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Report

of the

Board of Inquiry

into the action at

Forward Operating Base Robinson

Afghanistan

28/29 March 2006

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Forward Operating Base Robinson Board of Inquiry

Lest We Forget

Private Robert Howard Costall
First Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry
Canadian Forces

Master Sergeant
Vermont National Guard
United States Army

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7 July 2006

Commander CEFCOM

Please find enclosed the minutes of proceedings, henceforth referred to as the Report, for the Board of Inquiry convened to investigate the circumstances surrounding the injuries and death of Canadian Forces personnel during an action in Helmand Province, Afghanistan on the night of 28/29 March 2006.

The Board submits for your consideration a comprehensive response to all finding objectives assigned within the Terms of Reference. Given the extensive amount of information required to arrive at these findings and subsequent recommendations, it was neither possible nor desirable to include all examined documents and material with the Report. Please be assured that all evidence gathered has been catalogued and will be submitted for proper archival storage.

Due to the ongoing operations in Afghanistan and the multi-national aspect of the incident, the final Report is classified SECRET and therefore cannot be released to the men and women of the Canadian Forces, the public and, in particular, the affected families in a non-severed format.

I would like to take this opportunity to express the Board's sincere appreciation for the complete, professional and compassionate support provided by the United States Army and by Coalition Forces Command-Afghanistan. Their unwavering assistance and co-operation enabled the Board to examine all aspects of this complex action. Our own Task Force Afghanistan provided outstanding administrative support meeting every challenge with enthusiasm and flexibility.

In closing, it is evident from our work that Canada should be justifiably proud of its fighting men and women who serve this great country of ours. Private Robert Costall made the ultimate sacrifice doing his job as a professional soldier. This Report will serve to honour his legacy and explain what occurred on that dark and stressful night in Afghanistan.

C.J.R. Davis
Brigadier-General
President
Board of Inquiry



Executive Summary

Introductory Narrative

The sequence of events that led to the death of one Canadian Forces soldier and the injuries sustained by three others in Helmand Province, Southern Afghanistan began in January 2006 when the province experienced a significant increase in insurgent activity. The Government of Afghanistan responded by establishing an Afghan National Army (ANA) operating base in a remote area of the northeast portion of the province. As a result, the coalition forces established a forward operating base (FOB) occupied by the coalition elements partnered with the ANA. It eventually became known as FOB Robinson.

A forward operating base is a temporary defensible location providing sanctuary for soldiers in hostile territory from which operations can be launched.

FOB Robinson consisted of four separate yet mutually supporting compounds. Coalition forces occupied the two eastern compounds, one north and one south. The ANA occupied a large compound to the west of the coalition forces. The fourth area just west of the south coalition compound housed the Afghan Security Guard (ASG), which was a small group of Afghan civilians hired to assist with outer perimeter security. The US Army commander of the south compound was designated the on-site commander for the coordination of overall FOB defence. The sketch below graphically depicts the layout of the compounds in addition to two key terrain features known as the Castle Ruins and the Fortress.

FOB Robinson Sketch

During February and March, the insurgents in the area of the FOB made a determined effort to disrupt and dislodge the ANA and coalition forces by attacking them repeatedly. The soldiers at FOB Robinson withstood 21 attacks in the 42 days leading up to the night of 28/29 March 2006.

On 28 March, a large convoy of essential supplies escorted by the ANA and coalition soldiers was dispatched to the FOB. In a significant and coordinated attack that lasted several hours, insurgents ambushed the convoy and later struck it with an improvised explosive device, causing the death of six Afghan soldiers. The headquarters responsible for the area, Coalition Task Force AEGIS¹, was not made aware of the convoy until it was attacked. Nonetheless, options to either reinforce the convoy or the FOB with the Canadian Quick Reaction Force (QRF) were quickly developed. In considering its options, Headquarters Coalition Task Force AEGIS used information gathered during a QRF rehearsal to FOB Robinson that took place in early March.

