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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

From: Executive Assistant, Chief of Naval Operations

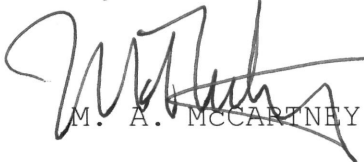
Ref: (a) SECNAV M-5510.36, DON INFOSEC Programs

Encl: (1) CPF ltr 5720 Ser 01J/1634 of 24 Jun 16  
(2) COMTHIRDFLT ltr 5720 Ser N00/215 of 28 Jun 16  
(3) COMNECC ltr 5510 Ser N00/383 of 29 Jun 16  
(4) Executive Summary (Breckenridge Supplement) to DESRON FIVE-ZERO ltr 5830 Ser N00/034 of 28 Feb 16  
(5) VCNO ltr 5830 Ser N09D/16U112919 of 31 Mar 16  
(6) CPF ltr 5830 Ser N01/084 of 31 Mar 16  
(7) COMNECCPAC ltr 5830 Ser N00/026 of 11 Apr 16  
(8) COMTHIRDFLT ltr 5830 Ser N00/S003 of 15 Apr 16  
(9) CPF ltr 5830 Ser N00/0100 of 20 Apr 16  
(10) VCNO ltr 5830 Ser N09/16U100522 of 31 May 16

1. Enclosures (1) through (3) defer declassification authority of enclosures (6) through (9). NAVCENT and DNS-36 conducted a declassification review for Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) proactive release of enclosures (4) through (10). As a result, information was redacted for those sections unable to be declassified and released in accordance with reference (a).

2. All other information is determined to be "UNCLASSIFIED."

3. The points of contact for this matter are (b) (6) (b) (6) NAVCENT, and (b) (6) DNS-36. (b) (6) can be reached at (b) (6) or email: (b) (6) and (b) (6) can be reached at (b) (6) or email: (b) (6).

  
M. A. MCCARTNEY

Copy to:  
NAVCENT  
DNS-36

## Executive Summary

(U//FOUO) On 12 January 2016, two Riverine Command Boats (RCBs) left Kuwait on a 259 nautical mile (nm) transit to Bahrain. It was the longest transit the crews had ever attempted. Their tasking was to proceed directly from Kuwait to Bahrain via a standard Plan of Intended Movement (PIM) track, with a brief stop for refueling half-way through the transit. From the moment they left port, the two boats deviated from the PIM. While the original PIM would have kept the RCBs out of any territorial seas, the crews' unplanned and unauthorized deviation caused them to transit unknowingly through Saudi Arabian territorial seas and then through Iranian territorial seas off the coast of Farsi Island. When the RCBs were about 1.5 nm from Farsi Island, one of the two boats suffered an engine casualty. The boat went dead in the water to conduct engine repairs, while the second RCB stopped and waited. Shortly thereafter, Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy (IRGCN) patrol craft approached the RCBs in a threatening posture (with weapons uncovered). As the crews briefly attempted to evade and then communicate with the Iranians, two more IRGCN vessels arrived. The RCBs, being overmatched, were then forced to reposition to Farsi Island where the crews were held overnight and interrogated. After learning the crews were detained, (b) (6), Commander, Fifth Fleet (C5F) directed a military response while liaising with CNO and CENTCOM/Department of State. As a result of these efforts and diplomatic negotiations, the crews were released the next morning.

(U//FOUO) On 13 January 2016, (b) (6) (C5F) directed (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) to conduct an investigation into the facts and circumstances surrounding the incident. (b) (6) and his team completed a Command Investigation and presented it to (b) (6) on 28 February 2016. After a number of endorsements provided amplifying information clarifying the findings of the Command Investigation, the Vice Chief of Naval Operations (VCNO) directed (b) (6), Deputy Commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command, to conduct a supplemental inquiry to provide a more comprehensive review of this incident, to include a discussion of the consequences of force disaggregation. This supplemental inquiry focused on four areas:

1. (U//FOUO) Pre-deployment Readiness. The investigation reviewed the pre-deployment command organization, manning, and training to determine whether there were deficiencies in those areas and if so whether those deficiencies contributed to the incident.
2. (U//FOUO) Deployment Tasking and Readiness. By the time the detention incident occurred, the RCB crews were in the fifth month of a six month deployment, three months of which were disaggregated from their home port in Bahrain. The investigation reviewed the first five months of the deployment, focusing on the period of disaggregated employment to determine the effects of in-theater maintenance, sustainment training, command oversight, and disaggregated force employment on the transit.
3. (C) Operational Tasking and Tactical Execution. The RCBs were tasked to conduct the 259 nm transit with less than 24 hours' notice. The investigation reviewed the operational chain of command's planning and tasking procedures. It also reviewed the tactical execution of the transit and operational planning and oversight as conducted by the Maritime and Tactical Operations Centers.
4. (U//FOUO) International Law. The (b) (6) tasking letter to (b) (6) also directed the Judge Advocate General of the Navy to provide the investigation team with an analysis of U.S. and Iranian compliance with international law during the incident. VADM Breckenridge's comments on that memo are included as part of this report.

## **Findings**

(U//FOUO) The findings of the investigation are as follows:

1. (U//FOUO) Tactical and On-Scene Failures. The RCB Boat Captains and crews were derelict in performing their duties to expected norms and standards. They did not conduct mission planning or produce a Concept of Operations (CONOPS) brief; they did not review the PIM; they deviated from the PIM without authority; (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a) they failed to report the engine casualty to the Tactical

Operations Center (TOC); they failed to report the sighting of unpredicted land; and they failed to maintain maneuver while repairing one of the RCB engines.

2. (U//FOUO) Supervisory Leadership Failures. (b) (6), Commander, Task Force 56 (CTF 56) and (b) (6), Task Group 56.7 (CTG 56.7) inappropriately tasked their subordinates beyond the capabilities and limitations of their training and craft. They did not ensure adequate planning and preparation, and failed to conduct adequate risk management. CTF 56's "can do/will do" culture, especially in the face of short-notice tasking, frequently compromised appropriate risk management and procedural compliance.
3. (U//FOUO) Operational Planning Failures. (b) (6) (CTF 56) and (b) (6) (CTG 56.7) failed to ensure that the transit was properly planned. The transit had lacked sufficient "go/no-go" criteria, did not have a fully-developed communications plan, did not anticipate the potential for interactions with the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy (IRGCN) and Iranian Navy (IRIN), failed to provide Pre-Planned Responses (PPRs) for Iranian interactions. Contrary to (b) (6) (C5F) intent, (b) (6) and the C5F staff failed to ensure the RCBs had surface or air overwatch during the transit.
4. (C) Inadequate TOC/MOC Oversight. An atypical transit such as this should have been overseen at the CTF 56 Maritime Operations Center (MOC) level, but (b) (6) failed to take ownership of the transit and delegated oversight to CTG 56.7. CTG 56.7 then failed to plan for accountable and engaged Tactical Operations Center (TOC) oversight during the transit. As a result, junior watchstanders coordinated the transit; oversight was disjointed and ineffective, and incident response was passive and reactionary as events unfolded.
5. (U//FOUO) Compliance with International Law. It was reasonable for Iran to investigate the unusual appearance of armed U.S. Naval vessels within territorial waters so close to its shores. However, the IRGCN's obstruction, at gunpoint, of the RCBs' transit

infringed upon their right of innocent passage under international law and was disproportionate under the circumstances. Iran's boarding and seizure of the RCBs followed by the interrogation and video recording of the crew clearly violated established norms of sovereign immunity. The RCB crews, although not operating in accordance with established U.S. Navy procedures, did act consistently with international law.

6. (U//FOUO) Pre-Deployment Training. The RCB crews received adequate pre-deployment training in accordance with established Fleet training requirements. Pre-deployment training and manning were not contributing factors to this incident.

### Causal, Contributing, and Other Significant Factors

(U//FOUO) The factors that led to this incident are complex, but can be divided into one of three categories.

(U//FOUO) Category A: Causal factors that, if corrected, would have interrupted the chain of events and prevented the incident from occurring.

1. (C) (b)(6) (CTF 56) demonstrated poor leadership by ordering the transit on short notice without due regard to mission planning and risk assessment. He severely underestimated the complexity and hazards associated with the transit. He lacked a questioning attitude, failed to promote a culture of safety, and disregarded appropriate backup from his staff and subordinate commands.
2. (S//REL (1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a)) (b)(6) The CTG 56.7 Commanding Officer, (b)(6), exercised poor leadership in that he failed to set the conditions for success prior to the transit. When tasked with extending the RCBs in the Northern Arabian Gulf (NAG), he failed to adapt support and oversight of his disaggregated forces, resulting in degraded RCB maintenance, declining standards, and poor morale. (b)(6) failed to provide appropriate oversight of CTG 56.7 leadership to ensure the crews conducted proper voyage planning for the transit, and was derelict in his responsibility to review and approve the navigation track. He also failed to properly train his TOCs and

plan for TOC oversight of the transit, further hindering awareness and delaying response time.

3. (U//FOUO) When tasked with the transit from Kuwait to Bahrain, the Kuwait detachment Officer-in-Charge and both RCB Boat Leaders were derelict in their duties in that they failed to meet even the most basic requirements of leadership, planning, and tactical execution. The two RCB Boat Captains made poor tactical decisions during the transit that further compounded these problems. Unprepared and unaware, the boat crews were late in responding to approaching IRGCN patrol craft, delaying action to establish a heightened security posture. Their lack of adequate force protection left them with few realistic options to resist detention.<sup>1</sup>

(U//FOUO) Category B: Contributing factors that were not direct causal factors but, if corrected, might have prevented the event from occurring.

4. (S//NOFORN) (b) (6) [REDACTED] promulgated sufficient Commander's Guidance that should have prevented this incident. However, his guidance regarding the importance of overwatch for smaller vessels was not translated into appropriate action by his staff and subordinate task force (CTF 56). They did not provide coordinated surface or air overwatch for the RCB transit contrary to Commander's Intent. Surface or air overwatch would have provided stronger naval support of the RCBs and would likely have prevented the IRGCN from conducting the boarding and detention.
5. (C) The MOCs and TOCs at all levels of the chain of command failed to provide proper oversight during the transit. No TOC or MOC had the RCBs' intended navigation track charted and thus were unable to detect when the RCBs deviated from that track. The operations centers at the CTG 56.7 level and below did not know where Farsi Island was located nor understand its significance. Finally, neither CTG 56.7 nor CTF 56 developed a plan for maintaining tactical oversight and turnover as the RCBs transited from one area of tactical control to another.

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<sup>1</sup> Based upon the investigation team's interactions with other task forces in theater, the boat crews' lack of preparedness and warfighting toughness does not appear to be indicative of a systemic issue within C5F.

6. (S//NF) CTF 56 failed to conduct planning that included risk management. As a result, the RCB crews had less than 24 hours to prepare for this unprecedented voyage and on the morning of the transit had not established sufficient go/no-go criteria for the underway or Pre-Planned Responses (PPRs) in the event of Iranian interaction.
7. (S) In-theater training was deficient in that it did not support elements of new mission employment. Although pre-deployment training included navigation training and certification, the RCB crews were not proficient in conducting “broad seas,” long-range transits. (b)(6) extended the range of RCB operations beyond the traditional littoral operating areas without directing responsive training to address this change in mission profile (navigation, communication, force protection, PPRs, etc.). Further, the crews did not conduct sustainment training of any kind while deployed.

(U//FOUO) Category C: Other significant factors that, while not direct contributors to the event, should be addressed.

8. (U//FOUO) The assessment process at CTF 56 and C5F is weak, in part because feedback is ineffective. RCB employment in the months leading up to the transit was not properly assessed or adapted, as would have been appropriate based on the change in employment and operating area with a greater potential for Iranian interaction.
9. (S//NF) Communications between C5F and CTF 56 require improvement, especially those related to the operational employment of forces. For example, (b)(6) did not effectively communicate the date and time of the RCB transit to (b)(6). This limited C5F’s ability to provide oversight, direction, and forceful backup.

### **Recommendations**

(U//FOUO) Chapter 7 provides recommendations. Some of these recommendations are already in progress. Highlights include:

1. (U//FOUO) Accountability recommendations are addressed in Chapter 7.

2. (U//FOUO) Recommend Navy Expeditionary Combat Command (NECC) and C5F take steps to review and improve Coastal Riverine Force (CRF) disaggregation policy and procedures to include overseeing the flow of disaggregated forces into theater, reviewing and approving the tactical placement of units, reviewing the command and control process for disaggregated units, and increasing oversight of disaggregated operations across multiple areas of operation. Leaders should ensure disaggregated forces receive appropriate enabling support and oversight.
3. (U//FOUO) Recommend C5F, in conjunction with NECC, assess CRF sustainment training in theater to ensure it is sufficient and responsive to changes in mission tasking.
4. (U//FOUO) Recommend NECC conduct a detailed assessment of operational risk management procedures within the CRF and develop a plan of action to instill an active and ingrained planning mindset.
5. (U//FOUO) Recommend C5F improve command and control effectiveness by reviewing staff training and qualification requirements, assessing C5F command and control design, flattening Task Force 56 command and control layers, formalizing its tasking process, and establishing a robust operational assessment process.
6. (U//FOUO) Recommend C5F improve fleet-wide communications and follow-through by: conducting a review of all Fleet and Force Directives to ensure they support commander's guidance from the operational to the tactical level and highlighting defense in depth while institutionalizing priorities through scenario-based training.
7. (U//FOUO) Recommend NECC review CRF theater employment policy to determine whether the forces are effectively tasked within the capabilities and limitations of their boats and training regimen.



## Chapter 1 - Introduction

(U//FOUO) On a routine basis around the globe, the U.S. Navy uses robust planning to conduct successful over-the-horizon operations in complex, high-threat environments. The U.S. Navy is able to routinely conduct successful complex operations because we are a learning, adaptive organization; when something goes wrong, we take a careful, critical look at the event and incorporate the lessons learned into our future practices. The initial Command Investigation, its endorsements, and this investigation are an example of that learning process. Self-assessment is not easy, but it one of the mechanisms that enables the U.S. Navy to maximize combat effectiveness.

(U//FOUO) On 12 January 2016, two Riverine Command Boats (RCBs) left Kuwait on a 259 nautical mile (nm) transit to Bahrain. It was the longest transit the crews had ever attempted. Their tasking was to proceed directly from Kuwait to Bahrain via a standard Plan of Intended Movement (PIM) track, with a brief stop for refueling half-way through the transit. From the moment they left port, the two boats deviated from the PIM. While the original PIM would have kept the RCBs out of any territorial seas, the crews' unplanned and unauthorized deviation caused them to transit unknowingly through Saudi Arabian territorial seas and then through Iranian territorial seas off the coast of Farsi Island. When the RCBs were about 1.5 nm from Farsi Island, one of the two boats suffered an engine casualty. The boat went dead in the water to conduct engine repairs, while the second RCB stopped and waited. Shortly thereafter, Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy (IRGCN) patrol craft approached the RCBs in a threatening posture (with weapons uncovered). As the crews briefly attempted to evade and then communicate with the Iranians, two more IRGCN vessels arrived. The RCBs, being overmatched, were then forced to reposition to Farsi Island where the crews were held overnight and interrogated. After learning the crews were detained, (b)(6), Commander, Fifth Fleet (C5F) directed a military response while liaising with CNO and CENTCOM/Department of State. As a result of these efforts and diplomatic negotiations, the crews were released the next morning.

