CANADIAN WAR MUSEUM

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW CONTROL NUMBER: 31D 7 STOGRAN

INTERVIEWEE: Colonel Patrick B. Stogran

INTERVIEWER: Angus Brown

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 01 August, 2006

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Ottawa, Ontario

TRANSCRIBED BY: L. Stimson

Transcription of Interview Number 31D 7 STOGRAN

Colonel Patrick B. Stogran

Interviewed 01 August, 2006

By Angus Brown

INTERVIEWER: Canadian War Museum Oral History Program interview with Colonel Pat Stogran**.** Recorded on 01 August, 2006 at Ottawa, Ontario. Interviewed by Angus Brown. Tape one, side one.

STOGRAN: My name is Pat Stogran. [spells last name]

INTERVIEWER: Pat, I just want to confirm before we begin that we have both signed the legal release? Is that correct?

STOGRAN: Check.

INTERVIEWER: Pat, can you give me a bit of background on your biography, please?

STOGRAN: A bit of background, way back to the beginning. I was born 16 April, 1958 in La Sarre, Quebec. My family lived in Quebec until I was about 12 at which time we moved to BC where I spent my teenage years.

I joined the military August of 76 starting off with Royal Roads for two years and then finished off an Engineering degree, electrical, at the Royal Military College in Kingston.

My first regimental tour was with the 3rd Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, 3PPCLI, in Victoria, British Columbia. I spent almost six years there doing virtually all the jobs of a, up to and including, junior captain ranging from platoon commander for two years, mortar platoon commander for two or three years, a stint at Brigade Headquarters attached as well as training officer in the battalion.

In January of 86 I moved onto a British Technical Staff College in Shrivenham England, DIV 1, where I did the Tech Staff Program, Technical Staff College Program.

Having finished that in January of 87 I was posted to the Light Armoured Vehicles Project in Ottawa where I was the desk officer for mobility. Our team wrote the SOR, Statement of Requirements, for the current LAV field of vehicles including the Coyote and Bison variant through to LAV III. We started the work on that.

My next posting was with the Canadian Airborne Regiment in June of 89 where I was the regimental adjutant at Regimental Headquarters until promotion in June 1990.

Next regimental tour with the Patricias was as a rifle company commander in Calgary, Alberta for three years, following which I was seconded to the United Nations for a year as a Military Observer in the Former Republic of Yugoslavia.

Staff College in Toronto was to follow the next year in 94 to 95, then a three-year stint in Australia as a formation tactics instructor with their Land Warfare Centre in Cununga, Queensland.

Posted back to Canada upon promotion to Lieutenant Colonel to work at the Royal Military College at their Land Staff Technical Staff Program, the equivalent of the Shrivenham course I had done some years earlier. I was the directing staff responsible for military vehicles, mobility and weapons technology.

Two years in Kingston followed by a posting in 2000 to the 3rd Battalion PPCLI, which then had been relocated to Edmonton, Alberta.

Two years with the battalion was followed by a couple years of kicking around as a Staff Officer following the Afghanistan tour. I was posted to Director of Land Requirements at National Defence Headquarters, but due to the media attention to my post-Afghanistan, I didn't spend much time on the job.

The next real job I held down was in – I was posted to the Joint Operations Group formation-level Standing Joint Task Force in Kingston, Ontario in April of 2004. I held that job until the Canadian Expeditionary Force Command was stood up in February of this year. The Joint Operations Group and the Joint Headquarters was disbanded.

I'm now seconded to the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre as the Vice President located at Carleton University in Ottawa.

INTERVIEWER: I want to zero in on the time you, that your battalion, was in Afghanistan. Can you describe the events leading up to the selection of your unit for that deployment?

STOGRAN: Sure. I'll start off, I'll have to go way back to the time that I was in Kingston It was when General [Jeffries?] Jeffries was Chief of the Land Saff. He took over the Chief of the Land Staff and his vision called for the elimination of the light battalions and the three regiments because the Army was going to become medium weight, mech-centric, based on the LAV III vehicle.

Prior to taking command I was a vocal opponent to it, which was probably the first stepping-stone in marginalizing myself in the Army. But wrote a couple of papers and had significance voice in the importance of retaining the light force capability. I would even go so far to say going back to the airborne regiment, but fortuitously I was posted to the 3rd Battalion in July, which is the light battalion for the PPCLI.

It was a bit of a difficult task because the battalion was just coming off of a tour to Bosnia under Colonel David Barr and they were on a bit of a high. But at the same time their future was pretty well postdated with intention to disband the battalion. I think it was 2003 so it would have been shortly after I left the battalion. So the motivation was a bit of a – morale was a bit of a problem in the early days, as was budget.

The brigade commander at that point in time, recognizing that he would be throwing good money over bad in his view, I had barely enough money to just keep the doors open and the lights on and it was a fight to get any sort of training time.

My first exercise wasn't until January of 2001. It was a winter exercise. I left the training to a very low level through the fall because the battalion had just come back from Bosnia. The intention was to rest and recuperate from the tour.

So January was the first exercise that we had and that was in Wainwright, Alberta. Winter exercise focused at company level and below and shakeout for battalion headquarters. It wasn't until the following September that we had another formal exercise. Although there was low-level training go on. One of the – actually I should correct that.

Around December I was notified that we would become the Immediate Reaction Force Land. In February of 2002 that brigade was sponsoring what would be called confirmation exercises to confirm that we were ready to take over the task in April. That was an exercise held out in the foothills of Alberta in the area of Sundry[?]. From a battalion prospective, it wasn't much of a test exercise.

The Lord Strathcona's Horse were our enemy. They had been forced to be dismounted in the mountains to basically conduct offensive Operations through mountains against a light infantry battalion. For the seven or 10 days or however long we were in the mountains, we really never saw the enemy. It was a bit discouraging from our perspective. In fact, I remember it wasn't until the final night where they had to be bussed into final position to attack us from the inside out. It was uneventful.

One of the things I did early on in the tour was I took, I think, $25 000 of my own M money to reconstitute snipers. The snipers had been basically disbanded for the Bosnia tour. They didn't exist as an entity so I tasked the 2IC recce platoon, Warrant Officer Primmer[?], to act as my master sniper and take the snipers to Dundurn, Saskatchewan in the spring. I spent I think six weeks of focussed sniper training. My rationale there was, snipers is not a skill you develop overnight. It's much like hunting, for lack of a better analogy, that you have to develop over the longer term. That ended up paying off in the end.

The first real battalion exercise was in September of 2001. We had pooled all of our money and our ammunition to have what we refer to as a Battle School. We basically ran a battalion live fire camp in Wainwright for, I think it was, 10 days or two of concentrated live fire training.

The other thing I might add, over that period when I was faced with such a small budget I had a gone to DLFR, the Director of Land Force Readiness at NDHQ – basically the G3 of the Army and managed to… In order to keep the troops gainfully employed and keep morale up I had secured several small unit exchanges where we would send companies or elements of the battalions overseas, we managed to get a company over to Germany to train with an alpine battalion. We managed to get Bravo Company to Poland to conduct an exercise to train Middle Eastern countries in peace Operations. It was a company effort there. We sent a company to the Yukon and another element of Alpha Company to Austria to conduct a Partnership For Peace exercise.

The other training activity I latched onto was the battalion took over responsibility for the reserve light infantry company commander course, which was an opportunity for me to get our A Company (Para) training at the Queen's expense. So that was all the training events up until September 11.

On September 11, I was away in Norway with a reconnaissance party and we were meeting with General Holmes and the AMF(L) staff to plan for a NATO exercise that was to take place the following March – in March of 2002. General Holmes, an actual Royal Canadian Regiment officer, had sort of a pivotal role for our light battalion to play in this exercise, sort of his storm trooper battalion, he confided to me in private. So that was going to be a highlight exercise for me.

Unfortunately, during that recce was when the incident on September 11th happened. We came in after a day's worth of reconnaissance of the AOR to watch the second plane collide with the World Trade Centre. I remember turning to the American officer beside me and saying, "I think we've just seen the first salvo in World War Three."

The next planned event – and this was all very fortuitous, really, that we had saved our sheckels for the training in the fall of 2001 because we had the Live Fire Battle School which was a successful training event. In October we were going to have Exercise VENTURESOME BRAVE.

Just a bit of a sidetrack on that one. I used to use the term BRAVE in all of our exercises, the nickname for our exercises to sort of reflect back on the history of the First Special Service Force. I used to use that as an example for us to live up to and they were referred to sometimes as the BRAVES.

So VENTURESOME BRAVE was my, sort of, 'crown jewel' as I refer to it. I got to backtrack once again. When I first arrived on the ground in 2000, in the fall of 2000 when the battalion was still on block leave coming back from Bosnia, the US Rangers in Fort Lewis had asked to come up and doing some training in October of 2000. I really gutted the rear party in order to effect what I would call a reciprocal exchange agreement where they would come to Wainwright and we would sponsor them in Wainwright for October of 2000. The agreement was we would go down in October 2001 to Fort Lewis and use their facilities. They had a Live Fire – we refer to it as a Kill House – basically a

bulletproof house that they use for clearing. They had accommodation. All of that was all going to be provided to us, as well as an enemy force, and MILES, a weapons simulator for our small arms for force on force. So this really was, as I refer to the 'crown jewel' of all of our training. Unfortunately, with September 11th, that Ranger Battalion was deployed overseas and that event was cancelled. So they never had the opportunity to reciprocate on our hospitality earlier.

General Beare had taken over from General Nordik. Wrong; Colonel Beare had taken over from Colonel Nordik in the summer of 2001. I got my foot in the door as quickly as I could. I had suggested to him that the light battalion did not fit in to the mechanized brigade construct. We were more a land component of a joint rapid reaction force. We weren't really; we didn't fit in to the combined arms team that he was training. He didn't accept it completely but I think he accepted the rationale.

Post September 11th , I went to him and I wanted to retain VENTURESOME BRAVE and I wanted to go to Dundurn, Saskatchewan and do a MILES-based exercise of our own. In those days money was short but he had the vision. He could see the potential that we could be deployed somewhere. So he basically cut us an open cheque and allowed my headquarters to find where we could rent MILES equipment. It ended up we rented – I think it was referred to as MILES 2000. It was state of the art. We rented off the US Marine Corps. They wanted to do cold weather trials on it anyways. Exercise VENTURESOME BRAVE was about a 10-day exercise that took place in Dundurn, Saskatchewan.

My intention there was to get away from the traditional physically demanding exercise. I wanted that physical element there but I wanted the focus at close encounters at lower levels. The intention was also to try to maximize the time with the simulators and minimize on battle procedure. I got a lot of flak from the NCOs on that because we always want to go this 17 steps of battle procedure. Start off with a recce through till final orders and that sort of thing. I suggested to them that was a pipe dream, that on Operations were going to have to abbreviate and that's the mark of professionalism. The reason why we have those 17 steps, so that we can all be in agreements in which ones we're going to abbreviate or eliminate.

So we went through seven to 10 days of fairly intense training. I remember when we arrived it was a fairly mild fall. I think the first day that we actually went to the field we had freezing snow and the temperatures plummeted. It would melt during the day and then freeze at night. It kind of became too much of a survival exercise. Not that I'm adverse to that but because we had this MILES equipment and I wanted to really exploit the full potential of it.

So we went through a series of traces during the day where we would go in our quarters and do our battle procedure, abbreviated battle procedure, each night. And then each day the company would face a force on force scenario that was completely off the wall, something that they never encountered before. For example, two companies may have been tasked to secure the same bridge and they would be arriving at it from different

directions. We wouldn't have any idea what the enemy situation on the map would be; on objective would be, when they arrived. It was virtually what we would call a meeting engagement. Through those types of exercises I got to see the real character in my company commanders.

Unfortunately at that point in time I only had two rifle companies. The battalion was so weak we had consolidated. We had split up Charlie Company and basically had Alpha and Bravo Company…

INTERVIEWER: Did you have a full complement of support weapons?