The QRF consisted of _____ and an infantry platoon which had two sections (known as 2 and 3 Section)

¹ Coalition Task Force AEGIS (CTF AEGIS) is the name assigned to the Canadian led Multi-National Brigade in Regional Command (South).



Forward Operating Base Robinson Board of Inquiry

The QRF Commander was responsible for the entire QRF while the QRF Platoon Commander commanded the platoon.

At 7 pm (local), the QRF was ordered to deploy to reinforce the FOB as the convoy had extricated itself and was now expected to reach its destination without further incident. The QRF 8:30 pm (local), one hour before the arrival of the convoy. With the assistance of the of the in-place forces who secured the the QRF moved to the south compound and established itself there.

The on-site commander briefed the QRF Commander, in the presence of the Platoon Commander, on the defensive plan. The QRF Commander accepted the plan and then directed the Platoon Commander to accompany the (tasked with the coordination of the defensive plan on behalf of the on-site commander) to reconnoitre the outer perimeter defensive positions that the QRF was to occupy. These positions, normally manned by the ASG, covered approaches from the north, east and south. While the Platoon Commander walked the defensive position, the on-site commander provided the QRF Commander additional information on the operational and enemy situation, an update on the inbound convoy, and an overview of the friendly force disposition.

After walking the ground with his section commanders, the QRF Platoon Commander went back into the south compound, briefed the platoon and then deployed them to their respective positions: 3 Section

and 2 Section – south Shifts were established to rotate between rest inside the compound and duty at the positions. The task was professionally executed without incident. Subsequently, the QRF Platoon Commander backbriefed the QRF Commander on the platoon's deployment. The sketch below graphically depicts the initial deployment of the QRF and the arcs of fire assigned to each position.

Initial QRF Positions on FOB Outer Perimeter and the Arcs of Fire (shown in blue)

The QRF movement to the FOB and its positioning on the ground occurred under extremely poor visibility conditions due to very low ambient light and high levels of dust. The illumination on the night of 28/29 March was Essentially, soldiers could not see without the Also, the ground was covered in several centimetres of a fine talc-like powder, which tended to hang in the air after being disturbed by vehicle or pedestrian traffic, further reducing visibility.

² Due to the headquarters

, CTF AEGIS had to seek special authorization from its higher



Forward Operating Base Robinson Board of Inquiry

Shortly after the QRF soldiers took up their positions, the battle weary convoy arrived at the FOB. This convergence of forces on one of the darkest nights of the month presented the on-site commander with a significant command and control challenge. In essence the population of the FOB grew from approximately 200 to over 400 personnel.

The personnel at FOB Robinson were extremely tired due to the high level of enemy activity during the previous 42 days, and the demanding physical work required establishing and improving the FOB. A [redacted] who arrived with the convoy that night described the in-place personnel as “smoked”, which he defined as “physically, mentally [and] emotionally drained.” The QRF Commander characterised them as “tired...They were beaten...They had seen a lot...They hadn’t got a lot of sleep”. Therefore the on-site commander took advantage of the QRF’s arrival and gave as many of his soldiers as possible some much-needed rest. Those soldiers who went to sleep were not briefed [redacted] on the detailed locations of the QRF or the recently arrived convoy.

Throughout the evening, the QRF Platoon Commander coordinated the QRF’s movements and locations with the crew responsible for the gun position in the southeast corner of the south compound and two US gun crews who had recently arrived with the convoy and were assigned defensive positions on the [redacted] perimeter (near the east and south positions). Due to the darkness and a miscommunication between the QRF Commander and the Platoon Commander concerning weapon locations and numbers, no one coordinated with the US crew responsible for the gun position in the northeast corner of the [redacted] compound.

At approximately 11:00 pm (local), there were reports of 30-40 Taliban massing in the north. As a result of this potential threat, the south QRF [redacted] detachment was moved and co-located with the [redacted] detachment already at the north position. Shortly thereafter, 2 Section was tasked to conduct a patrol into the area surrounding the FOB to observe and report on likely insurgent approaches. Consequently, 2 Section and one [redacted] detachment moved into the [redacted] compound to prepare for the patrol, requiring 3 Section to now man both the north and south defensive positions. One [redacted] remained at the north position and the [redacted] continued to occupy the [redacted] position.