(U//FOUO) The events of 12 January 2016 stand in stark contrast to the U.S. Navy's otherwise impressive record of performance in one of the most complex and stressful naval operating areas in the world. How could the crews of two RCBs end up breaking down within two miles of Farsi Island in a relaxed defensive posture, such that they were unable to prevent their detainment by Iranian forces? Understanding the answers to this hard question requires a review of the event across all levels of the Navy chain of command and through the lens of long-standing tenets of international law. This report and its enclosures are that review; the intent is to identify the root causes that led to a series of breakdowns in operational oversight and tactical execution, and to provide recommendations to prevent similar recurrences.

### Scope

(U//FOUO) On 13 January 2016, Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command (COMUSNAVCENT) directed (b) (7)(C) to conduct an investigation into the facts and circumstances surrounding the Farsi Island incident. On 21 January 2016, COMUSNAVCENT provided further direction to the investigating officer, directing that the report include a review of several potential contributing factors such as force protection, training, and planning. (b) (7)(C) and his team completed the Command Investigation and presented it to COMUSNAVCENT on 28 February 2016.

(U//FOUO) Because the report discussed actions and responsibilities of both the administrative and operational chains of command, the report was endorsed both by COMUSNAVCENT and by members of the administrative chain of command. These endorsements provided amplifying information clarifying findings of the Command Investigation. Additionally, the Command Investigation identified a number of issues requiring further resolution, to include force employment and command and control (C2) oversight.

(U//FOUO) The Vice Chief of Naval Operations (VCNO) directed (b) (6) [REDACTED], Deputy Commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command, to conduct a supplemental inquiry to provide a holistic review of this incident. In a letter dated 19 April 2016, VCNO directed that (b) (6) [REDACTED] focus on: 1) the command and control for the mission up through the operational level of command, to include whether there was adherence across the entire chain of command to established procedures for mission planning, operational risk

management, orders execution, mission oversight and delegation of authorities; and 2) the impact of disaggregating units coincident with deployment to the Fifth Fleet Area of Responsibility (AOR). In the same letter, she directed the Judge Advocate General (JAG) of the Navy to evaluate U.S. and Iranian compliance with international law during the incident and provide his opinion for inclusion in the supplemental inquiry report. In accordance with VCNO direction, this investigation report is intended to provide Navy leadership with a full and complete understanding of both the incident and its causal factors, as well as provide an authoritative review of applicable international law.

### **Methodology**

(U//FOUO) This investigation team consisted of 17 personnel from both the U.S. Fleet Forces and OPNAV staffs. The investigation team carefully reviewed the original investigation and all of its 265 enclosures, as well as the endorsements and each of the additional enclosures the endorsers provided. Nine team members, including (b)(6), traveled to Bahrain immediately after the VCNO tasking to conduct interviews and gather additional evidence. Two team members traveled to San Diego to gather additional materials covering aspects of unit and squadron training. Six personnel remained at U.S. Fleet Forces Command to provide reach-back support.

(U) This investigation report is divided into a number of chapters intended to give the reader a clear picture of the events near Farsi Island on 12 January 2016 and the causal factors for the incident. Chapter 2 covers applicable aspects of international law, including Iranian interaction; Chapter 3 discusses the RCB crews' pre-deployment readiness; Chapter 4 discusses the effect of disaggregation on the RCB crews and comments on leadership's obligation to proactively oversee disaggregated forces; Chapter 5 covers the operational re-tasking process, tactical execution, and oversight for the transit; and Chapter 6 discusses the RCB crews' captivity and release.

(U) The report's recommendations are consolidated at Chapter 7. These recommendations are either short-term or long-term. Some are already in progress. Chapter 7 also details the steps already taken by C5F and Navy Expeditionary Combat Command (NECC) to prevent similar incidents.

## Background

(U) In order to fully understand the Farsi Island incident, it is first necessary to understand aspects of the U.S. Navy administrative and operational chains of command as they relate to the RCBs. This section will identify specific commands involved in the incident, describe the operational and administrative chains of command, describe various command and control authorities, and the types of missions and vessels associated with the RCB chain of command.

(U) An administrative chain of command has responsibility for manning, training, and equipping naval personnel to forward deploy. Prior to the deployment, the RCB crews were under the administrative chain of command of Coastal Riverine Squadron Three (CRS 3), who in turn reports to Coastal Riverine Group One, who in turn reports to Navy Expeditionary Combat Command, Pacific (NECCPAC).

(U) Once CRS 3 deploys overseas, in this case to the C5F AOR, it becomes part of an operational command. The administrative command still has administrative control (ADCON) of the forces, while the operational chain of command exercises tactical control (TACON) and operational control (OPCON). C5F exercises OPCON of several subordinate Task Forces, one of which is CTF 56. CTF 56 exercises OPCON of several subordinate Task Groups, one of which is CTG 56.7. When CRS 3 enters the C5F AOR, it becomes CTG 56.7. CTG 56.7 is headquartered in (b)(6) geographically disaggregated Task Units. CTU 56.7.1 is located in (b)(6) UAE; CTU 56.7.2 is in (b)(6); 56.7.3 is stationed at Kuwait Naval Base (KNB); 56.7.4 is deployed to Bahrain. As discussed in later chapters, the RCBs moved from CTU 56.7.4 in Bahrain to 56.7.3 in Kuwait about half-way through the deployment.

### 1) Administrative Chain of Command

a. (U) Navy Expeditionary Combat Command. In January of 2006, the Chief of Naval Operations established NECC to provide combat-ready expeditionary forces to Numbered Fleet Commanders and Combatant Commanders. NECC is a subordinate command of U.S. Fleet Forces Command and serves as the single functional command to centrally manage the U.S. Navy's expeditionary forces currently serving in every theater of operation. NECC's mission is

to organize, man, train, equip, and sustain Navy Expeditionary Combat Forces to execute combat, combat support, and combat service support operations across the full spectrum of naval, joint, and combined operations which enable access from the sea and freedom of action throughout the sea-to-shore and inland operating environments.

b. (U) The Coastal Riverine Force. The Coastal Riverine Force is part of NECC. It operates in harbors, rivers, bays, across the littorals, and ashore. Its primary mission is to conduct maritime security operation across all phases of military operations by defending high value assets, critical maritime infrastructure, and ports and harbors, both inland and on coastal waterways. The Coastal Riverine Force also conducts combat operations when directed by higher authority. The Coastal Riverine Force b(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

2) Operational Chain of Command.

a. (U) Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command/FIFTH Fleet. COMUSNAVCENT/C5F conducts persistent maritime operations to support U.S. interests, deter and counter disruptive countries, defeat violent extremism and strengthen partner nations' maritime capabilities in order to promote a secure maritime environment in the U.S. Central Command AOR. Its area of operations encompasses about 2.5 million square miles of water area, to include the Arabian Gulf, Red Sea, Gulf of Oman, and parts of the Indian Ocean. This expanse, composed of 20 countries, includes three critical choke points at the Strait of Hormuz, the Suez Canal, and the Strait of Bab al Mandeb at the Southern tip of Yemen. COMUSNAVCENT/C5F is headquartered in Bahrain. COMUSNAVCENT/C5F will be referred to as C5F throughout the remainder of this report.

b. (U) Commander, Task Force 56. CTF 56 operationally controls seven different Task Groups made up of NECC forces, including CTG 56.7. The types of forces under its command include naval construction forces, Navy explosive ordnance disposal, mobile diving and salvage, maritime expeditionary security forces, Navy expeditionary logistics support forces,

combat camera, riverine squadrons (CTG 56.7), b(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a), maritime civil affairs teams, and expeditionary training teams. Its mission is to properly assign and manage these NECC forces in theater and to provide NECC expertise in support of C5F tasking. CTF 56 seeks to “Dominate the Littorals, Reinforce the Blue Water.”

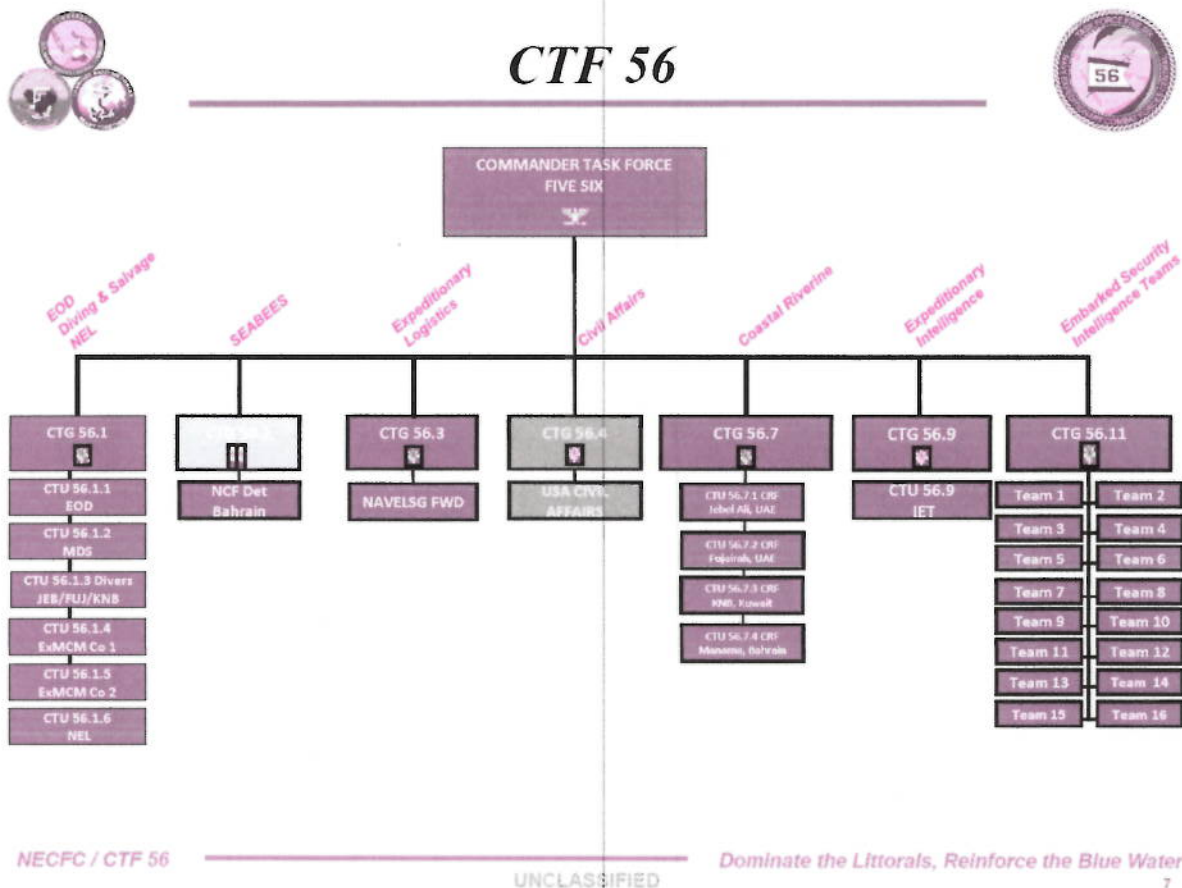


Figure 1-1.

c. (S) CTG 56.7. When Coastal Riverine Squadrons deploy to the FIFTH Fleet AOR they become CTG 56.7. As discussed above, when the Farsi Island incident occurred, CRS 3 was deployed to C5F, and its Commanding Officer was acting as CTG 56.7 Commander. CTG 56.7 Headquarters is located in Jebel Ali, UAE. CTG 56.7 had TACON of four geographically disaggregated CTUs, one of which included the two RCBs involved in the RCB detention incident. At the beginning of the deployment the RCB crews were stationed in Bahrain as part of CTU 56.7.4, and about half-way through the deployment they were moved to Kuwait to operate

as CTU 56.7.3. They were part of CTU 56.7.3 at the time of the incident. CTU 56.7.1 and 2 are both located in the UAE. CTU 56.7.1 is in Jebel Ali, and CTU 56.7.2 is in Fujairah.

(U) CTUs operate several small boats in theater, but three are discussed at various times throughout this report. They are: (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a)

(S) Combat Control Boat (CCB). The U.S. Navy's only CCB was built in 2011 and assigned to CTU 56.7.4 in Bahrain. (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a)

(S//NF) Riverine Command Boat (RCB). RCB missions in the C5F AOR (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a)

(U) 34-Foot Patrol Boat (Sea Ark). The 34-Foot Patrol Boat is the smallest of the boats discussed in this report. Its primary mission is to conduct force protection of strategic shipping and naval vessels operating in the inshore and coast assets, anchorages and harbors. (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a)

(U) Mark VI Patrol Boat. The MkVI Patrol Boat represents the newest boat in the Navy's inventory. This innovative, low-cost platform with a (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a)

[REDACTED]

(U) Weapon Conditions. (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a)

[REDACTED]

### Sequence of Events

(U) CRS 3 conducted pre-deployment basic training from September 2014 through May 2015, culminating in a satisfactory Final Evaluation Problem 11-15 May 2015. CRS 3 completed the advanced/integrated training phase in July of 2015. CRS 3's training cycle is discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

(S) CRS 3's main body deployed to the Fifth Fleet AOR on 8 August 2015 and commenced Relief-in-Place/Transfer-of-Authority (RIP/TOA). On 12 August 2015, Commander, CRS 3 assumed command of CTG 56.7. The crews of RCBs 802 and 805 did not participate in RIP/TOA. Instead they first deployed to Indonesia to participate in an exercise, and rejoined their command in Bahrain as an element of CTU 56.7.4 on 17 August 2015. The CTG 56.7 force laydown is depicted in the following figure:



Task Unit	Location	Personnel	Platforms
56.7.1	Jebel Ali, UAE	b(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a)	
56.7.2	Fujairah, UAE		
56.7.3	Kuwait Naval Base		
56.7.4	Bahrain		

Figure I-2

(S) RCBs 701, 802, and 805 moved from Bahrain to Kuwait Naval Base (KNB) and joined CTU 56.7.3 on 12 October 2015. From 12 October 2015 through 13 December 2015 they conducted presence operations, tactical experiments and other patrol activities during b(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a) [REDACTED]. (b)(6) [REDACTED] (CTF 56) extended the RCB mission at KNB in support of other NECC objectives.

(U) On 6 January 2016, the CCB in Bahrain sustained an engine casualty that prevented it from supporting an operation in the vicinity. (b) (5) [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED].

The crews learned of the decision on the afternoon of the 11<sup>th</sup> when they were ordered to move the next day. RCB crewmembers stayed up all night making repairs to RCB 802 to make her mission capable.

(S/NF) On 12 January 2016, the RCBs got underway several hours past the approved start time and immediately deviated from the approved track in order to make up time. At the time, they had not satisfied the go/no-go communications criteria, RCB 802 was in the b(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a) [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

(U) The RCBs entered Iranian territorial seas in the vicinity of Farsi Island at 1546, and at 1612 stopped to assess and repair an engine casualty on RCB 802. Two boats, later identified as the

Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy (IRGCN), were observed approaching at high speed about 15 minutes later. At 1628 the RCBs began making way again, RCB 802's engine casualty being repaired. The IRGCN boats maneuvered in front of RCB 802 and pointed their weapons at the 802 crews. As the crews briefly attempted to evade and communicate with the Iranians, two more IRGCN vessels arrived. Now overmatched, the RCB crews submitted to IRGCN direction, nesting the RCBs together. The IRGCN boarded, searched, and seized the RCBs, and then searched, blindfolded and bound the crew. They struck the U.S. flag, replacing it with their own. Two Sailors were forced at gunpoint to drive the RCBs to Farsi Island, arriving at 1753.

