniper tower (exhibits 77, 83, 88, 89). Echo Company was working the inner gate, as of 1200-1300, to provide additional manpower at the gate area and prepare for the closing of Abbey Gate that night (exhibits 56, 77). (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) was concerned with the threat reporting and ordered all 1stSgts and Corpsmen to remain in the inner corridor area for force protection (exhibit 77). However, some corpsmen were called forward because of heat and trauma injuries suffered by civilians in the crowd (exhibits 77, 92). At approximately 1600, (b)(6) (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) attended a meeting with (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) 2/501 PIR (b)(6) the 2 PARA (b)(6) and the Taliban to discuss U.K. passage of lines from Barron Hotel, handover of security of the outer gate to the Taliban, and responsibility of the inner gate transitioning to 2/501 PIR (exhibits 53, 77). At approximately 1700, BGen Sullivan visited Abbey Gate and discussed the closure timeline with (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) (exhibits 15, 17, 18, 53, 77). BGen Sullivan departed at approximately 1715 (exhibits 15, 17, 18). At approximately 1725, (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) 24th MEU (b)(6) convinced an Afghan civilian to speak to the crowd through a non-standard loud speaker for 10 minutes (exhibit 105). The messaging pleaded with the crowd to stop pushing, and stated that women and children were being crushed to death (exhibit 105). Three snipers from the 2/1 Marines Sniper section, attached to Echo Company, but in direct support of units at Abbey Gate, were in the tower at the outer gate (exhibit 62). The snipers in the tower were (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) was at the base of the tower near the fence (exhibits 62, 63). They were well aware of the reported threats and scanned the large and unruly crowd in the canal for individuals "out of baseline" or demonstrating hostile intent (exhibit 62).

(m) At approximately 1730 on 26 August, the crowds at Abbey Gate were desperate and growing agitated (exhibits 76, 77, 80, 84, 89). First Platoon, Golf Company, led by (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) (b)(6) were consolidated at the jersey barriers beneath the tower at the outer gate (exhibits 77, 88, 89, 91, 92). The platoon was forced to move nearly all personnel into the corner to hold back the massive and largely recalcitrant crowd from coming over the barriers and breaching the gate (exhibits 89, 91). Three members of the FST, Sgt Nicole Gee, Sgt Johanny Rosario Pichardo, and (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) were operating slightly behind the platoon (exhibits 89, 91, 92, 106, 107). (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) 2/1's (b)(6) were standing to the North of the PSYOP vehicle in the outer corridor (exhibits 53, 76). (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) was near the canal, approximately 30-40 meters from the sniper tower (exhibits 77, 89, 92). Several members of Echo Company were in the outer corridor area, escorting civilians or looking for specific potential evacuees (exhibits 61, 62, 63). SSgt Darin Hoover was near the fence at the base of the outer gate tower (exhibit 63). (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) was escorting an interpreter to the canal to look for his father in the crowd (exhibit 63). Two corpsmen were also in the outer corridor. HM3 Maxton Soviak was called forward to treat a civilian heat causality and was rendering aid near the canal, but up against the

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Findings and Recommendation – Attack Against U.S. Forces Conducting NEO at Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August 2021

fence (exhibit 92). [REDACTED] (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) came forward from the inner gate to bring water to the 1st Platoon Marines on the canal wall (exhibit 92). **At approximately 1736 local time, 26 August 2021, a single explosion occurred at Abbey Gate (exhibits 66, 98, 72, 121, 236).** Overhead persistent infrared systems captured the time of the explosion at precisely 13:06:52Z, or 17:36:52 local (exhibit 236). The STP OIC received notification of the attack from 2/1 Marines by radio at 1738, and used the Signal Application to warn the North HKIA Role II-E of potential casualties at 1739 (exhibit 66, 98).

(n) The blast at Abbey Gate killed thirteen Service Members total, to include eleven Marines, one Sailor, and one Soldier:

- (i) SSgt Darin Hoover, USMC, Echo Company 2/1 Marines
- (ii) Sgt Nicole Gee, USMC, CLB-24, 24th MEU
- (iii) Sgt Johanny Rosario Pichardo, USMC, JTF-CR (TF 51-5th MEB)
- (iv) Cpl Hunter Lopez, USMC, Golf Company, 2/1 Marines
- (v) Cpl Daegan Page, USMC, Golf Company, 2/1 Marines
- (vi) Cpl Humberto Sanchez, USMC, Golf Company, 2/1 Marines
- (vii) LCpl David Espinoza, USMC, Golf Company, 2/1 Marines
- (viii) LCpl Rylee McCollum, USMC, Golf Company, 2/1 Marines
- (ix) LCpl Dylan Merola, USMC, Golf Company, 2/1 Marines
- (x) LCpl Kareem Nikoui, USMC, Golf Company, 2/1 Marines
- (xi) LCpl Jared Schmitz, USMC, Golf Company, 2/1 Marines
- (xii) HM3 Maxton Soviak, USN, Golf Company, 2/1 Marines
- (xiii) SSG Ryan Knauss, USA, Bravo Company, 9th Psychological Operations Battalion (A)

(o) Those killed in action were all located in vicinity of the tower at the outer gate standing a security position at the edge of the canal or jersey barriers, with the exception of SSG Knauss and SSgt Hoover (exhibits 63, 91, 92, 105, 129). Three of the 1st Platoon Marines who were killed in the blast were elevated on the canal wall,

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Findings and Recommendation – Attack Against U.S. Forces Conducting NEO at Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August 2021

helping pull potential evacuees into the outer gate: LCpl Rylee McCollum, LCpl Dylan Merola, and LCpl Kareem Nikoui. SSgt Hoover was in the outer corridor area, on the inside of the fence, near the tower (exhibits 63, 91, 92). SSG Knauss was in the outer corridor area with the PSYOP vehicle, on the passenger's side, to the rear of the vehicle (exhibits 105, 129). The vehicle front was pointed at the jersey barrier and canal intersection below the tower where 1st Platoon was providing crowd control and security. Autopsy summaries provided by the Armed Forces Medical Examiner's Office confirmed all Service Members who were KIA died of blast and ballistic injuries (exhibit 145). There were no gunshot wounds on any of the KIA, but significant penetrating ball bearing injuries (exhibit 145). Injuries sustained to those KIA were primarily lacerations, ruptures, and bruising to the head, torso, and pelvis (exhibits 138, 145). Of the protective gear examined by Joint Trauma Analysis and Prevention of Injury in Combat (JTAPIC), small arms protective insert (SAPI) plates and helmets were effective at stopping fragmentation and ball bearings (exhibit 138).

(p) Those interviewed during the investigation could not provide a number of civilian casualties caused by the attack. Most were only aware of open source reporting and concurred the number would be substantial. **Open source reporting estimates casualties at 160-170** (exhibits 251, 252).

(q) Numerous Marines were wounded because of the attack, with most being part of 1st Platoon, Golf Company or members of 2/1 Marines positioned in the canal or in the outer corridor area, near the physical gate and PSYOP vehicle (exhibits 63, 91, 92, 105, 129, 224). The initial list of wounded is best captured by the 2/1 S2 blast and injury analysis, sketches from Echo and Golf Company NCOs, and Aeromedical Evacuation Critical Care Air Transport Team (AE-CCATT) TRANSCOM Regulating and Command and Control Evacuation System (TRAC2ES) flight data (exhibits 92, 137, 236). There appear to be 27 service members reported as initially wounded during the attack, but eight were not medically evacuated and instead redeployed with the unit (exhibits 68, 92, 93, 95, 131). The remaining nineteen were redeployed due to their wounds (exhibit 68). However, since redeploying, units have reported additional TBI and concussion related wounds for 12 more Marines, for a total of 39 Service Members wounded in the attack (exhibits 68, 92, 93, 95, 164). This new number does not include members of the 82nd Airborne who were conducting a leader's recon at Abbey Gate for the RIP, and 24th MEU personnel, who were also in the outer corridor area (exhibits 107, 124, 129). The number of wounded from the attack at Abbey Gate will almost certainly continue to grow.

(r) The SPMAGTF EOD Team, attached to 2/1, conducted a post blast analysis at 0620 on 27 August with U.K. Forces EOD and Taliban security (exhibits 5, 65). EOD concluded the blast was either a vest or backpack detonated on the far side of the canal held above the waist, directly across from 1st Platoon, Golf Company Marines (exhibit 5). EOD deduced this location from the fragmentation pattern in the nearside canal

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Findings and Recommendation – Attack Against U.S. Forces Conducting NEO at Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August 2021

wall, fragmentation in the PSYOP vehicle, and blast burns on the wall on the far side of the canal (exhibit 5). The fragmentation from the vest or backpack was primarily ball bearings (exhibits 5, 95). Open source news reported the Taliban had recently freed the individual bomber, (b)(6) on 15 August from the Parwan Detention Facility near Bagram Air Base (exhibit 165). **The investigation found no evidence to support a conclusion the bomber used U.S. identification to clear Taliban checkpoints on the approaches to the Abbey Gate canal. There were multiple avenues of approach to the canal, continuously used by Afghans to bypass Taliban checkpoints (exhibits 76, 102). The bomber likely used one of these avenues. Further, no Marine mentioned that any person used U.S. identification to move closer to their position in relation to the attack.**

(s) There was no complex attack; it was a single suicide bomber not accompanied by enemy small arms fire.