Just before 2:00 am (local) the insurgents mounted a significant attack using mortars, rocket propelled grenades, and small arms. In response, soldiers within the FOB took up their designated defensive positions. This included the American gun position located at the northeast corner of the south compound. The on-site commander took up a position where he could coordinate close air support in defence of the FOB and as a result he was not monitoring the FOB Troops in [redacted] during the attack.

2 Section and the C6 detachment, which had been preparing for the patrol task, were ordered by the QRF Platoon Commander to quickly reinforce the north position. Since 2 Section was



reinforcing a known and assigned QRF position, the QRF leadership did not inform the on-site commander of this adjustment to the defensive layout.

The Platoon Commander and his Second in Command accompanied 2 Section during its move northward. As they rushed past the northeast corner gun position, the Section Commander yelled to the crew that he and his soldiers were moving forward. He did not receive an acknowledgment nor did he wait for one.

2 Section's move to their new position was made all the more difficult because of the low light conditions, dust and incoming fire. Tracer could be seen coming from the Castle Ruins to the northwest and the Fortress to the northeast. Assessing the situation, the Section Commander ordered his soldiers to take cover on a small dirt mound (referred to as the berm) oriented to the northwest. Due to its increased range and lethality, he immediately issued fire control orders to his attached detachment to return fire toward the Castle Ruins. Because of the darkness it was impossible to identify targets, therefore soldiers engaged the source of the tracer approximately 600 meters away. Just after the detachment opened fire, 2 Section came under effective machine gun fire from the US gun in the northeast corner of the compound. The US gun crew, in the heat and confusion of the battle, mistook 2 Section on the berm for insurgent forces. This mistake resulted in the death of Private Robert Costall and the injuries sustained by three Canadian soldiers.

The Platoon Second in Command, who was co-located at the berm and now wounded, realised that the incoming fire was from a friendly position to his south. He immediately called for a check fire, which the Platoon Commander promptly passed on the radio. Concurrently, other American forces in the area of the east position observed the fire from the US gun position and yelled at the crew to stop firing. The crew ceased firing on the Canadian position, then engaged to the north-northwest causing the death and injury of US personnel.

All firing ceased shortly thereafter as suspected insurgent positions were engaged by close air support. The wounded received first aid and they along with the remains of the two deceased were later evacuated by helicopter to the medical facility at Kandahar Airfield. The QRF remained at the FOB until redeployed back to Kandahar Airfield on 1 April 2006.

Formation of the Board of Inquiry

On 12 April 2006, at the instruction of the Convening Authority, Lieutenant-General Michel Gauthier, Commander Canadian Expeditionary Force Command, the Board Of Inquiry (BOI) President, Brigadier-General Christopher Davis convened the Board to investigate the circumstances surrounding the death of one Canadian Forces soldier and the injuries sustained by three others during the action described above. Board members included Lieutenant-Colonel Dave Anderson, Lieutenant-Colonel Perry Wells, Major Erick Simoneau and Chief Warrant Officer Alain Comeau supported by legal, medical, public affairs and administrative personnel. In addition a United States Army Military Advisor and a United States Army Legal Liaison Officer augmented the Board.



Conduct of the Inquiry

Following completion of the Administrative Investigation Support Center two-day BOI training package in Ottawa, the team deployed to Theatre on 16 April. Upon arrival in Kandahar, contact was made with the American and Canadian authorities responsible for the other on-going investigations into the same incident. Their unwavering assistance and co-operation enabled the Board to examine all aspects of this complex action.