STOGRAN: That point in time we had recce platoon. Yes we had our TOW platoon although we were very much watered down. Our dets, our detachments, within the support weapons platoon were not able to function 24/7 and this was something – because they were cut back to three men per det. This was one of the things we had to address when we were actually given the warning for Operations in Afghanistan.

We had all of the det commanders for the various elements of combat support company were in the place.

INTERVIEWER: And your battalion being a light battalion, how did your TOWs move? Were they on tracks?

STOGRAN: No. We had TOWs on Iltis. If you can overlook the fact they are a gasoline engine and basically a fireball in waiting, the size of them and the ability to load them onto Chinooks or whatever became very useful for a light battalion.

We were alerted to go to Afghanistan. I remember waking up in a cold sweat one night. It was early November, I think. It might have been mid November.

I would just say to add to my last anecdote about Exercise VENTURESOME BRAVE, another fortuitous step that Colonel Beare took at the time was recognizing we only had two rifle companies. He had warned off Major Bob Ford and Charlie Company of the 2nd Battalion under Marv Makawowlich[?] to come and participate in the training that we had done, Exercise VENTURESOME BRAVE in Dundurn. Unfortunately, I had other engagements somewhere and that was conducted under my Deputy Commanding Officer Steve Borland[?]. We managed to get all the manoeuver elements through that training and, again, credit to General Beare for having that kind of vision.

Back to the warning. We were having an O Group one morning and I think it was about the 14th of November, I recall, shortly after Remembrance Day. I woke up in a cold sweat because I hadn't addressed – I was so fixated on the training and everything to do with September 11th that I forgot about all the silly season coming up, the officers' At Home, the men's Christmas dinner, etcetera, etcetera. So I reached over and started scribbling out notes for the O Group for that day to pass on the planning guidance so we could get those things kick started.

We sat down for our O Group and shortly after we started – we weren't too long into at all – it might have just been the preamble and I got a knock at the door. Kim Johnson, my secretary said, "Colonel Beare is on the phone and he has to talk to you now."

I said, "Does it have to be now?"

She said, "Had to be now."

So I went over and took the phone call and he said, "We've been warned off for Afghanistan. Report for orders at 1300 hours."

I just couldn't believe it. So I went back to the O Group and, all of a sudden, all this silly season stuff took on very little meaning. I couldn't pass on to my company commanders and my staff what had transpired. I told them basically we were going for orders because it was very, very sensitive at that point in time. It hadn't been announced by government yet. I warned them off that I was going to take my O Group key players to area headquarters. As I said, the rest of the O Group became a little bit meaningless and sort of chuckled our way through it.

INTERVIEWER: So what sort of orders did you get at 1300 hours?

STOGRAN: Can't remember exactly the details of the orders. But, in essence, there wasn't too much information on it. As I recall, there had been negotiations – the British had been talking about setting up the forerunner to ISAF and going into Kabul. They were talking about putting together a composite Commonwealth brigade, I think. Basically, the only information that was passed on that I can remember is that I could expect to be moving certainly within the next 24 hours and that the battalion could be moving at any point in time after that.

INTERVIEWER: So you were on 24 hours notice to move?

STOGRAN: Yes, or faster, I think…

INTERVIEWER: That seems to be awfully…

STOGRAN: Yes, and that was the ridiculous thing we were experiencing at the time. I was the Immediate Reaction Force Land commander and we were at 72 hours notice to move for a company group. And I think it was seven or 10 days notice to move for the main body for rapid reaction anywhere in the world. I was on to General, then Colonel, Stewart Beare about the prepositioned equipment. We had no logistics in place. I said, "You know, this is a façade. It's laughable."

I remember him replying something in effect, "There's a void at the Operational level. There's no real desire to put all the prepositioned logistics in place that's required."

I knew about this because of my days with the airborne regiment some years before, where once a quarter we would fall in on our prepositioned equipment. We called it a QUICK RIG. I was the adjutant. I was responsible – make sure everybody's pers docs were ready. That was true rapid reaction. We had the capability to do none of that. But all of a the sudden, the 72 hours, the 10 days notice went out the window and they said, "Get to Ottawa as fast as you can. You could be leaving at any point in time after that."

We did sort of launch to Ottawa. I grabbed my company commanders and we left, I think, the next night, as I recall. I left my DCO, Steve Borland, behind. I had treated the DCO – this is, sort of, another luck of the draw type thing. Throughout my career the Deputy Commanding Officer had always been sort of the garrison commander and he was responsible for non-public funds, the safety committee and those sorts of things. I had my DCO right from day one when John Bagnall[?] was my 2IC. I wanted to make him a true 2IC and I told him, "Delegate all those garrison responsibilities." And I said, "I want you more like a chief of staff." I wanted him on top of all my training, the go-to guy for ops plus all of the administration. He was really my second in command. So when we got the warning to move it was – Steve Borland had taken over that summer and it was very fortuitous. It was not a matter of him abandoning his garrison duties and, sort of, reading into the training situation. He had been on top of everything. In fact, he was the one that had run Charlie Company through Exercise VENTURESOME BRAVE earlier.

The next day when we basically took our barrack boxes, rucksack and kit bags to Ottawa. Myself and virtually all of the commanders including the detachment from the Lord Strathcona's Horse, Tom Bradley[?], and our engineer commander Major Rod Keller, we packed up and, for all intents and purposes, we thought we were going over to do the recce in Afghanistan, and sometime after the next day.

Steve Borland – I have a bit of a gap in my memory from that point on because Steve really looked after all of the theatre and mission specific training that was taking place at that time. He had a nightmare of logistics. It was good thing we didn't leave at three or 10 days notice to move because I think it took us six weeks for our RQ to go out and buy all the stuff that we needed. There was a mad dash of pallet loading and the Kapyong Drill Hall at Greisbach was loaded to the ceiling with stores. We had Sergeant Major Payette[?] out on the tarmac organizing our light vehicles. Sergeant Major Butters, I think, was spending 24/7 in the Kapyong Drill Hall. It was just a flurry of activity. That would be worthwhile, to get some stories from Steve Borland.

INTERVIEWER: So what happened when you were in Ottawa?

STOGRAN: Well, we arrived in Ottawa. There was myself, all of our company commanders and it was about midnight, I think. We were in combat. We didn't bring any civvies and we checked into the Novatel Hotel and I gathered them together for some confirmatory orders and I said, "Let's go for a beer."

We were loaded for bear and they sort of looked at me like, "What's on here?"

My intention was to do a bit of bonding and to treat this – I didn't want to change my approach to life because we were going on Operations. So the next morning we were in our combats at National Defence Headquarters and we were receiving a series of briefings. CSIS was present. We had their area experts giving us briefings. We had DND doing – I can't remember the DND briefings. I remember hanging on the briefing from CSIS. I remember one young finance officer asking the question: where you would find ATMs in Kabul? I sort of looked at him with disbelief. This is all in the book that I've written but never published but… I said to him, "You can find them in all the strip malls." He sort of looked at me as if that was an answer but my company commanders all broke out laughing. That was the level of naivety.

I remember Sergeant Major Brad Gates, when we were getting ready for our pre-deployment training. We were all locked and loaded. We'd been training hard for it but the strategic recce team that they were putting together – that sort of question from that finance officer. He was coming with us on the recce. He was going to be carrying the bag of money. That sort of characterized the level of readiness and the approach to business to National Defence Headquarters, absolutely farcical.

Sergeant Major Brad Gates, I can't remember, we ended up spending an overnighter because things ground to a halt. We were supposed to be leaving. The Brits were well ahead of us. They sent their Marine Commandos in. But I guess in our haste to save the Afghans nobody asked the Afghanis and they had a firefight. So, all of a sudden, things ground to a halt.

But we went through this pre-training stuff. Sergeant Major Brad Gates had a canniption because they were handing out weapons and ammunition and even going to hand out hand grenades to these guys and he said, "Sir, these guys are going to be a hazard to us. They're going…"

INTERVIEWER: These guys meaning the strategic team?

STOGRAN: Strategic recce team. There were a couple of Army guys amongst them but, for the most part, these guys probably hadn't handled small arms since basic officer training.

INTERVIEWER: Were you the senior officer in this group?

STOGRAN: No, the senior officer as I recall was Larry Zapporzan who was a Lieutenant Colonel at the time because it was a strategic recce being dovetailed with the tactical recce. He was the representative from the G3 or DLFR.

INTERVIEWER: I guess the thrust of my question is: were you then dealing as a battalion commander with the National Headquarters?

STOGRAN: Yes. I just reassured Sergeant Major Gates that when the shit hit the fan we knew who we could rely on. I wasn't worried about it.

INTERVIEWER: Did your reconnaissance group, your R Group, go to Afghanistan?

STOGRAN: No, as I mentioned, the bullets started flying and all of a sudden NDHQ did a double take and said, "Perhaps were a little bit too hasty." What's interesting in these proceedings, the only person that visited us and had any, in terms of rank, senior rank, was an Associate Deputy Minister, Jim Wright, from Foreign Affairs. He came down and gave us a pep talk and I've never forgotten it. In fact, I've corresponded with him since and told him what a huge impact it had. But none of our so-called military leaders came down to give us a pat on the back.

I think I already disenfranchised myself with Army headquarters because I was such a vocal proponent of light forces. Here it was, coming to fruition. I remember sending General Jeffries – our A Company (Para) had stayed – during March Break we normally stood down the battalion. But we had a Hercules that weekend and A Company (Para) stayed behind to do para training during the week. I remember at the end of the week I was absolutely knackered from all the jumping that we'd been doing. I fired an email off to General Jeffries and said, or words to the effect, "Before you get rid of these light forces, you got to spend a weekend with the kind of troops that you get in a light battalion and see the professionalism and dedication in these guys." I got a nasty-gram coming back.

There was no senior leadership in the Army that came down to give us words of encouragement. Except the only senior person was Jim Wright from Foreign Affairs and he gave us a tremendous pep talk. He was assuring us that this was not a major reaction – Afghanistan had been on the radarscope of Foreign Affairs for quite some time and that Canada is committed to rebuilding that country. One of my company commanders said, "Yes, OK, that's all well and good. But when the body bags start coming back, do you think the Canadian public is going to be behind it?"

He said to his credit, "We don't know. We're going to have to manage that at the time."

That was a very, very profound moment. The closest thing that DND did, or the CF did, to match that was, Colonel Tim Grant who was COSJ3 came – and very apologetically – because he had recognized that no senior management had come down to give the troops a pep talk before going over. He was apologetically saying, "You know, we're all behind you and we'll give you everything that you need."

INTERVIEWER: What happened next in the deployment process?

STOGRAN: We basically went home with our tails between our legs because we sat around for several days. We got some very good planning in, my company commander sitting down with Larry Zapporzan and the Army staff and the Joint Staff were able to get some detailed planning done. I managed to go around and ruffle feathers, but after a

couple of days it was clear that we weren't going to be going overseas. We headed back to Edmonton.

INTERVIEWER: What happened next?

STOGRAN: There was all the preparations that were underway under Steve Borland. And I basically just got caught up to date but didn't meddle, didn't screw things up. I just was becoming completely aware of the situation.

I think the next significant event was when a recce was planned… No, the next significant event was an official delegation was going over to PJHQ. That's the Permanent Joint Headquarters in Norwood in the UK. It was consisting of myself, a representative from COSJ3, Christian LaBrosse[?], Fred Noseworthy who was the Army liaison at CDLS London, and I don't know who else. I went over there. All I had was combat clothing.

INTERVIEWER: What was the purpose of the trip?

STOGRAN: It was to meet with General Wall who as I recall – I remember General Wall because I had actually done Shrivenham with him years before.

INTERVIEWER: So he was a British general?