(i) Immediately following the blast, nearly all Marines and personnel reported small arms fire (see all exhibits with 2/1 Marines, 24th MEU). There is wide variation of thought on where the firing originated and who was actually doing the firing. Many Marines described personnel near the canal as the source of outgoing small arms fire immediately following the blast. Many Marines, to include snipers in the tower, also recall fire from the Chevron area into the outer gate and from the East (see all exhibits with 2/1 Marines, 24th MEU). Marines from Golf Company described seeing individuals on a roof near a water tank to their east, one with a camera and one with a rifle (exhibits 86, 87). These Marines stated they fired on the individuals after confirming they posed a threat, and that they suppressed the threat (exhibits 86, 87, 88). Golf Company Marines reported U.K. Forces occupied the position in that building shortly after the attack, but (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) 2 PARA, stated his soldiers never occupied a position in that building (exhibits 86, 87, 88, 127, 148). Several key leaders from 2/1 stated it was unlikely Marines received fire from the East, as Taliban members had occupied those buildings throughout the NEO (exhibits 53, 76, 77). The 2/1 Marines S2 stated that friendly forces occupied all elevated positions around Abbey Gate (exhibit 76). Soldiers from the 82nd Airborne Division provided overwatch of Abbey Gate from a tower 75 meters north of the outer gate tower. (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) was in the tower during and after the blast, and was confident small arms fire came from the vicinity of the Barron Hotel and not the Chevron or the East (exhibit 144). (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) also had visual of one Afghan civilian on a rooftop near Abbey Gate, but this individual posed no threat (exhibit 144). It is unlikely Marines received fire from buildings to the East of Abbey Gate. If they did, it was far more likely to have originated from a rogue Taliban member, than it was part of a complex attack.

(ii) Marines who reported hearing small arms fire after the blast most likely heard friendly warning shots. Golf Company, 2/1 Marines specifically identified members of the Recon Company, 24th MEU as shooting from near the canal after the explosion

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Findings and Recommendation – Attack Against U.S. Forces Conducting NEO at Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August 2021

(exhibits 77, 87, 88). (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) of the 2nd Marine Recon Company, stated during their interview that (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) fired unsuppressed warning shots (two hammered pairs) at an individual who positioned himself to observe the Marines' reaction to the blast and had been in the crowd acting suspiciously before the blast (exhibit 106, 184, 237). (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) fired the rounds southwest, down the canal, toward the Barron Hotel. The rounds would have crossed the frontage of Marines, who were entering the canal to recover casualties and take up security positions, which would have contributed to their perception that they were taking fire (106, 237). No Marines beyond the Recon element Staff NCOs, and those firing at the individuals near the water tank, describe having positive identification of any targets (exhibits 62, 66, 86, 87, 88, 106). This includes the snipers in the Abbey Gate tower and Soldiers in the tower to the North, who had the best vantage point (exhibit 62, 144).

(iii) In addition to the Recon element firing warning shots, (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) (b)(6) 2 PARA, confirmed U.K. Troops fired warning shots to help control the crowd in vicinity of the Barron Hotel (exhibits 127, 148). The Bravo Company, 2/501 PIR (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) was in the outer corridor, south of the blast area, and described seeing two U.K. Soldiers firing their weapons at a 45-degree angle into the air, towards the northeast (exhibit 124). These rounds also would have crossed in front of Golf 2/1 Marines, contributing to their confusion about taking fire.

(iv) Claims by the Marines to have heard or felt fire originating from outside Abbey Gate should be attributed to both the 2 PARA and Marine Recon personnel firing warning shots, and their potential for disorientation post blast (exhibits 76, 95, 106, 127, 148). Many of the Marines we interviewed were at Abbey Gate. The vast majority of those Marines were within the blast radius and suffered potential TBIs or concussions from the event (exhibits 62, 63, 77, 88, 91, 92, 93, 95, 164). There was a tremendous amount of smoke, and tear gas canisters were ruptured and pouring chemicals into the blast area, further limiting visibility, and responsiveness (exhibits 63, 89, 127). Nearby observers noted the overwhelming noise from the wounded and civilian crowd fleeing the area (exhibit 148). Marines at the canal were already exhausted and were now experiencing sensory overload (exhibits 77, 127). It is unknown whom Marines engaged holding a weapon on a rooftop immediately following the blast, or even if this actually occurred. (exhibits 76, 77, 87, 88). During the interviews, fellow Marines expressed skepticism and doubt about possible positive identification of targets (exhibits 87, 88). It is worth noting the only Marines who reported receiving fire following the explosion were junior Marines, with no prior combat experience. (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) and other leaders concluded there was no complex attack, merely the belief there was one (exhibits 53, 76, 77, 102, 148).

(t) Interviews with Marines at Abbey Gate post-attack revealed no information supporting a conclusion fratricide or civilian casualties resulted from

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Findings and Recommendation – Attack Against U.S. Forces Conducting NEO at Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August 2021

reaction to the blast. Open source research found no reporting to support a conclusion warning shots or engagement of targets in response to the attack caused additional harm to civilians. Marines did report stopping civilians from running through the gate after the attack, and presenting deadly force to stop civilians with bags from approaching or using phones, but no shots were fired in these instances (exhibit 63). A Platoon (b)(6) from 2/1 Marines, (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) stated during a group interview he witnessed a flash bang grenade detonate near a civilian's head (exhibit 84). He stated the incident did not appear intentional and assumed the injury resulted in death (exhibit 84). This incident took place during the confrontation at Abbey Gate on 20 August between Golf Company and unruly civilians who breached the gate (exhibit 84). (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) Surgeon at the Role II-E, recalled treating a civilian with an eye injury from flash bang grenade that may have been from Abbey Gate (exhibit 128).

(u) The reaction to the blast, and the immediate CASEVAC, by the 2/1 Marines, and adjacent Army and Marine units, were nothing short of incredible. All wounded personnel were evacuated from the canal blast site to the inner gate CCP in 15 minutes (exhibit 53). All the wounded were evacuated by vehicle to the Role II-E at North HKIA in less than one hour (exhibit 66). Marines flooded the blast area, worked through tear gas, and expeditiously moved over 30 personnel nearly 100 meters to the CCP (exhibits 62, 63, 64, 65, 76, 77, 88, 92). Marines used riot control shields as makeshift litters and a Marine immediately cut multiple holes in the fence to shorten the distance from the blast site to the CCP (exhibits 62, 63, 88, 92). At the CCP, Navy corpsmen, and Marines with additional medical training, were assessing and stabilizing the wounded rapidly (exhibits 63, 77, 98, 144). The situation was chaotic. With many leaders injured, it was difficult to determine if anyone was truly in charge, but collectively the task of triage and movement was successfully accomplished (exhibits 53, 57, 66, 76, 77, 78, 90, 98, 124, 128, 131). At least twenty vehicles rotated through Abbey Gate to move the wounded either to the SPMAGTF's STP Role I-E facility, positioned between Abbey and East Gates, or directly to the Role II-E at North HKIA (exhibits 66, 124). The STP Role I-E facility treated four urgent surgical patients, to include 2/1 Marine (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) during the MASCAL event (exhibit 66). The STP also treated injured Afghan civilians for over an hour and half after the attack (exhibit 66). All wounded from Abbey Gate were evacuated from HKIA rearward to CONUS by 0700 on 27 August.

(v) After the blast and recovery of all Marines and U.S. personnel, (b)(6) (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) Echo Company (b)(6) took control of the outer gate, closed the gate and focused on internal security (exhibits 56, 77). (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) focused internally on his company, which sustained heavy casualties (exhibit 77). The SPMAGTF EOD Team attached to 2/1 conducted a search for secondary devices and sensitive items after the gate was closed (exhibit 65). U.K. Forces took over security of the canal and outer corridor, but the blast dispersed the crowd considerably (exhibits 15, 17, 18, 53, 56, 65, 77). At approximately 0200 on 27 August, (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) Bravo Company, 2/501 PIR, began to transition his company into Abbey Gate to relieve Echo Company and 2/1

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Findings and Recommendation – Attack Against U.S. Forces Conducting NEO at Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August 2021

Marines (exhibit 124). By 0500, Bravo Company had taken responsibility for security of Abbey Gate (exhibit 124). U.K. Forces did not complete their operations at Barron Hotel and fully retrograde through the inner gate of Abbey Gate until 0700 (exhibits 124, 127).