(U) At Farsi Island, the RCB crews were placed in a room and interrogated as a group. Over the course of the night, seven of the ten were further interrogated individually. On the morning of 13 January they were fed while a news crew recorded them. (b)(6), the RCB 802 Boat Captain and only officer in the crew, was given a script to read on camera; after several attempts to evade compliance he was told that they would not be released until he read it exactly as written. (b)(6) read the script.

(S/NF) The Fifth Fleet watchfloor was notified between 1710 and 1715 on 12 January of an interaction between the RCBs and Iranians. The watchfloor attempted to gather more information but did not react until approximately 1800, when (b)(6) (Commander, 5F) came to the watchfloor following a phone call with (b)(6) (Commander, TF 56) in which (b)(6) informed him of an Iranian interaction and loss of communications. (b)(6) directed the C5F response.

(U) On 13 January, after (b)(6) read the Iranian script, the crews were blindfolded and led back to the RCBs. They rendezvoused with USS ANZIO around 1301, were transferred by helicopter to USS HARRY S TRUMAN, and then transferred by fixed-wing aircraft to Al Udeid airbase, where they arrived at 1747 to begin the reintegration process.

## Chapter 2 – U.S. and Iranian Compliance with International Law

### Summary

(U//FOUO) On 12 January 2016, Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy (IRGCN) forces breached long-standing tenets of international law when IRGCN vessels intercepted two U.S. Riverine Command Boats (RCBs) in Iran's territorial sea. During their forcible interdiction and subsequent boarding of the RCBs, the IRGCN vessels violated both the RCBs right to exercise innocent passage and the principle of sovereign immunity.

(U//FOUO) First, the RCBs were entitled to transit through territorial seas continuously and expeditiously as an exercise of the right of innocent passage. Vessels in innocent passage may stop if necessary due to *force majeure* or distress; the RCBs did not violate international law by stopping to assess and repair an engine casualty. The IRGCN vessels obstructed innocent passage by maneuvering in front of one of the RCBs with weapons trained on the crew, forcing it to stop.

(U//FOUO) Second, the immunity of one State from the jurisdiction of another State is an undisputed principle of international law. Iran disregarded this well-established norm when its agents boarded, searched, and seized the RCBs, and replaced the colors of the United States with the IRGCN's standard. Sovereign immunity also protects personnel onboard a State vessel from search and seizure by foreign authorities to include preserving the sanctity of their identities. Iran therefore further violated sovereign immunity by its detention, search and video recording of the crew.

### Permissible Presence in Iran's Territorial Sea

(U//FOUO) As described in enclosure XIII, the legal memorandum of the Judge Advocate General,<sup>1</sup> the RCBs were entitled to transit in innocent passage through Iran's territorial sea. The RCBs were moving rapidly and expeditiously through Iran's waters as they relocated from Kuwait to Bahrain, until RCB 802 experienced an engine casualty 1.5 nm from Farsi Island. The

fact that the RCBs stopped to trouble-shoot and repair the casualty did not render their passage non-innocent. The fact that this transit was not a planned or purposeful exercise of innocent passage is not relevant to the lawfulness of the transit under international law. The RCBs did not engage in activity that would have threatened Iran's security or otherwise make their passage non-innocent. Consequently, they were entitled to proceed unimpeded by Iranian forces.

(U//FOUO) No doubt, from the IRGCN's perspective, the transit of U.S. forces not only through their territorial waters but also in such close proximity to Farsi Island itself was highly unusual and deserved investigation. While the right of transit passage through the Strait of Hormuz and its approaches is exercised almost daily, as a matter of policy and practice, the U.S. has not actively exercised the right of innocent passage in the waters surrounding Farsi Island, perhaps inadvertently establishing a "pattern of life" expectation that the territorial sea around Farsi Island would not be transited by U.S. Navy vessels. In addition, as described in more detail later in this report, there was a well-established navigation track used by forces transiting between the Central Arabian Gulf (CAG) and Northern Arabian Gulf (NAG). The RCBs originally planned to follow that track, but deviated from it to make up time after commencing their voyage late. The questions asked during crewmembers' interrogations while held by Iran indicate a concern that the RCBs were part of a larger force in the vicinity, or were executing some mission inimical to Iranian security. The desire to resolve U.S. operational intent is understandable and reasonable; every coastal state has the right to verify compliance with the innocent passage regime. But as the Judge Advocate General points out, the coastal state's remedy when transit is non-innocent is to request compliance with international law, and failing that, require the offending vessel to depart the territorial sea. In this case, finding that the RCBs had made a navigational error compounded by an engine casualty, the IRGCN overstepped the coastal state's authority when it responded by forcibly boarding and seizing them.

### **Obligation to Render Assistance**

(U//FOUO) Iran was not obliged under international law to offer assistance to the RCBs, according to the Judge Advocate General. Nevertheless, (b)(6) (C5F) was correct in noting in his endorsement of the Command Investigation that as a matter of policy and practice a

vessel encountering another vessel dead in the water and indicating mechanical problems should offer assistance.<sup>2</sup> This is the custom among mariners from time immemorial; it is codified as a positive legal obligation on U.S. naval personnel in U.S. Navy Regulations paragraph 0925.

### **Sovereign Immunity**

(U//FOUO) The Judge Advocate General also opined that the RCBs were State vessels entitled to full sovereign immunity. Sovereign immunity protects the RCBs and any materiel or personnel onboard from seizure or search, as well as protecting the identity of any crew or cargo, whether in national or international waters. Applying that standard to Iran's actions taken against the RCBs, the Judge Advocate General opined that "[t]he actions of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy (IRGCN) personnel in forcibly detaining RCB 802 and RCB 805 and taking their crews into custody during the incident were inconsistent with customary international law...." This was compounded by taking down the American flag and replacing it with an Iranian flag, ransacking the vessels, damaging equipment, searching the vessels and crew members, and interrogating the crew members. Additionally, although the protections of Geneva Convention III, Article 13 from "insults and public curiosity" did not apply since the U.S. is not in an international armed conflict with Iran and the crew members were not prisoners of war, the filming of the crew while in Iranian custody further violated sovereign immunity by revealing the identities of the crew.

### **RCBs Complied with International Law Requirements**

(U//FOUO) Iran was able to commit these violations because although the RCB crews complied with international law, they failed to adhere to established standards of vigilance and force posture. As described in detail in the remainder of this report, complacency in planning and executing the RCBs' movement from Kuwait to Bahrain at the tactical and operational levels of command cost the RCB crews their maneuverability, compromised their self-defense posture, and forfeited the vital decision space necessary to maintain the tactical advantage, ultimately ceding control to the Iranians.

(U//FOUO) However, this failure to adhere to U.S. policies and procedures did not violate international law and do not excuse Iran's unlawful reaction. The evolution of this voyage from a poorly planned and executed long-range transit to an international incident is attributable primarily to Iran's failure to adhere to established international norms.

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<sup>1</sup>Pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 5148 and SECNAVINST 5430.27D, the Judge Advocate General, among other things, provides legal advice on international and operational law issues of interest to the Navy Department, including: fundamental principles of international law the govern or affect Naval operations, matters of jurisdiction or sovereignty over various parts of the world's oceans, the international legal status and navigational rights of vessels, and the safeguarding of national interests in the maritime environment.

<sup>2</sup> See First Endorsement, ¶ VI.D.5.

## Chapter 3 – CRS 3 Organization, Manning, and Training

### Organization

(U) In the ten years since its creation, Navy Expeditionary Combat Command (NECC) has continuously adjusted its manning, training and organization to adapt to the changing demands of Combatant Commanders and the realities of fiscal constraints. To fully understand how CRS 3 was manned for its 2015-2016 deployment, it is necessary to understand the NECC and Coastal Riverine Force (CRF) organizational changes that preceded the deployment.

#### NECC Reorganization and the Creation of the Coastal Riverine Force

(U) In January 2006, the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) established NECC to provide combat-ready expeditionary forces to Numbered Fleet Commanders and Combatant Commanders.

(U) In late 2011, as a part of the Navy's Program Objective Memorandum for Fiscal Year 2012 (POM-12) Efficiency Review, NECC began executing a phased plan to realign and merge Maritime Expeditionary Security Squadrons and Riverine Squadrons.<sup>1</sup> The CNO ordered these organizational changes due to further budget reductions in POM-13.<sup>2</sup>

(U) The reorganization and merger approved in Fiscal Year 2012 (FY12) and implemented in FY13, which ultimately resulted in the creation of the CRF, was well understood and carefully managed by Navy leadership at every level. This realignment was successfully managed by respective Coastal Riverine Group Commanders, and resulted in certified and effective units for deployment worldwide. NECC formed the CRF on 1 October 2012 by merging the Maritime Expeditionary Force and Riverine Force.<sup>3</sup> The CRF consists b(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a)

Creation of Coastal Riverine Squadron Three (CRS 3)

(U) On 2 January 2013, CRG 1 merged its Maritime Expeditionary Security Squadron Three (based in San Diego, CA) with Riverine Squadron Three (based in Yorktown, VA) to form Coastal Riverine Squadron Three (CRS 3). CRS 3 is headquartered in San Diego with detachments in San Diego and Yorktown.<sup>4</sup> CRS 3 deployed with Detachment Yorktown (Delta Company) to the Fifth Fleet Area of Responsibility (AOR) in December 2013.<sup>5</sup> [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Detachment Yorktown's billets, resources and equipment were scheduled to transfer from Detachment Yorktown and join the rest of CRS 3 in San Diego in September of 2014.<sup>7</sup> In April 2014, Detachment Yorktown's billets were transferred to CRS 3 in San Diego, six months ahead of schedule.<sup>8</sup> While Detachment Yorktown was deployed, CRS 3 received new Sailors to fill the Delta Company billets in San Diego.<sup>9</sup> In July 2014, Delta Company returned from deployment and began to transfer personnel, resources and equipment from Delta Company in Yorktown to San Diego.<sup>10</sup>

**Manning**

Priority Manning Request

(U) In August 2014, both CRGs submitted a joint request, endorsed by NECC, for [REDACTED]. Ratings are Enlisted occupations that consist of specific skills and abilities. A request for [REDACTED] b(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a)

[REDACTED]

request was for specific ratings on both coasts and in a number of CRG squadrons, including CRS 3. U.S. Fleet Forces Command denied this request on 22 October 2014 because future manning forecasts showed that within nine months those rates were projected to have a [REDACTED] Fill, [REDACTED] b(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a). In other words, U.S. Fleet Forces Command denied the request because within nine months, unit manning was projected [REDACTED]





during that month b(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a) Manning Control Authority Fleet (MCAF) requirements. However, as described above, this was due to a June 2015 change in the CRS 3 FDM which b(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a) the number of Billets Authorized (BA) for Supervisors and Journeymen, and b(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a) the number of BA for Apprentices. The Fit levels did not change due to physical movement of Sailors into or out of the command. This Manpower Document change resulted in a “step change” in both Fit and Fill across paybands. The number of Sailors Carried Onboard (COB) b(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a) over the 12 months prior to the 2015-2016 deployment and is reflected as a general trend across paybands. Had the Manpower Document not changed in June 2015, it is expected that CRS 3 would have met MCAF-required Fit levels for deployment. CRS 3 b(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a) of Critical Navy Enlisted Classifications (NECs) required by MCAF. In the aggregate, CRS 3 b(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a) Enlisted Sea Duty and NECC Enlisted Sea Duty levels for RCN Fit and Fill in May 2015, prior to the CRS 3 Manpower Document change.<sup>16</sup>

### **(U) Training**

(U) To fully understand CRS 3’s training and certification, the following describes the Navy’s process to train, assess, and certify units in preparation for deployment.

#### Optimized Fleet Response Plan

(U) The Optimized Fleet Response Plan (OFRP) is the Navy’s model for sustainable force generation. OFRP optimizes the readiness generation process to achieve and sustain maximum employability for all forces. The OFRP encompasses all aspects of force generation, to include maintenance, training, and manning. Commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command (USFF) in coordination with Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet (CPF), direct the implementation and execution of the OFRP. Four major phases constitute the OFRP cycle: (1) maintenance phase, (2) basic phase, (3) integrated or advanced phase, and (4) sustainment phase (including pre-deployment, deployment, and post-deployment sustainment period). Individual requirements are completed in the maintenance phase, unit training is accomplished in the basic phase, and multi-unit training is integrated into the advanced phase.<sup>17</sup>

### Fleet Response Training Plan

(U) The Fleet Response Training Plan (FRTTP) is aligned with the OFRP and provides structured and sequenced training to accomplish readiness. The FRTTP is subdivided into the maintenance phase (aligned to OFRP Phase 1), basic phase (aligned to OFRP Phase 2), and advanced phase (aligned to OFRP phase 3). Individual training requirements are completed in the maintenance phase, unit training in the basic phase, and multi-unit training is integrated into the advanced phase. CRS 3's basic phase was led by the Coastal Riverine Group One Training Evaluation Unit (CRG 1 TEU), and the advanced phase was led by the Expeditionary Warfighting Development Center (EXWDC), both Echelon IV commands.<sup>18</sup> The training cycle framework for the FRTTP and the deployment certification process for the FRTTP are published in the USFF/CPF Fleet Training Continuum (FTC) instruction. Commander, Third Fleet (C3F) serves as the Executive Agent for the FTC on the west coast, and is thus CRS 3's ultimate certifying authority. NECC Pacific (NECCPAC) and CRG 1 make the deployment readiness recommendations to C3F for CRS 3.<sup>19</sup>

(U) In accordance with the FRTTP, units are trained to established standards and assessed on their capabilities to accomplish mission sets including: (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a)

Communications; and Base Camp Operations in an Expeditionary Environment. Final certification recommendation is contingent upon achieving the number of trained and ready boat crews required for this deployment. At the commencement of CRS 3's FRTTP, the CRG 1 TEU established a FRTTP specifically for CRS 3, based on aggregated requirements listed in the deployment Force Tracking Number (FTN) capability requirements and CRS 3's troop-to-task assessment.<sup>20</sup> FTNs tell CRS 3 which missions and tasks various units should be trained to accomplish.