STOGRAN: He was a British general and I think he was going to be commanding or – we were meeting with the headquarters. It may have been General McCall[?] actually, his boss, that was going to be the commander over there. We were planning; it was going to be the technical recce for us to plan our deployment.

INTERVIEWER: Did much get produced after this meeting?

STOGRAN: Well, it was clear – interestingly, General Wall and a couple of his staff I had done Shrivenham with, and they pulled me into their planning room and they actually showed me the sector they were planning on having the Canadians take over. It was a huge sector from Kabul to the Bagram airport, as I recall. I'd have to look at a map again. Huge sector. They were talking first person singular. This is what General has planned for you. So I was absolutely sure I was going and, once again, I was travelling without any civilian clothing and I had all my barrack boxes. I had all my weapons cleared into the UK, sure I was going all the way this time.

But during the presentation – up until the point the Brits were saying they wanted an exit strategy. They said they were going to be out of there in six weeks. They were trying to convince Canada, bully Canada, to take over the lead so that they could get out of there. There was all bunch of reticence for anybody to get locked into the long term.

During the meeting, right towards the end – what had happened was that all sorts of European Union countries had turned up at this meeting. Right towards the, when

General McCall[?] asked if there were any of the countries represented that wanted to make a comment, the Turks put up their hands and said, " If we can be one of the battle groups in the first rotation, then we will relieve the Brits in the lead in ISAF."

You can see all the sudden the discussion, sort of, edged the Canadians out, and they were very interested in taking on this Turkish battle group because that was their exit strategy. It was clear to the delegation, Fred Noseworthy – Bob Scantlan[?] was the other person in the party. He was working over in CDLS London. It was very clear to us at that point in time, we were being edged out. So I just basically grabbed my kit and headed back home. I think I got home on Christmas Eve or very close to. If not Christmas Eve, it was the 23rd. Close enough for that period to be a wash for me. It was clear to me that we weren't going to be part of that brigade.

INTERVIEWER: So, what was the next significant event that then led to your deployment?

STOGRAN: The next significant event was shortly after New Years. Of course, this was a very anxious period for me especially. I don't think we had told the troops to stand down yet. But we had the fan outs and we're testing the fan outs throughout the Christmas period.

INTERVIEWER: Did the battalion go on Christmas and New Years leave as normally?

STOGRAN: Yes, we tried to keep that as normal as possible but we maintained constant phone contact with them. It was early January. It was before block leave was over but I got a notification, and up until this point all of the news we hear about the deployment was coming across the media from announcements in Ottawa before it came down to the chain of command. So family at home was finding out about deployments before we were and it very, very demoralizing.

At this point in time, I got the notification. I think General Beare phoned me at home and said, " Get your troops in by 0800 hrs tomorrow." I think it was the sixth of January and we were going to the eighth or the tenth. He said, "Get your troops in and if you announce it before 0800 hrs then they're going to announce it in Ottawa." I think at that point in time, during the course of events Kevin Cotton came to me with the warning order that we were going to be attached to the 101st Airborne Division.

INTERVIEWER: Was that a surprise to you, that you were going to be attached to a US formation?

STOGRAN: A complete surprise. Absolutely out of the blue.

INTERVIEWER: Did anybody explain why?

STOGRAN: I had been talking to Steve Appleton who is DFLR, Colonel Steve Appleton, and he told me over the Christmas period that things were happening. I guess our

Minister of National Defence did not get along with Minister Hoone, I think his name was, the Brit Minister of Defence. He said things were happening and he couldn't speak over unclas and it worth me going in to use the secure means.

As I recall, it was completely out of the blue to be attached to the 101st. So the… Sorry.

INTERVIEWER: So this is now January, early January 2000…

STOGRAN: 2002.

INTERVIEWER: You've now been told that you're going to deploy. How soon?

STOGRAN: [Pause]

INTERVIEWER: Was it a week or a month?

STOGRAN: No, no, no. There was some time there, but I left virtually the next day, myself and my recce party and the strategic guys once again. We left, I think, on the seventh of January and flew straight over.

INTERVIEWER: Straight to?

STOGRAN: Straight to Kuwait City then into Kabul, or into Kandahar, rather.

INTERVIEWER: Into Kandahar and met up with the American formation commander at that time?

STOGRAN: Yes, Colonel Wiercinski. I remember I was in the battalion long enough for the troops to look up who we were attached to, 187 Brigade Combat Team. And, of course, the headquarters were right on the Internet. They come in and tell me about Colonel J Francis Wiercinski who had parachuted into Panama, very impressive record. Of course the Rackkasans had a very distinguished history. They were whom we were attached to.

We went in *en masse* into this desert combat environment with our woodland pattern uniforms and this trail of staff officers from NDHQ were there to help us.

INTERVIEWER: The American formation was on the ground, was it?

STOGRAN: Actually, they were in the process of being of relieving the US Marine Corps who were hot on the heels of the Northern Alliance when they captured Kandahar. The Marine Corps were the first ones in from Camp Rhino to secure Kandahar and then the 101st relieved them in January sometime.

INTERVIEWER: The formation that you were attached to again?

STOGRAN: It was the 3rd Brigade of the 101st Division. It is the 187 Rackkasans, 187th Regiment.

INTERVIEWER: 187th Infantry Regiment?

STOGRAN: Yes. At the time it was 187 Brigade Combat Team, Task Force Rackkasans.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have an opportunity to go back to your unit?

STOGRAN: Negative. It looked like there was going to be at least couple of weeks before the American airflow could accommodate Canadians moving in. The plan was to send all of subunit commanders back to Canada so they could back brief the troops and develop their situational awareness. And then myself and my Operations officer, then Captain Peter Dawe [?], would stay in theatre and understudy our Americans and, basically, prepare ourselves mentally for what we were facing.

INTERVIEWER: How were you accepted by the American formation?

STOGRAN: Well, openly and readily on the personal level but there was a significant reticence. You can understand. Up until that point – I think his name was Brigadier Pike from the UK, had actually gone public and said that Canada was nothing more than a peacekeeping nation and could never fight a war again. We arrived there with a whole bunch of staff officers and we were wearing green woodland pattern even more it's the new CADPAT which nobody – although every western army is copying it. At that point in time, the CADPAT was completely foreign to them but, to make it even more demoralizing, and I would say make our hosts even more anxious was, we were wearing woodland pattern and they were all in arid pattern for the desert.

They welcomed us and made us feel at home but there was clearly a little bit of hesitance. Although when the troops finally started arriving, Colonel Wiercinski was quick to put us in the line. At that point in time, Kandahar was dark and scary but he wanted to get on offensive operations with his troops, so there was no hesitation to put us to the test in the defence.

INTERVIEWER: Interview with Colonel Pat Stogran end of side one.

END OF SIDE ONE

INTERVIEWER: Canadian War Museum Oral History Program interview with Colonel Pat Stogran. Tape one side two.

Can you give a brief description of the terrain and the Operational situation you found on arrival?

STOGRAN: Sure. Kandahar airport, the airfield was in rubble. There were all sorts of destroyed fuselages of Soviet aircraft that had been abandoned there. The place was in

complete disrepair, a garbage scow. It was sort of comfortably warm during the day and freezing cold at night. The trenches around the perimeter were hastily dug by the Marine Corps. There was wire laid out and, of course, Soviet mines all over the place. Bad guys on the outside and good guys on the inside.

The odd, I would refer to them as mujihadeen, these were the Afghan freedom fighters that went thorough several different political correct names at the time, but we just called them "the muj". They would come in the odd time to coordinate activities with the in-place force, the Marines or the 101st when they took over.

INTERVIEWER: Can you tell me what your expectation was?

STOGRAN: That's a very good question because my expectation was the worst. I had come out of the Former Republic of Yugoslavia in some pretty stressful days and arrived in Vancouver International Airport within 12 hours, I guess, and just couldn't believe the switch and was pretty messed up for a year. Stress-wise, well, pretty messed up for a long time. I think I'm carrying some of it today.

At that time I was thinking to myself, if I was messed up then – I was expecting combat. We were sleeping with our weapons and a round up the spout and the whole nine yards, complete light and noise discipline at night and those sorts of things. So I figured if I was messed up based on my experience the troops were going to be really messed at the ended of whatever happened here.

That's where I came up with the idea of the re-integration/decompression program that we instituted at the end.

INTERVIEWER: So you decided on that really in your first month or so there?

STOGRAN: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Interesting. What…

STOGRAN: It took on a life of its own. I had originally asked that we might stop off in Cyprus or something like that. The way it came together, I was asking the American military, the Army guys, "Well what do you for PTSD and stress casualties"

They said, "Not very much."

So I went to the Marine Corps guy, his name escapes me now, but I've met him a couple times since, and he said, "Well, we don't have stress casualties."

I thought, "What are you talking about?" He was either bragging or they were ignorant of it. But there is a significant difference between the Marines and us in that the Marines are conditioning their troops right from raw recruits. We have gone through this period of political correctness where we now have 50-year-old grandmothers graduating from

recruit schools alongside these young troops that want to go and close with and destroy. So were not building strength of character and we're not weeding people out in our training. The Marine Corps is.

The other thing the Marine Corps – and this is the rationale I used in the early days. I couldn't do anything about that but the other thing the Marine Corps does is, after they go through some hard times together, they are on a ship for six weeks together and talking about it. So perhaps they have time to debrief and that's what gave me the idea of stopping off some place. As I said, that took on a life of its own because I was hopeful – all I was asking for was we would sleep between sheets, learn how to that again. Have lots of booze and no real rules that we had to follow but it would but it would be just us together and we would see who was having the problems. The staff ran with that. Then we got Guam so…

INTERVIEWER: So that was a decompression time that you felt was really important?

STOGRAN: Oh Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Did it work?

STOGRAN: Anecdotally, it did. The jury is still out amongst the medical community – and this is another one of PTSD rants is, outside of Paul Morneault who was the J1 at NDHQ. The medical community wasn't prepared to support this thing and they had – and the Chaplain community had General Jeffries's ear and they weren't going to support the thing. Between the DCDS, Admiral Maddison, the CDS and Paul Morneault, they said, "Let's give it this thing a try. There's no harm in trying it."

It took on a five star appearance. We did the re-integration. There were two things. Decompression was just the idea of not going home right away so we could decompress. The other thing was re-integration. That's where we developed mutual lectures that we would present to ourselves on re-integrating with the family, re-integrating with the workplace because the Army had changed. All of a sudden, light forces were back on the drawing board. Re-integration into Ottawa. All those sorts of things. The idea was we would put together slide packages, then each company would give it to themselves.

However, when the DCDS forced the issue and said, "No, there will be a re-integration period." And they established Guam as the place we would do it. All of a sudden, the medical community was on board and they were going to send, no lie, like 25 psychologists and clinicians and people in white overcoats to save us. I said, "No, we are not sick. This is a time for us to find…" So I think we ended up with a psychiatrist that came out. Even to this day there's all sorts of denial from the medical community that this was worth anything, but you hear from the old soldiers who got back, and I can say from my own perspective, it was far easier. And I faced a move immediately after arriving. It was far easier in those early stages.

The places the we've let down our soldiers and we continue to do it. The medical community knows and I've experienced the problem from six weeks to six months afterwards, that's the sort of period that is critical. Where I actually melted down in my Bosnia days and had some significant problems this time. We still treat our troops – they're sent off to the four winds. There are – our troops in the 3rd Battalion – I had long since left. But here they are coming back from this hormonal, historic mission and first thing they are told to do is, "Give us all your night fighting equipment and you're going to get a hundred rounds for the next two years." Or whatever. Very demoralizing and that's where we let our troops down.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about the introduction to Operations for your battalion?

STOGRAN: OK. As soon as the battalion started arriving, it was right around Valentine's Day. I know that because my son covered for me to get something to my wife because I was otherwise engaged. We were in the middle – as soon as the troops were arriving – minimum time for acclimatization and General Wiercinski was throwing them straight into the line because he wanted to get, he wanted some new maneuver capability in the offence.