After a thorough planning session, the Board commenced taking testimony on 24 April 2006. On 7 May, the Board visited the FOB and walked the ground to gain a far better appreciation of the terrain, time and space issues faced by the soldiers. Every facet of the action was examined and discussions were held with the US Army forces at the FOB. It should be noted that the US personnel who occupied the south compound on the night of 28/29 March 2006 had been replaced and therefore were unavailable. Shortly after the visit, the Board returned to Canada where the last sworn testimony was taken in Edmonton on 25 May. The Board heard testimony from 33 witnesses, received 58 sworn statements, and examined 112 documents during the course of the investigation.

The Board received outstanding support in the form of full access to investigators, witnesses and any relevant written statements from investigations conducted by the US Army and Coalition Forces Command-Afghanistan. In spite of this cooperation, the US personnel who were stationed at the south compound on the night in question declined to be interviewed by the BOI. They could not be compelled to appear before the Board, as they were not subject to Canadian jurisdiction.

However, the lack of verbal testimony from these members did not hinder the Board's work as it had complete access, through the US Army Legal Liaison Officer, to written statements given by them to the US investigative authorities. These statements, when combined with eyewitness testimony from Canadian and other US Army personnel, enabled the Board to collect sufficient evidence to establish the facts based on a balance of probabilities and to make findings as to what happened that night. Therefore, the Board submits its report with confidence that the body of collected evidence supports the findings and recommendations.

Definitions

A common understanding of a few key terms is required before reviewing the contributing factors, causes and findings related to this incident. Friendly fire is defined as "the employment of friendly weapons and munitions with the intent to kill the enemy or destroy his [or her] equipment or facilities that results in unforeseen and unintentional death or injury to friendly personnel", whereas fratricide is defined as a "friendly fire event that results in a fatality." One of the key methods for mitigating the risk of friendly fire incidents is a means of clearly identifying friendly forces, and it is referred to as Battlefield Combat Identification (BCID). BCID is defined as "the process of attaining an accurate characterisation of detected objects in the battlespace [in order] that timely applications of military options and weapons resources can occur with high confidence." BCID incorporates the technical and mechanical means of



identifying a target, awareness of the enemy and friendly situation, and the tactics, techniques and procedures that are used to minimise the likelihood of friendly fire.

Contributing Factors

Before discussing the detailed findings, the action at FOB Robinson must be placed into perspective. Combat operations are usually accompanied by high levels of uncertainty and friction brought on by a variety of factors. This phenomenon is commonly referred to as the “fog of war”. In this particular incident, four factors created the confusing and ambiguous environment within which the coalition had to fight. The four contributing factors are discussed below.

First, the overarching situational context for this incident remains the Taliban efforts to thwart the legitimate goals and initiatives of the democratically elected Government of Afghanistan. Their assault on FOB Robinson was an aggressive act that instigated the combat action that brought about the friendly fire incident. The complexity and intensity of the insurgent attack, launched from at least two different locations, was the most intense experienced by the FOB to that point. Also, not seen before was the fact that the attack came on the heels of a ferocious and sustained assault against the incoming convoy.

Second, the attack occurred on a night with illumination,

Third, the coordination challenge posed by the incorporation of elements of both a large convoy and the QRF into the defensive plan was significant. With their arrival the size of the FOB doubled, and the on-site commander was required to make rapid adjustments to an established defensive plan. A marry-up operation is difficult at the best of times and this one was made all the more complex by the time of day, the environmental conditions and the fact that the new arrivals and in-place forces had not previously had an opportunity to work together, and hence lacked the habitual relationships that usually serve to mitigate such undertakings. The level of mutual trust and understanding that leads to unity of thought, effort and purpose was not present.

Fourth, the in-place soldiers and leaders were from the heavy work of establishing and building the FOB plus the relentless pressure of the insurgent forces in the weeks preceding the attack.

In summary, the context within which the combat action occurred was that of a deliberate and complex insurgent attack on a very dark night, against a tired and in-place-force,



whose leader was faced with the added challenge of coordinating the sudden influx of coalition troops that doubled the size of the force within the FOB. This sudden convergence of a number of events created the uncertainty and friction that set the conditions for this near “perfect storm” to occur. However contributing factors are not in and of themselves causes. While significant, they only set the stage for events to occur.

