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UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS  
U.S. MARINE CORPS FORCES  
SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

IN REPLY REFER TO:  
1000  
ECB  
23 Mar 2015

From: [REDACTED]  
To: [REDACTED]

SUBJ: COORDINATION BETWEEN LOUISIANA ARMY NATIONAL GUARD AND 2ND MARINE  
SPECIAL OPERATIONS BATTALION

1. During a site survey in the Gulf Coast area in September 2014, [REDACTED] from MARSOC [REDACTED] section was introduced to [REDACTED] as a POC for possible future aviation support from the Louisiana Army National Guard (LAANG). Upon [REDACTED] return to MARSOC, he gave me the information for [REDACTED]. I contacted [REDACTED] in October 2014 and he passed me off to [REDACTED], the [REDACTED] and the [REDACTED] from the LAANG. Through discussions between [REDACTED] and me in December 2014, the LAANG planned on providing two or three days of UH-60M support for the MARSOC RAVEN 15-03 exercise in the Gulfport, MS region. In early January [REDACTED], the [REDACTED] reached out to the other Air Officers in MARSOC asking about any available assault support aircraft in the Gulf Coast region that may be able to support their HAVEACE exercise. At this point I contacted [REDACTED] to see if it would be feasible for them to support 2<sup>nd</sup> MSOB training in Eglin AFB, Florida. [REDACTED] said that it was a strong possibility and I then pushed his information to [REDACTED] for continued coordination. In early February the LAANG provided support for the MARSOC RAVEN exercise with good success and initial planning was conducted for future integration between LAANG and the RAVEN exercise. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] continued planning for support for the HAVEACE exercise and I left them to plan the exercise support between themselves with no further inputs provided by me.

[REDACTED]

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17 Mar 15

To whom it may concern,

On 17 March 15, I was requested to make a statement IRT how MARSOC first gained contact with and ultimately came to use 1-244<sup>th</sup> Assault Helicopter Battalion from the Louisiana State Aviation Command National Guard during HAVEACE. I was also asked to provide the Primary POC that was utilized. Below is my statement.

First MARSOC contact with LAARNG was the result of a G-7 Site Survey to the Gulf Coast Region (approximately Sept '14 timeframe). At that time, the [REDACTED] was provided a [REDACTED] USA as a POC. Following initial comms with the [REDACTED], [REDACTED] was provided as the main POC for LAANG going forward and still is as of today (POC info below). [REDACTED] first established contact in Oct '14. As a side note, we have utilized National Guard Aviation to augment RAVEN in the past, and it is normal for the [REDACTED] to investigate and determine available units in the area to utilize during their site surveys.

12 Jan 15: [REDACTED] ([REDACTED]) was first provided [REDACTED] POC information from [REDACTED]

21 Jan 15: [REDACTED] first contacts [REDACTED] via email about HAVEACE support. [REDACTED] has x1 phone conversation with him prior to this email.

06-15 Feb 15: 1-244th successfully supported RAVEN 15-3 ISO MSOC N in the Gulf Coast Region.

18 Feb 15: [REDACTED] conducts a face to face with [REDACTED] at their home station of Hammond, LA.

01-14 Mar 15: 1-244th supports HAVEACE ISO elements of MSOC H. No "official" frag process was utilized only face to face coordination. The MSOB did, however provide a LOA for funding purposes.

10 Mar 15: Mishap occurs.

28 Apr- 08 May 15: 1-244th is planned to support RAVEN 15-4 ISO MSOC G.

#### Primary POC Info

[REDACTED]

Not listed on the timeline, however I will also add, that attempts to schedule elements of the 160<sup>th</sup> were initiated by me on the 4<sup>th</sup> of Dec. at the JAAAC in Tampa, FL with the 160<sup>th</sup> [REDACTED]. This was then followed up directly with the Ops Shop of 3-160th on the 12<sup>th</sup> of Dec 14 via email correspondence. The MSOR received no follow up from them following this conversation.

This statement is true and accurate as I am able to recreate from a collection of verbal and written communications.

[REDACTED]

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**SWORN STATEMENT**

For use of this form, see AR 190-46; the proponent agency is PMG.

**PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT**

**AUTHORITY:** Title 10, USC Section 301; Title 5, USC Section 2951; E.O. 9397 Social Security Number (SSN).

**PRINCIPAL PURPOSE:** To document potential criminal activity involving the U.S. Army, and to allow Army officials to maintain discipline, law and order through investigation of complaints and incidents.

**ROUTINE USES:** Information provided may be further disclosed to federal, state, local, and foreign government law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, courts, child protective services, victims, witnesses, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Office of Personnel Management. Information provided may be used for determinations regarding judicial or non-judicial punishment, other administrative disciplinary actions, security clearances, recruitment, retention, placement, and other personnel actions.

**DISCLOSURE:** Disclosure of your SSN and other information is voluntary.

1. LOCATION A-15 Eglin AFB	2. DATE (YYYYMMDD) 20150313	3. TIME	4. FILE NUMBER
5. LAST NAME, FIRST NAME, MIDDLE NAME [REDACTED]		6. SSN [REDACTED]	7. GRADE/STATUS [REDACTED]

8. ORGANIZATION OR ADDRESS  
[REDACTED] Louisiana

9. I, [REDACTED], WANT TO MAKE THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT UNDER OATH:

IO: Please state your name, rank, unit of assignment, and duty position.