So this is where the, sort of, trust came in, the acceptance of risk by the commander. Because he just said, "I don't care how you do it, the perimeter is yours." So as soon as the troops started arriving we started putting them in the perimeter. One of things that we did was we, of course, had the Coyotes around the perimeter evenly spaced to cover the 360. But up until that point, the way we dominated no man's land was armoured reconnaissance, like the Marine Corps used their LAV 25 with Cobra and overwatch. Basically, went out there and patrolled in force. Then the 101st would use their up-armoured Humvees with the Apaches.

My approach to it was, I would say, characteristically Canadian in that we knew there were mujihadeen on the outside that were working with the Americans. We knew there were Special Forces that were operating with them. Well, I sent my recce platoon out to live with the mujihadeen. The idea was they would establish a command and control link with the Coyotes and the Coyotes would pick somebody up on the perimeter.

Up until that point both the Marines and the 101st had firefights on the perimeter. What we would do is, the Coyotes would pick something up on the perimeter, radio up to recce platoon and recce platoon would grab a couple of mujihadeen and they would drive out there and grab the guy. The way they would treat it was, they would slap them around and throw them in prison for the night and that was the end of it. I actually grew to trust these individuals because they fought to kick the Taliban and Al-Qaeda out. They hated foreigners. They were prepared to accept Taliban because Taliban was just a way of staying alive. When it was a local or a nomad that was on the perimeter they were a lot more tolerant than if it was a foreigner. But we just left that to them .We never actually put our hands on – took in any detainees.

INTERVIEWER: How long did you stay on the defensive perimeter and when did you switch to Operations offensively?

STOGRAN: Well, I would say shortly after we took the perimeter, Operation ANACONDA started brewing up. Up and until that point, we only had two companies of infantry because, for some reason, it was decided we would only go with two companies. So Charlie Company was back in Winnipeg sitting on their rucksacks. I managed to convince General Wiercinski – like, I was told by one of the officers that had been working the early plans that if we could get him to ask for a request for forces, Canada would pitch in. General Wiercinski didn't want to make waves, didn't want waves. So, finally, as ANACONDA was approaching, he wanted to have a third manoeuver until complete so he could rotate in, so he could use. So he put the request in and Charlie Company started arriving in the middle of March.

I would say shortly after we took the perimeter, things started to shape up for Operation ANACONDA and we were being brought into briefings and the plans were being cut and I was trying to work us into the plans. At that point in time, Kandahar was still a dark and scary place. As General Wiercinski put it to me, he said he couldn't afford to take risk in Kandahar and lose Kandahar while they were off doing this Operation ANACONDA.

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned that you had put some efforts into training snipers. I understand that your snipers were used by American forces?

STOGRAN: Yes. We actually made an offer in a couple of ways to the US Forces. We knew it was going to be cold up there so we offered, first of all, our winter warfare trainers and mountain ops instructors to give them lectures in that. We also offered to give them our winter survival gear which we brought along because we sort of studied Soviet experiences there. So, we had our full tent groups with us. We were even prepared to act as Sherpas for them to bring the survival gear along but they wouldn't have any part of that.

General Wiercinski, then Colonel Wiercinski, knew we had these .50 caliber sniper rifles and he said, "I just want to get your 50's into the fight." Very, very sensitive issue. All of a sudden, there's all this waffling at National Defence Headquarters, particularly within the Army because the snipers were going in to the fight.

INTERVIEWER: Now, did you have to ask Ottawa for the permission to deploy them?

STOGRAN: I probably had to, but I didn't. I just informed them we were doing this. I've got to set this straight. I was as big an enemy to myself as I was to the Al-Qaeda because I had gone in there with certain preset, certain ideas. I was not going to fail in Afghanistan. I was not going to have a Dutch battalion in Srebrenica in Afghanistan. I was going to lead ethically and in accordance with my conscience, and I was going to win there, and I had decided this in advance. In fact, I had told my company commanders, if I'm told to do something this against my conscience, unlike the battalion in Srebrenica, I said, "There may come a time when I'm going to disobey a lawful

command and I'll ask for volunteers." I had my mandate and I felt I was the senior Canadian there and I was conducting Operations. I did ruffle some feathers back in Canada but you know I was asked…

I had an Admiral working in Tampa who was my boss. At one point in time he said, "Pat, you don't understand and I'm caught between a rock and hard place here. You don't know how much pressure a one star can be under." This is like at two or three o'clock in the morning. We used to talk on the phone because it was convenient back in Tampa. But I would get really short with him. At one point he asked me, "Can you send a platoon commander with your snipers?"

I said, "No. I'm not going to do it. You have no concept of how snipers…"

They're worried about command and control. So what I did say to Colonel Wiercinski was, up until that point, the peacetime configuration for a sniper that was two. And I wasn't comfortable that they could operate 24/7 so I said, "You can have my snipers but you are only going to get two detachments of three."

He said, "I don't care as long as you get your .50s into the fight."

And they were gone. When General Jeffries came to visit me – he and the Admiral came to visit me – he said – and this is sensitive stuff but it's not classified and it's certainly going to go in a book. He said, "Pat, quite frankly, I'm concerned about your command and control." I knew what he was talking about because I had been told by a couple of people after that that their idea of being under OP CON – they used the Bosnia example, " Well, you might use a company to do a patrol for them. We had no idea that you were going to attach people to fight with them." So General Jeffries said, " We're concerned about your command and control."

I said, "Hang on a second, sir. You remember that Black Hawk I put you up this morning at 9:30 in the morning on half hour's notice to move with two Apache gun ships taking you round Kandahar?" I said, " I can do that like that. I can call for eight Apaches that fast." I said, "They ask me for my .50 caliber sniper rifles and I'm going to say no?" I would not have accepted that. That was the end of the discussion of command and control.

Subsequent to when General Gauthier came in – and here's the PTSD rant coming out – but General Gauthier came in May, I think, when we were – no early April. We were off doing…He took command shortly after the friendly fire incident and we were doing Operation Tora Bora. He said to me, "Pat, I'm coming in on such and such a date and if I don't like what I see I'm going to close you down."

I said, "Well, I hope you don't close us down but I'm going to be away on Operations at that point in time."

He came in and visited with Colonel Wiercinski and we got a clean bill of health. Anyways, the rest is history.

INTERVIEWER: Let me explore a little bit more about the command and control. In the past, independent Canadian commanders – and I think you're aware of Colonel Stone in Korea – had a very specific mandate from the Canadian authorities when he was attached to the Commonwealth Brigade in those days. Did you have any specific mandate? Were you given any qualifying limitations, anything of that nature?

STOGRAN: Yes, and this is where it gets a little bit – I don't know what the – our mandate covered as I recall four tasks: airfield security, sensitive site exploitation which was new to us but it ended up being a reconnaissance in force, combat Operations, and to facilitate humanitarian aid if and when it came. Those were the four general tasks. But the specific – in terms of – I wasn't given a mandate *per se* with very clear direction. I had a huge constraint put on me in terms of strategic targeting. For us to do tactical operations, if there was going to be chance of a single civilian casualty, then I had to get NDHQ's approval.

INTERVIEWER: So were these Rules of Engagement, then, you had to work under?

STOGRAN: No, no, the Rules of Engagement were very clear and very robust. The Rules of Engagement allowed for us – they were the normal Rules of Engagement in that when we were dealing with non Taliban/ Al-Qaeda. Because Taliban/ Al-Qaeda were considered to be the enemy. So that was under Laws of Armed Conflict. Anybody else that demonstrated hostile intent, that we didn't know to be Taliban/ Al-Qaeda – how you can discriminate is an act of magic – because some with a Kalishnakov is somebody with a Kalishnakov, but there were the two. If we had somebody identified as Taliban/ Al-Qaeda, we didn't have to wait for hostile intent. So we could initiate and we could also retaliate if the actions were, as the Rules of Engagement put it, 'reasonable and proximate'. So we didn't hunt them down two weeks later. It was hot stove rules.

They were very robust and there were the two, Rules of Engagement and Laws of Armed Conflict. Anything under Laws of Armed Conflict that we conducted, if there was a chance of a single civilian casualty, then we had to get NDHQ's prior approval. Which Jim Stone couldn't have done, and I couldn't have done if I was on a ground sheet at Tora Bora making my plans to attack a target of opportunity and guys in jack boots and black turbans and bull whips. I couldn't have expected to have that kind of turnaround time.

INTERVIEWER: Would you say that your Canadian chain of command was perhaps more immediate than historically Canadian officers in the field had, had to deal with before?

STOGRAN: Definitely, given the communications equipment that we have today. But a lot of it, I think, has to do with how we've treated Operations up until Afghanistan. Like, it's ground breaking and things are happening in Afghanistan. There is no – I can say

this with all confidence and without revealing any sort of sensitive or secret information, that I'm quite confident that there is no requirement for them for every tactical engagement to relate back to Canada. Because we fully expected to be in that kind of environment every place we went.

So two things. I think we came from a period of very good fortune because, despite the casualties, and this is a big debate now about peacekeeping and I'm getting a little bit passionate because of my current job in the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre. We have found that watershed peacekeeping missions from Bosnia through to Afghanistan were bloodless offerings. And we could micromanage them and control them to the nth degree and we could sweep things like Medak Pocket and Sarajevo under the carpet and keep it out of the public eye.

We came from that kind of a background and so there was every expectation – remember the CDS was an Air Force officer. He was a great guy but he was an Air Force officer. We don't have a War College or a war ethos in anywhere outside the combat units and I would say it ends there. The DCDS was a naval officer and great guy and very, very experienced, but he was very much into the detailed management as a naval officer would.

My boss in Tampa was a naval officer up until General Gauthier took over. And I can honestly say, and this is not blowing smoke at anyone, that once General Gauthier took over and he could relate to what he was happening on the ground, once he came and visited the Operation and he recognized that this was not Bosnia, this was not a mech environment. Yes, we had troops scattered all across the hinterland but we were mounting helicopters where 400 kilometres all of a sudden becomes a two-hour trip. It's not like an eight-hour road trip like we would have had in Bosnia. So, once he was flying top cover for me in Tampa, it was a lot easier.

He would come and visit me in the field. He recognized the chain of command. He knew General Wiercinski from his War College days. They were classmates in Carlisle in an earlier life. So he was comfortable with the command and control from that perspective. It changed.

We still had those NDHQs imperatives of the strategic targeting, but it makes a world of difference. If you look at the National Defence culture that we have now, General Hillier has fractured the culture that existed by standing up CEFCom and standing up Canada Command and basically teaching NDHQ about mission command. So we can fight this war now and I can take some of the credit for it…

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about your offensive Operations from a battalion point of view?

STOGRAN: OK. If you are talking in terms of who I offended in NDHQ, that's a different story.

The first one was Operation HARPOON. The way that transpired was, we had heard that the 3rd Brigade that when they had flown into the Shinkay Valley that hot LZs, and they were fighting tenaciously and our snipers, we actually had to re-supply them .50-calibre sniper ammunition. Borrowing them off of people in Kandahar who should remain unmentioned but who were the other unit in Canada to have troops over there, or .50 caliber sniper rifles. It looked like it was going to be a fight.

Meanwhile, we are sitting back in Kandahar maintaining the firm base and I was trying to get our troops into the fight because I thought we had something to offer. We had studied the Soviets successes in Afghanistan. One of things they used to do that was successful, what they would put light infantry in all the passes and then drive their armoured into the valley. So I got on to the TACSAT to General Wiercinski, who was under fire through the whole thing, and I was saying, "Look, I'll pack as many infantry on the trucks as we can and we'll bring the armoured vehicles up there and we'll do the Soviet thing."

He was saying, "No, no, no I'll give you a call when I need you."