### Basic Phase Training

(U) The basic phase focuses on completion of Unit Level Training (ULT) requirements: team training, unit level exercises, evaluations, and assessments. Upon completion of all required sub-

events, a Final Evaluation Problem (FEP) is conducted to provide a practical demonstration and assessment of all capabilities and performance.<sup>21</sup>

(U) Coastal Riverine Maritime Operations Training in the basic phase is provided by the CRG 1 TEU. It is comprised of an estimated 130 hours of instructor contact time per student over four sequential weeks and it includes classroom and hands-on underway (field) instruction on Coastal Maritime Operations for maritime CRS Companies and Riverine Maritime Operations for riverine companies, to include mission planning, tactical boat handling, patrol operations, asset protection, contact prosecution, communications, tactical insertion/extraction (riverine elements only), patrolling and interdiction, and the Use of Force (UoF) continuum. This unit-level training requires crews and watch sections to employ proper Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs), Standard Operations Procedures (SOPs), and watch standing fundamentals in the required Coastal Riverine Company (CRC) capabilities of: port security/harbor defense; riverine operations; harbor approach/defense; and vessel escort.<sup>22</sup>

(U) The FEP is a final evaluation for a CRS and marks completion of the basic phase. FEP is designed to evaluate CRS performance in mission planning, rehearsal, execution, and debrief for the “most likely and most dangerous” combat scenarios. FEP is a scenario-driven, robust, performance-based evaluation of the unit’s ability to conduct multiple simultaneous naval capability areas and to survive complex casualty control situations under stressful conditions. This includes an evaluation of all conditions of readiness the unit is designed, manned, and equipped to exercise. Units must demonstrate sufficient tactical proficiency and warfare knowledge to progress to the advanced phase and integrated unit training.<sup>23</sup>

#### Advanced/Integrated Training

(U) Advanced/Integrated training is a two- to six-month period during which units from various commands participate in multi-unit training events. The advanced phase goal is to prepare and assess the unit and command’s ability to integrate and exercise capabilities into operations within their deployed Task Force/Task Group/Task Unit operational structure. This is accomplished through Navy staff planning phase I and II and NECC Integrated Exercise (NIEX).<sup>24</sup>

(U) NECC Staff Planning phases I and II provide the foundation for development of the CRS headquarters staff training plan and introduces the staff to the fundamentals of Maritime Operations Center (MOC)/Tactical Operations Center (TOC) operations center procedures and the Navy staff planning process. It includes 21 hours of academics and 27 hours of team training for the Command Center and watch floor. The objectives include: knowledge and skills to use the staff planning process; mission analysis principles and Course of Action (COA)/Concept of Operations (CONOPS) development; developing multiple options for the allocation of limited resources; and defining/mitigating risk in COA and CONOPS development. The MOC/TOC training focuses on the execution of Navy Standard Communications Procedures and command developed operating procedures. MOC/TOC team training is intended to provide baseline fundamentals supporting successful watch station qualifications, and is not designed to substitute for a watch standing personnel qualification standard.<sup>25</sup>

(U) EXWDC is responsible for advanced phase exercise coordination and development, staff organization, and final assessment of NECC units. EXWDC accomplishes this through the NECC Integrated Exercise (NIEX). During NIEX, CRS 3 was assessed on its ability to perform 11 Navy Tactical Tasks (NTAs), including the following C2-specific NTAs: (U//FOUO) E.O. 13526 1.4(a) [REDACTED]; Perform Collections Operation and Management; Acquire, Process Communicate Information, and Maintain Status; Determine and Plan Actions and Operations; Direct, Lead, and Coordinate Forces.<sup>26</sup>

#### Certification Recommendation

(U//FOUO) After satisfactory completion of Measures of Performance (MOP) in line with NTA and assigned NMETLs, CRG 1 recommended certification of CRS 3.<sup>27</sup> In July 2015, upon completion of the basic and advanced phases, CRG 1 forwarded certification of CRS 3 through NECCPAC to C3F for CRS 3's 2015-2016 deployment to the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Fleet AORs.<sup>28</sup> At the end of Basic/Advanced Phase training, CRS 3 met mission capability and capacity in these assigned theaters, to include FTN # 1150C063552 that requested four Riverine Command Boat (RCB) crews.

(S//NF) To meet the certification requirements, CRS 3 was required to operate as a forward deployed C2 and tactical staff with a number of varied mission sets.<sup>29</sup> Specifically, FTN #1150C063552 requested four Riverine Command Boat (RCB) Crews. CRG 1 TEU trained, assessed, and recommended certifying a total of (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a) RCB crews, (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a) were deployed to fill this FTN.<sup>30</sup>

(U//FOUO) This investigation team conducted an independent review of whether the FTNs for Bahrain (1150C063552), United Arab Emirates (UAE) (1150C050930), and Kuwait (1150C055313) were appropriate to the NTAs. The investigation found that the FTNs map directly to NTAs and are a subset of the capabilities for Coastal Riverine Crew (CRC) and CRS on the USFF approved Navy Mission Essential Task List (NMETL). Each of the CRC/CRS NMETL capabilities are identical to the Defense Readiness Reporting System – Navy (DRRS-N) Capability Areas which NECCPAC recommended for deployment certification and which were ultimately certified by C3F.

#### Quality of Pre-deployment Training

(U) The Command Investigation revealed that many of the RCB 802 and RCB 805 crewmembers felt that their pre-deployment training was not sufficient to accomplish their assigned missions on deployment. A number of crew members also indicated that during the CRG 1 TEU-led training, they had to rely on themselves because the CRG 1 TEU did not understand RCBs well enough to conduct proper training.<sup>31</sup> However, the this investigation team's independent review of CRG 1 TEU determined that the scope, quality, and quantity of training provided by the TEU was appropriate and met naval standards to prepare deploying RCB crews to perform all of their assigned missions. This review included:

- A troop-to-task assessment
- A review of the Basic Phase training and assessment blocks accomplished by the RCB crews
- A review of the content, lesson plans and student guides associated with each training block

- A review of the ULTRA and FEP schedule of events and CRG 1 TEU assessment sheets for evaluated RCB events
- A review of the results of the navigation check ride (NCR) conducted by CRG 1 TEU on the crew of RCB 805 prior to deployment (four of five RCB 805 crew members, including the Boat Captain/Mission Patrol Officer and Coxswain, were evaluated during this NCR)<sup>32</sup>

(U//FOUO) Some RCB crewmembers expected more platform-specific training during the pre-deployment training cycle. Maritime tactics, however, are not platform-specific; crews are trained and assessed to the mission capabilities and not platforms.<sup>33</sup> Crews 802 and 805 were trained and assessed as a Maritime Security and High Value Unit (HVU) crew on tactical boats.<sup>34</sup> This is a legitimate training method utilized by the CRG TEUs to maximize production with limited training assets.<sup>35</sup> Seven of ten members of crews 802 and 805 trained on RCBs and six of ten members trained on 34-Foot Patrol Boats during the basic phase.<sup>36</sup> 34-Foot Patrol Boats use many of the same weapons and the same navigation systems as RCBs.

#### Navigation and Weapons Training

(U) The lack of navigation and live-fire weapons pre-deployment training was highlighted in the Command Investigation; however, these opinions and conclusions were based on incomplete information and later corrected by the endorsing chain of command. The differences are briefly addressed below. A more thorough explanation is available in the NECCPAC endorsement.<sup>37</sup>

(U) During post-incident interviews, RCB 802 and RCB 805 crewmembers remarked that their navigation training during the pre-deployment training cycle was not sufficient and that they had received only two hours of familiarization training on the Common Geospatial Navigation Toolkit (COGENT) navigation system. An independent review by this investigation team of the COGENT familiarization training determined that it adequately instructed students on how to operate the program, manipulate the chart scale, input navigation tracks, use the search and rescue and man-overboard functions, and update the software. This training included a classroom and lab session in which the track for the following day's navigation training transit was entered into the system and reviewed by TEU personnel.

(U) Crewmembers of both RCB crews received an additional 26.5 hours of navigation-specific underway hands-on training and 176 total hours of RCB underway training from March through June of 2015. Eight of ten participated in portions of the navigation specific training and ten of ten participated in portions of the total underway time. In addition to the two hours of familiarization training on COGENT, seven CRS 3 personnel received 24 hours (12 hours of classroom instruction and 12 hours of underway instruction) of focused COGENT “train the trainer” training on 18-19 November 2014.<sup>38</sup> The purpose of the training was to ensure that members of CRS 3 were prepared to instruct other members in the COGENT system during pre-deployment training and in theater.<sup>39</sup>

(U//FOUO) The Command Investigation found that the crews received inadequate live-fire training, citing that seven of the ten RCB 802 and RCB 805 crewmembers participated in only one underway live-fire exercise during Unit Level Training Readiness Assessment (ULTRA) from RCBs. While that finding was correct, five RCB 802 and 805 crewmembers also conducted a live-fire exercise on 16-17 March 2015 from a 34-Foot Patrol Boat. This training utilized the M2, M240, and M203 weapons. Seven of ten RCB 802 and RCB 805 crewmembers conducted a third RCB live-fire exercise on 29 April 2015. During this exercise, crews trained on Mk44 GAU, M2HB, and M240 weapons.<sup>40</sup> The Command Investigation correctly revealed that the Remote Operated Small Arms Mount (ROSAM) weapon system was not employed in a live-fire exercise during the training cycle.<sup>41</sup> The ROSAM suffered a “hard malfunction” casualty and did not fire during one of the scheduled live fire events.<sup>42</sup>

#### Operational Tasking During Training

(U//FOUO) CRS 3 was tasked with two operational missions between October and December 2014, during the Basic Phase. This is average for a unit during the deployment training cycle and did not prevent the RCB 802 or RCB 805 crewmembers from participating in individual skills training or the required schools necessary to begin the unit training phase. At no point did real-world mission tasking create risk to CRS 3 pre-deployment training, certification, or preparedness.<sup>43</sup>



CARAT Indonesia

(U//FOUO) The crews of RCB 802 and RCB 805 did not deploy with the main body of CRS 3 to Fifth Fleet. While the rest of the crews deployed to Fifth Fleet, the crews of 802 and 805 deployed to Seventh Fleet in support of the Cooperative Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) Indonesia exercise from 15 July 2015 to 15 August 2015. CARAT is an annual, nine-country bilateral exercise designed to enhance maritime security skills and operational cohesiveness among participating forces. The tasking associated with CARAT included: deploying crews and support personnel from CONUS to Guam; activating RCBs from inactive equipment maintenance status; preparing a RCB pack-up kit (PUK) for maintenance; loading RCBs and PUK on USS GERMANTOWN (LSD 42); executing Subject Matter Expert Exchange training with Indonesia, and completion of a turnover to CRS 4 for CARAT Malaysia and Thailand. The underway portion of the CARAT included Coastal Riverine operations with a Joint and combined U.S. and Indonesian crew; underway navigation; formation driving; casualty drills; patrolling; HVA/HVU protection/escort, and Maritime Interdiction Operations. With oversight by CTF 57, the crews of RCB 802 and 805 developed, briefed, and approved a CONOPS for mission execution in support of CARA Indonesia. This effort demonstrated effective mission planning, Operational Risk Management (ORM), and an ability to conduct CRS operations in a forward-deployed environment. The success of RCB crews 802 and 805 during CARAT Indonesia was directly related to sound mission planning and proper execution of their duties, all of which were developed during CRS 3's FRTP. The effectiveness of this unit and specifically these boat crews was demonstrated just prior to deployment to Fifth Fleet. The negative impacts on the two crews of missing the relief-in-place/transfer-of-authority (RIP/TOA) will be addressed elsewhere in the Fleet Investigation.

Conclusion

(U) CRS 3 was adequately trained for deployment and appropriately certified for their expected mission sets. The Fleet Training Continuum and additional C3F processes were followed throughout the unit's integrated/advanced training cycle. There were no training deficiencies noted at any time during the recurring reporting process to C3F and there were no training deficiencies reported in either the Type Commander certification recommendation or in the DRRS-N program itself.<sup>44</sup> The conclusions of the Investigating Officer and first endorser that

pre-deployment training was deficient were based on an incomplete picture of the FRTP and do not reflect the entirety of training conducted across the basic and advanced/integrated training phases. The endorsement process corrected this discrepancy and provided additional clarifying information about the training cycle, and this investigation's independent analysis confirmed that the unit was properly trained for deployment.

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<sup>1</sup> Encl 106

<sup>2</sup> Encl 108

<sup>3</sup> Encls 93, 155

<sup>4</sup> Encl 106

<sup>5</sup> Encls 62, 72

<sup>6</sup> Encls 62, 93

<sup>7</sup> Encls 62, 72, 106

<sup>8</sup> Encls 72, 106

<sup>9</sup> Encl 72

<sup>10</sup> Encls 62, 72, 106

<sup>11</sup> Encl 356

<sup>12</sup> Encls 62, 72, 155, 164

<sup>13</sup> Encl 72

<sup>14</sup> Ref (c)

<sup>15</sup> Encl XV

<sup>16</sup> Encl XV

<sup>17</sup> Ref (A)

<sup>18</sup> Ref (f)

<sup>19</sup> Ref (bg)

<sup>20</sup> Ref (f)

<sup>21</sup> Ref (f)

<sup>22</sup> Ref (f)

<sup>23</sup> Ref (f)

<sup>24</sup> Ref (c)

<sup>25</sup> Ref (c)

<sup>26</sup> Ref (c)

<sup>27</sup> Encls 131, 133

<sup>28</sup> Encl 131

<sup>29</sup> Encl 157

<sup>30</sup> Encl 148

<sup>31</sup> Encls 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 21, 39, 45, 56, 61, 65, 75, 76, 80, 100

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<sup>32</sup> Encl XIV

<sup>33</sup> Refs (f), (bd)

<sup>34</sup> Refs (f), (bd); Encls 225, 282-284

<sup>35</sup> Refs (f), (bd)

<sup>36</sup> Encl XIV

<sup>37</sup> Fourth endorsement to the CI

<sup>38</sup> Encls 282, 283, 286, 293

<sup>39</sup> Encls 286-288

<sup>40</sup> Encls 227, 294

<sup>41</sup> Encls 5-14, 84, 221, 223, 227, 228, 230

<sup>42</sup> Encls 227, 297

<sup>43</sup> Encls 220, 335-339

<sup>44</sup> Encls 340-348

## Chapter 4 – Deployment, Disaggregation and Operations in the NAG

### Introduction

(U//FOUO) This Chapter describes the RCB crews' deployment to the Fifth Fleet (C5F) Area of Responsibility (AOR). It then examines the operational tasking and planning processes that led to the decision to disaggregate Riverine Command Boats (RCBs) 701, 802, and 805 from their Bahrain task unit and move them to the Kuwait task unit. It also examines the subsequent decision to extend the RCBs in Kuwait past the original planned end-date for the Kuwait mission. It discusses the how those decisions impacted the RCBs' overall mission readiness and proficiency and ends with a short discussion of leaderships' obligations with regard to disaggregated forces.

### CRS 3 Deployment to Fifth Fleet and Assumption of CTG-56.7 Duties

(S//NOFORN) RIP/TOA. The advance party from Coastal Riverine Squadron 3 (CRS 3) deployed from San Diego to the C5F AOR on 22 July 2015. The advance party generally precedes the main body of the deploying command by a few weeks to begin the turnover process known as Relief-in-Place/Transfer-of-Authority (RIP/TOA).

(U//FOUO) RIP/TOA is a deliberate, comprehensive two-week turnover process between outgoing and incoming units. For Coastal Riverine Forces (CRF), both Coastal Riverine Groups (CRGs) send teams forward to oversee RIP/TOA in theater.<sup>1</sup> RIP/TOA involves equipment inventory and turnover, including weapons and ammunition, a habitability inspection, a maintenance assessment, and theater indoctrination for incoming personnel. Theater indoctrination is normally provided by the immediate superior in the operational chain of command (ISIC) and includes commander's guidance, AOR familiarization, and current intelligence and operations briefs. The incoming unit also conducts an acceptance inspection of the boats in theater before assuming custody of them and beginning operations. "Check-rides" are typically used to familiarize the incoming personnel with the local geography, hydrography, navigation, and operating procedures. RIP/TOA additionally allows the incoming personnel to

acclimate to theater before beginning deployment-type missions. RIP/TOA culminates with a change of command during which the incoming Commanding Officer (CO) formally relieves the outgoing CO.