WIT: [REDACTED]

IO: What is your MOS?

WIT: 15B00

IO: How long have you been in this duty position?

WIT: [REDACTED] since 2009.

IO: Can you tell me what your participation in the planning and execution of this mission was?

WIT: As a [REDACTED] I am responsible for the training of all tenet units and their rated and non-rated crewmembers.

[REDACTED] We are responsible for training their rated and non-rated crewmembers in their specified aircraft. We also train crewmembers based off commander's guidance and unit METL. I got involved with this incident because I support the training of 1-244th rated and non-rated crewmembers.

I first started receiving B-mail traffic leading up to this training event in October of 2014. I had met with my [REDACTED] and CW4 Griffin who is our supervisory instructor pilot for the facility and Battalion. [REDACTED] is in charge of Operations as well as all the instructor pilots on the management side. CW4 Griffin does the standardization and SOP writing for the facility. Both [REDACTED] and CW4 Griffin stated they were in contact with MARSOC and had received requests from them for joint training exercises. I told them that I was fine with the said training exercises; I then stated there had to be meetings and it also had to be approved through AVS and [REDACTED] prior to execution. In December the mission started to get locked in more to the point where I requested [REDACTED] set up face to face meetings with MARSOC and seek AVS approval. We had a VTC (video Tele-Conference) and I met one of the Marines that came out to the facility for a face to face meeting. I had multiple meetings with [REDACTED], and he was very interested in doing this type of training to support his unit METL. The verbal mission approval from [REDACTED] came down, and I gave [REDACTED] the go ahead to start initial planning. We had meetings on how we wanted to do it, we planned to mitigate our risk by not allowing any M-Day (part time aviators) to participate initially on the missions, or anyone that had very little experience until our facility standardization instructor pilot felt

10. EXHIBIT	11. INITIALS [REDACTED] MAKING STATEMENT	PAGE 1 OF 8 PAGES
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ADDITIONAL PAGES MUST CONTAIN THE HEADING "STATEMENT OF [REDACTED] TAKEN AT [REDACTED] DATED [REDACTED]"

THE BOTTOM OF EACH ADDITIONAL PAGE MUST BEAR THE INITIALS OF THE PERSON MAKING THE STATEMENT, AND PAGE NUMBER MUST BE INDICATED.

USE THIS PAGE IF NEEDED. IF THIS PAGE IS NOT NEEDED, PLEASE PROCEED TO FINAL PAGE OF THIS FORM.

STATEMENT OF [REDACTED] TAKEN AT [REDACTED] DATED 2015 0313

9. STATEMENT (Continued)

comfortable with the mission set and our SOP. We would then integrate the other unit members later on. When you talk about CTL's (Commanders Task List) you have to have those tasked to be trained place on your CTL if you are going to conduct this type of training on a recurring basis; we didn't want to have too many people on these missions until we developed a good SOP and established a steady state mission set.

The risk assessment for the final mission approval authority was 'High'. I had a medium level risk approval authority, so even though I was integrated into planning, I knew that I was not going to be the final mission approval authority for the mission. [REDACTED] was aware of this; we including [REDACTED] conducted several face to face meetings about it as well. We felt as leaders the best way to mitigate the risk was to put the right people (most experienced) on the mission, and the right controls in place prior to execution. A mission was conducted about three weeks prior to this mission where the pilots worked with MARSOC and what they did was a QRF (quick reaction force insertion), CASEVAC (medical evacuation in a non-standard platform), and air movement with MARSOC. The training was conducted at night. Our pilots came back and debriefed us saying they were pleased with the training, liked the training area, and there were no major issues with the training event. But with that being said, we still didn't want to open this up to the masses, because we still had some concerns about the skill level of the pilots that we were sending. Soon after the last mission we received another request from MARSOC for support and I got briefed on it; there was a CONOP put together for [REDACTED] and it went up to AVS per their request. We know it was going to be a more complex mission then the previous one, as it would require EXFIL, INFIL, and utilization of equipment we weren't familiar with. To mitigate the risk we agreed to work off a common (SOP) USSOCOM Manual 350-6, conduct a planning meeting prior to training, followed by static and live training. The MARSOC unit was also responsible for providing a Cast Master (subject matter expert) to familiarize our guys, with the equipment and how it was to be utilized statically and dynamically. If they did SPIES (Special Patrol Insertion and Extraction), which is basically a latter type system to (Infil/Exfil) Marines, they would initially do this training without people on board the aircraft. They were doing this training on Sunday and unless I have the actual CONOP in front of me I couldn't give the exact sequence; but everything that was done on this mission they were briefed to do per the CONOP. They received their briefings from [REDACTED] on the Sunday before the live mission. The initial approval authority was [REDACTED] ([REDACTED]); mission briefer was [REDACTED] ([REDACTED]), Final Mission Approval was [REDACTED] ([REDACTED]).