We got orders from him to do a *coup de main* in behind Ginger. Ginger was the sort of the plug in the south end of the valley they were using to exfill and infill. They hadn't been able to crack that so we were going to drop in behind into, I think, it was the Nakka Valley or the Nekka Valley. First combat air assault was going to be into the jaws of death. Like, this was going to be the big battle.

So I phoned Tampa because I had to go through the approval process. Well Admiral Tiffault said, "No, Pat you're not going into Ginger. You're going onto the Whale."

I said, "No, I just got orders over TACSAT and we got the maps out and we're planning it."

He said, "Well, I just came from a briefing with General Franks and you're going to the Whale."

So I had to inform General Wiercinski that we were going into the Whale.

INTERVIEWER: Help me here. Who was calling the shots…

STOGRAN: Franks.

INTERVIEWER: …the commander on the ground or Tampa?

STOGRAN: No, Tampa.

INTERVIEWER: Down to battalion level?

STOGRAN: Yes, but that's the anomaly in today's world. I can understand it. Because tactically, from General Wiercinski's point of view, that was the thing to do. Ginger was

the nut that had to be cracked. He had to get to the bad guys that were down in this valley and this village because they were the ones reinforcing and exfilling the casualties, etcetera. That was what he had to do. But, if you look at it, I was an Operational level resource. Even though I was the battalion commander, I was the Operational commander, not Tampa. Tampa was more liaison to the strategic level. From the operational level, to have that Canadian flag out on the Whale, Taqul Ghar I think they called it, where CNN could pick it up, that was far more important than cutting off the remnants of whoever was trying to exfill.

I think from the operational – so there are two sides to that issue. I'm not saying which one was right but that's the day and age we live in. And I think that event, first combat air assault in Canadian Army history, the first sign of a true coalition operation in Afghanistan from the American point of view, was really significant.

INTERVIEWER: OK, go on.

STOGRAN: We get called up and it's, like, from go to woe, I think, three days. And here the American colleagues spent two weeks rehearsing and preparing for their part of this and we're going into our first combat air assault ever and we have three days. So I grab all my commanders down a section level, I think it was, and we get on the next available Herc or C17 into Bagram. And we were cut to for this subsequent Operation to Task Force Commando, which is based on 10 Mountain Division. And we're working for a Colonel Tim Wilkerson[?]. Their call sign is a usually a code word and "six". Like, my boss was "Rack6" and this guy went by "Commando6". All of his staff referred to him as "CNN6" because he was all show and no go.

So we fly in there and his basic orders to me initially were, "I want you to kill Al-Qaeda." So my orders were a little more detailed than that. It was capture or kill Al-Qaeda. We ended up doing some co-ordination things towards the end, but his command intent was very clear "I want you to kill Al-Qaeda!" He wanted us to go, like, tomorrow.

And I'm saying, "Well, the best we can do and I can talk it over with the guys, how long before we can get the troops on the ground."

Then we hear the Afghans have gone up on the Whale and the Operation is delayed for five days.

INTERVIEWER: Now the Whale was a ridgeline? Is that correct?

STOGRAN: That was the ridgeline of the west of the Shali-i-kot Valley. Basically, a feature on a relief map looks like a whale, a spine whale. So were in the process of doing our battle procedure and the Americans are in the process of breaking contact with the enemy and we hear the Afghan, the mujihadeen, or whatever they were called at that point in time, had cleared the Whale already. It will be five day delay. Then we hear, well, they're now down in the village, so were probably going to call off the mission.

The next we know we know, well, we said, "They didn't go on the Whale at all. They went straight down to pillage the valley or whatever." I don't know, to occupy the valley is probably a better word, "So you got to go tomorrow." So, all of a sudden, were back on zero minutes, you're too late so get out there. We had to draw a compromise that was as tight as possible.

So I confer with the staff to find out the sate of the deployment. We still have – we wanted to give proper orders and have briefings and that sort of thing. We were literally so tight that we were pulling the mortars and the mortar ammunition off the Herc to walk down to the DZ for the flight in. It was just-in-time training, or just-in-time planning. And I have referred to it as parallel planning because we would pass information from battalion headquarters to section commander level as fast as could so we could all be as situational aware as they could be at such a hectic moment. Then we launched on to the mountain.

INTERVIEWER: What was your general tactical plan?

STOGRAN: Well, we were told where we had to land, up on the north end. We had to sweep down, down to the south towards Ginger. So that was pretty straightforward. We had enough lift on day one to do, I think, two thirds of the battalion group, the dismounted part. The last company came in the next morning. So we, basically, just secured the LZ and then expanded out.

INTERVIEWER: So, you seized the high ground and then pushed your companies out from there. Is that what you basically did?

STOGRAN: That's basically it.

INTERVIEWER: How did that Operation go?

STOGRAN: We had an American company attached to us. It went well. Unfortunately, we could hear firefights going on down in the low ground. In my estimation, what had happened was, because we didn't move fast enough, because we couldn't get the entire battalion onto the ground, they were exfilling off to use objective Ginger. But they were going down through the valley and meeting up with the mujihadeen who had gone into the valley.

We had one contact. It was right at the south end of the high feature. Recce platoon picked it up. We had an American company attached to us that I was not at all comfortable with because I had never worked with these guys before. So, my plan was to keep them up on the spine and manoeuver my companies elsewhere.

As luck would have it, recce platoon picked up this bunker that was still occupied. The position, in retrospect as I look back on it, was like a rear guard for the troops – or I hesitate to call them troops – but for the Al-Qaeda that were exfilling. It was sort of the last bunker right up on the ridgeline. So they confirmed the enemy there and they done as

recce platoon would. Picked out the best approaches and handed it over to the American company. When it came to me, it was a no brainer. There was one company in that position to secure it. I had moved my battalion tac [HQ] to just behind to what I thought the rucksack RV was. Cause that's our sort of drill. When you are going into combat, you put your rucksacks down and security and all this. Bear in mind, I hadn't worked with these guys before.

So, I'm sort of following what else is happening and I've got Todd McClure, the captain, my battle captain, who's following events very closely there. And I'm sort of thinking, "What's going to happen next." CNN6 comes up, Colonel Wilkerson and he's sort of walking around like General Patten. Were loaded for bear, helmet, flack vest and this stuff. He's got his pistol and his helmet on and that's about it and he's got this little entourage behind and he says, "Pat, are you comfortable with what's happening up there?"

I said, "Well, from what recce platoon tells me, it's one bunker. They've seen two or three Al-Qaeda on it." and I said, "I've got the bulk of my maneuver elements to the east and north of us. So if I hear they're having trouble up there, I'm just behind…" I didn't get into this kind of detail but I said, "If I'm having trouble there, I'm going to bring up one of my other manoeuver elements to reinforce it." Which would have been a feat in itself. So I'm trying to, how do I do that cause there up in the spine. The idea was they would attack down.

And he said, "Well, OK."

I guess I convinced him that I knew what I was talking about. I started wondering what was he going on about. So I'm just wearing my combat shirt and my webbing and don't have a helmet or whatever. So I go up to what I thought was their RV and it's just a pile of rucksacks lying around and I go, "What the fuck!" Like, quite literally and I walk along and there's a web belt there, rucksack there, helmet there, and I'm going along and I thought, " Holy cow, was there a fire fight all the way along here?" It's right at last light. And I'm going along and I'm just going from horror show to the next and I get up on the area of the firefight and it's at last light. I can just make out people but you can't make out what's going around.

I meet up with 6 Niner, Ryan Latinovitch[?], and he runs through what had happened up on the objective and he said, "They didn't even say thanks. They were so anxious to get into the firefight that they just charged down the rib of the spine…" or the spine of the Whale and basically the only thing that anybody said to him was, "Got any water?" Cause they were just like a loose mob and Ryan had the briefing for them. Best attack positions here, best routes and all this sorts of stuff. Thanks, no thanks and we're going to get on with it and they get on and destroy the bunker.

So the firefight's over and I'm coming up on the position and it must have been, gosh, a kilometer or something like that. Seems long. So I'm getting up on last light and I'm come up on these soldiers and I get the back brief from recce platoon commander and I

get up to the just the minus of the objective. And there's all these soldiers standing around shaking with their hands in their pockets. And I'm going, "What's going on…" and they got no kit or whatever. And I said, "Who's in charge here?" And I said, "You get your people back there and pick up the kit before last light and get them to ground!"

He says, "Yes, sir."

So they move back a bound and this is when I get the back brief from Ryan. Actually, it was just after this. He was so gobsmacked by it. So I get the brief and it's getting dark and I have to get back to Niner Tac cause I'd had no intention of going this far without security down the spine.

I'm going back and I go down in to a saddle and I could see just into the twilight that cluster had basically moved. As I moving up on the position, they had an accidental discharge from their machine gun just this side of us. And I hear *WACK* right over my head like that. I was sure that it had gone into recce platoon who was still on the objective. So I had a shit fit. I asked for who's the senior person in charge was and I said, "You get your people back there and pick up your kit and if you have casualties…" and blah, blah, blah.

The next day when CNN6 came along, I was just pissed and I'm trying to be diplomatic and he says, "What's wrong Pat? I can tell you're really upset." Cause he was that – well, anyway…

I said, "Get those people off this mountain because they're more of a hazard to me – I'm more worried about them taking casualties amongst themselves than I am about the Al-Qaeda." So he lifted them off within the next day.

I say that because there is a book written by one of those soldiers who claimed that he and buddy were watching Canadian soldiers down in the valley pull somebody out of a car and execute him. There was a big kafuffle. It was written within the last year. He was quite celebrated. He was captain or a lieutenant.

INTERVIEWER: Are these regular US Army or National Guard?

STOGRAN: They were regular force.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about your next offensive operation?

STOGRAN: Next one was Operation TORII and that was to go into Tora Bora where Osama Bin Laden had made his last stand. We once again deployed to Bagram as a staging base but things slowed down because the LZs that we had picked off from satellite photos when the special forces guys had got on the ground, they were completely unattainable. We had to wait till they could find us some proper LZs. Intelligence was basically only satellite int. and whatever the strategic operators had, or the special

operators had in terms of strategic int. So tactical int. was wanting and we were going off the news reports of these cave complexes. The troops were doing all their mountain stuff.

We knew that it was very rugged terrain so the troops were refreshing themselves on vertical hauling lines and all that sort of stuff. We actually, interestingly enough, had a very good relationship with all of the Special Forces in theatre except our JTF2. We received a lot of anecdotal intelligence from guys that had been there in November when they had actually caused the collapse of Bin Laden's efforts.

But interestingly, they had never done sensitive site exploitation so we were going to be the first ones in, and this is, I think, May.

INTERVIEWER: Define for me sensitive site exploitation?

STOGRAN: We didn't know what that was until we actually did one. It was what I'd call more of a reconnaissance in force. Where you would go into an area that, as you would with a recce, because there was suspicion that they had been there or were there. The intention is to collect evidence. So it's not a confirmed target. We wouldn't treat it as a combat mission but it was an offensive type of mission in that we would have to react to Rules of Engagement to whoever was still there.

INTERVIEWER: So what would be the tactics? Was it more cordon and search or was it to advance to contact?

STOGRAN: It was all of the above because you're in mountains. I would give areas of responsibilities for each company and try to put the LZs close to it, but it depended on the terrain. The idea was, first of all, we knew this to be a location where they had operated. And in the absence of any confirmed bad guys, then our guys were to collect evidence. So that's a sensitive site exploitation.

So, for the first time ever in history, our soldiers were doing the Rules of Evidence and looking for DNA. We were told to watch out for hard drives, booklets, anything that could be handed off to the [?] guys, the CIA and these guys that were building a database on the Al-Qaeda. That's why I refer to it as a reconnaissance in force because it could have been ugly.

INTERVIEWER: Let's go back to Operation TORII. Just before we do, is it T-O-R-Y?

STOGRAN: It's T-O-R-I-I.

INTERVIEWER: Double I. OK.