(w) 2/1 Marines consolidated in North HKIA and received the task of demilitarizing equipment in preparation for the JTE (exhibits 54, 57, 77). At approximately 1300 on 27 August, they attended the Ramp Ceremony and the KIA from the blast were evacuated rearward (exhibits 14, 54, 100). Before departing HKIA, but after completion of demilitarization, 2/1 Marines were tasked to police call the PAX Terminal area of trash and debris (exhibits 54, 56). 2/1 Marines perceived this order to be punishment for some of their excessive demilitarization efforts, namely defacing and breaking property that was not supposed to be broken (exhibit 56). MG Donahue specifically commented on the excessive destruction by 2/1 Marines, stating DoS and 82nd had to intervene (exhibit 125). He overtly noted Golf Company Marines, led by (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) were not involved in the destruction and had set the standard for all units operating at the gates throughout the NEO (exhibit 125). The 2/1 Marines departed in two groups, with Fox Company (-), Golf Company, and Weapons Company departing for Camp Buehring, Kuwait on 28 August and 2/1 Battalion HQ with Echo Company departing on 29 August for PSAB (exhibit 54).

c. Force Protection, specifically including pertinent issues associated with: Force Posture, and Gate Operations.

(1) Key Finding. **The attack was not preventable at the tactical level without degrading the mission to maximize the number of evacuees.**

(2) Force Posture

(a) Manning. Abbey Gate was operated by 2/1 Marines throughout the NEO (exhibits 53, 56, 77, 100). On 19 August, Golf Company consisted of three platoons, and was reinforced by two additional platoons of Fox Company, when they established operations at Abbey Gate (exhibits 77, 81). From 19-22 August, Golf Company was responsible for Abbey Gate and relieved by Echo Company on 22 August (exhibits 56, 77). From 22-25 August, Echo Company, with four platoons, reinforced by two Weapons Company platoons, was responsible for Abbey Gate. At approximately 1600 on 25 August, Golf Company reinforced by Fox Company platoons, resumed responsibility of Abbey Gate (exhibits 56, 77). Echo Company, reinforced by Weapons Company platoons, was tasked to prepare Abbey Gate for closure and RIP with 1/82 IBCT (exhibits 56, 57). On the afternoon of 26 August, the size and aggressiveness of the crowd increased (exhibits 53, 56, 77). (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) tasked Echo Company to assume operation of the inner corridor to facilitate Golf Company's need to allocate more platoons for crowd control in the outer corridor (exhibits 53, 56, 77). At the time of the blast, approximately seven platoons were operating Abbey Gate. This consisted of

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Findings and Recommendation – Attack Against U.S. Forces Conducting NEO at Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August 2021

three from Golf Company, two from Fox Company, and two from Echo Company (exhibits 53, 56, 77, 81). Steady state manning was generally five to six platoons (exhibits 53, 56, 77).

(b) Rest Cycle. Companies rotated between Abbey Gate, QRF, rest, and evacuee security for those waiting for processing or flights (exhibits 53, 56, 57, 77). While establishing the gate, rest cycles were initially by opportunity only, resulting in infrequent and short periods for Marines to sleep during 72-hour periods at the gate (exhibits 53, 56, 57, 77). After gate operations normalized, the companies were able to establish a sustainable rest cycle, with one platoon rotating to a rest shift for six or eight hours (exhibits 53, 56, 77, 81). Because of the tempo of operations, all units at HKIA experienced challenges establishing rest cycles (exhibits 13, 15, 53, 57, 76).

(c) Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Marines at Abbey Gate consistently maintained full PPE while working in the outer corridor and canal areas (exhibits 54, 89, 98). PPE included plate carrier, small arms protective inserts (SAPI), eye protection, ballistic helmet, and issued combat gloves (exhibit 55, 89, 98). Marines could remove PPE during rest periods in the inner corridor, behind protective cover (exhibits 83, 89). Marines occasionally removed their helmets to humanize themselves and deescalate confrontations with civilian evacuees (exhibits 83, 89). Marines affected by the blast were universally wearing their PPE, as evidenced by statements, autopsy results, and JTAPIC analysis (exhibits 77, 83, 89, 138, 145). The one known exception was (b)(6) (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) 1st Platoon (b)(6). At the time of the blast, he removed his helmet to engage with a civilian evacuee at the canal wall (exhibit 83, 92). JTAPIC analysis demonstrated helmets and SAPIs were effective in stopping all fragmentation (exhibit 138).

(d) Crowd Control Measures. The most effective method of crowd control was physical presence and interaction by Marines with the crowds (exhibits 56, 77, 80, 129). Professional actions, verbal commands, physical force, and riot control shields prevented crowds from breaching the gate (exhibits 56, 77, 80, 89). Forces utilized warning shots with varying degrees of success at HKIA (exhibits 53, 54, 100, 117, 118). 2/1 Marines did not use warning shots and only used flash bang grenades infrequently (exhibits 53, 54, 77, 80, 83). The employment of riot control agents (RCAs), such as tear gas, required O-6 approval for use in defensive situations (exhibit 116, 117). 2/1 Marines employed cross cultural engagement and de-escalation with the civilian population to establish calm and decrease aggressiveness (exhibits 57, 77). The employment of PSYOP capabilities served to enhance the 2/1 Marines' techniques by communicating threat warnings, document requirements, and advisements for safety and temporary closures (exhibits 105, 129).

(e) Force Protection Measures. Abbey Gate Corridor provided some natural force protection and required additional effort by 2/1 Marines to enhance survivability.

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Findings and Recommendation – Attack Against U.S. Forces Conducting NEO at Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August 2021

(i) The canal running southwest to northeast initially served as a natural obstacle. The canal was approximately three meters wide and two-three meters deep, and held approximately a foot of water throughout the NEO (exhibits 172, 176-178, 192). The wall and fence of Abbey Gate bordered the canal on the northwest, or nearside, and a wall and fence on the opposite side divided the area from private property, which created a long alley (exhibits 167, 172, 176-178, 192). The canal walls rose approximately three feet above the ground on each side, providing protection to Marines on one side, and creating an obstacle for the crowd on the other side (exhibits 167, 172, 173, 175, 177, 178, 192). Jersey barriers were located at the base of the sniper tower to impede the flow of civilians from approaching the gate on the nearside of the canal (exhibits 167, 172, 177, 178, 180, 182, 185, 192). The terrain limited the crowd from massing and overwhelming Marine formations (exhibits 167, 172, 175-178, 192).

(ii) 2/1 Marines made a significant improvement to force protection when they emplaced the shipping containers, known as the Chevron (exhibit 83, 89). This obstacle blocked the road leading to Abbey Gate from the South, reducing risk of VBIEDs and controlling the in-flow of crowds (exhibits 15, 18, 53, 77, 89). Another improvement was installation of concertina wire across the nearside canal wall to prevent civilians from climbing out of the canal (exhibits 167, 172, 176-178, 192). Snipers continuously operated from the tower to provide overwatch of Marines executing screening and to observe the crowd for potential risks to force (exhibit 62). The SPMAGTF EOD section installed two ECM devices at Abbey Gate to prevent the use of remote control detonated IEDs and inhibit the cell phone communications of potential attackers (exhibit 62, 65). When threat streams indicated an impending attack, commanders regularly stopped processing evacuees, pulled Marines back to cover, and reduced posture (exhibits 19, 77, 80, 89). Leaders utilized UAVs and RAID cameras to observe avenues of approach and maintain situational awareness to employ QRF for emergencies (exhibits 13, 15, 18, 54, 102, 125).

(3) Gate Operations.

(a) Occupation of Abbey Gate. At approximately 0800 on 19 August, Golf Company, reinforced by Fox Company platoons, arrived at Abbey Gate and found U.K. and other foreign forces standing in the inner corridor (exhibits 77, 89). Golf Company attempted to open the gate to process evacuees and enable U.K. Forces to move to the Barron Hotel (exhibits 77, 89). This attempt failed because the large and desperate crowd in the outer corridor nearly breached the gate and forced Golf Company to stop in less than an hour (exhibits 77, 89). On 20 August during the period of darkness, Golf Company, reinforced by Fox Company platoons, moved the crowd approximately 150 meters south passed the entrance of the Barron Hotel (exhibits 77, 83, 89). 24th MEU engineers emplaced several shipping containers to form an obstacle, known as the Chevron, in the road (exhibits 77, 83, 86, 87, 89). The Taliban were employed to man

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Findings and Recommendation – Attack Against U.S. Forces Conducting NEO at Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August 2021

the outside of the obstacle and conducted initial screening and crowd control (exhibits 77, 83, 89). Later on 20 August, crowds in the canal breached the southern end of the fence separating the canal from the outer corridor (exhibits 83, 172). Marines identified the need to clear the nearside of the canal and keep crowds on the opposite side (exhibits 53, 76, 77, 83).