The briefing process for this mission was unique in a sense that on the weekend the tentet units conducting IDT are responsible for briefing the crews, but during the week day it is the facility. But we knew that this would be starting on Sunday and ending on Tuesday night. So it was unique in the sense that it started out as a Battalion briefed mission and ended as a facility briefed mission. All three days were briefed on Sunday prior to the crew's departing Hammond. So the plan to clear up any confusion created by this situation was to have a pilot that was not only a battalion member, but a facility member do the briefing. [REDACTED] was also the final mission approval authority for all three days which solved the final mission approval authority issue. The pilots were briefed on Sunday that if anything did not meet the criteria briefed, i.e. weather, equipment or type of training they were to contact [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] immediately in-order to get approval for any mission deviations. On, Tuesday morning I asked [REDACTED] during our facility meeting at 0730hrs if the weather for the MARSOC mission was good to go and he informed me that it was and the crews were instructed to call him if it did not meet the briefed criteria. He said that they would call back if they had any issues with the weather. That was the last time I really talked about the mission because they were going to do a day and night mission, then come back and debrief me and [REDACTED] upon their return. I got home on Tuesday the night of the 10th at about 10 p.m. and when I looked at my phone I had multiple missed calls, with the first missed call at 2152 from [REDACTED]. The first person I talked to was [REDACTED] at approximately 2208. He said that there was a possible overdue aircraft for the MARSOC mission over at Hulburt Air Field. [REDACTED] gave me what he understood was the situation, and at that time I said that everything needed to come through me and that I would get all pertinent information to [REDACTED]. I called [REDACTED] and then contacted the aircraft that was on the ground at Hulburt (A15). I started communicating at about 2208 hours, with my first call to [REDACTED] at 2212. Between 2215 and 2230 was when I finally got a good understanding of what was going on because it was fluid and there were multiple calls. The aircrew said that they took off at 2030, as a flight of two. I questioned them about the weather and they said that the weather was good and they verified visibility using a light which they could see three miles away. They were at a 10 to 12 rotor disk separation when they took off. There were some wires the lead aircraft crossed in which they were calling out the altitude to chalk two as they flew over them.

From what I understand prior to cranking the weather was good. However, upon takeoff they seem to realize the weather was a little different from what they observed prior to crank. Cranking an aircraft can take between 10 and 20 minutes. The second aircraft said they could see the lead aircraft, but when they got near the shoreline they realized the weather was deteriorating rapidly. They then heard from the lead aircraft call "Going In," on their internal FM radio. At that time chalk 2, [REDACTED] aircraft, who

INITIALS OF PER [REDACTED] STATEMENT

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USE THIS PAGE IF NEEDED. IF THIS PAGE IS NOT NEEDED, PLEASE PROCEED TO FINAL PAGE OF THIS FORM.

STATEMENT OF [REDACTED] TAKEN AT [REDACTED] DATED 2015 03 13

9. STATEMENT (Continued)

was in the left seat from what I understand, said "Hey I still got the ground," [REDACTED], who was in the right seat said, "I have the controls and I have the road" and they decided to abort the mission and return to A15, their departure LZ. They came back, landed and shut down the aircraft. During the flight back to their original LZ the crew stated they had no further communication with lead. According to chalk two's last visual of lead, they saw the lead aircraft conduct a level climb, basically going inadvertent which was the last and only radio call they heard from lead. Prior to the flight they briefed inadvertent IMC breakup, where lead and trail would climb to 3500 and 4500 respectively and contact approach control. I was told by chalk two they conducted a thorough inadvertent IMC brief prior to departing as a flight of two. After landing at the original LZ, chalk two listen in on the radio to see if their lead aircraft made any calls to the air traffic controllers at Hulbert field. They attempted to locate the aircraft via their radios and cell phones. Their assumption was lead conducted a successful inadvertent IMC procedure and they didn't want to talk to them on the radio, because when you go inadvertent there is a lot of radio traffic, trying to get vectors, trying to get approach control, and the second aircraft didn't want to add any additional stress to the crews procedure. So, that is why there was a delay in saying 'Hey we got an overdue missing aircraft, to higher!' because their assumption was these guys were up with approach control, and sometimes it can take 45-50 minutes for a guy to contact them telling them 'Yeah we landed at Hulbert Field.' When they were in the aircraft and shut down, they had no indications that there had been an accident, so they were basically waiting to see where these guys were going to land.

Once chalk two realized lead was not responding and did not contact ATC, they initiated search and rescue efforts through the MARSOC. After working with the guys on the ground they then call me at 2152hrs.

IO: When you say "they" who are you referring to?

WIT: That was Chalk 2, [REDACTED]

IO: Who was the pilot in command?

WIT: [REDACTED] was the most experience pilot, so my assumption was he was the pilot in command. However, I would have to review the briefing sheet to be honest.