STOGRAN: And the TORII is the insignia of the Rackkasans. It's the Gate of Good Luck for the Japanese. So that's where the name came from.

INTERVIEWER: So you launch your guys to these sites?

STOGRAN: Yes, fully expecting to see all sorts of caves there and to have to exploit all the talents of the troops in terms of mountain ops capability. When we started conversing with the locals, they looked at us like we had two heads because there were no cave complexes there. They had dug in a very well reinforced and extensive set of bunkers along the top. We searched high and low and we brought in literally tons of explosives. I did not want to leave there and have a British unit come in after us and say, "Look how the Canadians messed up." So we took off the sides of mountains trying to find – in case a JADAM had closed one of these things in – where the cave openings might have been.

What we did find out from the locals was, a bunch of these foreign fighters – which was very significant because that meant that Al-Qaeda – when they told us foreign fighters had been buried in a shrine down in the local village. I sent Charlie Company down to do sensitive site exploitation down in the village. Walking through poppy fields. It looked like it was going to be very tense initially so I remained with the main body because Tora Bora was still the main effort. But I was ready to reinforce down, which would have been another one of these things I would be doing off the seat of my pants but…

They went down into the low ground into the valley, I forget the name of the village, and dug up the graves of these foreign fighters. It was very ornate. You may have seen pictures. It was a very ornate burial ground. As Charlie Company – they did a recce on day one, as I recall, and they described the situation going into the villages like it looked very, very dangerous. The locals were not welcoming them there at all until they explained to them that they weren't there to, as the Soviets had, to burn down their poppy fields, they were there to dig up the foreigners. All of a sudden, it was no problem. They welcomed them in. They actually used the village elders to assist them in it so we didn't desecrate their graves. We tried to follow, as much as you can when you are digging up a grave, the proper tradition. And certainly when we replaced things, we did it all in accordance with the Muslim traditions.

Got lots of DNA etcetera but no real – we were sort of hoping to see Osama buried there because they told us these guys were all very big foreigners and that the intelligence had not heard from Osama Bin Laden since November. So we were sort of hoping maybe he had died there and we'd find him and get the $25,000 000 award, but no such luck.

INTERVIEWER: And in the meantime, your other companies were on the top of the mountain?

STOGRAN: Yes, the other two companies were basically destroying all of the bunkers. A Company had bunch of explosives and we went around and systematically destroyed the defensive positions they had there. B Company was carrying on within their AOR. I can't remember exactly their function was.

Interestingly, subsequent to that shortly before we left, I met with Jim Richardson who was the Apache battalion commander. They were in a big fire fight because up in Tora Bora he stopped by and stuck his head in my office and he had all of his Apaches up

there fighting the Al-Qaeda who had retaken the position and had dug back in. He said, "Stogie, would like to know there back in there and were fighting them."

INTERVIEWER: This is how long was this after you left?

STOGRAN: It would have been July, so it would have been two months, six weeks after we left or something like.

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned the village elders. Did you have many occasions to interact with the locals?

STOGRAN: No. I interacted mainly with the, I'd call them the warlords, the commanders…

INTERVIEWER: The Afghan nationals, yeah.

STOGRAN: …the main fighters. What happened, while we were Kandahar – this is another sensitive issue but it's the truth. CIDA was going to give us a $100,000 worth of seed money because there was no humanitarian aid going on in the region. As soon as it became a combat mission, they backed off. They wouldn't touch us with a ten-foot pole. So the troops wanted to do something for the local people so – this is in the Kandahar region – they collected $7K of their own money and ended up getting other money from Canadians in Dubai and such. We started building schools around the, in the villages right around the airfields, and established a very close relationship with these people.

To the point where Alec Watson, who was my CIMIC guy, because we weren't too focused on CIMIC or humanitarian aid. It was going to be a side issue for us. But Alex was involved full time and he would very often go break the rules and go in very light order and meet with these people because we had such a relationship with the local people. So a lot of the soldiers who were involved in these types of projects – we as much as possible tired to hire the locals – but a lot of our soldiers interacted with some of the local people. I didn't have much occasion for it.

INTERVIEWER: Interview with Colonel Pat Stogran ended of tape one side two.

END OF SIDE TWO

INTERVIEWER: Canadian War Museum Oral History Program interview with Colonel Pat Stogran. Tape two side one.

Can you tell me about Operation CHEROKEE SKY?

STOGRAN: This is, I think, one of the very significant operations because it was the first time where we, as a battle group, had our own task. I recognized, I think, by that point in time it had already been announced that we were coming out after six months. I wanted one last operation. We hadn't really been tested in terms of a firefight. I was referring to

us at that time as Ahave guns, will travel@. We had actually been approached by the special operators, the US Special Forces, Coincidentally I just finished War College with the gentleman. They were going to do the Operation in Deh-ra-wood and they needed conventional troops to do the cut off.

As I said, there is a huge chasm between the conventional force and the special operators, I guess in any army. But we were very close to them and so we actually put it up our chain of command. We wanted to go and do a mini ANACONDA with the Special Forces. When it got up to the three star level General McNeil[?] said, "No it is not a mature enough plan." He wanted strategic recce to carry onY.

INTERVIEWER: General McNeil was?

STOGRAN: He was the three star that had been into theatre after General Hagenback[?], after ANACONDA.

INTERVIEWER: He was an American?

STOGRAN: He was the American, yes. They started to build up the command and control structure in theatre. Up until that point, the three star had been back somewhere in Kuwait at CFLCC Headquarters. So it was turned off. But the special operators said, "Yeah, we are going to do strategic recce but we are going to do it our way." And so they carried on with the operation and fortunately we weren't involved because – I don=t know if you remember Deh-ra-wood but quite a lot of humans shields were put out by the bad guys and so it was a very, very controversial operation that we managed to skirt.

But we were given this other operation in Zabul Province. I guess, tit for tat, they wanted to get us employed. The coalition had a long term plan to do Zabul Province in three phases, as I recall. And so I went to Colonel Lennington[?] and I said, ALook if you can give me my Coyotes, and if I can use recce platoon, we will do all three phases very quickly.@ He managed to convince the chain of command. I don=t know what that took but we used our recce platoon. Up until that point we had been using American Special Forces. It was very worthwhile because, although we had them kitted out like US Special Forces so that we wouldn't alert the locals that it was Canadians coming up.

They very much did things like a tactical recce group would. They had gone up on the recce and they had identified that the fort in Zabul Province, in downtown Qolat – has a huge fort that overlooks the capital – was a training ground for Al-Qaeda. They had gone in there and taken pictures of foreigners, clearly Uzbeks and such, which to us was an indication of Al-Qaeda. And we knew that the governor was involved and so the original battalion plan was we would start off with a cordon and, if necessary, an attack on the fort to capture the Al-Qaeda in them. And then we would use our helicopters and recce squadron to do recess into other areas where we thought there might be some problems.

It was considered initially that that was a little bit too aggressive. They wanted us to tone down the operation so we said, "OK, we will just consider it a reconnaissance in force."

The intention was, because the governor was claiming to be a friend of the coalition, we would just go up and pitch – sort of surprise him, I guess, for lack of a better term. But we put call sign zero in the fort. We=d say, "Hey, your in-laws are here. Can you put us up for the night?" We wanted to surprise him but unfortunately what we thought would be a three-hour road move turned into a nine-hour road move from hell. So he had plenty of time to vacate the fort. He welcomed us in, but there was nothing in there.

We had a couple of sensitive site exploitations up into the north where the governor had claimed there was an Al-Qaeda training camp. But recce platoon confirmed that there wasn't. We basically went into some caves, or some areas where we thought there were caves, to see if there was anything in there. We sent two companies there. It was a matter of concurrent activity throughout the AOR.

While I was meeting with the local governor he said, "We know where there are all sorts of bad guys in the Shinkay Valley." So we decided we=d do a joint operation. This was going to be, sort of, the highlight of our operation up there. It was going to be a joint coalition / Afghan Nationals sweep to capture or kill Al-Qaeda. We set up a series of blocking positions for the Coyotes to go into. We air assaulted troops into different cut-off positions. I was moving my Niner Tac with the Mujihadeen, the army of this local commander. They were actually going to do the sweep and capture people. We went up into the region and there was an adobe compound just before we got into the actual valley, and we crossed this river. I was really impressed with the way they just laid siege to it. They put the cut-offs in. They put the troops up on top of the adobe huts with RPGs, ready to repel boarders and all this. And I'm saying, "Oh, OK, these guys are aggressive, they mean action.

[Tape interrupted]

… into the valley we get to what I would have thought was a…

[Tape interrupted]

… all of the Mujihadeen get out of their vehicles and start brewing up tea, having cigarettes and start smokin= and jokin=. I go, "What's this all about?" The Special Forces guys who were the translators for us they sort of said, "Well it appears, like, to them the operation is over and there are no bad guys here."

I didn't know what was going on. But I was sure that we had been doped.

Right around that time A Company, who had been put in as one of the cut offs, they had a hard landing and we almost lost a chopper. So I was really pissed off that I had been led astray like this. So I went up to the local commander and I said, "We are here to sweep this valley." I wasn't taking any chances. Once again, I didn't want to be embarrassed later on that we had gone into an area and not accomplish our mission. So I said to the local commander, "You are going to do this sweep. We are going to go house to house, if necessary, with you." But I was a little more colourful than that. So they sort of picked up

and started doing their sweep. They apprehended a couple of people and the Special Forces guy said, "Well, Pat, we got these guys what do you want us to do with them?"

I said, "They are notY"

We=d encountered this before. They=d picked up some hapless souls and were prepared to hand them over to coalition. I said, "Unless you can tell they are foreigners or whatever, this was a wasted effort." We do the exfill. Troops all go back. And the way we=d planned it was Niner Tac would be the last one out of the Valley. We would drop by Qolat and I=d go visit the local governor. I was pissed driving in there. We go into his compound and he meets me in the compound. The Special Forces guy's there and he greets me like a long lost brother. I=m told that our Operation uncovered some surface-to-air missiles, including a couple of stingers, apparently. It was a significant capture, if you will. Seizure of surface to air missiles and so it was a chance for me to restore face, I guess. These guys were crediting our sweep with having uncoveredY.

INTERVIEWER: Sorry who was crediting you?

STOGRAN: The governor of Qolat.

INTERVIEWER: And who had discovered the actual weapons?

STOGRAN: Well, he was crediting us with it but I didn't recall them ever reporting it. I think what he was doing was saving face. Because, as you can probably imagine in this environment, surface-to-air missiles were a huge threat and, so, for us to have captured this was going to reflect very well on the battle group. I think it was just sort of pay off because he knew that I knew that we=d been led along on this thing. So I said, "OK, thank you very much." And we handed it over to coalition. We managed to salvage the mission. But what I think was significant about that was, it was a Canadian operation. We used recce platoon, recce squadron, and all elements of it.

INTERVIEWER: Like to ask you about the support elements, specifically fire support elements. Did you use many of your own integral battalion fire support elements and what other fire support elements did you have to call upon?

STOGRAN: We never actually fired. The only encounter we had, as I mentioned, was that company level attack. But we certainly employed TOW to it=s fullest on CHEROKEE SKY. When reconnaissance squadron was off reccing the countryside, we sent TOWs with them in case he might come across some tanks.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever have to use mortars for illumination for instance?

STOGRAN: Negative. No. Company commander fired one salvo of mortars on OP HARPOON at what looked like a machine gun position and had been confirmed. But we took mortars with us everywhere.

That was a lesson that US Forces had on Op ANACONDA because they had decided to leave their mortars behind. I felt a little bit like a country bumpkin. I've used this term before because me and my grade one, page ten, Canadian Infantry approach to things, I was aghast when the battalion commanders, when we were doing the planning for ANACONDA – all except for the 10th Mountain Division battalion commander – said, "No, we are going to leave our mortars behind. We have the Apaches." Well, as luck would have it, they got snowed in and fogged in and the only thing that worked were the sniper rifles and the 120s of 10th Mountain Division. So we never went anywhere without them. TOW was used mainly in overwatch with the Coyotes and, of course, on the perimeter…

INTERVIEWER: How effective were the Coyotes with their surveillance suites?