(b) Steady State Gate Operations.

(i) After the establishment of the Chevron and clearing the nearside of the canal, 2/1 established a steady state operation of screening evacuees and movement to the PAX Terminal (exhibits 53, 77, 83, 89). Steady state was between 21-25 August. Marines on the canal would search for persons with documents (passports, immigration forms) meeting the current eligibility requirements for evacuation (exhibits 77, 83). Marines at the Chevron would do a similar screening (exhibits 78, 79). After pulling them into the outer corridor perimeter, they would conduct a cursory search of the potential evacuees, and place them into the holding area (exhibits 77, 83). 2/1 Marines established the holding area in the outer corridor traffic lane, against the HKIA exterior wall (exhibits 57, 60, 61, 77, 83). When DoS Consular officers were available, Marines would escort evacuees from the holding area to the search area in the inner corridor (exhibits 57, 60, 61, 77, 83). After thoroughly searching the potential evacuees, Marines would escort them to an area further into the inner corridor to be screened by the Consular officer (exhibits 57, 60, 61, 77, 83). The Consular officer would determine if the evacuees met the eligibility criteria and approve moving the evacuees forward to the PAX Terminal, or reject them, and the Marines would return them to the canal (exhibits 56, 57, 60, 61, 77, 79, 80, 82). The FST would assist in the searches and the escort of rejected civilians back to the canal (exhibits 77, 83, 107). Corpsmen were staged a CCP in the inner corridor and treated casualties at the canal or Chevron (exhibits 77, 83, 98).

(ii) U.K. Forces conducted NEO from the Barron Hotel, but also provided personnel for security on the canal and the Chevron (exhibits 53, 56, 76, 77, 127). U.K. support to steady state gate operations reduced as the NEO progressed (exhibits 77). Other partner nations provided no assistance with security at Abbey Gate (exhibits 56, 57, 60-63, 77, 79-88). Partner forces utilized Abbey Gate to escort their own consular officers or to pull evacuees from the crowd (exhibits 77, 79-89). Partner nations often did not coordinate their activities with Marines at Abbey Gate, and did not adhere to the established processing or security procedures (exhibits 79-89).

(c) Increased Crowds and Attack.

(i) On 25 August, Echo Company recognized an increase in the size and desperation of the crowd (exhibits 53, 56). The Echo Company (b)(6) (b)(3)130b, (b)(7) was concerned with the crowd pushing past the jersey barriers at the base of

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Findings and Recommendation – Attack Against U.S. Forces Conducting NEO at Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August 2021

the sniper tower and not having space to operate (exhibit 56). In response, Echo Company cleared the crowd on the nearside of the canal (exhibits 56, 60-62). Echo Company positioned Marines approximately 150 meters down the canal, running northeast, to maintain control of the nearside (exhibit 56, 77). At approximately 1600, Golf Company relieved Echo Company and assumed the same positions along the canal, the outer corridor, and inner corridor (exhibit 77). (b)(3)130b, (b)(7) received several updates concerning SVIED attacks at gates and determined the positions down the canal presented unacceptable risk to force and isolated Marines from support, to include CASEVAC (exhibit 77). Golf Company withdrew the Marines back down the nearside of the canal and crowds backfilled the space almost immediately (exhibits 77, 83). (b)(3)130b, (b)(7) stopped the flow of evacuees and took the defensive posture previously mentioned (exhibits 77, 83).

(ii) The next day, crowds were even larger and more unruly (exhibits 53, 56, 77, 83). Golf Company was forced to push additional Marines to the canal to keep them from crossing the jersey barriers at the base of the sniper tower (exhibits 53, 76, 77). Echo Company assumed inner gate responsibilities so Golf Company could maintain the positions on the canal (exhibits 56, 57). The crowds grew so desperate, they began to crush people against the sniper tower walls and jersey barriers (exhibits 53, 75, 77, 105). Golf Company Marines consolidated at the base of the tower in response (exhibits 53, 76, 77, 83, Brit Video). At 1736, the single explosion occurred, and detonated directly across from the platoon gathered at the base of the tower (exhibits 5, 53, 76, 77, 83, 89). Shortly after, Abbey Gate closed, the 1/82nd IBCT took over security of the Gate, U.K. Forces passed through for the final time from the Barron Hotel, and gate operations ended (exhibits 53, 56, 77, 124, 127).

(4) Preventability of the Abbey Gate Attack. **The attack was not preventable at the tactical level without degrading the mission to maximize the number of evacuees.** Given the priority of effort, time, resources, partner nation requirements, and terrain restraints, the only mitigation possible would have jeopardized the flow of evacuees and potentially risk mission failure.

(a) The priority for the Marines at Abbey Gate was maximizing the flow of evacuees through the gate to the ECC (exhibits 11, 15, 18, 56, 77, 88). Any time spent emplacing obstacles was time not spent searching and screening civilian evacuees. Additionally, many force protection measures that could have been implemented, such as additional T-Walls or HESCO barriers, would have inherently reduced the flow of evacuees. Closing the gate was also not an option because of U.K. efforts to conclude evacuation operations at the nearby Barron Hotel (exhibits 18, 54, 121, 127). Closing the gates would have isolated U.K. Forces and jeopardized the JTE force flow and timeline, potentially initiating renewed armed conflict with the Taliban (exhibits 15, 18, 21, 23, 125).

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Findings and Recommendation – Attack Against U.S. Forces Conducting NEO at Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August 2021

(b) Leaders at Abbey Gate on 26 August made frequent decisions (multiple times daily) to increase the force protection posture. Electronic countermeasures were already emplaced to prevent enemy coordination and radio controlled device use (exhibit 65). Several times during the 18 hours prior to the attack, the company commander stopped the flow at the gate and had Marines take covered positions (exhibits 77, 83, 84). Medics were consolidated in the inner corridor to ensure their safety and quick reaction to any attack, and additional medical assets were surged forward (exhibits 66, 77, 98). An Afghan interpreter was recruited to pacify the crowd using PSYOP capabilities (exhibit 107). ISR was increased and the Taliban were tasked to screen for the specific threat (exhibits 18, 125). Leaders struck the balance of protecting the force and maximizing the flow of evacuees as best as possible under the circumstances

d. Readiness.

(1) Key Findings.

(a) Most units that deployed to HKIA in support of the Afghanistan NEO, with the exception of USFOR-A FWD and JTF-CR, had adequate manning levels for the assigned mission. USFOR-A FWD and JTF-CR staffs were task-saturated due to the nature of the NEO. The effects were further exacerbated by the fact that many of their personnel were forced to expend significant energy trying to find specific evacuees, or groups of evacuees, at the gates of HKIA, on behalf of various U.S. government officials, senior military officers, or special interest groups.

(b) All units deployed to HKIA in support of the Afghanistan NEO had trained on their respective mission essential tasks (METs) prior to deployment. In some cases, this included NEO-specific training, while in others it did not. Leaders at all levels stated no training could adequately prepare them for what they experienced at HKIA.

(2) USFOR-A FWD.

(a) Manning. USFOR-A FWD, led by RADM Pete Vasely, USN, Commander, USFOR-A FWD, and Brigadier Thomas Day, United Kingdom, Deputy Commander, USFOR-A FWD, was originally task organized and manned as a SOJTF in anticipation of taking over the NSOCC-A mission. In June 2021, they transitioned into Diplomatic Assurance Platform-Afghanistan (DAP-A), with a focus on the medical, flight, and security requirements of USEK (exhibit 20). In July 2021, RADM Vasely took command from General Miller, and assumed the functions of Resolute Support Headquarters (RSHQ) and USFOR-A, albeit with a drastically reduced footprint due to a reduced boots on the ground (BOG) force cap of 650 being implemented. In addition to USFOR-

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Findings and Recommendation – Attack Against U.S. Forces Conducting NEO at Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August 2021

A FWD's organic staff, they had TACON of one company from 2nd IBCT, 10th Mountain Division, and two companies from 3rd IBCT, 10th Mountain Division (exhibits 20, 21).

(b) Training. USFOR-A FWD trained to deploy as a SOJTF, and did not train to assume the role of RSHQ and USFOR-A, nor did they train to conduct a NEO. While deployed, USFOR-A FWD participated in the 28 June Operational Planning Team (OPT) at USEK, focused on pre-NEO planning. USFOR-A FWD then participated in the CENTCOM-led NEO tabletop exercise (TTX) on 29 June, and a National Security Council (NSC)-led NEO TTX on 6 August (exhibits 20, 21).

(3) 82nd Airborne Division.

