

4. (U//~~FOUO~~) Summary of the Incident. On April 6, 2011 at 0851D* SSgt Jeremy Smith and HN Benjamin Rast were struck by friendly fire from a Predator firing a HELLFIRE missile. The missile functioned properly and struck the target area intended by the commander, however the exact disposition of ground forces was not known by all involved in the execution of the strike. Enemy contact, compartmentalized terrain, and a lack of overall common situational awareness led to friendly forces moving to an unanticipated position resulting in their targeting as assumed enemy forces. Indications and warnings of this pending error were available but unrecognized by the ground force commander, higher headquarters command centers, and the Predator crew. Even if indications that the personnel were firing away from friendly forces were communicated, it is deemed likely that the strike would have occurred anyway due to the ground force's perception of friendly disposition and the source of enemy contact. The key shortfall was a lack of accurate friendly locations of the ground force. Absent this clarity, no unit or person involved in the strike process could have confidently intervened to prevent this tragedy. The immediate ground force commander was not aware that his forces were in the vicinity of the target area, did not refute the targeting of the personnel by accurately indentifying the source of enemy contact, and was unable to use anything other than communicated position reports to improve his situational awareness. Information was available to the Predator crew that potentially could have increased the commander's understanding of the situation but this information was not communicated to the ground force commander or the JTAC. In the final analysis the chain of events that led to SSgt Smith and HN Rast being targeted and ultimately killed by friendly fire was initiated by the on scene ground force commander's lack of overall situational awareness and inability to accurately communicate his friendly force disposition with respect to the enemy.

5. (U//~~FOUO~~) Timeline of events:

0720D*	Ground force departs friendly lines
0807D*	Ground force dismounts at objective area
0820D*	Initial enemy contact
0827D*	Predator directed to scan objective area for enemy
0840D*	Predator identifies three personnel in the vicinity of a compound of interest
0841:12D*	Muzzle flashes observed by Predator IVO three personnel
0841:43D*	JTAC communicates 9-line CAS request to Predator
0842D*	Muzzle flashes again observed by Predator IVO three personnel
0849D*	JTAC communicates ground commander's call sign approving strike
0851D*	HELLFIRE Impact
0852D*	Ground force indicates possible friendly casualties
0855D*	Additional medical personnel arrive at point of impact
D*	Ground force submits casualty report for 1-urgent and 1-routine
D*	Ground force operation center requests MEDEVAC of 2-urgent casualties
(b)(1)1.4a	Casualties commence movement to ground evacuation vehicles
D*	On scene commander reports additional enemy contact
D*	Casualties arrive at vehicles and are reported as 2-FKIA
D*	Ground evacuation vehicles commence movement to HLZ



UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

II MARINE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE (FWD)

UNIT 73920

FPO-AE 09510-3920

IN REPLY REFER TO:

5800

JEC

14 Apr 11

From: Lieutenant Commander (b)(3), (b)(6) 2100 USN
To: Colonel (b)(3), (b)(6) USMC, Investigating Officer
Subj: COMMAND INVESTIGATION INTO THE FACTS AND CIRCUMSTANCES
SURROUNDING THE DEATHS OF HOSPITALMAN BENJAMIN D. RAST XXX-XX-
(b)(6) AND STAFF SERGEANT JEREMY D. SMITH XXX-XX- (b)(6) ON 06 APRIL
2011

Ref: (a) JAGINST 5800.7E, Change Transmittal 2, Manual of the
Judge Advocate General (JAGMAN), 16 Sep 08

1. I am a board certified Emergency Physician assigned to UK Role 3 Hospital Bastion and in charge of trauma resuscitations at this facility. I am additionally responsible for certifying the deaths of US service members who arrive at this facility.
2. I was the physician in charge of the Emergency Department on 06 April 2011.
3. At 0926 hours, we received a 9-line request for medical evacuation mission of two "CAT A" patients who were reportedly injured by blast. This was mission 04-06B. The MIST report indicated one patient with "concussion" and "in/out of consciousness" and another patient with "frag" and "blood loss."
4. Mission 04-06B was later updated (time unknown) to reflect transport of two "heroes," or service members who had been killed in action. No further details of the patients' injuries were given.
5. Mission 04-06B arrived at UK Role 3 Hospital Bastion at approximately 1100 hours with the remains of Hospitalman Rast and Staff Sergeant Smith.
6. I examined Hospitalman Rast and Staff Sergeant Smith at Mortuary Affairs and certified their deaths. A full autopsy was not performed at that time. My preliminary examination revealed the following injuries.
6. Hospitalman Rast sustained fragmentation wounds to the right side of his body, including the right arm, shoulder and back. There was a large penetrating wound to the right side of his head, behind the right ear. A supraglottic airway device had been placed pre-hospital and was in an appropriate position. Time of death was documented as 1024 hours.

Subj: COMMAND INVESTIGATION INTO THE FACTS AND CIRCUMSTANCES
SURROUNDING THE DEATHS OF HOSPITALMAN BENJAMIN D. RAST XXX-XX-
(b)(6) AND STAFF SERGEANT JEREMY D. SMITH XXX-XX- (b)(6) ON 06 APRIL
2011

7. Staff Sergeant Smith sustained massive blast injuries to the head and face, with extensive open skull fractures and exposed brain tissue. Additionally, there were fragmentation wounds and partial amputations of all four extremities. Time of death was documented as 1025 hours.

8. In my professional opinion, the injuries that Hospitalman Rast and Staff Sergeant Smith sustained were unsurvivable, regardless of medical care rendered in the field, during medical evacuation or in a hospital setting.

9. In my estimation, Staff Sergeant Smith died instantaneously. Hospitalman Rast may have lived for some time after his injuries, but his wounds were fatal regardless of care rendered.

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