IO: Please continue

WIT: Chalk two immediately started making contact with MARSOC when they realized the lead aircraft did not contact ATC, and I think the delay in contacting us was that the missing crew was their primary concern. In our area of operation we have an operation that when an aircraft is out, we have someone in operations that conducts flight following and we have a red book that has all the numbers which walks us through the steps when an aircraft accident occurs. This mission was not conducted in our local area which made the search a little unique. As soon as they (chalk two) were able to get everything in motion to start doing a search and rescue and trying to find these guys when they had time they did a phone tree callback to the facility. The first call I got was at 2152hrs from Chalk two. I started making the appropriate calls to higher, and then along with [REDACTED] drove to the facility and reviewed our pre-accident book with him. I called our [REDACTED] and he didn't answer so I left a voicemail for him that we had a possible accident and for him to report to the facility as soon as possible. With the absence of an [REDACTED] at the facility I took the red book out and made sure that the appropriate reports were being sent to higher. I finally got in touch with [REDACTED] who also recommended I contact [REDACTED], the [REDACTED]. I made contact with [REDACTED] and I asked him if there was any reports I was missing, and questioned if I was doing the right thing. [REDACTED] directed me that I should start moving towards, Hulbert field, as a representative, and to secure the crew, and make sure the scene had some representative from Louisiana. I went home and at that time I made contact with [REDACTED] and he started to quarantine records and do his thing as a safety officer. I got home packed, got prepared to leave, and made some calls to the facility and told [REDACTED] to go in a separate vehicle, because I would be an hour or two ahead of him. I then got into a lot of traffic because of the fog. I made contact with the air force counterparts here prior to 0800hrs. I arrived at Hulbert about 8 or 9 in the morning, and started getting briefed up on the incident. My first priority was the welfare of the remaining crew (i.e. making sure that they had mental health, there and started talking to them making sure they knew what to expect). I was also in contact with Rucker all morning talking to the CRC (combat readiness center) assisting with the development of their team. They requested support which I provided on sight. I was also working issues with recovery, and making sure the crews' health and welfare were taking care of. Everyone seemed good except for the non-rated crew members, who seemed rather despondent. At my request mental health was sent in multiple times, and the chaplain went in also to make sure there wasn't any major issues with our remaining crew members.

INITIALS OF PERSON MAKING STATEMENT

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STATEMENT OF [REDACTED] TAKEN AT [REDACTED] DATED 2015 03 13

9. STATEMENT (Continued)

Then I made it out to the scene of the accident and got briefed by the on-scene commander. I made sure all of the leadership back home got all the information from the site, I was trying to be the [REDACTED] and the ears and eyes of the leadership back at home station. I made sure any new information was passed on to higher.

IO: Who were the enlisted crew members on [REDACTED] aircraft?

WIT: The enlisted personnel were [REDACTED] and that was the second aircraft.

IO: Who were the Marine Corps reps who did the initial planning and coordination with you?

WIT: Initial planning was done by a different group as this was a different MARSOC team, this group was different. I would have to refer to emails for exact names.

IO: For the Marine Corps representatives that was planning with you guys was it all done at the team level, the company level, or the battalion level?

WIT: I don't know, the highest rank that was coordinating with our guys was a Captain. I am not sure if they had it broken up in teams, a lot of the face to face was done by [REDACTED] and Mr. Griffin. I was really concerned with the type of training, who was on the mission and that the training was nested with the Battalion's METL. As far as the Marine structure I really don't know.

IO: Were all the tasks you did in support of the MARSOC METL tasks in accordance with the ATM?

WIT: We had this conversation on numerous occasions with [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and CW4 Griffin and I was assured it was. We also requested approval thru AVS and I have emails on that also, but bottom line is by their METL and by the regulations of an air assault battalion it fell as a sub-task for the primary METL from what I understand. Tactical Infil/Exfil was the task I was told covered all the task to be conducted.

IO: Was there a written request from the Marine Corps to start the process?

WIT: There was email traffic, a VTC, and there was a face to face. I don't know if there was a formal memo that came from the Marines. I know there was formal process for reimbursement, because we had a big concern with flight hour restrictions, and TDY travel funds being paid through them. We were also going to get them to get the fuel paid for, since we was using such a small group of guys to do this training we didn't want the training to eat into our flight hours and restrict our ability to train at home-station. I would have to look in my files to see if I have a formal memo, but from my recollection, no.

IO: Was there any type of MOA, or MOU between MARSOC, and the 1-244th, or State Aviation Command?

WIT: No, Sir. That would have been developed if the relationship would have become a recurring event. We were in the crawl phase conducting operations to see future training was suitable and feasible. We had just started this training and we didn't know if it would develop into a long-term relationship.

IO: The request that went up to NGB, did that come from you? Or someone else?

WIT: No, Sir, it originated out of [REDACTED] office. A lot of the verbiage according to the regulations were given to [REDACTED] via [REDACTED], and that went through to [REDACTED]. Then it came back down to us thru [REDACTED]

IO: Do you know who approved it?

WIT: No, Sir. I would have to look at it.

IO: The team left on Sunday, March 8th, to go to Hulbert field to start training, and conduct training up to the time of the accident on March 10th, were there any changes to the mission briefing throughout that period of time?

INITIALS OF PERSON MAKING STATEMENT

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STATEMENT OF [REDACTED] TAKEN AT [REDACTED] DATED 2015 03 13

9. STATEMENT (Continued)

WIT: No, we knew that the training would be off site, so the briefing were conducted on Sunday as a block of briefs (three days) and for any changes requested by the crew, the POC was [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]

IO: What were the weather limitations on the brief?

WIT: From what I remember it was one thousand and three miles visibility for NVG's.

IO: What are the Standard IFR procedures, what would they have done for inadvertent IMC procedures?

WIT: Inadvertent IMC procedures are based on the highest obstacles in the area, it was going to be a minimum of 1000ft above the highest terrain feature in the area of operation (flat terrain). Each aircraft is then briefed by flight lead a particular altitude and heading they would fly. Lead aircraft calls out his heading when he goes inadvertent, the other aircraft will deviate 20 degrees (right/left) depending on whether he is staggered left or right. It can be a very fluid procedure based on your area of operation, but is always briefed prior to takeoff.