STOGRAN: They were, as they are everywhere else, they were war winners. That is what changed the face of security around Kandahar airfield, being able to cue the Mujihadeen to any sort of areas that looked there was somebody trying to infiltrate or probe.

INTERVIEWER: I just want to clarify when you have referred to Mujihadeen here, you've been talking about Afghan National Forces or Militias is that correct?

STOGRAN: Yes. That was one of the problems that we had when we started these joint patrols with them. NDHQ wanted us to identify them by name and service number. It was ridiculous. For legal purposes, because they wanted to be sure with who we worked with today wasn't going to be our enemy tomorrow. The only thing we could be sure with at any point in time was they were working with us. So we called them the Mujihadeen. They may have been militia. There were movements at that point in time to try and establish the Afghan National Army or the Transitional Army, or whatever they were referring to it. But that was very, very slow moving in those days. Mujihadeen was a complimentary term to them. It wasn't meant to slag or anything like this. These were the people who were working with us who clearly had not only demonstrated but expressed a desire to rebuild Afghanistan.

INTERVIEWER: So this was just a generic term that troops used to refer to Afghans?

STOGRAN: I couldn't say that all the troops were using it but certainly amongst battalion headquarters it was – because we couldn't keep abreast what the latest politically correct name was. And we weren't sure that they were necessarily part of the national army.

INTERVIEWER: Let=s go back to fire support. What assets did you have on call to your battalion in the event that you needed them on operations?

STOGRAN: We had the world. As I mentioned earlier, Apaches. I could make a call for Apaches at anytime. Troops could make a call through Zero for Apaches. We had

SPECTRE gun ships up. Recce platoon had gone out and established SOPs with them so they knew Canadians.

INTERVIEWER: SPECTRE gun ships were?

STOGRAN: That's the Hercules with a 105 gun on it. It was an amazing piece of kit at night. It could hit a dime at I don=t know how many thousand feet. But it was a key asset in ANACONDA. I felt very comfortable at night because you could hear the purr of the engines over top of us when we were on operations. That was in overwatch. Of course, we could call for fast air also.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have access to artillery or were the operations too widespread for that use?

STOGRAN: There was no artillery in theatre at that point in time.

INTERVIEWER: Can you tell me about the logistics of a single Canadian battalion in an American command?

STOGRAN: We had a forward support group or a forward support element that consisted of, call it 2nd/3rd line support, attached to us from Service Battalion. The intention was, unlike other operations because we were linked in with the Americans so closely, was to rely on their resources where ever possible. For anything that was not uniquely Canadian we would try to resource through the American supply system. Because there was just limited – we were only flying at night for the first part of that tour and very limited capacity to bring them into the airfield. Even to the point of our vehicles, so we tried to leave as many vehicles behind and we borrowed Humvees off the 101st to accommodate that. So we had this forward support group. Their job was to link into 626 Logistics Task Force, which was an ad hoc measure that the 101st had done from their divisional support group because during the Cold War they would fight as a division. I think even during Iraqi FREEDOM they fought as a division. But what they did is, they took a slice from their divisional support group and called it a logistics task force. It would be much the same as a service battalion in the old brigade group construct that we used to have.

INTERVIEWER: So where was the Canadian SFG located.

STOGRAN: It was collocated with us.

INTERVIEWER: But you moved?

STOGRAN: It was in Kandahar.

INTERVIEWER: So it stayed in Kandahar.

STOGRAN: It stayed in Kandahar but when we staged out of Bagram they would send an element forward to us. So the elements of Administrative Company that were with us, they constituted a reserve force for us called Cowboy 6. They would just look after from the LZ to us and the forward support group would handle from the airfield to the helicopter pick up point.

INTERVIEWER: So things like ammunition, rations and POL were pretty much all interchangeable and used American sources?

STOGRAN: Yes certainly POL, rations we were on MREs, troops thought they were the best things since sliced bread for the first six weeks. But after that it got a little bit – they are much like our IMPs, got a little bit mundane. Ammunition, most natures I think or some natures we would use. I know we had reciprocal agreements with the Rangers, for example, because they used Carl Gustav. The rest of the Army doesn't but the Ranger Battalion used Carl Gustavs, so we=d trade off certain natures with them. From that perspective, we were completely operational. I don=t think at any point of time we could have used US .556 ammunition but we always had sufficient stores of our own.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about medical.

STOGRAN: Medical, again, was a US function. We had two Canadian doctors with us and a reinforced, from a Canadian perspective, medical capability. But nothing I would have – if I had my way in terms of – as I=m sure they have right now, the number of medics they have in Afghanistan is significantly more than we used to have in our peacetime entitlements.

Their link was Charlie Med, as we called it. The Med Company that was part of 626 Logistics Task Force and the capability of the 101st. I've often said that we think of US Forces in terms of their combat power and their ability to destroy things. Well, the only thing they do better than destroy things is fix people. Their Charlie Med facility, they would bring trauma surgeons forward in Chinook helicopters right into the battlefield to stabilize casualties that were being brought back. The only reason we didn't have more people killed on the 17th of April with the friendly fire was because Charlie Med literally saved at least Loren Ford=s life, if not a couple of the other troops.

INTERVIEWER: You referred to the friendly fire incident at Tarnac Farms. Can you describe that for me?

STOGRAN: I gotta go back a little bit and set the scene. We had done extensive training at Tarnac Farms and it was all oriented towards our night fighting capability. It was either 3 PPCLI on Tarnac Farms or Rangers or Special Forces or somebody. My intention was, wherever possible, because of our night vision equipment was, if I had to close with and destroy, then I would do it at night because that would give us a significant advantage. We would have troops out there as often as we could. And this is to the credit of the CF. We had significant ammunition coming over for us to maintain and enhance those skills. So we never suffered from skill fade. It got to be quite routine. We were eventually going

to do full scale, company level air assaults but we had to go through each phase. We would have done a company air assault in a pinch without having actually rehearsed it. But I wanted to make sections were absolutely comfortable at fighting at night, and platoons, and we=d build up.

The way we approached it was that we eliminated as much of the peacetime safety as we could and we relied on the chain of command for their own safety. Now, we had a bit of redundancy built in. We would have a commanders' huddle every day. The company commanders would feed back to me what was working what wasn't. The approach was we would only change one moving part at a time. We had sections assaulting in line to start off with, complete with grenades and the whole nine yards, building their own sort of safety. After they had not only done it once or twice but had mastered it, then we would allow them to displace a firebase and then we=d do the same thing at platoon level. We were quite aggressive in our training. We=d have these daily huddles.

But it got to the point where I=d do the odd check down there. But this particular night, April 17th , myself and the RSM had just gone to ground. It was late, can=t remember when, but we were just dozing off. And I had a radio set by my cot and we were both in sort of that transitional period of sleep and listening to the talk with One Niner coming over saying that they had been attacked from the air. To both of us at the time it sounded like a dream. I remember thinking to myself: the Al-Qaeda don=t have any air assets. Where would that have come from? So it just felt like a dream to me because I was just in that state.

Then finally the RSM said, "Do you hear that?" That took me out my sleep and I realized it was actually happening on the radio. After that we just went into battle stations. Daryl Mills, my battle adjutant, was there already. We had some SOPs and they were all going. Steve Borland was in Zero. By this point in time, the dust-off was already en route and in the process. Like, that is how fast their medevac was. It was just amazing. One of the things, again, it has always been my pet peeve. We relied for so long on St. John=s Ambulance. But in terms of training our troops when you're doing these operations, all of a sudden the troops would ask, if you didn't give it to them in their orders, they would ask, "how long is it from bullet to blade?" They=d do anything for you but they wanted to know that you hadn't missed out on that part.

The medevac was very, very slick and we=d rehearsed this and the casualties were coming in. I was down at Charlie Med as they were coming in. Time just flew by. We had already identified that there were four killed and the company had very quickly gathered in who was wounded. Well, I say very quickly, as quickly as they could. It seemed like it was fast but it was over a long period of time. So I was with the wounded. I was actually in the operating theatre when Link had his foot stitched up and when Sergeant Ford was being operated on. I wasn't right up close. But the surgeon said to me as soon as he finished, if that soldier lives the only reason is because he's one of the fittest soldiers that he has ever seen on the operating table. All of a sudden – I've always been passionate about training and PT and stuff like that – and it all clicked in. That's

what it is all about. It is about staying alive on the battlefield. It's not about looking good in a uniform or anything like that.

The next thing I know, the sun is rising and the body bags come back with our KIA, the four guys in it. The night just flew by. I was actually on my way, myself and the RSM, we were going to go out to Tarnac. By the time we got out, there were flags around where they had picked up major body parts, but they were still finding kit. There's an interesting anecdote in the book between Joe Jasper who was 2IC A Company and I where I went back to Zero. And I wanted to bring the company out of there because they had survived the ground zero thing. They were out there doing their sweep. Joe sent back whoever wanted to go back. I said, "Joe you're coming in."

He said, "No, Sir, I=m staying out here to pick up our comrades."

I said, "No, Joe, you aren't listening to me. I=m not asking you I=m telling you."

He said, "Well, you will have to send the MPs out."

At that point in time, I=m thinking to myself what is going to better for his mental health. Because that sort of preoccupied a lot of my thinking. I said he is doing this over battalion command. So do I swallow the bitter pill and let him pick up his comrades? Or how will he feel in two years if I send the MPs out and drag him off there? The next thing I know after that – the time between loading the wounded on the aircraft and the actual ramp ceremony that's just grey to me. The next thing I know we are doing the farewell on the airfield.

INTERVIEWER: What did you do to impart the news to the rest of battalion?

STOGRAN: Right, it is coming back to me. For starters, we had a battalion parade. You can imagine word spread really quickly about the fact that our troops had been attacked by Americans. So I was really worried that this would create a rift between us. So, as soon as possible, I think it was probably the next day, whenever that was. I don=t think it was the morning where I came out of surgery but I think it was the subsequent morning. We had battalion parade for everybody company except A Company. I gave a little bit of a speech saying something to the effect that if you are feeling bitter towards the Americans – don=t. The reason that we are here is because the Al-Qaeda. They are the ones that brought us here. They are the ones that have caused all this. Just keep it in perspective and keep an even keel on all of this. To everyone=s credit it really brought us closer. Task Force Rack 6 came down and gave a talk to the troops and before we knew it we were off doing Tora Bora and OP TORII.

But it was the battalion less A Company. We left A Company to their own devices for a couple of days. We let them put up the maroon beret and wear that around. I got a phone call from General Gauthier. He had seen me on the news because I was wearing my maroon beret. He was saying he was getting some flak for it because I was not a member

of A Company. What are you doing with a maroon beret on? I said, "The troops are mourning." There is a long story but the troops expected me to wear the beret.

He said, "Right answer."

The thing that is worth noting here is that there was a lot of paranoia about the Airborne Regiment that was manifesting itself. I had heard from significant sources that the three-stars at NDHQ were uncomfortable with my leadership style. And I don=t know how they can assess my leadership style because they would get 20 second sound bites or whatever on TV. I=m very confident that there was a lot of concern that we were out of control there. And then they would see me with a maroon beret and, "Oh, Stogran thinks he is in the Airborne Regiment". But it was just an act of mourning on behalf of all of the troops.

INTERVIEWER: Any lasting results of the incident that you know of?

STOGRAN: Lasting results in terms of PTSD or …

INTERVIEWER: In terms of the attitudes of the soldiers, PTSD, perhaps relations with the Americans? Effectiveness of your troops in subsequent operations?