Causes

The three causes for the friendly fire incident were incomplete coordination and control, poor situational awareness, and an error in battlefield combat identification.

Effective command and control is enabled by the use of a variety of control measures and thorough coordination at all levels of command. The FOB did not fully address several defence planning considerations and control measures, and the coordination at the lowest levels was incomplete. A of the nature employed at the FOB required the on-site commander to have a detailed sketch or diagram that included the friendly force locations, arcs of fire, and This all-important sketch would act as an aide mémoire to ensure all defence planning fundamentals were considered and incorporated into the plan. As well, it would serve as a briefing aid during guard duty shift changes and on the arrival of new troops to the location.

The in-place forces at the FOB used none of these control measures that night. Due to the reduced visibility and the pace of activity following their arrival, the QRF was unable to complete until the next morning. Further, due to an error in communication between the QRF leadership and the darkness of the night, there was no coordination done with the gun crew in the northeast corner of the south compound.

Situational awareness is critical for effective military decision making in any complex and dynamic environment. The incomplete coordination and control described above may have been mitigated if all personnel already stationed at the FOB were aware of the changes to the situation brought about by the arrival of the QRF and convoy. Due to the intense operational tempo and heavy workload in the weeks leading up to the attack, the personnel at the FOB

During the insurgent attack, the fact that the on-site commander was reduced his situational awareness and prevented him from monitoring and controlling aspects of the defensive battle. The decision by the QRF leadership not to inform the on-site commander of 2 Section’s move to the north position during the attack further reduced overall situational awareness.

Battlefield combat identification is a form of control measure which incorporates the technical and mechanical means of identifying a target, awareness of the enemy and friendly situation, and the tactics, techniques and procedures that are used to minimise the likelihood of friendly fire or fratricide. Even though the base defence coordination and control was incomplete and the gun crew lacked situational awareness, the incident could possibly have been avoided if the Canadians on the berm had been clearly identified as friendly. Neither the QRF nor the in-place



forces discussed battlefield combat identification procedures while coordinating the deployment of the QRF

In summary, incomplete coordination and control, poor situational awareness and an error in battlefield combat identification caused the death and injuries to Canadian soldiers during the combat action. The lack of detailed coordination coupled with inadequate control measures added to the flawed situational awareness of the US Army gun crew. In the end, the US gun crew did not identify 2 Section as friendly.

Board Findings

The Board was directed in the Terms of Reference to make specific findings. Each finding consists of a narrative summary leading to one or more concluding statements. To simplify the presentation, all of the findings will be examined by answering questions as posed in the Terms of Reference or introduced by the Board for clarity – the latter being applicable to the first two findings.

What were the details of the tasks being conducted by the members at the time of the action?

The QRF was tasked to reinforce FOB Robinson on 28 March 2006. This mission was part of a contingency plan that had been rehearsed and identified as a likely QRF task. On the ground, the QRF was deployed in accordance with the on-site commander's defence plan. During a particularly significant insurgent attack that night, 2 Section was used to reinforce an existing QRF position in response to a real enemy threat from the north. The fire position selected by the 2 Section Commander and tasked to his section was sound in that it offered protection from fire and view. All members of 2 Section carried out their duties and responsibilities as they were trained to do.

The Board concluded that the QRF was tasked appropriately.

From a review of the details of the action, what findings can be made regarding the situational context within which the incident occurred?

This combat action was characterised by a climate of uncertainty that is often referred to as the "fog of war". As stated in the review of contributing factors and causes, the Board concluded that this incident occurred during a combat action brought about by the Taliban efforts to defeat the objectives of the legitimate Government of Afghanistan. It was a very complex and intense insurgent attack, launched from at least two different directions on a night with illumination. The Coalition soldiers and leaders occupying the FOB pressure of the enemy in the weeks preceding the attack. Compounding all of this was the challenge of incorporating the arrival of both a large convoy and the QRF into the extant defensive plan. As a result, it was difficult to acquire targets, situational awareness was diminished and detailed planning suffered.