IO: Can you explain what inadvertent IMC is?

WIT: It is when you are flying under a visual flight plan (rules), clear of clouds or visual obscurations such as fog. It happens when you transition from visual flying to instruments flying unexpectedly; it's where you have to transition to your instruments in-order to keep control of your aircraft. You go from flying with visual references, to having to control the aircraft with no visual references. The crew in the lead aircraft said they "were going in", the second helicopter thought that it meant that they were going inadvertent. The crew said they saw the lead aircraft initiate the procedure briefed for inadvertent.

IO: When you got the initial call you were at home?

WIT: Yes, sir.

IO: You then started to come into the facility?

WIT: Yes, sir. After we made contact with all the appropriate people and got a good indication of what was going on, and figured out it was not just your typical aircraft overdue. I made the decision to call in my primary staff at the facility, to start working the situation.

IO: You mentioned that you were not able to get a hold of your ASO and how long did it take to get a hold of him?

WIT: I never got in touch with him, the facility got in touch of him. I had his cellphone, but apparently he had a home phone that I didn't know about, and he had his cell phone on silent. The facility was able to contact him on his home phone. I did get in contact with [REDACTED] who is the safety officer for [REDACTED]

IO: So you pulled the red book and started going through the procedures?

WIT: Yes, sir.

IO: Where you, [REDACTED] and Mr. Griffin, developing SOPs to be used in this potential relationship?

WIT: It was a big concern of ours as far as risk mitigation goes. Since it was an inter-service training exercise, we wanted to make sure we all were speaking the same language. The procedure was set in place that we would be working off of USSOCOM Manual 350-6. Mr. Griffin was in the process of developing a facility SOP base off the USSOCOM 350-6 and his experience with MARSOC. He was in the development phase of that SOP. We also had an issue when they were sending their mission stuff, there were some acronyms that are different in the Marine Corps, and we had to have explanations for them.

INITIALS OF PERSON MAKING STATEMENT [REDACTED]

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STATEMENT OF \_\_\_\_\_ TAKEN AT \_\_\_\_\_ DATED 2015 03 13

9. STATEMENT (Continued)

We knew that there would be some issues, and we were very aware about that and making sure that was getting squared away prior to mission execution.

IO: You mentioned that during the initial briefs that it was a drill weekend and then it moved into a technician week. So what is \_\_\_\_\_ M-day position?

WIT: He is the \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ who did the briefing sheets he is in the battalion, but I don't remember his exact unit position, but both are mission briefers and mission approval authorities for the unit and facility.

IO: What about Mr. Griffin (Duty position)?

WIT: He is the Battalion and facility SP.

IO: You mentioned that you briefed a three day mission, because of what they were doing. Do they call back daily or only when there are changes to what they would be doing?

WIT: They were directed to keep in contact, with \_\_\_\_\_ I don't know if they called him daily, I would assume so, but I would need to ask him. I did question on Tuesday morning at the PC meeting, how the training was going, and he said everything was going well. I even asked him about the weather since I knew it was going to be an issue. He said that it wasn't an issue at this time, and that the pilots would keep tabs on it, and were instructed to call him if they did have a weather issue.

IO: When you do this offsite training, how is maintenance support done? Do we have support if needed?

WIT: None of the crew members were MTPs, because all the aircraft they flew had the required hours needed for the mission. As far as scheduled maintenance, the only thing they needed was daily's. They had TIs, and the crew chiefs were going to do the daily's. And our pilots are actually full time instructor pilots who go through training so they are Technical inspectors. Unless there were any unscheduled events they were going to be internal and not need any maintenance support.

IO: Can you give me any past history, where the 244th has done missions supporting special ops?

WIT: The first time we deployed in 2004-2005 we were a general support battalion. When we deployed in 2008, we were an air assault battalion, where we did 700 men traditional air assaults. When the 10th Mountain departed Iraq we lost that mission, but Special ops requested that we support them out of Fernandez, where we conducted time sensitive target air assault mission with Army Rangers and Navy Seals. We ended up doing things that we had never done before. To become proficient at these new mission tasks we utilized the same train-up process we were using for the MARSOC missions. The biggest challenge to this mission set was the equipment. MARSOC owned the equipment we would just utilize.

IO: The specialized equipment is that owned by the ground forces, or is it Aviation equipment?

WIT: It is not equipment that is issued to the unit as standalone equipment. Typically ground units do have it but you can procure it through appropriate channels. We believed that the unit should provide the equipment since they are the experts and know how to inspect and maintain it.

WIT: When we were deployed in 2004, we were mobilized in 2003, and went to Ft. Polk for a few months, and deployed as a general support battalion, that fell under a combat aviation brigade, that was commanded by the Mississippi unit. When got there, there was a tasking that we provide two flight crews to support the special ops unit, because they were short on pilots. They had a different mission set, like Air Assault, TST. I am almost positive Mr. Griffin was part of that mission set, and some of our other aviators. So when we transitioned to an Air Assault battalion in our 2008 deployment, we had a baseline of guys familiar with that mission set, and those guys were leaned on heavily for advice on how those missions are to be conducted.