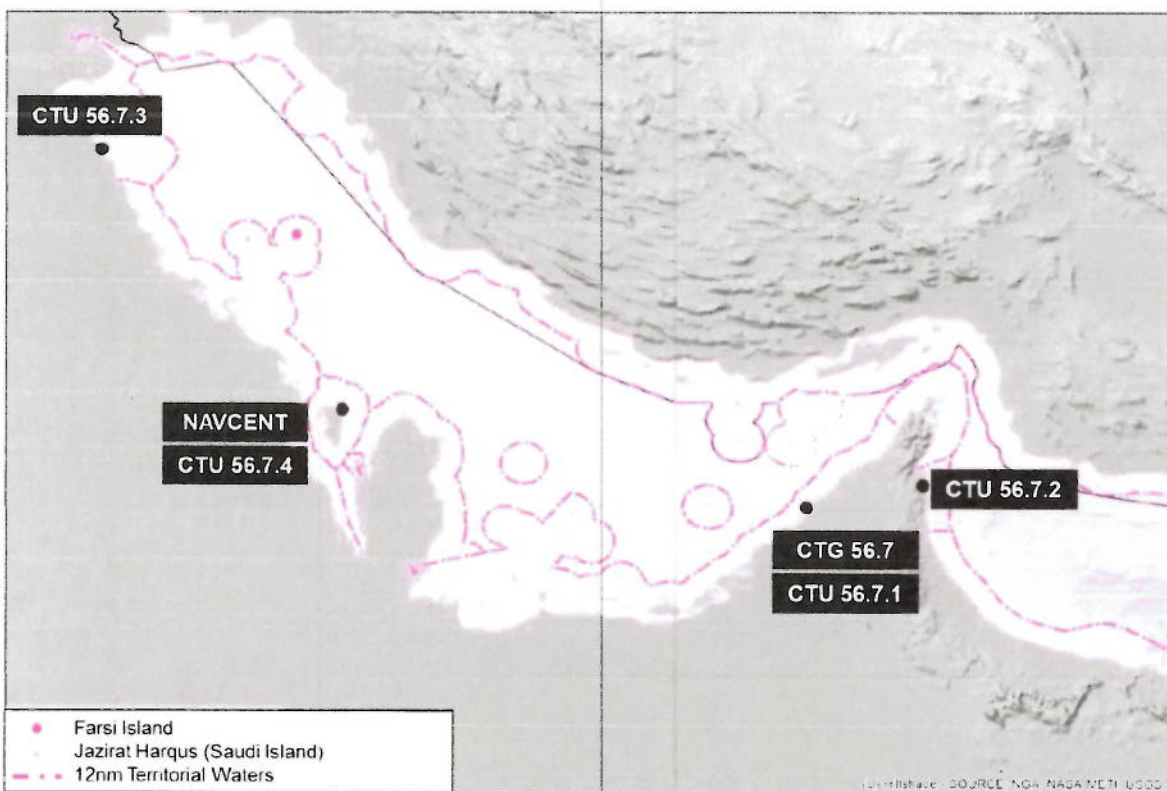
(S) The CRS 3 advance party began RIP/TOA on 22 July 2015 by conducting lengthy tasks such as equipment and weapons inventories. A few weeks later, on 8 August 2015, the CRS 3 main body followed the advance party into theater to complete the process. The RIP/TOA turnover from CRS 4 to CRS 3 was overseen by the CRG 1 Supply Officer, and was heavily focused on supply and maintenance.<sup>2</sup> As the Administrative Immediate Superior in Command (ISIC), CRG 1 did not address operational issues, as that is the responsibility of the units turning over and Operational ISIC, in this case CTF 56. The CTF 56 Chief Staff Officer (CSO), (b)(6) presided over the change of command ceremony as Acting Commodore, but no one from CTF 56 provided theater-specific indoctrination training during RIP/TOA.<sup>3</sup>

(U) The RIP/TOA report of turnover process developed by the CRG 1 Supply Officer and sent to the CRGs describes the RIP/TOA as a success. It states, “in every location, with the exception of the boats in Kuwait, we observed the best presentation of boats and binders to date. CRS3 is motivated and ready to take over the CTG 56.7 missions, and I am confident they have tools necessary to be successful on their deployment.”<sup>4</sup> The report goes on to state that the Boat Maintenance Facility (BMF) in Kuwait is not up to the standards of the other BMFs in theater. The report remained maintenance-focused with no reference to operations.

(S) On 12 August 2015, (b)(6), the CRS 3 CO, formally relieved the CRS 4 CO and assumed duties as Commander, CTG 56.7, located in Jebel Ali, United Arab Emirates (UAE). As Commander, CTG 56.7, (b)(6) was responsible for the four geographically disaggregated subordinate Task Units, each led by an Officer-in-Charge (OIC). Commandner, Task Unit (CTU) 56.7.1 was co-located with the CTG 56.7 staff in Jebel Ali, UAE; CTU 56.7.2 in Fujairah, UAE; CTU 56.7.3 in Kuwait Naval Base, Kuwait; CTU 56.7.4 in Manama, Bahrain.<sup>5</sup>

- *CRS 3 received its turnover equipment, including the RCBs, in satisfactory material condition for operations.*

- *The CTG 56.7 RIP/TOA was characterized by a high level of involvement from the administrative chain of command, while the operational chain of command played only a symbolic role.*
- *CTF 56 failed to provide an operational indoctrination or theater orientation for CRS 3; consequently CRS 3 was not well prepared to operate as CTG 56.7.*
- *Without a theater orientation, CRS 3/CTG 56.7 personnel were unfamiliar with the physical operating environment, to include weather and geography, and unaware of potentially hostile threats.*



(U) Figure 3.1 Map showing all locations of the CTG-56.7

(U//FOUO) RCB 802 and 805 Boat Crews Miss RIP/TOA. While the rest of the command was conducting RIP/TOA in theater, the crews of 802 and 805 were conducting a separate tasking to support a month-long exercise, Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) Indonesia.<sup>6</sup> Although they received excellent training during the exercise (see Chapter 3), they arrived in Bahrain after RIP/TOA.

(U//FOUO) Because the RCB crews missed RIP/TOA, they did not receive indoctrination training, nor did they participate in any navigational “check-rides” to familiarize themselves with the RCBs or requirements for local navigation. Additionally, the two RCB crews were not allowed sufficient time to acclimate to the environment. On the first day after their arrival in theater, the RCB 802 and 805 boat crews were tasked to conduct a High Value Asset (HVA) escort mission. During the escort, one crewmember from RCB 805 succumbed to a heat casualty, in which his core temperature reached 103 degrees.<sup>7</sup>

- *Missing RIP/TOA caused the crews of RCB 802 and 805 to miss the acclimatization period and “check-rides” which would have familiarized them with the boats and operating environment.*
- *The circumstances contributing to the heat stress casualty are symptomatic of the CTF 56 and CTF 56.7 leadership’s disengagement from overseeing mission planning and execution.*

#### Planning for RCB Operations in the Northern Arabian Gulf

(S//NOFORN) From August to October 2015, the four RCB crews operated as components of the Bahrain task unit (CTU 56.7.4) and primarily conducted HVA escort missions. On 13 October 2015, the USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT Carrier Strike Group (CSG) departed the C5F [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] A CSG consists of a Flag Officer-led staff, an aircraft carrier, an air wing and its staff, and supporting vessels. Because of their large, well-trained staffs, CSGs have the ability to effectively command and control numerous operations in theater. CSGs also provide meaningful presence; this presence acts as a deterrent to prevent conflict and is a reminder to our Allies in the region that we are prepared to take swift and decisive action when conflicts arise.

(S//REL [REDACTED]) In response to the [REDACTED], [REDACTED] (C5F) directed the development of a CSG [REDACTED]. The plan was designed to synchronize the schedules of units in theater [REDACTED]. As their

contribution to support the mitigation plan, CTF 56 proposed to operate RCBs from Kuwait Naval Base (KNB) and conduct presence operations in the Northern Arabian Gulf (NAG).<sup>9</sup>

(b)(6) (CTF 56) tasked (b)(6) to present him with a plan to relocate three RCBs from Bahrain to Kuwait.<sup>10</sup>

(U//FOUO) (b)(6) initially resisted the idea of using RCBs for presence operations in the NAG, asserting that the RCBs were unsuited for that type of mission. He also argued that the RCBs were built for missions closer to the coast in the littorals, and was concerned that presence operations would take them out into the “blue water,” an area in which they were not designed to operate. (b)(6), however, stated that (b)(6) was too risk-averse and that blue water operations were the future of NECC.<sup>11</sup> The Coastal Riverine Force Navigation Policy delineates the differences between Riverine (brown water) and Coastal (green and blue water) Navigation, but does not specifically define the term “long range.” Green water consists of beaches, estuaries, harbors, bays, and offshore waters out to the continental shelf, while blue water is territorial seas and out to 200 nm.<sup>12</sup> (b)(6), anticipating the in-theater arrival of the Mark VIs, a larger patrol craft with a longer range and greater payload, wanted the RCBs to perform similar types of missions until their arrival. On numerous occasions, (b)(6) voiced his concerns to (b)(6) regarding his plan for RCB employment in the NAG, but (b)(6) pressed him until (b)(6) eventually conceded.<sup>13</sup>

(S//NOFORN) On 7 October 2015, (b)(6) received and approved a Concept of Operations (CONOPS) brief from (b)(6) entitled (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a) ”<sup>14</sup> This proposal outlined a plan to temporarily move the RCBs to Kuwait to conduct two separate but related missions in the Northern Arabian Gulf (NAG). A third mission was not briefed in the proposal but is described below.

- (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a) [REDACTED]



b(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a) [REDACTED]

- b(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a) [REDACTED]

- b(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a) [REDACTED]

(S//REI b(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a)) The CTG 56.7 CONOPS brief lacked specificity. The crews of Navy vessels usually determine the intent of an approaching vessel by executing Pre-Planned Responses (PPRs). While it contemplated Iranian interaction, the CONOPS did not comprehensively address the means by which the RCB crews would accomplish PPRs. The CONOPS stressed documenting the interaction, but neglected to provide guidance on how the RCBs should determine Iranian intent.<sup>19</sup> One way to document interaction is through video recording. OPTASK Visual Identification (VI) requires units to record video and/or photographic evidence of Iranian interaction and to report it within one hour through the operational chain of command. Additionally, there were no measures of effectiveness to assess whether the objectives were achieved and no feedback loop to adjust the plan in light of its

effectiveness. As will be discussed later in the chapter, (b)(6) (C5F) published other guidance with regard to Iranian interaction; this guidance was not mentioned in the CONOPS brief.<sup>20</sup>

- (b)(6) 'unwillingness to accept the advice of his subordinates set the conditions for CTF 56's subsequent ill-considered decisions regarding RCB operations.
- The failure to detail PPRs for Iranian interaction in the RCB NAG CONOPS is another indicator of the failure to consider and mitigate risk at CTF 56 and CTG 56.7. It also reflects an assumption that Iranian interactions will be benign opportunities for collection of visual information.

#### RCBs Move from Bahrain to Kuwait

(S//NOFORN) For the RCBs to operate in the NAG in accordance with the CTF 56-approved CONOPS, they had to relocate from Bahrain (CTU 56.7.4) to Kuwait (CTU 56.7.3). The distance between those two locations is approximately 250 nm. Although he thought the RCBs were capable of making the voyage themselves, (b)(6) had concerns that such a voyage would constitute an undue risk to the RCBs. He expressed his concerns about distance, weather, and fuel requirements to (b)(6), the CTF 56 CSO. As a result, the staffs arranged to move the RCBs by Army Watercraft on 11-12 October 2015.<sup>21</sup> The move to Kuwait was accomplished without incident, and on 12 October 2015, tactical control of the RCBs shifted from CTU 56.7.4 in Bahrain to CTU 56.7.3 at Kuwait Naval Base.<sup>22</sup> Beginning in October 2015, the RCBs conducted out-and-back patrols from KNB to (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a). These patrols usually lasted anywhere from two to six hours, and were roughly 110 nm, round trip.<sup>23</sup> No member of the CTF 56 staff accompanied the RCBs on KNB operations; one member of CTG 56.7, the Executive Officer, participated in a single (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a).<sup>24</sup>

(S//NOFORN) Prior to each patrol, a written patrol briefing was required.<sup>25</sup> (b)(6) stated he did not recall seeing any patrol briefings for the Kuwait task unit's (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a) operations in the NAG. The investigation team was unable to obtain copies of any NAG patrol briefings. These briefs, if they existed, should have identified safety considerations and discussed Iranian interaction PPRs.<sup>26</sup>

- *CTF 56 and CTG 56.7 leadership did not exert sufficient personal oversight over the Kuwait detachment and the RCB NAG operations set the conditions for declining standards and lax discipline within the RCB crews.*

#### Operational Oversight of NAG Missions.

(S//NOFORN) (b)(6) (C5F) delegated mission planning and Command and Control (C2) of the RCB NAG missions to CTF 56.<sup>27</sup> Although (b)(6) was not the approval authority for the CONOPS, he was aware of the RCB (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a)<sup>28</sup> The mission was expressed in the C5F Daily Intentions and Operations Message (DIOM) as “posture forces to support presence operations” from 13 October to 13 December 2015.<sup>29</sup> There was no other explicit written order from C5F directing CTF 56 RCB NAG operations.

(S//NOFORN) Although there was no recorded guidance for the (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a) beyond the single line in each C5F DIOM, information on general RCB operations was available in the C5F Operational Tasking Riverine Command Boat (OPTASK RCB) message of 12 March 2013.<sup>30</sup> OPTASK RCB establishes overarching policies and procedures for the conduct of RCB operations in the C5F AOR. For example, it establishes standards for communications, methods of RCB employment, weapons conditions, and the main mission areas. Despite this broad applicability, most personnel assigned to the staffs of C5F, CTF 56, and the two RCB boat crews involved in the incident were unfamiliar with the contents of this OPTASK.<sup>31</sup>

(S//NOFORN) As discussed in the (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a) section above, the CONOPS contemplated that the RCBs would interact with the Iranians. However, there was very little planning with regard to how the RCBs were expected to conduct themselves during those interactions. At the operational level, the C5F Commanders had been formally communicating their intent with regard to Iranian interaction for some time. In July, the previous C5F Commander, (b)(6) issued a message discussing Iranian interaction which stated in part:

(S//REL (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a) “Tools should be used to assist commanders in determining if hostile intent exists, *and deescalating situations*, if possible. They should be used whenever

possible, to the extent practical, given the time and space available. PPRs are not a prescriptive list of things that must be done prior to the use of deadly force in self-defense.”<sup>32</sup>

(S//NOFORN) When VADM Donegan arrived in theater and assumed command of Fifth Fleet, he verbally articulated his intent to the CTF Commanders over a period of three months. In December 2015, he put that intent in writing. The message was released four days after the two CSGs (led by the French aircraft carrier FS CHARLES DE GAULLE and USS HARRY S TRUMAN) arrived in theater, (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a). The message reminded forces that with the arrival of so many ships, the Iranians may be more curious, and come out to observe, interact with, and probe units. The message further states:

(b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4 (a)

The message further mentioned that PPRs are vital in making this determination, and that he expected that the units would be trained to conduct PPRs. Although the message mentions de-escalation, it takes the focus from de-escalation to preparation.

(S//NOFORN) Despite clear commander’s intent even before the message was released, his intent was not incorporated in the (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a) ” CONOPS, as it contained no discussion of specific PPRs for Iranian interaction. When the December message was transmitted, CTF 56 forwarded it to CTG 56.7. (b)(6) stated he did not recall whether he sent the message to his subordinate task unit Officers-in-Charge.<sup>34</sup> (b)(6) held a (b)(6) on 6 January 2015 with CTG 56.7 to discuss tactics, trainings, and procedures (TTPs) based on the message. He also reported that in January he discussed PPRs, Seaward Continuum of Force (SCOF) levels, and the Standing Rules of Engagement (SROE) with CTG 56.7. In their interviews, the boat crews of RCB 802 and 805 either had never heard of (b)(6) December 2015 message or had not read it.<sup>35</sup> (b)(6) intent regarding Iranian interaction was not understood by any of the operators at the tactical level; in fact, they seemed unaware that Iranian interactions were a possible consequence of NAG operations.