STOGRAN: The Americans were rapt with our participation to the point where they allowed us to open the first foreign chapter of their association, The Rackkasans Association. However, I think the troops now are very much focussed on the latest battle in Afghanistan. The whole thing in Kandahar in those days is probably ancient history to them now. I think it reaffirmed in their minds the capabilities that they have and the fact that they can soldier alongside anybody in the world.

There was very demoralizing period for the troops in the third battalion in particular, as I mentioned earlier. They arrived back from Kandahar, were told to hand over their night fighting equipment and went into this reconstitution mode and that was very tough for them. But I think it was a confidence builder. They view it as an achievement for us to have been working so close to American Forces, shoulder to shoulder with them. It wasn't so much – there was a contrast in cultures. In professionalism, our troops were every bit as professional and capable but there is a different approach to doing business. We really complemented each other. And saw it in a way that had we not been that close probably since that First Special Service Force had there been that kind of unity between Americans and Canadians.

INTERVIEWER: Describe your style of command.

STOGRAN: My style of command. OK. I can quantify this because when I finished commanding a company in 1993, I had gone to Bosnia. It was a life-defining moment for me because up until that point I had always been tactics, techniques, on that side of it. And the personal side of soldiering had always been secondary to me. I thought you had to be the samurai. Family meant nothing because you weren't issued a family. I really

regret that in retrospect, because when I went to Bosnia I saw people fighting for their families and dying and I almost didn't get back to see my family again. So, all of a sudden, the personal side of soldiering was important to me.

When I came back from Bosnia I spent a year in Toronto, high intensity but I was carrying a lot of baggage. With disbandment of the Air Borne Regiment, failure of senior management to back it and all this stuff, it was really traumatizing me big time. That's why I say the six weeks to six months is really important in re-integrating a person. By happenstance, I've always wanted to train with the Australians. I've always wanted to teach at the Jungle Warfare School. That opportunity came up to our regiment so I sent a letter off and I said, "I want to get this job in Australia." I was told, "No, you are a potential battalion commander. It's not for you." As it turned out, I was offered the job.

They said, "Understand something, you might not get promoted as a result of it and you certainly won=t get a battalion if you go there."

I was just so keen on taking this job. I said, "It's just a bird in the hand." I was never ever sure I'd command a battalion anyway, although that was my goal. It was a tremendous sabbatical for me. It brought me closer to my family like I had never experienced before. It allowed me to sort of analyse what I had experienced and learn about mission command. I had syndicates of 10 young professional officers that I could exchange ideas with and took huge advantage of that. I actually developed my approach to mission command and theories about leadership and these sorts of things.

I remember teaching syndicates and coming back and marking assignments and plans and saying, "I wish I could command a battalion now. It is too bad I=m not going to get a chance because I just learning so much after these watershed years for me." When I arrived at the 3rd battalion, I was not going to do a bunch of policy memos. I was going to do mission command. I don=t know if you've read Simkin but he calls it "directive control". The idea is that you don=t force feed details to subordinates. You expect them to use their initiative and you expect them to fill in the gaps.

So I wrote up a manifesto, 21-page value statement. There is going to be no policy directives but my attitudes towards soldiering are on that. I=d bring my field officers in and we=d go through it paragraph by paragraph a couple of times a year, I think. Well, in the first year. The second year was a little bit more accelerated. We=d go through my values. I would have officers come to me, company commanders, saying, "Well, I've got this charge parade and this and this is going to happen. What do you want me to do?"

I=d say, "I want you get out of here and go earn your money. You can back brief me afterwards."

So I spent a lot of time culturing a spirit of empowerment and ownership. When I first joined the battalion I gave a speech and I said, "I will never call this my battalion because, if it belongs to anyone it's Corporal Smith, who I knew was in the 3rd battalion

20 years ago. It's our battalion and I=m just part of the team. I=m lucky that I=m going to be in command of it for two years"

I tried to manifest that in everything that I did. When troops were arriving in Afghanistan – this was after 18 months – I think the troops understood where I was coming from. I made every pitch I could. I used to say to them, focus on your circle of influence. What you can do. That's to be professional at what you can do. I said, "I will take the argument to the Army about our future. You just make sure you can do your job in the here and now."

I had an opportunity to address DMC, which is Defence Management Committee, I think, all the three stars in the Canadian Forces. I was given the opportunity to describe to them what the difference between light infantry and mech infantry is. I just seized on this. But I put together this presentation and I brought in all the senior NCOs and I said, "Guys, this is what I=m gonna tell all the three stars. What do you think?" So they felt part of that team in it.

When they arrived in Afghanistan, I tried to corner all of the companies and sit them down. I said, "Look guys…" I didn't tell them exactly the theories. But I said, "You're probably going to make a million decisions while you are in theatre here. Some of them are going to be life and death even if it just means walking across unproven ground. I said, "Don=t change a thing from the way you've been in peacetime." That is why I reflect back to that. The first thing I said when we got back to Ottawa I said, "Let=s go for a beer." We are not going to get all anal and uptight about this. We are going to just continue on and do the things we have been doing. I=m gonna keep a sense of humour and an even keel. I wanted the troops [to] make those decisions. Keep doing business the exactly the way you have been doing it. The only thing I want to guide your thoughts is whatever you do for the next six, eight, ten months. We had no idea how long we were going to be there, is I want you to be sure that whatever you are doing you are prepared to brag to your wife, your children, your grandparents and your parents B that=s all. So do whatever you want but make sure that you will be proud enough to tell the story when you get home.

I tried to get that around to all of the troops. But my approach to mission command was, I would sit down like Slim and I would spend a lot of time on the concept. I would spend time writing out my intents statement and then I=d walk away from Peter Dawe. He was my ops officer. He=d bring in all the company commanders and he=d go through all the excruciating detail. I wasn't in Zero. I left it to the staff. I=d go into the line and smoke a cigarette with whoever was diggin= a trench. My idea was that I=d get out and hear and feel how things were filtering down from the chain of command. So I=d give a set of orders. We had morning prayers every morning. I would just go out and I=d casually, when I=d meet up with a troop I=d ask them about this and ask them about that. I=d see how things were filtering down. Very much standoffish approach. But I have to say that the majors in that battalion seized on to it. I mentioned the re-integration /

decompression. I planted the seed in Daryl Mills= head. He said, “Let me see what I can come up with Sir.” And Steve Borland, the same sort of way.

After our deployment to Afghanistan, this was a significant change from the normal way of Canadian officers doing business. When I’ve had occasion to meet up with some of my officers – this is in the early PTSD days – but I said to them, “You must have thought I was sort of shirking my responsibility because I was not in Zero…” During the cas evac of the troops, Admiral Tiffault in Tampa wanted me at the helm. He wanted me in Zero. I felt my place was so that the troops that were injured and being casevaced can see Niner there with them. So I went to the staff officers and said, “You must have thought I was really slack and really idle.”

They said, no, to the contrary, they appreciated the opportunity, in a combat zone, to have been able to do what they did.” I think history speaks for itself. And I got to say that all I did was I set that ship on course and it was the initiative and the professionalism of the chain of command right down to section commander [indistinct word] capable.

INTERVIEWER: What was the state of discipline of your troops?

STOGRAN: I think it was the highest. In Afghanistan I=m told anecdotally we had the, up until that point, the least number of accidental discharges. The least number of orders parade. We had the one incident with the sniper. Other than that, discipline was very high.

INTERVIEWER: What was the feelings of dependants? Do you know?

STOGRAN: Dependents, families?

INTERVIEWER: Families during this time you were away?

STOGRAN: Well, of course, there were high level of anxieties but they drew very, very close. I just like to add the level of camaraderie my wife is still very, close to many of the wives of senior NCOs.

INTERVIEWER: Were there many problems with dependants that might have affected any of your soldiers?

STOGRAN: Definitely. In this era of communication we had Internet and phone calls back home and there were, as I mentioned – the levels of anxieties back home were definitely being felt in the field.

INTERVIEWER: You’ve referred to it earlier, but tell me about debriefings, formal debriefings, that you or your battalion may have gotten when you came home.

STOGRAN: In terms of operational that was another interesting thing for me to experience in the aftermath of the whole thing. I was not debriefed at all. General Jeffery

made a point, he believes in the German approach to things. Like, for example, the success of the Germans in Poland. They didn't believe that they were necessarily successful. It was just that the other side was not really up to scratch. So they would always review even their victories as if they had failed. He said, "I=m gonna pick apart everything to do with this deployment to Afghanistan." I never heard anything about it. It sort of came to a head when we were closing down a mission in Africa. There was a lieutenant colonel in charge of three or four majors for the daily int and operations brief, the DIOB in the morning. They actually had him address the collective at this morning briefing. I experienced no sort of debrief.

INTERVIEWER: Well, did you have to write a report, lessons learned, after action report, anything of that nature?

STOGRAN: Yes, there was a lessons-learned approach. We put together a PowerPoint show because I wanted these lessons to be actually seen by people rather than being filed away in the archives in Kingston. The idea was that a senior officer could just put it into their computer and it would just show all of the things and it was in detail. But, unfortunately, the 3rd Battalion was ordered to reverse engineer it and put it into the proper proforma that could be stored into the archives in Kingston so…

INTERVIEWER: So, what were some of the major lessons learned, in your mind, of your deployment? Just the top three.

STOGRAN: Interoperability with the US Forces. When I say interoperability, as I mentioned, this complement of cultures, because we bring something different to the battle which is very useful. I've been told by 101st guys that have fought in Iraq in the original invasion that they have learned things from the way we do things.

I think the utility of mission command. Or refer to it as free reign, or Simkin directive control. It is not manifest in the Canadian Army. It is our doctrine but we are a culture of micro management and zero defect. It took me 18 months to – that's a broad brush. There are certain people who just naturally do that, but our success in Afghanistan was very much a collective effort.

The third one I think it sort of comes off the utility of mission command and it's the capability of our units in terms of combat. We are seeing it today in Afghanistan. I think the battalion regimental level in the Canadian Forces is the bastion of our capability overseas. It is our centre of gravity. The soldiers and young people that we attract today is truly astounding and we should be supporting that.

INTERVIEWER: Can you say a few words about the climatic conditions, altitude sickness, sunburn, hear, creepy crawlies, that sort of thing that your troops experienced?

STOGRAN: It was all there in spades to the 11th degree. We were living in trenches and tents for at least the first three months in typical Korean approach to business. During the winter, as I said, it was moderately warm during the day and frigidly cold at night. Then

we were in altitudes up to, I think, 13,000 feet. We took very, very few casualties. It is a credit to the training of our troops and the discipline and the capabilities of our NCOs. The skill sets that we have been imparting in our infantry in terms of mountain ops, for example. It was interesting that 3rd Battalion attracts all those kinds of infantry guys that like to mountain climb and they like to do spelunking and that sort of thing. They have very much awareness, when we get to 13,000 feet of the problem. What is it, hypoxia and those sorts of things. We took very few casualties due to the climatic conditions.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have any reflections you would like to give me on this tour?

STOGRAN: Yes, I do. Actually just reflecting on the comments that I've had in the last couple of hours as well as my experiences it might sound like I have brought up a lot of negative. I've given presentations that were entitled, "The Glass Half Empty" and "Fledgling Swans Take Flight." And things like that reflect on the frustrations that I had in my early days. But I think that is where the lessons come out. I always encouraged battalion to be – when we would write after action reports, the first person you criticise is yourself and your abilities. Those negative points are not because it was not a high water mark for me, and that I=m not really pleased.

The things that are happening in the Canadian Forces now with General Hillier, with the CEFCom having a clear chain of command and not an amorphous staff that things disappear into. The performance of our troops overseas, I think what it indicates to me, even though I may have come across in a negative vein, the Army has been moving along. And perhaps some of my ranting and ravings have contributed to that.

INTERVIEWER: Interview with Colonel Pat Stogran on 1 August 2006 interview ends.

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