IO: Where was the maintenance support coming from again?

INITIALS OF PERSON MAKING STATEMENT

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STATEMENT OF [REDACTED] TAKEN AT [REDACTED] DATED 2015 03 13

9. STATEMENT (Continued)

WIT: It was from our unit, the crew chiefs, three of them were full time mechanics, and one was an FI/SI (a non-rated crew member instructor). They took care of their own scheduled maintenance; we were prepared to send resources if any unscheduled maintenance arose. But the pilots did tell us that one of the aviators did have an issue with putting his PIDs into log flights. The guy on site was not able to fix it. Their solution was to log entries on a piece of paper. They did not notify us of this problem.

IO: So that is not an authorized option?

WI: No

IO: So you are telling me that they dispatched that helicopter without the log book?

IO: No, they had the log book, they just could not log one of the pilots flight data after each flight. When you are getting ready to depart the log books is the laptop, they do not input the flight and the pilot's information until they land. When they took off everything looked fine. They didn't notice the problem until they got to Hulburt. Now I didn't find out till I got down here after the accident. I was told that the Pilot in command made a decision to just log the entries on paper. I do not know if they entered daily's. I have not looked at the log book since the accident. It was supposed to be in the aircraft but it was not.

IO: This was an issue with the aircraft that was in the accident?

WIT: Yes, Sir.

IO: Is this a grounding procedure for an aircraft like that?

WIT: Aircraft by regulation are not supposed to fly without the logbook.

IO: So the logbook was inoperative?

WIT: No, sir. The only thing they could not do was input flight data for the crews, but they could input all the maintenance information to make sure that the aircraft was safe to fly.

IO: I am unclear, where is the logbook exactly?

WIT: In the rental vehicle of Mr. Griffin, I found out about it because, I saw a Pelican case, and they said it was Mr. Griffins. That was when they told me about the issue. I called my chain of command, and said I would like to turn it over to the investigation team, the CRC. So I turned it over to the investigation team (CRC).

IO: Just to be clear; the aircraft that crashed, you said it had three maintenance members, and two instructor pilots?

WIT: Each aircraft had two instructor pilot's, each one had a supervisory instructor pilot, and an instructor pilot. In the back of the lead aircraft was a FI/SI. The lead aircraft had the most experience of the two crew mixes.

IO: Who was the Air mission commander?

WIT: I am not sure I would have to look at the brief sheet.

INITIALS OF PERSON MAKING STATEMENT



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STATEMENT OF [REDACTED] TAKEN AT [REDACTED] DATED 20150813

9. STATEMENT (Continued)

IO: I am confused on the risk assessment, it was high risk, because the "Seats were out", was that a reference to the Marines or the overall mission?

WIT: Seats out automatically makes it a high risk, because you have passengers back there, and the seats are crash worthy, and without them they have no crash protection. It could also be from the type of mission, but [REDACTED] is the final mission approval authority, so I don't want to misspeak. But there could have been multiple reasons why it was risk high, usually safety of the occupants is the main reason.

IO: Is there any risk assessed to it due to the flight, and how it was flown?

WIT: Yes, but I don't want to misspeak, it could have been high because of seats out, or from the flight mode itself. And I wasn't the briefer and I wasn't the final mission authority, so I am not sure.

IO: Is it normal procedure for the second aircraft when separated from the first, to wait to report it?

WIT: Yes and No. The aviators know that when you have an inadvertent IMC incident one aircraft might go inadvertent and the other may not. The one that goes inadvertent might take up to an hour to land depending on where the recovery field is. The pilots know that the cockpit gets hectic, and they didn't want to get in the way of the other pilots trying to contact ATC to get vectored in. However, if both aircraft went inadvertent, they would have known immediately and contacted leadership upon landing which could have still taken up to an hour.

[Large handwritten signature area with a long horizontal line and a small signature at the end]

AFFIDAVIT

I, [REDACTED], HAVE READ OR HAVE HAD READ TO ME THIS STATEMENT WHICH BEGINS ON PAGE 1, AND ENDS ON PAGE 8. I FULLY UNDERSTAND THE CONTENTS OF THE ENTIRE STATEMENT MADE BY ME. THE STATEMENT IS TRUE. I HAVE INITIALED ALL CORRECTIONS AND HAVE INITIALED THE BOTTOM OF EACH PAGE CONTAINING THE STATEMENT. I HAVE MADE THIS STATEMENT FREELY WITHOUT HOPE OF BENEFIT OR REWARD, WITHOUT THREAT OF PUNISHMENT, AND WITHOUT COERCION, UNLAWFUL INFLUENCE, OR UNLAWFUL INDUCEMENT.