- *The CTF 56 and CTG 56.7 commanders failed to ensure that (b)(6) Commander’s Intent was promulgated to their subordinate tactical elements. Despite*





Consequences of the RCB NAG Operations on Readiness

(U//FOUO) The ill-planned long-term disaggregated operations in Kuwait adversely impacted every component of RCB crew operational readiness.

(U//FOUO) Manning. (b)(6), the Kuwait task unit OIC (CTU 56.7.3), a naval aviator, had no prior coastal riverine, RCB, or Surface Warfare experience and was unfamiliar with the RCBs' capabilities and limitations. After the RCBs arrived in Kuwait, his responsibilities and scope of mission increased from one mission per quarter to almost daily presence operations in the NAG.<sup>46</sup> (b)(6) provided him with no further direction or guidance,<sup>47</sup> and did not replace him with an Officer who was more familiar with RCB operations to support the increase in missions.

(S//NF) In the first month of deployment, (b)(6) personnel from the Bahrain detachment back to San Diego to execute other missions, leaving CTU 56.7.4 undermanned.<sup>48</sup> The RCB crew members in Bahrain doubled as 34-Foot Patrol Boat crew members. That 34-Foot Patrol Boat mission in Bahrain did not end when RCB crews were sent to Kuwait. Thus, when (b)(6) disaggregated his forces by sending RCB crews to Kuwait, he had fewer people available to send than he did at the beginning of deployment.

(S//NF) The number of RCB crewmembers per boat is driven by tactical mission requirements such as frequency, duration, environmental conditions, operating area, operating tempo, threat condition, and the potential for contact with unfriendly forces.<sup>49</sup> (b)(6) sent (b)(6) personnel to Kuwait with (b)(6) RCBs. (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a) would have supported (b)(6) E.O. 13526 1.4(a) -person crews, but the RCBs in Kuwait were operating with (b)(6) E.O. 13526 1.4(a) -person crews at the direction of (b)(6).

(b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4 (a)

rationale that “they were getting beat up” by the sea states on the longer patrols.<sup>50</sup> In fact, their manning was such that they could not realistically have operated the boats and manned all of the weapons at the same time.

(U//FOUO) A [REDACTED] detachment does not account for boat maintenance, training requirements, crew fatigue, injury, or illness. The small size of the detachment, combined with high operational tempo, began to take a toll on many of the RCB 802 and 805 crewmembers. Their extension in Kuwait exacerbated matters. One crewmember stated, “we were getting extended and we were tired of continuously going on missions.”<sup>51</sup> Morale suffered<sup>52</sup> and the crew became fatigued.<sup>53</sup> In Bahrain, the crews had received a high additional daily allowance (per diem) because they were “living in the economy”; in Kuwait, the crew members lived on a military base, and were therefore ineligible for per diem. This difference in pay between Kuwait and Bahrain amounted to more than \$3000 per month, a significant amount for junior Sailors. The RCB crews voiced their concerns about per diem, but those complaints were dismissed by both (b)(6) [REDACTED] and (b)(6) [REDACTED].

(U//FOUO) In addition, facilities were poor. The Kuwait Boat Maintenance Facility (BMF) was inadequate for support of four boats and had no air conditioning. While the BMF in Bahrain was manned by (b)(6) [REDACTED] Sailors in addition to the boat crews, Kuwait’s BMF was manned with only [REDACTED] non-crew Sailor, and could perform only the minimum of preventive maintenance and basic repairs.<sup>54</sup> Therefore, while operating at a significantly increased operational tempo, the RCB crewmembers themselves were also conducting the majority of the maintenance on their boats.

(U//FOUO) The high OPTEMPO, decreased morale, and lack of oversight contributed to complacency among the RCB crews. (b)(6) [REDACTED], the CTG 56.7 Executive Officer, recognized this, stating that he did not believe the appropriate steps were taken to “set the sailors up for success” at KNB.<sup>55</sup> Basic naval standards began to relax; for example, the crews stopped conducting required patrol briefs.<sup>56</sup>

(U//FOUO) Training. Throughout the deployment in the Fifth Fleet AOO, (b)(6) [REDACTED] did not require the RCBs to conduct sustainment training or fire any weapons from the RCBs.<sup>57</sup> (b)(6) [REDACTED]



(b)(6) did not direct or enforce a plan to conduct, track, or manage sustainment training, and (b)(6) did not establish in-theater sustainment requirements.

(U//FOUO) As described in Chapter 3, the CRF has an established and documented requirement for Coastal Riverine Squadrons to conduct individual and unit training throughout all phases of the Fleet Readiness Training Plan (FRTTP). CRF Instruction 3502.1 provides direction on how to execute this responsibility. Additionally, it specifies Navy Tactical Tasks (NTAs) that CRF Squadrons and Companies must successfully complete in order to sustain their operational readiness. Completion of these NTAs is reported by the Squadron via the Readiness Cost Reporting Program (RCRP) which is used to reflect unit readiness. This information feeds directly into DRRS-N. (b)(6) and (b)(6) were either unaware of or ignored these requirements. The lack of sustainment training led to a decline in unit operational readiness.

(U//FOUO) Equipment. The Kuwait task unit was not equipped to provide the maintenance required by (b)(6) additional RCBs. Completion and tracking of preventive and corrective maintenance was a challenge due to the geographic separation of systems and personnel; the primary maintenance systems used by RCB personnel for tracking, scheduling and ordering parts were also not available at KNB. An administrative review covering thirteen weeks of maintenance reports found the RCB maintenance program was “ineffective.”<sup>58</sup>

(U//FOUO) Additionally, the RCB crews did not have all of the items required for craft maintenance. Since (b)(6) believed the KNB missions would be short-term, the spare parts Pack-up-Kit (PUK) was not sent to Kuwait with the boats and crews. Two CONEX boxes full of spare RCB parts remained in Bahrain.<sup>59</sup> After it became clear that the RCBs would be extended, the Bahrain OIC requested spare parts be sent to KNB, but the request was initially denied by the CTG 56.7 chain of command. On 9 January 2016, 89 days after the RCBs left Bahrain, the spare RCB parts were finally shipped to KNB.<sup>60</sup> The Bahrain OIC, who was originally responsible for the readiness of the RCBs, also requested permission to travel to Kuwait to witness operations and check on the RCB crews and equipment. (b)(6) denied his request.<sup>61</sup>

(U//FOUO) While units are deployed, the administrative ISIC (CRG 1 and NECCPAC) assists with maintenance issues that cannot be rectified in theater. Had the required maintenance tracking systems been fully utilized, the administrative chain of command would likely have recognized that there was a serious problem with Kuwait's ability to maintain the [REDACTED] RCBs and most certainly would have intervened. When asked for assistance, NECCPAC was responsive. For example, on the day before the transit, CTG 56.7 sent a cannibalization request to NECCPAC and was given verbal approval the same day.<sup>62</sup>

- *Disaggregation is often necessary to satisfy distributed force requirements, but without strong leadership and careful management it carries a high risk of degraded maintenance, personnel readiness, and morale. CTF 56 and CTG 56.7 failed to provide either.*
- *While it is not clear that any of these parts would have prevented the engine failure on 12 January, the delay in providing them is indicative of the lax responsiveness by a chain of command that did not grasp the challenges of long-term disaggregation, as well as the lack of supervisory CTG 56.7 leadership and oversight of its dispersed forces. It also reflects the informal nature by which these operations were extended.*

### Conclusion

(U//FOUO) CRS 3 actually experienced three types of disaggregation that had varying impacts on unit readiness:

1. First, the crews of RCB 802 and RCB 805 arrived late in theater, after a month-long training exercise in another AOR. Because they missed the RIP/TOA process, they were never indoctrinated to the C5F AOR or allowed time to acclimate.
2. Second, the CRS 3/CTG 56.7 CO decided to send [REDACTED] personnel from the Bahrain Task Unit (CTG 56.7.4) back to CONUS to conduct other missions. He did this without clearly understanding or communicating the impact it would have to the operational readiness of his command.
3. Third, the CRS 3/CTG 56.7 CO, responding to pressure from the CTF 56 Commodore, further disaggregated his command by sending [REDACTED] personnel and [REDACTED] RCB detachments

to Kuwait for unique tasking. He did this without clearly understanding the impact it would have to the operational readiness of his command.

(U//FOUO) Disaggregation in and of itself is not an objectionable means of meeting dispersed and varied force requirements, provided it is subject to adequate, thoughtful leadership. In this case, however, the RCB crews were sent forward to conduct atypical operations with virtually no chain of command oversight while in Kuwait. The lack of proper assessments, planning for the extension, and leadership oversight left RCB proficiency and readiness severely degraded.

(U//FOUO) Leadership is the cornerstone of an effective fighting force. A disaggregated fighting force increases leadership challenges.

(U//FOUO) CTF 56 in Bahrain and CTG 56.7 in UAE led their commands poorly. This deficient leadership was the root cause of the poor decision-making and complacency that ultimately led to the RCB crews' detention. These leadership failures stemmed from non-compliance with the basic tenets of sound naval leadership: taking care of your people and complying with established standards. Simply put, leadership matters at all levels within the chain of command. Leadership, good or bad, starts at the top and works its way down through a command.

(U//FOUO) This investigation revealed three specific areas of leadership failures within CTG 56.7 and CTF 56, which are as follows:

1. Failure to uphold and reinforce compliance to standards. (b)(6) knew the standards required to lead an expeditionary command. He was an NECC-trained and certified Coastal Riverine Commanding Officer. He was trained to a known set of rules for the employment of his force. He was trained during his pre-deployment phase to know the limits of his equipment and his Sailors' training. NECC taught and reinforced the importance of the warrior ethos mindset. Leadership schools, provided early in Commanding Officer pipeline training, reinforced the principle of accountability – that is, a leader must hold the men and women under his or her charge accountable for their actions. C5F provided deployment standards, for which he was accountable. Lastly, the

basic tenets of his community's instructions, the CORIVFORINSTs, were applicable throughout his deployment. As demonstrated by his actions preceding the events of 12 January, (b)(6) did not embody those standards and fostered an environment where procedural compliance with the rules was not reinforced. This unfortunate lack of accountability spread throughout the CTU in Kuwait and into the crews of RCB 802 and 805, which was evidenced in their actions on 12 January. (b)(6) received the tools for success; he simply did not use them.

2. Blatant disregard for the genuine concern of Sailors. Understanding and appreciating men and women that work under one's charge is a vital aspect of good leadership. This investigation revealed this tenet of leadership was not applied to the personnel assigned to the CTU in Kuwait, by either (b)(6) or (b)(6). Neither officer nor their leadership teams truly listened to, empowered, or valued their crewmembers' insights regarding RCB utilization in the Northern Arabian Gulf (NAG) and the RCBs' transit to Bahrain. Team "buy in" never occurred, creating an environment that discouraged feedback. No member of the CTF 56 staff accompanied the RCBs on KNB operations and only one member, the Executive Officer of CTG 56.7, participated in a single patrol mission out of Kuwait. The lack of oversight for the KNB unit was evident and resulted in low morale, poor quality of life issues, and a lack of empowerment.
3. Assignment of tasking beyond the capabilities and limitations of the force. (b)(6) provided unreasonable tasking to (b)(6), which ultimately set him and his RCB crews up for failure. One principle of sound leadership is to know the limitations of your force. (b)(6) failed to practice this principle when he directed the mission extension in Kuwait without proper analysis and when he directed RCBs 802 and 805 to transit to Bahrain under their own power. He and his staff failed to recognize the limits of the crews and their craft; this led to a lack of crew ownership over the crafts and their missions.

(U//FOUO) The above examples illustrate that an inability to foster a culture of accountability and empowerment leads to apathy, erosion of standards, and a failure to adhere to operating

principles. Good leadership understands threat environments, assesses risk continuously and mitigates as necessary. Strong leadership considers training required, equipment status, logistical impediments, costs and acceptability of mission analysis. Lastly, virtuous leadership starts with a good leader, offering sound direction, a discerning ear, and an ability to hold Sailors accountable to standards.

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<sup>1</sup> Encl 60, 80

<sup>2</sup> Encl XIX

<sup>3</sup> Encls 8, 9, 47, 50, 47, 61, 67

<sup>4</sup> Encl XIX

<sup>5</sup> Encl 47, 130, 141

<sup>6</sup> Encl 279

<sup>7</sup> Encls 6, 11, 45

<sup>8</sup> C.I., III.D.3

<sup>9</sup> Encls 47, 67, 162

<sup>10</sup> Encl 162

<sup>11</sup> Encl 67, 77

<sup>12</sup> Ref g

<sup>13</sup> CI, III.C.9

<sup>14</sup> Encl 162

<sup>15</sup> Farsi Island is also highlighted on the map as a location of likely Iranian interaction.

<sup>16</sup> A Common Operating Picture displays current status of hostile, neutral, and friendly tracks/forces that includes data input directly and indirectly from organic and non-organic sensor.

<sup>17</sup> Joint Publication 3-09.3, Joint Fire Support

<sup>18</sup> Encl 162

<sup>19</sup> Encl 150.

<sup>20</sup> Encl 152

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<sup>21</sup> Of note, (b)(6) (CTF 56) was resistant to this mode of transport. In an interview for the Command Investigation, he stated "The CRS 3 Commanding Officer (CO) was not comfortable driving them up there; I did not know why because the RCB is a boat, and a boat floats."