Forward Operating Base Robinson Board of Inquiry

Was the planning of the operation including coordination and access to available intelligence by coalition troops adequate?

Headquarters CTF AEGIS had clearly anticipated the task to deploy the QRF to reinforce a number of locations, to include FOB Robinson, based on its estimate of the situation. Therefore HQ CTF AEGIS was well prepared to execute the mission on 28 March 2006. Consequently, the pre-deployment planning including access to intelligence and coordination between elements was more than adequate. However, the FOB defence plan prepared by the on-site commander did not fully address several defence planning considerations and it lacked thorough coordination, which is discussed below.

Were appropriate command and control measures in-place prior to and during the action to ensure adequate situational awareness and safety of coalition forces?

The command relationships were clearly articulated and well understood by all participants prior to and during the action. The control and coordination at the FOB was hampered by the absence of a base defence sketch and by the in-place force prior to and following the arrival of the QRF and convoy. Consequently, in-coming forces were not fully briefed and made aware of the locations and arcs of fire of all friendly elements at the FOB. Once soldiers deployed to their positions, coordination with flanking locations occurred in most cases but due to an error in communication and the darkness of the night one critical gun position was overlooked. Battlefield combat identification measures were not discussed at any time during the planning for and execution of the FOB defence task. In summary, the control measures used and the coordination conducted at the FOB was incomplete. In essence, the absence of some defence planning fundamentals, the incomplete coordination and the failure to consider using contributed to the friendly fire incident.

Were the rehearsal and liaison activities conducted between the Canadian QRF and other coalition forces adequate?

The Canadian QRF carried out a comprehensive two-week handover with the outgoing QRF before assuming the role on 24 February 2006. Subsequently they conducted several rehearsals to include a short reconnaissance to FOB Robinson leading up to 28 March 2006. They were also tasked with one tactical mission that confirmed their drills and procedures. It was evident that the numerous rehearsals permitted a smooth deployment to the FOB. Recognizing that Afghanistan is a highly active theatre, the Board found that the rehearsal and liaison activities were more than adequate.

Were the orders and directions issued to coalition troops by the on-site chain of command during the action adequate and how were they executed?

The Board determined that the initial orders from the on-site command team to the QRF leadership to occupy the three forward positions were clear, but they lacked the foundation of detailed planning and coordination.

***Forward Operating Base Robinson Board of Inquiry***

When the insurgents attacked the FOB, the on-site commander ordered all coalition forces under his command to occupy their respective defensive positions. This was executed promptly and professionally.

In summary, the orders and directions were adequate in terms of the taskings but lacked the detailed coordination and control as discussed at the command and control finding above.

Were the communications between Canadian and coalition forces adequate?

The communications between Canadian and coalition forces was adequate as the radio equipment was interoperable, available in sufficient numbers and integrated based on a sound plan.

Are there any other issues that are pertinent to the chain of events?***What caused the death and injuries?***

The death and injuries, with the possible exception of one soldier who may have been injured by enemy fire from the northeast, are attributed to rounds fired from a machine gun located in the northeast corner of the compound, which impacted 2 Section's position at the berm at 2:20 am (local) on 29 March 2006. The deceased and injured were not responsible for their death or injuries.

Were the members on duty and were the death and injuries attributable to military service?

The deceased and injured as members of the QRF were on duty in an operational theatre. The death and injuries were entirely attributable to military service as the soldiers were participating on an authorized mission with the QRF.

Was the medical response adequate?

The medical response to the casualties at the FOB, from administration of first aid and battlefield medical treatment to medical evacuation to definitive treatment at the hospital was timely and appropriate. The entire response was extraordinarily well performed and was more than adequate.


Was any person(s) to blame for the death and injuries?

As with all elements of this inquiry, it is imperative that the situation be considered within the context of that night, and the “fog of war” that characterised it. In the midst of re-organising the defence of the FOB on a night with the leadership at FOB Robinson was faced with an intense and complex insurgent attack. These contributing factors all helped create the near “perfect storm” within which the designation of blame must be considered.