[REDACTED Signature] (Signature of Person Making Statement)

Subscribed and sworn to before me, a person authorized by law to administer oaths, this 19 day of March, 2015 at [REDACTED]

[REDACTED Signature] (Signature of Person Administering Oath)

[REDACTED Name] (Typed Name of Person Administering Oath)

Judge Advocate (Authority To Administer Oaths)

WITNESSES:

[REDACTED Witness Name]

ORGANIZATION OR ADDRESS

ORGANIZATION OR ADDRESS

INITIALS OF PERSON MAKING STATEMENT

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UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS  
2d MARINE SPECIAL OPERATIONS BATTALION  
U.S. MARINE CORPS FORCES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

IN REPLY TO  
S-3  
19 Mar 15

From: [REDACTED], 2d Marine Special Operations Battalion  
To: 15-6 Accident Investigation Board

Subj: STATEMENT REGARDING PLANNING AND SELECTION OF LOUISIANA ARMY NATIONAL GUARD SUPPORT FOR 1-14 MARCH HAVE ACE EAST

1. I was the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] who was tasked with coordinating and executing HAVE ACE East during 1-14 March, 2015. This tasking was assigned during late November and early December 2014 to myself and [REDACTED], the former [REDACTED]. It was decided that the first week, 1-7 March, would be for Joint Terminal Attack Controller (JTAC) training, and the second week, 8-14 March, would be used for two Marine Special Operations Teams (MSOT) from Marine Special Operations Company (MSOC) Hotel to progress with amphibious training.
2. As the plan was developed, products were pushed to [REDACTED], [REDACTED], around 8 December. The initial training plan focused heavily on aviation supported amphibious operations with CH-47, MH-60, and MC-130 support being requested. Of note, the 2nd Quarter Joint Air Asset Allocation Conference (JAAAC) had already met the week prior on 3-4 December. That is where discussion for 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (SOAR) support for the exercise would have taken place. Since there had not been a definite plan established yet, and the [REDACTED] did not attend the JAAAC, a discussion with the 160th about supporting did not take place. As a result, the [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] scheduled a meeting with 3d Battalion, 160th SOAR on roughly 16 January, 2015. At this meeting the only support that was discussed related to this HAVE ACE rotation was for the air assault planning and execution during the JTAC week. I made contact with the [REDACTED] and corrected this by sending him MSOC H's training plan directly on the afternoon of the 16th.
3. Concurrent with the attempts to work through the HAVE ACE LNO to coordinate SOF aviation support, I began working through other options in the area to find suitable assault support and Close Air Support (CAS) assets. In the process I spoke with five different units to coordinate support. I received the contact information for the Louisiana Army National Guard (LAARNG) from the MARSOC [REDACTED], [REDACTED]. The point of contact for the LAARNG is [REDACTED], who responded to the initial email from [REDACTED] on 12 January with enthusiasm and a desire to support. We spoke on the phone several times to discuss the training objectives of the JTAC week and followed up with first email contact with [REDACTED] on 21 January.
4. At this point in the planning we had not yet identified that we would not be able to get support from the 160th SOAR. Therefore, the LAARNG support was going to be limited to 5-6 March for planning and execution of an air assault to Camp Shelby, Mississippi with our JTACs. On the afternoon of 21 January it was becoming clear that the 160th SOAR would be unable to support MSOC H 8-13 March, so I reached out to [REDACTED] to see if they would be willing and able to support both weeks of training. He confirmed that they could support, and on 28 January I sent an email and followed up with a phone call regarding the LAARNG crew qualifications to conduct the training that MSOC H was requesting. We went through each

line of the training plan on the phone to identify shortfalls to make recommendations for changes to MSOC H and confirm what the LAARNG could support.

5. The only problems identified by [REDACTED] were the Fast Rope Insert and Extract (FRIES) and hoist training because their aircraft are not outfitted with the appropriate equipment. [REDACTED], myself, and the [REDACTED], attempted to find a unit that would temporarily loan the LAARNG FRIES bars in order to install them on the aircraft and complete the training. We were unable to find that capability, so FRIES and hoist were removed from the plan. Also, it was verified that all aircrew were qualified to fly the profiles that had been confirmed in the training plan. After this I passed the bulk of the coordination of training to [REDACTED] since he had a more detailed understanding of what his company wanted to do. At this point, we began to work on a cross-organizational line of accounting to allow the aircrew the opportunity to detach from their home station and stay at the Destin airport throughout the time they would be supporting HAVE ACE. This line of accounting was approved.
6. During the week of 17-20 February I flew down to Florida and drove to Hurlburt Field, Hammond Northshore Regional Airport, Camp Shelby, and New Orleans to sit down face to face and discuss the plan with the [REDACTED], LAARNG, Shelby Range Control, and Marine Helicopter Light Attack Squadron [REDACTED]. On 18 February I met [REDACTED] at Hammond Northshore Regional Airport in the LAARNG spaces. In this conversation we went through the overall training intent and plan for both weeks to ensure that we all shared a common understanding of what was going to happen. I was also able to conduct a static display of the aircraft with [REDACTED] to ensure it met our needs and identify any issues or concerns. No problems were identified and the plan was confirmed.
7. During the JTAC week of training, the LAARNG sent one aircraft and four personnel to participate in integrated planning on 5 March and execution to Camp Shelby on 6 March. Included in the aircrew was their Standardization Pilot, Chief Warrant Officer 4 Griffin. The aircrew demonstrated a thorough understanding of air assault operations during planning and provided outstanding support during execution. After my interaction with them during this portion of HAVE ACE, I left Florida on 7 March very confident in their ability to support the following week.
8. I have all emails related to this exercise saved and can be reached at [REDACTED], commercial telephone [REDACTED], or personal cell phone [REDACTED] for any questions regarding the ongoing investigation.

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MSOC H ██████████ Statement for HAVE ACE Training 8-13 March 2015

During the first week of December 2014, MSOC H was notified of training opportunity at HAVE ACE in March 2015.