<sup>22</sup> Encls 8, 12, 61, 80

<sup>23</sup> Encls 8, 61, 80

<sup>24</sup> Encl 81

<sup>25</sup> CORIVFORINST 4590.1B. [Ref (g)]

<sup>26</sup> C.I. III.F.3; Encls 5-7, 10, 14

<sup>27</sup> Encl III

<sup>28</sup> Encl III

<sup>29</sup> Encl 145

<sup>30</sup> Encl 152

<sup>31</sup> Encl 5-14, 23, 31, 46, 47, 50, 62, 67, 70, 77, 78 80, 99

<sup>32</sup> Encl 132 [emphasis added]

<sup>33</sup> Encl 268

<sup>34</sup> CI, III.f.10

<sup>35</sup> CI, III.f.11

<sup>36</sup> Encls 145, 204-206

<sup>37</sup> Encls 45, 50, 61

<sup>38</sup> Encls 45, 50, 61

<sup>39</sup> Encls VI, VII, X

<sup>40</sup> Encls 61, 81

<sup>41</sup> Encl 61

<sup>42</sup> Encls III, VI, VII

<sup>43</sup> Encl III

<sup>44</sup> Encl VI

<sup>45</sup> Encl XX

<sup>46</sup> Encls 61, 80, 81, 162, 210

<sup>47</sup> CI, VI.B.14

<sup>48</sup> CI Encl 45

<sup>49</sup> CI Ref f

<sup>50</sup> Encl 5

<sup>51</sup> Encl 13

<sup>52</sup> Encls 5, 9, 11, 61

<sup>53</sup> Encl 12

<sup>54</sup> Encl 61

<sup>55</sup> CI, III.E.18

<sup>56</sup> Encls 5-7, 10, 14

<sup>57</sup> Encls 6, 7, 11, 13, 23, 43, 75, 80, 81

<sup>58</sup> Encls 91, 94, 96

<sup>59</sup> Encl 45

<sup>60</sup> Encl 45

<sup>61</sup> Encl 45

<sup>62</sup> CI, IV.B.9-10

## Chapter 5 – The Transit: Operational Retasking, Execution, and Oversight

### Introduction

(S//REL **(b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a)** ) **(b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a)**  
[Redacted text block]

### Operational Retasking – RCBs Chosen to Replace the CCB for **(b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a)**

(S//NF) **(b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a)**  
[Redacted text block]



(S//NF) (b)(1) E.O. 13526 had been scheduled for 8 January, but the CCB suffered an engine casualty on 6 January and could not be used for the mission.<sup>5</sup> After learning that the CCB was not available, (b)(6), the C5F Future Operations Officer (FOPS) asked (b)(6) the CTF 56 Chief Staff Officer (CSO), whether RCBs were capable of performing the mission. In turn, (b)(6) asked (b)(6), the CO of CTG 56.7, if RCBs could support the mission. The CO assessed that the RCBs were suitable for this mission tasking. The sequence of events of the next few days accelerated rapidly in order to execute the mission within the then-current time window (8-15 January) based on availability (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a). Unbeknownst to the CTF 56 staff at the time, greater flexibility existed to reschedule the mission to another time period. In fact, (b)(1) E.O. 13526 has not been conducted as of the date of this investigation. This perceived urgency based on the pressure of an artificial time constraint resulted in inadequate planning and preparation to relocate the RCBs from Kuwait to Bahrain to conduct the mission on 15 January. Following the mission, the RCBs were expected to return to Kuwait and continue (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a).<sup>6</sup>

- (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a)
- (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a)
- (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a)
- (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a)
- (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a)
- (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a)

### Operational Planning

(S//REL (b)(1) E.O. 13526) On 10 January, the CTF 56 staff engaged the CTG 56.7 staff about relocating the RCBs from Kuwait to Bahrain. At the time, (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a) were Non-Mission Capable (NMC) and (b)(1) E.O. 13526 was only Partial Mission Capable (PMC), but (b)(6) was confident the Kuwait unit could make two RCBs mission-capable on time.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, one of (b)(1) E.O. 13526 Kuwait RCB crews (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a) including the detachment LCPO) was in Bahrain collecting personal belongings and gear for the boats given the recent decision to extend the RCBs in the NAG through March.<sup>8</sup> The preferred method for relocating the RCBs was Army Watercraft transport. This was the manner in which they had been transported north to Kuwait in October. However, the Army Watercraft was not available on such short notice. (b)(6)

(b)(6) s, the CTF 56 Commander, sought to demonstrate increased range of operations in support of a future NECC “broad seas” concept of employment of the Coastal Riverine. Upon receiving the word that Army Watercraft was not available for transport, he directed the RCBs to execute the 259 nm transit under their own power in order to support the mission timeline.<sup>9</sup> RCB transits greater than 150 nm are atypical and require refueling, so the CTF 56 and CTG 56.7 staffs coordinated an at-sea replenishment at approximately the half-way point of the transit.<sup>10</sup>

(S) Several members of CTG 56.7, as well as staff officers at CTF 56, communicated their

(b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4 (a)

(b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4 (a)

(U) (b)(6) (CTF 56) and his Chief Staff Officer underestimated the planning complexities and inherent risk of this unprecedented, long-range transit. (b)(6) considered that experience gained from conducting shorter-range out-and-back (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a) missions had adequately prepared his RCB crews for a journey of this magnitude. He later described the 259 nm transit as “no big deal.”<sup>16</sup> On 11 January, (b)(6) verbally directed (b)(6) to have the RCBs conduct the transit the following day.<sup>17</sup> The order was relayed verbally to (b)(6) (OIC of CTU 56.7.3 in Kuwait) and (b)(6) (RCB 802 Boat Captain) at 1600 on 11 January.<sup>18</sup> The only formal written order for the move was a single line in a CTF 56 (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a) fragmentary order, transmitted later that evening.”<sup>19</sup>



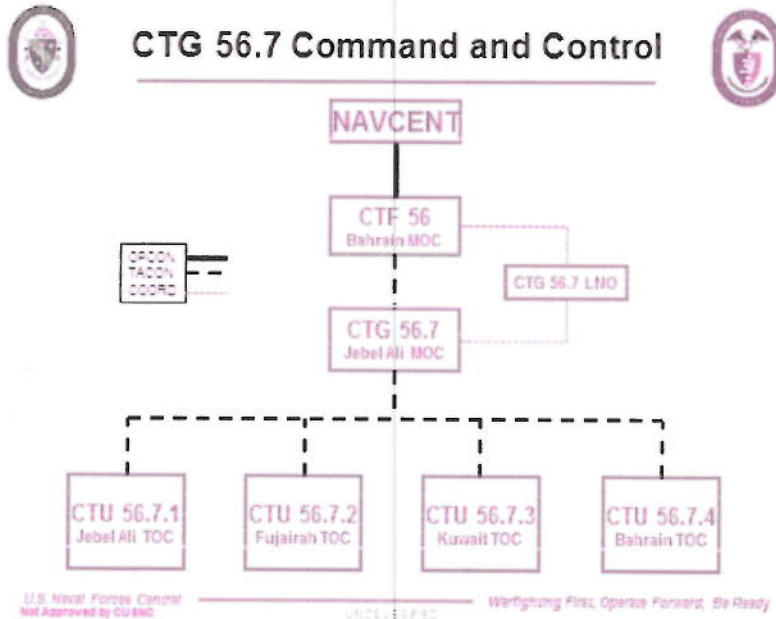
considered it the CTF's responsibility to coordinate directly with the other CTFs to arrange for things like replenishment and overwatch. In retrospect, C5F staff involvement might have elevated the authoritative direction needed to task naval or Joint forces to deliver surface and air overwatch for the mission. ~~(b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(s)~~

- *Leaders within CTF 56 did not have a shared understanding of "overwatch" or a common agreement that it was required.*

#### Lack of Command and Control

(U//FOUO) In the C5F AOR and other theaters, command and control (C2) is accomplished through Tactical Operations Centers (TOCs) and Maritime Operations Centers (MOCs). TOCs and MOCs communicate with operational units to provide oversight and support to ensure they are able to execute assigned tasking. They provide information about operations to Commanders at various levels in the operational chain of command, so that those Commanders have a clear understanding of their force employment. If necessary, the MOCs and TOCs can relay orders back to the operating units or coordinate with other units in the area to provide on-scene support.

(U//FOUO) CTG 56.7 TOCs correspond to geographically disaggregated task units: Kuwait (56.7.3), Bahrain (56.7.4), and UAE (56.7.1 and 56.7.2). These TOCs receive position reports from the boats and provide direct tactical level communications and shore support. The TOCs feed tactical information and required reports to the higher-level CTG 56.7 MOC co-located with one of the UAE TOCs. A MOC maintains the common operational picture (COP) and exercises higher level operational C2. As required, the CTG 56.7 MOC forwards required reports and tactical information to the CTF 56 MOC in Bahrain, who then forwards reporting information to the Bahrain C5F MOC.



(U//FOUO) CTF 56 and CTG 56.7 failed to establish a C2 plan to provide oversight of the RCB crews as they transited from Kuwait to Bahrain. There was no coherent plan to communicate with the craft or plot their progress in relation to the approved navigation plan. CTG 56.7's initial intention was to establish C2 via their MOC in Jebel Ali, UAE. In a cell phone call prior to underway on 12 January 2016, the Bahrain OIC indicated to (b)(6) (RCB 802 Boat Captain) that he intended to stand up the Bahrain TOC one hour before the RCBs' arrival in Bahrain. Once the RCBs were underway, however, neither the Kuwait TOC nor the CTF 56.7 MOC were able to establish and maintain encrypted satellite communications with the RCBs. So, the Kuwait TOC abandoned attempts to provide oversight of the RCBs, passed tactical control to Bahrain TOC and stood down at 1400C.<sup>24</sup> By default, the Bahrain TOC provided limited oversight throughout the transit.

- *Failure to establish a communications plan exacerbated the effects of informal C2 oversight between the Kuwait and Bahrain TOCs.*
- *The TOCs and MOCs functioned primarily as a means for passing information up and down the chain of command instead of as an actual command and control node.*

## Tactical Planning

### Navigation and Voyage Planning

(U//FOUO) The boat crews had less than one day to prepare for the transit and did not satisfy basic standards for navigation planning. Pressed for time, (b)(6) obtained a standard Plan of Intended Movement (PIM) from the navigator assigned to the Army Watercraft Unit in Kuwait. Army watercraft routinely transited between Kuwait and Bahrain for logistical purposes, and their navigation plan avoided Saudi and Iranian territorial seas by maintaining a track to the north-northeast of Farsi Island. (b)(6) trusted this track because he knew it was proven through repeated Army use, so he thought it would simplify the approval process for his chain of command. He plotted the track coordinates in the Common Geospatial Navigation Toolkit (COGENT), a laptop used to develop a visual PIM track and the primary means of navigation for an RCB. However, he did not plot the track on a paper navigation chart, as required, and was therefore not aware of hazards near the track, including Farsi Island. The track was also never plotted on a navigational chart by anyone else at any operational level. He sent the PIM to (b)(6) in spreadsheet format consisting only of a list of geographic coordinates, who approved it in that form.<sup>25</sup> (b)(6) planned to accomplish the voyage at an average speed of advance (SOA) of 25 knots, refueling at about the half-way point along his transit (130 nm). He had hoped to rendezvous with the refueling vessel by 1600 and conduct the majority of that evolution in daylight, recognizing that sunset would occur at about 1700. This plan was predicated on a 0800 boat departure time.

(S//REL (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a)) Neither the Kuwait task unit OIC, (b)(6), nor (b)(6) generated a patrol briefing for the transit. The only depiction of the planned event is a PowerPoint “quad slide,” shown below, which was provided to both (b)(6) and (b)(6) for approval of the mission. The quad slide has several errors: the transit distance from Kuwait to Bahrain (~225 nm) does not match the PIM track (259 nm); no territorial waters are depicted (including those around Farsi Island); boat numbers are incorrect; refueling rendezvous position is inaccurate. Neither (b)(6) nor (b)(6) – or anyone on their staffs – questioned its validity.



# CTU 56.7.3 RCB Transit 12JAN



**SRW**

**WHO:** CTU 56.7.3 RCBs (761, 805)

**WHAT:** Transit from Kuwait to Bahrain (250 NM)

**WHEN:** 12JAN16 ETD 0800C

**WHERE:** Northern Arabian Gulf to Central Arabian Gulf using AWC pre-planned routing

**WHY:** (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4 (a)

**WEATHER:** Winds NW 6-10 kts, seas 1-3 ft. Temperature H2/L50, Skies mostly sunny. Sunrise 0644, Sunset 1709



**Personnel**

Crew 1	BC	[REDACTED]
	COX	[REDACTED]
	ENG	[REDACTED]
	CREW	[REDACTED]
Crew 2	BC	[REDACTED]
	COX	[REDACTED]
	ENG	[REDACTED]
	CREW	[REDACTED]
	CREW	[REDACTED]

**Timeline**

0700: RCBs top off fuel Tanks

0800: RCBs UUV KMB

1215: RCBs RDV with PCAVPB

1336: RCBs will refuel with USCGC MOHOMBY (fueling adapter on hand) IVD 28 06 57311050 24.468E

1445: PCAVPB escort/fuel complete

1500: RCBs arrive at BASREC

**Comms:**

- 1) Primary (SAR): 280.0 MHz
- 2) Primary Higher: SATCOM
- 3) Secondary: Bridge-to-Bridge on T2

U.S. Naval Forces Central Not Approved by CUI/NC

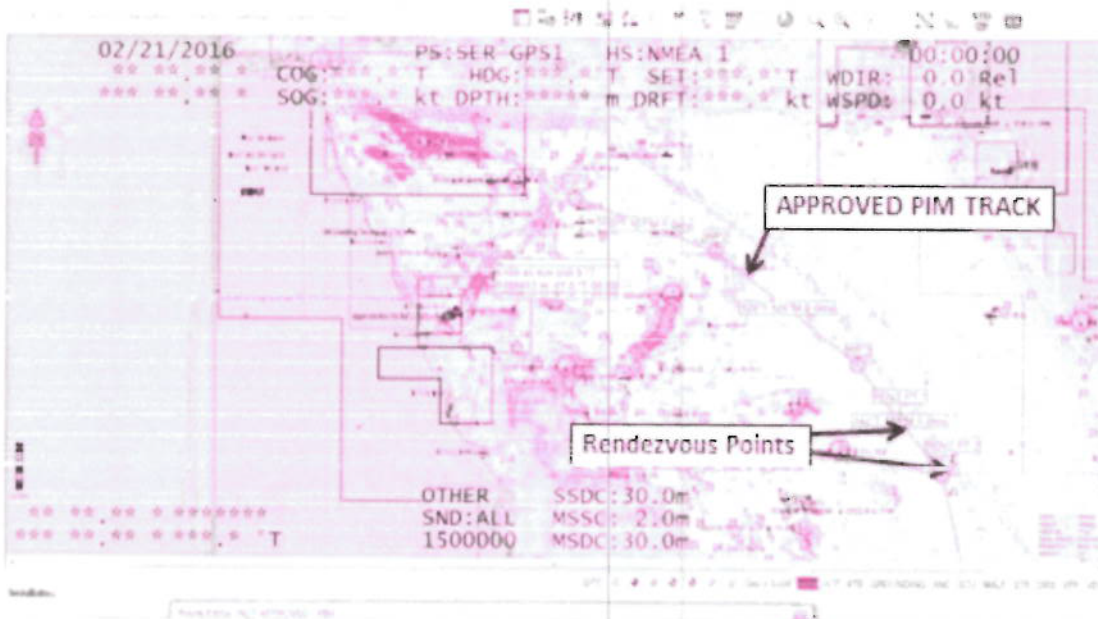
(b)(1) E.O. 13526

Righting First, Operate Forward, Be Ready

## The PowerPoint "Quad Chart"

(S//REL (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4 (a)) By contrast, the figure below depicts the Army watercraft track, plotted for illustration purposes after the event.

## Intended PIM to Rendezvous Points









With another 120 nm to go after refueling, it was likely that the RCBs would arrive in Bahrain after 2200 that night. (b)(6) did not know that (b)(6) new plan was to rendezvous on time using maximum speed with a considerable deviation from his original PIM.

Specifically, (b)(6) chose to decrease the transit time to the refueling vessel by “cutting the corner” along a more southerly straighter heading and increasing SOA to 33 knots (versus planned 25), which would have shaved off approximately 1.3 hours to rendezvous. Ironically, they would have arrived just as early using original PIM at 33 knots, as the new PIM required the refueling vessel to adjust position further south. Effectively, (b)(6) did not shorten his distance to rendezvous by taking this impromptu straighter track that would, unknowingly to (b)(6), place the RCBs in Iranian territorial seas.

- Neither (b)(6), nor their staffs, reassessed risk associated with time delays driven by maintenance and communications challenges.
- An artificial sense of urgency contributed to poor, and rushed, decision making.
- (b)(6) did not take a detailed interest in the movement plan.
- (b)(6) did not intervene and disapprove the RCB departure when the underway time was excessively delayed.