To determine blame, the Board had to establish all of the following three elements as articulated in the Terms of Reference: duty, means, and foreseeable result. An individual must have a duty to act in such a way as to prevent the situation from occurring. Means refers to whether an individual had the means to act or avoid the action that led to the event. A foreseeable result indicates whether a reasonable person in the same situation would foresee the result from their action or inaction.

The analysis of the evidence led the Board to apply this standard against the actions of the following primary participants: the US Army gun crew (located in the northeast corner of the compound overlooking the Canadians on the berm), the US Army on-site command team, and the leadership of the QRF.

After careful consideration of the facts, the Board found that no one person or persons met the requirements of blame as articulated in the Terms of Reference. However, the collective accumulation of human errors brought on by the complex circumstances characterizing the action led to the friendly fire incident.

Recommended Measures To Reduce the Occurrence of Friendly Fire

Combat is a highly complex and stressful human endeavour, and as history has proven, no amount of training or technology will completely prevent friendly fire from occurring. As previously discussed, there are often contributing factors that create the “fog of war” characterised by uncertainty and friction. However, the judicious application of doctrine, adherence to tactics, techniques and procedures, relevant and focused training, and the application of basic soldier skills all serve to lift the “fog”.

The Board has already communicated to Commander Coalition Task Force AEGIS the issues that could be immediately rectified or implemented. The following represents the various recommendations the Board submits for consideration.

In-Theatre SOPs. The command and control structure in theatre is very complex.

A critical

component to limiting the friction inherent in multi-national and joint operations is the



development of and adherence to SOPs. It is recommended that Coalition Task Force AEGIS SOPs be developed that cover the following critical areas:

- Although there is a concerted effort within the NATO and ABCA communities to develop protocols, doctrine, and tactics, techniques and procedures, soldiers in contact now cannot be expected to wait for the final solution. A comprehensive and authoritative must be developed that reflects and incorporates the differing capabilities of all troop-contributing nations. More importantly, the must be enforced for all friendly elements that operate within an assigned area of operations.³

- **Policy on Use of** . Testimony from soldiers and leaders in the QRF highlighted the fact that

Although this may well be the case, the decision to This is essentially an exercise in management of risk, and the benefits of positively identifying oneself to other friendly forces must be weighed against the Tactics, techniques and procedures must be developed to mitigate that risk.

- **Marry-up Drills.** It is recommended that a comprehensive checklist be developed/adopted that identifies the critical activities, control measures, and information that must be exchanged between the QRF and in-place forces, as well as for marry-up of This checklist must be widely disseminated to all coalition assets operating in the Coalition Task Force AEGIS area of operations.

Canadian SOPs. To facilitate training, Canadian SOPs must be established, published, and put into practice as soon as possible. The Land Force SOPs related

In the interim, commanders on operations are writing their . The latter practice will be precluded by the immediate adoption of a CF wide for personnel conducting land operations.

Defence Planning Considerations. Irrespective of the type of operations that are being conducted across the spectrum of conflict, defence remains a core activity for all forces. As such, the well-established and universally accepted principles of the deliberate defence must be applied as strictly in counter-insurgency operations as they are in more conventional operations.

³ It is important to note that 16 days after the incident at FOB Robinson, CTF AEGIS issued



Forward Operating Base Robinson Board of Inquiry

The defence of a FOB must be based on these sound fundamentals using the full range of coordination procedures such as sketches, arc markers, range cards, etc.

As a result of the complex command and control structure in theatre, Coalition Task Force AEGIS does not always have full visibility on all the activities taking place in its area of operation. The coordination of all forces operating in a particular area needs to become more transparent in order to enhance situational awareness, while still respecting operational security (OPSEC).