(a) Manning. 82nd Airborne Division HQ, led by MG Christopher Donahue, initially deployed with a small team of six staff members, and arrived at HKIA on 18 August. The remainder of the Division HQ staff arrived on 20 August, bringing the 82nd's total manpower to 106 personnel (exhibits 125, 152). The 1st IBCT, 82nd Airborne Division (1/82 IBCT), led by (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) deployed as part of the IRF, began to arrive at HKIA on 15 August, and had roughly 1000 soldiers on hand by 16 August. The number of personnel TACON to 1/82 IBCT would swell to 2360 throughout the NEO (exhibits 130, 152). The 1/82 IBCT HQ was comprised of 65 personnel, and it had TACON of elements from 1/504 PIR (515 personnel), 2/504 PIR (378 personnel), 2/501 PIR (504 personnel), 3/319 Artillery (257 personnel), 307th Brigade Support Battalion (BSB) (56 personnel), 127th Airborne Engineer Battalion (24 personnel), 50th Expeditionary Signal Battalion (4 personnel), 16th Military Police Brigade (150 personnel), and 1/194 Armor Regiment (412 personnel) (exhibits 152, 153).

(b) Training. The 82nd Airborne Division HQ is trained to deploy rapidly, as part of the IRF, and did so in support of the NEO. While deployed to HKIA, the Division HQ participated in MASCAL TTXs and Rehearsal of Concept (ROC) drills, as well as Rules of Engagement (ROE) ROC drills with subordinate and adjacent units (exhibit 125). 1/82 IBCT began its IRF preparation training in March 2021 during its Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) rotation. During the IBCT's time at JRTC, units rehearsed civic engagement, conducted mock interagency engagements, utilized role players, and trained on entry control point operations. They did not train on crowd control or NEO (exhibits 121, 123). The 1/82 IBCT conducted Leader Professional Development sessions, where they executed tactical decision games focused on NEO (exhibits 121, 123). The brigade also trained to secure airfields (exhibits 121, 123, 124). 2/501 PIR executed three deployment readiness exercises (DREs), where they practiced deploying out of Joint Base Charleston, South Carolina (exhibit 123).

(4) JTF-CR.

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Findings and Recommendation – Attack Against U.S. Forces Conducting NEO at Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August 2021

(a) Manning. JTF-CR activated in anticipation of the Afghanistan NEO, and initially had a joint manning document (JMD) with 187 personnel associated with it. The JTF sent three Liaison Officers (LNOs) forward to Afghanistan in May 2021 to coordinate with USFOR-A, USEK, and HKIA. Additionally, the JTF sent a quartering party comprised of three Marines to HKIA to begin preparations for receiving the JTF in the event of a NEO (exhibit 15). On 19 July, JTF-CR sent an EEAT comprised of 49 personnel to HKIA to assist DoS with processing SIV applicants for travel to the U.S., and to continue preparations for receiving the JTF at HKIA in the event of a NEO (exhibits 15, 18). By the third week of July, JTF-CR had 55 personnel on the ground at HKIA, and would send an additional 28 personnel forward from Bahrain on 4 August (exhibit 15). By 26 August, the JTF-CR staff was back down to 59 personnel, as some staff members had redeployed. JTF-CR staff personnel were chosen for their versatility, so they could multi-task, and the JTF opted to place a heavy emphasis on planning ability, due to the anticipated requirement of multiple, competing planning efforts throughout the execution of the NEO (exhibit 15). When the NEO began, the JTF-CR was forced to employ most of its staff as a security force, due to multiple breaches in the HKIA perimeter and a limited number of security forces being on deck at HKIA (exhibits 15, 18).

(b) Training. JTF-CR was certified as a JTF in 2019 (exhibits 15, 18), and again in 2020 (exhibit 18). In addition to its certification via exercises and training, the JTF had activated three times within the past year, to include its planning response to the Beirut Port explosion in August 2020, and its deployment in support of Operation OCTAVE QUARTZ off the coast of Somalia in the spring of 2021 (exhibit 18). JTF-CR participated in NEO TTXs with CENTCOM at the end of June, and the NSC on 6 August, but JTF-CR staff members considered both to be ineffective, due to faulty planning assumptions (exhibits 17, 18). During NEO execution at HKIA, JTF-CR conducted MASCAL rehearsals with the Role II clinic and USFOR-A FWD, which ultimately paid dividends on 26 August (exhibits 15, 16, 18). Multiple leaders from JTF-CR stated that no training could have truly prepared service members for the tasks they executed at HKIA throughout the NEO (exhibits 17, 18).

(5) 24th MEU.

(a) Manning. The 24th MEU, led by (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) began sending Marines into HKIA as part of its quartering party in mid-July, and its CE began flowing into HKIA on 15 August. At full strength, the MEU had 1249 Marines and Sailors at HKIA, the bulk of which resided within BLT 1/8 and CLB-24 (exhibits 100, 101, 104). BLT 1/8 deployed 996 Marines and Sailors across three rifle companies, a weapons company, an artillery battery, a light armored reconnaissance company (-), an engineer platoon, and a reconnaissance company (-) (exhibits 100, 104). CLB-24 deployed to HKIA with 225 Marines and Sailors, task organized to support 24-hour ECC operations, with roughly 70 Marines supporting three, 8-hour shifts each day. CLB-24 personnel provided combat

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Findings and Recommendation – Attack Against U.S. Forces Conducting NEO at Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August 2021

service support to other units across HKIA, when they were not operating at the ECC. CLB-24 also task organized a FST, comprised of 35 female Marines and Sailors, with augmentation from BLT 1/8. CLB-24 had SPMAGTF's Combat Logistics Detachment-21 (CLD-21), and Marine Wing Support Detachment-373 (MWSD-373) attached to support ECC operations (exhibit 101).

(b) Training. 24th MEU completed the standard pre-deployment training program focused on the MEU's 13 core METs, including NEO (exhibits 100, 101, 104). The unit conducted an additional, four-day NEO training package, sponsored by Expeditionary Operations Training Group (EOTG) in January 2021, which included DoS and civilian role player participants (exhibits 100, 101, 104). In June 2021, while ashore in Jordan, 24th MEU's CE and BLT conducted embassy reinforcement and NEO training at the U.S. Embassy in Amman (exhibits 100, 104). In July, the MEU offloaded in Kuwait to posture for a potential NEO in Afghanistan, and throughout the month of July and into August, the CE, BLT, and CLB trained daily on various aspects of NEO, to include embassy reinforcement, fixed site security, ECC operations, and NEO Tracking System operations (exhibits 100, 101, 104). Additionally, the FST Marines and Sailors trained on proper search techniques to be employed at an ECC or ECP (exhibits 101, 107). MEU leadership agreed that the NEO training they conducted did not adequately train their Marines and Sailors for the conditions they faced at HKIA (exhibits 100, 101, 104).

(6) SPMAGTF.

(a) Manning. The SPMAGTF deployed a "heavy package" to HKIA with components of the GCE, comprised of 2nd Battalion, 1st Marines (2/1), the Logistics Combat Element (LCE), comprised of CLD-21, and Aviation Combat Element (ACE), comprised of MWSD-373. Additionally, the SPMAGTF "heavy package" included an STP and two EOD teams (exhibits 55, 65, 66). 2/1 deployed its entire battalion, with the exception of one platoon from Golf Company, which provided escort security aboard SPMAGTF flights to/from HKIA, two platoons from Fox Company, which remained at the Baghdad Embassy Complex (BEC) in Iraq to provide security, and their Combat Engineer Platoon, which stayed at the BEC to support force protection improvements there (exhibits 53, 54, 55, 56, 77, 78, 79, 81). As a result of the Engineer Platoon not deploying to HKIA, 2/1 was forced to depend on CLD-21's engineer section, whose focus at HKIA was ECC operations, and the BLT's Engineer Platoon, whose focus was supporting the BLT at North and East Gates.

(b) Training.

(i) Prior to deploying to the CENTCOM AOR in the spring of 2021, the units assigned to the SPMAGTF completed typical pre-deployment training, focused on their core METs (exhibits 53, 55, 56, 57, 76, 77, 79, 80, 81). Additionally, 2/1 conducted training at the Infantry Immersion Trainer (IIT) at Camp Pendleton, where they trained

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Findings and Recommendation – Attack Against U.S. Forces Conducting NEO at Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August 2021

on embassy reinforcement and crowd control operations (exhibits 76, 77, 86). While deployed, 2/1's companies were distributed throughout the AOR, and conducted various training events that would prove beneficial while operating at HKIA later in their deployment.

(ii) Echo Company, 2/1 conducted two Mission Rehearsal Exercises (MRXs), along with STP, CLD-21 and MWSD-373, at PSAB in July 2021, where they focused on ECC operations and security and response to a MASCAL event (exhibits 53, 54, 56, 57, 76). Echo Company, 2/1 also conducted non-lethal weapons training at PSAB and additional medical training in Kuwait (exhibit 82).