On 8 Dec 15, a training plan was submitted to 2d MSOB S-3 by the ██████████ for the week of 9-13 Mar 15; 2d MSOB S-3 subsequently submitted training plan to MARSOC HAVE ACE LNO. This resulted in the cancellation of a previous plan to conduct like training IVO Camp Lejeune during the week of 23-27 Mar, based on estimate of supportability for aircraft provided to the MSOC. Any SF-111s submitted at this time would have been considered late requests as far as the JAAAC process is concerned, but based on the extensive 350-6 training that was being planned, we felt we had a reasonable chance to get SOCOM assets for the training.

On 16 Jan 15, the same training plan was sent to MSOR by 2d MSOB due to MARSOC HAVE ACE LNO not having the training plan on hand when conducting coordination with 3/160<sup>th</sup>. I additionally learned that MSOR at the time had rewritten SOPs WRT how HAVE ACE air requests would be submitted (it would be the responsibility of the MSOR vice the HAVE ACE LNO, as had been done in the past).

On 21 Jan 15, MSOC H was notified that the 160<sup>th</sup> SOAR would not be available to support the training. Attempts to receive support from HSC-84 were also unsuccessful due to prior tasking. I also attempted coordination with Georgia Army National Guard (MH-47s), to no avail. The 2d MSOB AirO provided me with a POC for the Louisiana Army National Guard (LAANG), as he was conducting coordination with them to support JTAC training during the week of 2-6 Mar 15. At that time, I began to coordinate with the LAANG (specifically ██████████) regarding our training plan.

On 23 Jan 15, an MPC was conducted at 2d MSOB with all pertinent personnel, to include MARSOC HAVE ACE LNO (who up until this point had been difficult to get ahold of to coordinate our training desires). It was at this meeting that it was communicated to me that any SF-111s for the training and any future HAVE ACE training would need to be submitted by me and not the HAVE ACE LNO. I refrained from submitting a late SF-111 for the March training since we had a clear understanding that we would not be able to receive any support from SOCOM aviation assets.

On 11 Feb 15, an updated training plan (specifically pertaining to how we would conduct air operations) was submitted to the 2d MSOB AirO and MARSOC HAVE ACE LNO based on the type of support we could expect from the LAANG. That training plan is provided below:

Monday, 9 March  
0900-1300 (or completion) w/ H-60s  
FRIES (pending ability to conduct the training based on below email traffic); dry/wet ladder climbs at the beach (we will provide the ladders)

Tuesday, 10 March  
0900-Comp w/ H-60s  
Dry/Wet SPIE  
RFI: Are you able to do SPIE? Based on some of the research we've done, the rope is attached to the cargo hook with a sling rigged through the cabin.

Wednesday, 11 March  
EENT-Comp w/ H-60s  
Nighttime swimmer cast/ladder recovery, followed by nighttime  
Over-the-horizon swimmer cast (swimmers will then load boats and push toward land)

Thursday, 12 March  
Times based on window of support from MC-130  
Two day jumps (one jumpers only, followed by jumpers and boats)

On 12-13 Feb 15, I received an estimate of supportability from LAANG regarding our proposed training plan and spoke via phone with [REDACTED] regarding specifics. The only training they could not support was FRIES due to their lack of the necessary equipment (namely a FRIES bar). Attempts to procure FRIES bars via multiple different means (160<sup>th</sup>, [REDACTED], were unsuccessful, so that specific training was scrapped. Otherwise, we were assured that their aircrews were qualified to accomplish the training we wanted to conduct and that we would be supported by their more senior and experienced aircrews, to include Instructor pilots. As an instructor pilot myself prior to coming to 2d MSOB, this gave me a sense of security that they could safely accomplish the proposed training.

On 18 Feb 15, a Seats Out Waiver was submitted to MSOR. Additionally, after repeated attempts to coordinate with MARSOC [REDACTED], I finally received confirmation that training plan he submitted for this HAVE ACE rotation did not accurately reflect what the MSOC had submitted earlier and instead reflected operations and aviation support from AFSOC that was never requested by the MSOC. It appeared to be a typical HAVE ACE training template. As such, I requested that that training plan and associated air assets be turned off (except for the C-130 for Paraops on 12 Mar) since it did not meet our intent for training.

On 26 Feb 15, an updated training plan was submitted to 2d MSOB by the [REDACTED] to reflect changes to locations and timelines based on planned logistical support being different from what was originally expected and briefed at the MPC.

On or around 3 Mar 15, a confirmation brief was given to the 2d MSOB [REDACTED] by the personnel that would be leading and conducting the training. I was not present at this brief, as I was on a PDSS in New Orleans at the time.

After the confirmation brief, any additional coordination for the week was conducted at the training site between the LAANG pilots and the [REDACTED] who was a qualified JTAC and well-versed in aviation operations as they pertained to the training being conducted. I was not present for any coordination down there, but I'm told that the only changes to the plan that was previously coordinated and briefed were based on shifting training priorities due to forecast weather during the week. Nothing was added that was not previously briefed.

This statement has been filled out to the best of my knowledge and recounts all pertinent details I can recall as they pertain to the coordination for this training event. All pertinent emails associated with this coordination for this training exercised have been saved and are available for reference.