Train As You Fight. Success on the battlefield is drawn in large part from relevant, challenging and demanding training prior to deployment. Although great strides have been made in recent years, and the advent of the Canadian Manoeuvre Training Centre is sure to improve pre-deployment training, some critical areas must be reinforced in training in order to reduce the likelihood of friendly fire incidents on operations:

- **Coalition and Joint Operations.** Training must continue to incorporate both multinational and joint (including) elements, simulated or real, in order to experience the coordination challenges associated with the contemporary operating environment.
- Due to its importance must become an integral part of the CF training system from recruit training through to Theatre Mission Specific Training at the Canadian Manoeuvre Training Center must become ingrained into everything a soldier does.
- **Equip As You Fight.**
- **Uniforms.** The application of CADPAT uniform requires standardization and an institutional approach as presently modifications are taking place in theatre. The standardized approach will facilitate training and awareness.

Conclusion

In summary, the friendly fire incident at FOB Robinson was caused by incomplete coordination and control, poor situational awareness, and a battlefield combat identification error. Regrettably this finding is not new as it is repeated often in the vast body of work and knowledge on the



Forward Operating Base Robinson Board of Inquiry

causes of friendly fire and fratricide. However, it is incumbent upon Canada in conjunction with its allies to continue to work to reduce the likelihood of these unfortunate incidents in the future.

Analysis reveals that accurate battlefield combat identification enabled by positive target identification, good situational awareness, and effective standard operating procedures will significantly reduce losses due to friendly fire. Through a combination of technology, doctrine and training, troops can learn to anticipate the challenges posed by today's extremely complex full spectrum operating environment. The Canadian Forces is actively addressing these important issues and steps are being taken within the doctrine, training and equipment realms to reduce the threat posed by friendly fire. To aid this important work, the Board made several recommendations to improve the extant SOPs and to examine the use and allocation of BCID and night vision devices during training and operations.

In closing, it is clear that the Coalition soldiers and leaders who withstood the insurgent attack on the night of 28/29 March 2006 responded with courage and dedication. However, several critical errors were made resulting in the injuries and deaths of coalition personnel. It is imperative that all members of the Canadian Forces learn the lessons from this tragic event. In that way, we will honour the loss of Private Robert Costall who made the ultimate sacrifice fulfilling his duty with honour.


Table of Contents

Letter From the President of the Board of Inquiry	i
Executive Summary	ii
Introductory Narrative	ii
Formation of the Board of Inquiry	v
Conduct of the Inquiry	vi
Definitions.....	vi
Contributing Factors	vii
Causes	viii
Board Findings.....	ix
Recommended Measures To Reduce the Occurrence of Friendly Fire	xii
Conclusion	xiv
Statement by the Board	1
Reader's Guide to the Final Report	2
Definitions	3
Chronology of Events	4
Participants.....	4
Forward Operating Base Robinson.....	5
Sequence of Events at FOB Robinson	5
Contextual Narrative	8
General.....	8
Quick Reaction Force Preparations and Rehearsals	16
QRF Operations Prior to 28 March 2006.....	17
Narrative Summary Of Evidence	18
Situation at FOB Robinson	18
Enemy Situation.....	18
Friendly Forces	19
Environment.....	22
Conduct of the Action.....	23
The Trigger	23
Actions on Arrival.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
The Enemy Attack	29
Friendly Fire Incident	32
Post Incident Investigations and Actions.....	36
Contributing Factors	39
Causes	40
Detailed Findings	41
Tasks	41
The Action	41



Planning	43
Command and Control Measures.....	44
Rehearsals	47
Orders and Directions	47
Communications	48
Other Issues.....	48
Medical Findings	48
Blame	50
Claims for Compensation	53
Recommendations	54
Closing Statement	56
Annex A – Terms Of Reference	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Annex B – Chronology of Events.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Appendix 1 to Annex B – Detailed Chronology of Events	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Annex C – Glossary	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Appendix 1 to Annex C – List of Abbreviations	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Annex D – Time Comparaison Table.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Annex E – Conduct of the Investigation	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Appendix 1 to Annex E – BOI Detailed Log of Events	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Annex F – List of Evidence	Error! Bookmark not defined.