(iii) Golf Company, 2/1 deployed three platoons to Jordan, and one platoon initially to Djibouti, and then to PSAB, where it supported the Tactical Recovery of Aircraft and Personnel (TRAP) mission. In Jordan, Golf Company focused on its core METs, but had the unique opportunity to train alongside the U.K.'s 2 PARA, and the 77th Royal Jordanian Marine Battalion (77th RJMB). Training with 2 PARA helped build a level of interoperability and familiarity that proved useful when Golf Company, 2/1 served alongside 2 PARA at Abbey Gate, HKIA, whereas training with 77th RJMB helped Golf Company Marines grow accustomed to operating with non-native English speakers, a skill that also proved useful at HKIA (exhibits 53, 76, 77, 80, 86, 89, 90). Third Platoon, Golf Company, 2/1 received extensive medical training while serving as the TRAP platoon, to include Tactical Combat Casualty Care (TCCC), Combat Trauma Management (CTM) training, and Valkyrie walking blood bank training (exhibits 86, 98). The rest of Golf Company conducted Combat Life Saver (CLS) refresher training, TCCC refresher training, and MASCAL training in Jordan, while Golf Company's junior Hospital Corpsmen conducted CTM and Valkyrie training prior to deploying to HKIA in support of the NEO (exhibits 77, 98).

(iv) Fox Company, 2/1 deployed to the BEC, where the company executed fixed site security and crowd control operations, and trained on non-lethal weapons employment, all of which prepared them to operate at Abbey Gate (exhibit 81). All 2/1 companies discussed ROE and the importance of treating people at the gates of HKIA with empathy and respect prior to deploying to HKIA (exhibits 53, 54, 56, 57, 76, 77, 78, 81). The STP completed multiple MASCAL drills while deployed at Al Jaber, Kuwait and PSAB, prior to deploying to HKIA (exhibit 66).

e. Leadership.

(1) Key Finding. COMREL and Task Organization. **The task organization worked. This was in large part due to pre-existing or quickly forged relationships among leaders at the highest echelons and adaptability at the lower echelons.**

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Findings and Recommendation – Attack Against U.S. Forces Conducting NEO at Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August 2021

(a) The 82nd Airborne Division, led by MG Donahue, executed their mission with a clear chain of command (exhibits 10, 121, 124, 125). The Division rapidly adapted to the changing situation, as they were responsible for security of the airhead, support to the NEO, planning for the retrograde of all personnel and equipment, demilitarization of arms and equipment, and executing the JTE (exhibits 121, 125). In addition to security, the Division conducted initial screening and recovery of AMCITs, LPRs, locally hired embassy personnel, SIV applicants, and at risk Afghans at South and West Gates (exhibit 143). Once identified and screened, these evacuees were processed through the ECC for manifesting and departure from HKIA (exhibits 121, 125).

(b) General McKenzie established the NEO COMREL, and officially granted 82nd Airborne TACON of JTF-CR (exhibit 10, 11, 238). In reality, JTF-CR was TACON to USFOR-A FWD, and merely coordinated with the 82nd Airborne Division (exhibits 18, 21, 40, 125). This adjusted COMREL, along with the mixing of tactical responsibilities, resulted in the 82nd conducting airfield security and NEO for one sector, and JTF-CR conducting airfield security and NEO in another sector (exhibits 15, 121, 125, 143, 155). The senior officers made this division of tasks work under the circumstances with adjusted COMREL, mutual trust, and shared understanding.

(2) Engaged and Responsive Leaders.

(a) The leadership of the U.S. Forces tasked with conducting a NEO at HKIA worked collaboratively to adapt in an uncertain, chaotic, ambiguous, and high-threat environment. U.S. Forces experienced rapidly changing, complex relationships and compressed timelines to conduct a NEO. These leadership challenges were exacerbated by the reality that the Taliban, who could be described as a supporting effort, were operating under a unity of effort as opposed to a unity of command (exhibits 53, 125). This was demonstrated at each location around the perimeter of HKIA, where Taliban assistance ranged from actively supporting crowd control, to non-support, and even actively taunting the Marines (exhibits 23, 53, 100, 102, 125, 146). RADM Vasely, MG Donahue, and BGen Sullivan conducted Key Leader Engagements (KLE) to coordinate activities, ensure mission accomplishment, and protect the force (exhibits 21, 23, 125). Their coordination with the Taliban facilitated crowd control and force protection, and minimized the incidence of kinetic engagements between U.S. Forces, and Taliban (exhibits 53, 104, 125). While the ROE may not have been entirely clear at all times, due to the rapidly changing situation, U.S. Forces retained the right to self-defense, the ability to engage individuals committing hostile acts or demonstrating hostile intent, and the ability to utilize riot-control measures in defense to protect the force and civilians.

(b) Military leadership at every level was engaged and responsive, enabling security of the airhead, executing the NEO, and planning to execute the Joint Tactical Exfiltration (JTE). There were numerous examples of great leadership during an

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Findings and Recommendation – Attack Against U.S. Forces Conducting NEO at Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August 2021

operation amounting to simultaneous combat, evacuation, and humanitarian tasks during a compressed time, with constrained resources, and severe restrictions on terrain. There are three examples to highlight, the first being how leadership engaged the NSU and Taliban forces to assist with inner and outer perimeter security and checkpoint screening. Another example was the emplacement of the Chevron obstacle at Abbey Gate, which in combination with outside influences, had a profound impact on the flow of evacuees. The last example was the battlefield rotations conducted before 26 August and immediately before the blast at Abbey Gate. It should be noted that several leaders and Marines interviewed stated operations at HKIA were so chaotic, that even with the tremendous amounts of training conducted prior to deployment, no training would be able to prepare someone for what they faced (exhibits 107, 101). All of these examples tested leaders' ability to remain flexible in a dynamic environment and challenged them to rise above adversity.

(c) These challenges began when civilians breached the perimeter and started to occupy the southern area of HKIA on 15 August (exhibits 15, 53, 54, 56). This caused the JTF-CR to send 50 out of 53 personnel, emptying their JOC, to assist in pushing back the crowd (exhibit 15). It took almost everyone on the airfield to get the civilians off the runway in order to continue operations (exhibit 15, 53, 54, 56). Leadership recognized that they had to build and leverage relationships in order to provide better security and screening. This led to negotiations between RADM Vasely, the NSU, and the Taliban (exhibit 53). The NSU helped to clear the airfield and manned their gate, while MG Donahue instructed the Taliban regarding which areas they would need to control and clear to facilitate the NEO (exhibit 18, 21, 123, 125). The Taliban would later establish outer checkpoints and, more notably, provide security at the Chevron outside the outer corridor of Abbey Gate (exhibits 54, 77, 81, 84, 85 86, 89).

(d) The coordination to install the Chevron, which ultimately changed the dynamics at Abbey Gate, involved the U.K., Taliban, and the Commander of Golf Company, 2/1 Marines, (b)(3)130b, (b)(6). The U.K. Forces devised the idea and the placement location, but were having trouble executing. (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) and other members of the senior leadership were conducting KLEs with the Taliban to discuss security and future operations (exhibit 54, 18). (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) had the Taliban move the broken vehicles that were in the way and preventing the Chevron from being emplaced, and help to control Afghan civilians (exhibit 77). The Taliban would later provide security in front of and on top of the Chevron containers (exhibits 54, 77, 81, 84, 85 86, 89). (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) also coordinated with the MEU engineers to use their equipment to move jersey barriers and emplace the containers forming the Chevron (exhibits 54, 77, 81, 84, 85, 89, 103). This helped to create standoff between troops and the crowd and control the flow of personnel coming into the Abbey Gate for processing.

(e) Leadership, from USFOR-A FWD down to the company level, would visit the gates to ensure the Service members were cared for and to gather situational awareness

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Findings and Recommendation – Attack Against U.S. Forces Conducting NEO at Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August 2021

of the rapidly changing environment. The USFOR-A FWD team would visit gates multiple times a day (exhibit 21, 22, 23). The USFOR-A FWD (b)(6) would visit the gates to check on Marines/Soldiers and to provide reports on the current conditions and situation at the gates (exhibits 17, 21, 96). On 26 August, just before 1700, BGen Sullivan, (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) (all of JTF-CR) had visited Abbey Gate and left the area 20 minutes before the blast (exhibits 17, 19). (b)(6) (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) 3/10 IBCT, (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) 2/501 PIR, and (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) 1/8 visited Abbey Gate on 26 August as well (exhibits 104, 123, 126). The (b)(6) of 2/1, (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) attended a meeting at the Barron Hotel with Taliban and U.K. Forces to discuss the impending closure of Abbey Gate at 1600 on 26 August. As he was leaving Abbey Gate, (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) was caught in the blast (exhibits 53, 90).

(f) Leaders on the ground engaged with their teams in order to work through the evolving situation. They were coordinating support with friendly units while also negotiating with the NSU and Taliban to provide security for gate operations and retrograde planning. Junior leaders were empowered to make and execute decisions, as demonstrated through the emplacement of the Chevron. Overall, military leaders executed the mission and protected their Marines and Soldiers to the best of their ability.

f. Medical Considerations.

(1) Key Finding. **The wounds sustained by the KIA were so catastrophic none could be saved.** Medical providers at multiple echelons stated access to additional advanced treatment and equipment would not have saved more lives. The capability at HKIA's Role II-E saved several Service Members who otherwise would have succumbed to their wounds. Providers stated the capability at HKIA was the most robust they had experienced in an operational setting. Every Service Member who could have been saved with medical treatment survived due to the medical capability at HKIA.

(2) Capabilities.

(a) Role II. Throughout the Afghanistan NEO, there were two Role II facilities at HKIA, one on North HKIA (NHKIA), referred to at times as the NATO Role II, Role II-E, or the Military Treatment Facility (MTF), had the most robust capability, while a second facility at Camp Alvarado was operated by 1/82 IBCT medical personnel (exhibits 66, 98, 128, 130, 131). The MTF hosted eight surgical teams, including three Army Forward Resuscitative Surgical Teams (FRST), one Army light surgical team, two U.S. SOSTs, one Norwegian SOST, and one U.K. surgical team. The MTF had two ORs, with the ability to surge to four patients simultaneously, and space for seven intensive care unit (ICU) and 14 ward patients, with the ability to surge on both. The MTF also

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Findings and Recommendation – Attack Against U.S. Forces Conducting NEO at Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August 2021

had CT scanning and x-ray capability, a lab, a pharmacy, and an ER that operated 24 hours a day (exhibits 128, 131). According to multiple medical officers, the MTF at HKIA had more assets and capability than any field facility they had ever seen (exhibits 66, 128, 130, 131). The second Role II facility, located at Camp Alvarado, was operated by personnel from 1/82 IBCT and hosted an Army FRSD. The FRSD was capable of providing limited damage control surgery and resuscitation (exhibit 130).

(b) Role I. There were two Role I-E facilities at HKIA throughout the NEO. The 24th MEU's STP operated next to the PAX Terminal on NHKIA, while the SPMAGTF's STP operated out of a building between East Gate and Abbey Gate. The MEU STP had two physician assistants (PA), two nurses, and 15 corpsmen (exhibit 16). The SPMAGTF STP had two ER doctors, one PA, two nurses, and 12 corpsmen (exhibit 66). In addition to the two Role I-E facilities, the U.K. operated a Role I facility out of the Barron Hotel, in vicinity of Abbey Gate (exhibits 77, 98).

(3) MASCAL Plan. Prior to executing the NEO, the MASCAL plan for HKIA was not comprehensive, in that it did not incorporate every compound surrounding the airfield. Instead, the existing MASCAL plan only referred to NHKIA, where the aforementioned NATO Role II/MTF was located. Leading up to the NEO, TF MED leadership began refining the MASCAL plan, and attempted to designate CCPs and evacuation routes throughout the airfield (exhibit 128). The updated plan was not finalized prior to the beginning of the NEO, and as a result, during the NEO the MASCAL plan was reduced to, "In the event of a MASCAL event, utilize all available vehicles to transport casualties to the MTF as quickly as possible (exhibits 66, 128, 130, 131)". The lack of a comprehensive MASCAL plan caused some frustration and concern for units operating away from NHKIA (exhibit 66). Despite the lack of a comprehensive plan, each unit conducted internal MASCAL rehearsals that undoubtedly contributed to the rapid, successful response witnessed following the Abbey Gate attack of 26 August (exhibits 66, 98, 128, 130, 131).

(4) Medical Rules of Engagement (MEDROE). At the start of the NEO, the MEDROE were unclear among the various medical providers (exhibits 66, 130, 131). The SPMAGTF STP and 1/82 IBCT Role II were initially under the impression they were to adhere to the standing CENTCOM MEDROE, which was complicated by the fact that service members were coming into close, regular contact with large numbers of civilians at the HKIA gates (exhibits 66, 130). After operating for several days under an ambiguous MEDROE, TF MED's (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) passed guidance to all providers at HKIA stating that they were responsible for providing care to anyone within the gates of the airfield (exhibits 66, 130, 131). The lack of initial clarity regarding MEDROE presented a challenge for some medical providers, and served as a source of frustration (exhibit 66).

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Findings and Recommendation – Attack Against U.S. Forces Conducting NEO at Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August 2021

(5) MASCAL Preparations Prior to 26 August. Upon his arrival at HKIA, 82nd Airborne's Commander, MG Donahue, identified the likelihood of a MASCAL event during the course of the NEO, and tasked the 82nd's senior medical officer with preparing for a MASCAL (exhibit 125). In the days leading up to the attack on 26 August, units at all echelons conducted MASCAL rehearsals (exhibits 16, 18, 21, 66, 98, 128, 130, 131). In response to the increased threat leading up to 26 August, the SPMAGTF STP (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) ran MASCAL rehearsals in her clinic, and staged an ambulance with an enroute care team inside the inner gate at Abbey Gate on the evening of 25 August (exhibit 66). Beginning on the morning of 26 August, Golf Company, 2/1 established a CCP inside the outer gate, and consolidated medical supplies, litters, and corpsmen at the CCP in anticipation of a potential attack and MASCAL event (exhibits 77, 98). Following a phone call from the USFOR-A FWD (b)(6) (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) at 1310 on 26 August warning of a likely attack, TF MED (b)(6) (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) consolidated all medical personnel at the MTF, and kept them on standby throughout the afternoon so that they were prepared to respond rapidly to a MASCAL (exhibit 131).

g. Chronology/Timeline of Events. See enclosure 9.

4. Recommendations.

a. **TBI Screening**. During the course of the investigation, it became apparent Service Members received inconsistent evaluation for concussion and TBI after the attack at Abbey Gate. Since the initial medical evacuation of the wounded, twelve Service Members have been added to the list of those wounded in action; many for TBI. I therefore recommend forwarding findings and recommendations to all CENTCOM Service Component Commanders for consideration that all Service Members at Abbey Gate during the attack, and present in any blast zone depicted in exhibit 137, slide 7, be evaluated for TBI.

b. **Mental Health Evaluation**. A consistent trend during interviews with young Marines were stories involving traumatic injuries and death of children, separation of families at gates, and outright rejection of evacuees culminating in their distraught return to the civilian population outside the gate. During the response to the attack at Abbey Gate, young Marines heroically recovered the wounded and rendered life-saving care. Others carried the bodies of their deceased friends away from the canal. In consideration of the mental and emotional strain placed on these young Marines and other Service Members, I recommend forwarding the findings and recommendations to all CENTCOM Service Component Commanders. Recommend mental health evaluations and treatment options for all personnel executing entry control point operations at Abbey Gate from 17-26 August. Evaluations and treatment options should also be pursued for personnel involved in the medical response to the attack on Abbey Gate on 26 August.

ACTS-SCK-DO

SUBJECT: Findings and Recommendation – Attack Against U.S. Forces Conducting NEO at Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August 2021

c. **Interagency NEO Doctrine.** Many leaders observed planning and execution with interagency partners was difficult, because there was no shared understanding or baseline concepts common to the various entities involved in the execution of NEO. To address this shortcoming, I recommend forwarding this investigation to the Joint Staff for consideration in drafting and publication of interagency doctrine for Non-combatant Evacuation Operations.

d. **Further Investigation.** During an interview with Platoon Commanders of Golf Company, 2/1 Marines, a Platoon Commander stated a civilian was killed by a flash bang grenade. The investigator did not pursue the line of questioning, because of the group setting and potential for misconduct and a rights advisement. After speaking with my legal advisor, I assessed this line of inquiry was outside my scope to investigate and would incur a significant delay in meeting my timeline and mandate. I recommend forwarding exhibits 84 and 128 to MARCENT for potential investigation into statements made by the Platoon Commander from Golf Company, 2/1 Marines, concerning a possible civilian casualty caused by use of a flash bang grenade.

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

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

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

Encls

1. Appointment Memo
2. Extension Request and Approval
3. Assist. IO Appoints
4. Investigative Chronology
5. Terms of Reference
6. Exhibit Index
7. EXSUM
8. Task Organization
9. Event Chronology
10. HKIA Overlay
11. Abbey Gate Overview
12. Abbey Gate Macro Overview
13. Abbey Gate Micro Overview
14. KIA/WIA Sketch

(b)(3)130b, (b)(6)
LANCE G. CURTIS
BG, USA
Investigating Officer

Page 44 redacted for the following reason:

Legal Review (b)(5)

Approved for Release

Page 45 redacted for the following reason:

(b)(5)

Approved for Release

Page 46 redacted for the following reason:

(b)(5)

Approved for Release

Page 47 redacted for the following reason:

(b)(3) 10 U.S.C. 130b, (b)(5), (b)(6)

Approved for Release

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS BY INVESTIGATING OFFICER

Note. Completed forms may contain personally identifiable information and require handling as set forth in AR 340-21.
For use of this form, see AR 15-6; the proponent agency is OTJAG.

IF MORE SPACE IS REQUIRED IN FILLING OUT ANY PORTION OF THIS FORM, ATTACH ADDITIONAL SHEETS

SECTION I - APPOINTMENT

Appointed by LTG Ronald Clark, Commander, Third Army/ARCENT

(Appointing authority)

on 20210917 (Date) (Attach enclosure 1. Letter of appointment or summary of oral appointment data.) (See para 3-15, AR 15-6.)

SECTION II - TIMELINE

1. The (investigation) commenced at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait at 2000
(Place) (Time)
on 20210917
(Date)
2. The (investigating officer) finished gathering/hearing evidence at 1100 on 20211022 and completed
(Time) (Date)
findings and recommendations at 2000 on 20211022
(Time) (Date)

SECTION III - CHECKLIST FOR PROCEEDINGS

A. COMPLETE IN ALL CASES

	YES	NO ^{1/}	NA ^{2/}
1. Enclosures (para 3-13, AR 15-6)			
Are the following enclosed and numbered consecutively with Roman numerals: (Attached in order listed)			
a. The memorandum of appointment?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. All other written communications to or from the appointing authority?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Privacy Act Statements (Certificate, if statement provided orally)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d. Explanation by the investigating officer of any unusual delays, difficulties, irregularities, or other problems encountered (e.g., absence of material witnesses)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e. Any other significant papers (other than evidence) relating to administrative aspects of the investigation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
f. An Executive Summary, Index of Exhibits, Chronology of the Investigation and lists of all persons interviewed and evidence gathered. (Complex, serious and/or high profile cases)?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Exhibits (para 3-14, AR 15-6)			
a. Are all items offered (whether or not received) or considered as evidence individually numbered or lettered as exhibits and attached to this report?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Is an Index of all exhibits offered to or considered by Investigating officer attached before the first exhibit?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Has the testimony/statement of each witness been recorded verbatim or been reduced to written form and attached as an exhibit?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Are copies, descriptions, or depictions (if substituted for real or documentary evidence) properly authenticated and is the location of the original evidence indicated?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e. Are descriptions or diagrams included of locations visited by the investigating officer (Appendix C-3, AR 15-6)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
f. Is each written stipulation attached as an exhibit and is each oral stipulation either reduced to writing and made an exhibit or recorded?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

FOOTNOTES: ^{1/} Explain all negative answers on an attached sheet.

^{2/} Use of the N/A column constitutes a positive representation that the circumstances described in the question did not occur in this investigation.

SECTION IV - FINDINGS (para 3-10, AR 15-6)

The (investigating officer), having carefully considered the evidence, finds: *[Each paragraph should be one conclusion based on the evidence gathered during the investigation. These findings should provide answers to each question posed by the appointing authority in the appointment memorandum. The evidence that supports each finding must be cited.]*

SEE MEMORANDUM

SECTION V - RECOMMENDATIONS (para 3-11, AR 15-6)

In view of the above findings, the (investigating officer) recommends: [Each paragraph should be one recommendation based on the findings in Section IV. Address what actions, if any, should be taken with regard to the individuals involved, the unit leadership, and any steps that can be taken to prevent the occurrence in the future. Recommendations do not need to be adverse or punitive. For example, the investigation results can be used as a training tool.]

SEE MEMORANDUM

SECTION VI - AUTHENTICATION (para 3-15, AR 15-6)

THIS REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS IS COMPLETE AND ACCURATE.

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

(Investigating Officer)

SECTION VII - ACTION BY APPROVING AUTHORITY (para 2-8, AR 15-6)

The finding (b)(3)130b, (b)(6) of the (investigating officer) are:

a) Approve

b) Approved with the following modifications:

(1) The following findings of fact are added/deleted:

(2) The following findings of fact are modified as follows:

(3) The following recommendations are added/deleted:

(4) The following recommendations are modified as follows:

The Mental Health Evaluation/treatment priority will apply to Service Members at ALL gates at HK...

(5) The action recommended in recommendation _____ has been accomplished by _____

(6) Recommendation(s) _____ is not appropriate for action by this command; however, a copy of this investigation is being furnished to _____ for such action as deemed appropriate.

c) Disapproved. ☐

d) The report is (incomplete), (ambiguous), (erroneous) and/or (specify deficiency) with respect to _____

It is, therefore, hereby returned to the IO for corrective action as follows _____

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

NOV 10 2021

RONALD P. CLARK
Lieutenant General, USA
Commanding



SECRET//NOFORN

M4 Approval

UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDER
7115 SOUTH BOUNDARY BOULEVARD
MACDILL AIR FORCE BASE, FLORIDA 33621-5101

INFO MEMO

22 November 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

THRU: CHAIRMAN, JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

(b)(6)

FROM: General Kenneth F. McKenzie, Jr., Commander, U.S. Central Command

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

SUBJECT: Abbey Gate AR 15-6 Investigation

Mr. Secretary,

I have reviewed the AR 15-6 investigation completed at my direction by U.S. Army Central (ARCENT) and concur with and endorse its findings and recommendations. The investigation was exceptionally comprehensive in its scope, as appropriate to the tragic events that precipitated its initiation. The investigating team, led by BG Lance Curtis, conducted 70 separate interviews, many of which were held in a group setting to facilitate a free flow of information. A total of 139 people were interviewed at seven different locations spanning five countries. Interviews ranged from between one hour and six hours in duration, with the average interview lasting between two and three hours, and the average transcription totaling nearly 11 pages. I specifically concur that:

- The task organization worked. This was in large part due to pre-existing or quickly forged relationships among leaders at the highest echelons and adaptability at the lower echelons;
- By 25 August 2021, Abbey Gate was the main effort for “walk-up” gate operations at Hamid Karzai International Airport;
- There was no complex attack; it was a single suicide bomber not accompanied by enemy small arms fire;
- There is no evidence that Afghans were killed by return fire from U.S. forces in the immediate aftermath of the attack;
- The attack was not preventable at the tactical level without degrading the mission to maximize the number of evacuees;
- The attack was not the result of any act of omission or commission by forces on the ground;
- The wounds sustained by the service members Killed in Action were so catastrophic that none could be saved; and

Classified by: Gen Kenneth F. McKenzie, Jr., Commander, USCENTCOM
Derived from: USCENTCOM CCR 380-14 (12 April 2021)
Declassify on: 2043 105

- Although not assigned as a task to ARCENT or the investigating team, it is my judgment that all injuries sustained by U.S. personnel incident to the Abbey Gate attack occurred in the line of duty and were not due to any misconduct by the killed or injured U.S. personnel.

I further concur with the recommendations detailed in the ARCENT investigation. Accordingly, I have directed the following actions:

- The Findings and Recommendations will be forwarded to all USCENTCOM Service Component Commanders to ensure that all U.S. servicemembers at Abbey Gate during the attack, and present in any of the blast zones detailed in the investigation, are afforded the opportunity to be evaluated for Traumatic Brain Injury (Recommendation (a));
- The Findings and Recommendations will be forwarded to all USCENTCOM Service Component Commanders to facilitate prioritized access to appropriate mental health evaluations for personnel involved in executing entry control point operations from 17-26 August and personnel involved in the medical response to the attack on 26 August (Recommendation (b));
- The investigation will be forwarded to the Joint Staff to inform any efforts that might be undertaken to develop interagency doctrine for Noncombatant Evacuation Operations (Recommendation (c)); and
- Relevant portions of the investigation will be forwarded to U.S. Marine Corps Forces Central for appropriate action regarding the potential serious injury or death of an Afghan civilian on or about 20 August 2021 resulting from the alleged improper deployment of a flash bang grenade by a U.S. Marine from 2nd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment (Recommendation (d)).

Based on the totality of the facts and circumstances detailed in the ARCENT investigation, I do not believe that any adverse administrative or disciplinary action is necessary or appropriate for any U.S. personnel involved in our operations at Abbey Gate.

The ARCENT investigating team and the ARCENT Commander, LTG Ron Clark, briefed me in person on 11 November 2021 regarding this investigation. The presentation was as comprehensive as the investigation itself, and it included detailed PowerPoint slides, embedded video, and exceptionally well scripted speaker notes that complemented the written investigation and facilitated an informative exchange of questions and answers. I highly recommend you take the brief in person, and set aside two hours to this purpose. If you concur, my headquarters will work with your staff to make the ARCENT team available.

Enclosure: AR 15-6 Investigation (Enclosures and Exhibits available via Sharepoint)