## Mission Execution

### The RCB Begin the Transit

(C) The boats finally left port at 1232 with RCB 802 (b)(6) as Boat Captain) in the lead, followed by RCB 805 (b)(6) as Boat Captain and Patrol Officer). The Patrol Officer is responsible for mission execution, directs boat crews in all aspects of boat operations, and directs PPRs and escalation of force. Boat Captains report to the Patrol Officer for the offensive use of weapons and direct the boat and crewmen under their charge.<sup>40</sup> Although (b)(6) had handled most of the transit preparation, he was neither qualified nor assigned as Patrol Officer.<sup>41</sup> (b)(6) admitted to abdicating many of his Patrol Officer responsibilities to (b)(6) and made no attempt to review the track, plot it on a chart, or conduct any crew briefings. He did not enter the navigation track into his own boat’s COGENT system or ensure pre-operational checks were conducted for either boat.<sup>42</sup> When (b)(6) changed the PIM track, (b)(6) did not check the new track.

(C) The C5F OPTASK RCB requires small arms and crew-served weapons be placed in (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a) (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a) ) when proceeding to and from station and while on patrol. Upon leaving port, (b)(6) ordered his boat to (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a), but RCB 802 remained in (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a) (a) Neither boat had more than (b)(6) crew-served weapons mounted.<sup>43</sup> Later, crewmembers stated that they routinely operated with (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a) due to the impacts of adverse weather and sea state on the material condition of the weapons.<sup>44</sup> As the boats transited, the gunners left their gun mounts and went below decks to rest. At approximately 1530, the boats unknowingly entered Saudi Arabian territorial seas and then exited seven minutes later. At 1556, the boats unknowingly entered Iranian territorial seas to the southwest of Farsi Island.

- (b)(6) *abdicated his responsibility as the qualified Patrol Officer to (b)(6).*
- (b)(6) *failed in his responsibility as the senior Officer present by not setting a Force Protection watch to set a higher alert condition against potential threats.*

#### CTF 56 Oversight During the Transit

(S//NF) Neither (b)(6) nor (b)(6) requested permission to deviate from approved PIM, nor did they inform the Kuwait or Bahrain TOCs that they were modifying the approved navigation track.<sup>45</sup> The Bahrain TOC and the CTF 56 MOC were tracking the RCB Blue Force (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a), a navigational (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a)

However, neither of these stations had the PIM or territorial seas overlaid in this system, and no TOC/MOC watchstanders had been explicitly directed to assess RCB transit progress relative to PIM. Thus, they did not know when (b)(6) deviated from the approved track, because they could only see his current position, and not his position relative to PIM.”<sup>46</sup>

(C) Due to the material and communications challenges prior to the RCBs’ departure from Kuwait, considerable confusion existed at various control stations regarding the transit status. The CTG 56.7 Operations Officer told the MOC Watch Officer at approximately 1235 that the RCBs would not be making the transit. Later, they were told that the mission was canceled. As the RCBs prepared to get underway, no status updates were transmitted via the CTG 56.7 MOC. Rather, status updates were largely exchanged by cell phone conversations between (b)(6)

and (b)(6). Neither the Kuwait or Bahrain OICs or their respective TOCs were kept properly informed throughout the process. The Kuwait TOC could only be reached via satellite communications and VOSIP and the Bahrain TOC appears to have picked up communications responsibility by default. Primary TOC oversight was never formally assigned.

- *The performance of both the CTF 56 MOC and the CTG 56.7 TOC was inadequate and contributed to the confusion surrounding location and status of the RCBs.*

The Transit Halts Abruptly

(S//REL (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a)) (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

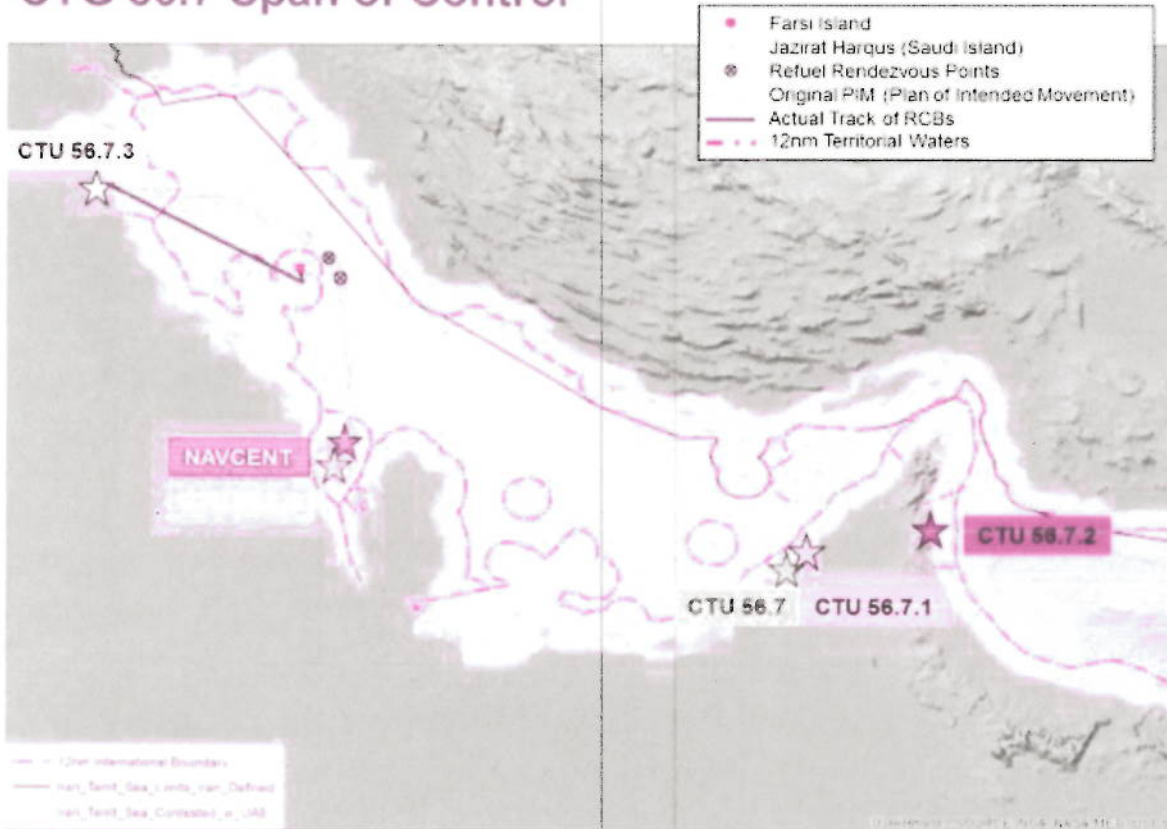
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(S//NF) As the RCBs closed Farsi Island, a MONOMOY watchstander again reported to the CTG 56.7 MOC that he held the boats in Iranian territorial seas. At that point, the CO of MONOMOY, realizing that the CTG 56.7 watchstander did not understand the significance of the situation, posted the same information into a more visible, formal chat to CTF 55 (DESRON 50), MONOMOY's TACON holder. MONOMOY then moved toward Farsi Island, stopping just outside of territorial seas. See RCB actual track and timeline table, below:

## CTG 56.7 Span of Control



### RCB Actual Track into Iranian Territorial Seas

- Failure to heed OPTASK COMMS by using ██████ chat stove-piped information and delayed reporting of the RCBs' entry into Iranian territorial seas.
- CTG 56.7 failed to comprehend the significance of reports from USCGC MONOMOY regarding the RCBs position, in part because they had neglected to plot the PIM, but also because watchstanders lacked basic knowledge of their operating environment.

(S//NF) When the RCBs were at their closest point of approach to Farsi Island (1.5 nm), RCB 802 suffered an engineering casualty to one of her two engines, so both boats stopped dead in the water (DIW) to troubleshoot.<sup>49</sup> The boat crews could visually see Farsi Island, but were not concerned, as they were unaware that it was Iranian or that they were in Iranian territorial seas. Both RCBs were subsequently confronted by Iranian small craft and directed to Farsi Island



TRUMAN CSG) in command of Search and Rescue (SAR), and directed USS ANZIO to make best speed to Farsi Island at approximately 1815, more than two hours after RCBs 802 and 805 first entered Iranian territorial seas. He briefed Commander, U.S. Central Command and the Chief of Naval Operations, directed the C5F MOC BWC to coordinate with Air Forces Central Command to (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a) Farsi Island, and provided his Commander's intent to CTF 58. Overall, (b)(6) acted promptly and appropriately when finally informed of the RCBs' encounter with the IRGCN.

(U//FOUO) Since the event, changes to improve communications flow up the chain of command to C5F require further improvement.<sup>52</sup>

- *TOC and MOC watchstanders from CTG 56.7 through CTF 56 to C5F lacked the initiative and situational awareness to take early action.*
- *C5F's battle watch did not comprehend the significance of reports from CTF 56.*
- *Once (b)(6) became aware of the RCB/Iranian interaction, he provided effective and forceful leadership.*

## Conclusion

(U//FOUO) This incident was the result of failed leadership at multiple levels, from the tactical to the operational. In particular, CTF 56, CTG 56.7, and CTU 56.7.3 staffs failed to provide adequate notification of tasking. This complex transit required more than 24 hours' notice, strict planning guidelines, and an assessment of risk compared against reward. There was no time for proper mission analysis, patrol briefing, thorough navigational planning, material condition assessment, or crew preparation/rest. Essentially, there was no time given for the team to think through the tasking before executing. The collective team felt a false sense of urgency for a mission that had previously been rescheduled and had no required accomplishment date.

(U//FOUO) Commanders at several levels failed to formally operationalize commander's intent, which made it impossible to embody that intent at the tactical level. Crewmembers neither read

nor received briefings on theater guidance messages written by the former and current Fifth Fleet Commanders.

(U//FOUO) The culture of the RCB detachment in Kuwait was characterized by informality. They conducted no patrol briefings, and missions were supported by no formal mission analysis, standard planning factors, risk assessment, or overwatch. Maintenance practices were informally conducted, crews/boats were not properly equipped to satisfy theater requirements, and there was no sustainment training.

(U//FOUO) Many existing procedures were rarely followed or understood. In particular, the rushed and informal planning for the 12 January transit ignored established crew rest directives and sound navigational practices. OPTASK RCB, the principal governing document for employment of RCBs in the Fifth Fleet AOR, was not required reading for the assigned crews.

(U//FOUO) MOCs and TOCs were not organized, equipped, manned, or trained to properly manage the required flow of information and direction necessary to make the KNB to Bahrain transit successful.

(U//FOUO) Directives addressing **b(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a)** were ignored for convenience, resulting in RCBs being unable to present the appearance of a hard target or to defend themselves against IRGCN aggression.

(U//FOUO) Decision makers at every level failed to intervene when the boats could not achieve minimum communications standards, when delayed underway time required an extended high-speed transit, and when the RCBs violated Saudi and Iranian territorial seas.

(U//FOUO) CTG 56.7 MOC and CTU 56.7.4 TOC watchstanders did not adhere to basic standards of information collection, analysis and dissemination. They did not use **b(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a)** overlays or plot RCB progress using a paper chart. They also failed to develop essential situational awareness, denying watchstanders and leaders an opportunity to intervene.



(U//FOUO) At the C5F level, watch team actions were driven by the Commander's personal direction and presence in the MOC rather than by unit reports and watchstander initiative. The overall C2 architecture did not properly serve the Commander in this situation; reports were late and incomplete, denying him the ability to intervene earlier.

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<sup>1</sup> Ref 161

<sup>2</sup> CI III.G.1

<sup>3</sup> Encl 161

<sup>4</sup> Encl 161

<sup>5</sup> CI III.G.4

<sup>6</sup> Encl 143

<sup>7</sup> CI III.G.13

<sup>8</sup> Encl 61

<sup>9</sup> Encl 67

<sup>10</sup> Encl 152

<sup>11</sup> Encl V, VI, VII

<sup>12</sup> CI IV.A.11

<sup>13</sup> CI III.G.14

<sup>14</sup> CI III.G.16

<sup>15</sup> Encl 110

<sup>16</sup> Encl 67

<sup>17</sup> CI III.G.17

<sup>18</sup> CI IV.A.13

<sup>19</sup> Encl 134

<sup>20</sup> Encl III

<sup>21</sup> Encl 110, 111, 112, 113

<sup>22</sup> Encl 112

<sup>23</sup> Encl 92

<sup>24</sup> Encl 81

<sup>25</sup> Encl 7

<sup>26</sup> Encl V

<sup>27</sup> Encl III

<sup>28</sup> The Command Investigation discusses an improperly substituted bolt on RCB 802 that was discovered during the cannibalization. No evidence shows when this improper substitution occurs, but it is clear it happened before the January 11 repairs. Additionally, the Command Investigation indicates that the bolt may have been the cause of the

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engine failure. A separate review by the Fleet Investigation determined that the bolt was not the cause. In any case, the evidence is inconclusive and the bolt's origin cannot be determined with available evidence.

<sup>29</sup> Encl 11

<sup>30</sup> Ref (h)

<sup>31</sup> Encl 11

<sup>32</sup> Encl 7, 67

<sup>33</sup> C.I. IV.E.4

<sup>34</sup> C.I. IV.E.6

<sup>35</sup> Encl 7, 59

<sup>36</sup> Encl 61

<sup>37</sup> CI IV.E.29-30

<sup>38</sup> Encl 61

<sup>39</sup> Encl 15, 35, 45, 81

<sup>40</sup> Encl 152

<sup>41</sup> Encl 152

<sup>42</sup> Encl 152

<sup>43</sup> Encl 152

<sup>44</sup> Encls 5, 21

<sup>45</sup> Encl 7

<sup>46</sup> Encl 181

<sup>47</sup> Encl 149

<sup>48</sup> CI Appendix C

<sup>49</sup> CI IV.G.3

<sup>50</sup> Encl 132

<sup>51</sup> Encl 25

<sup>52</sup> Encl V

## Chapter 6 – Captivity and Release

### Reaction to engine casualty and unidentified surface contacts

(U//FOUO) Navy Regulations require the senior officer present to be prepared for action and to guard against surprise attack. With the means available, he is to put into effect “such measures as are necessary to minimize the possibility of the undetected approach of hostile surface, air or submarine forces.”<sup>1</sup>

(U//FOUO) At 1612 on 12 January 2016, RCB 802 was dead in the water in Iran’s territorial sea. Upon seeing dangerously low lube oil pressure in the RCB’s starboard engine, (b)(6) stopped both engines to facilitate trouble shooting. Currents were from the south, pushing the RCBs toward what was, unbeknownst to the RCB crews, Farsi Island. (b)(6) later stated that he believed the island to be Saudi Arabian. (b)(6) (RCB 802 Engineer) opened the engine compartment and noticed that oil had surged from behind the raw water pump repaired the night before. (b)(6) (RCB 802 Coxswain) left his seat and went back to the engine compartment, believing himself the best engineer in the crew. (b)(6) did not object, and (b)(6) began making repairs while other crewmembers assisted by passing them tools.<sup>2</sup> RCB 805 stopped nearby to wait for RCB 802 to conduct engine repairs.<sup>3</sup>

(U//FOUO) Neither Boat Captain ordered his crew to don additional protective gear, stand lookout, or man weapons stations. Five to fifteen minutes after stopping, the RCB crews noticed two small boats approaching rapidly from the island. Several RCB crewmembers noticed the approaching boats when they were between one and two nautical miles away. As the boats approached, the crew observed crew-served weapons mounted on the boats’ bows. Accounts differ as to when RCB 805 (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a), (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a) but by the time the boats were “within their warning zones” the gunners were in place. Accounts from RCB 802 are similarly confused. One of two RCB 802 gunners began to (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a) but stopped at the direction of the Iranians. The other gunner (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a) when the Iranians were 100-300 yards away.<sup>4</sup>

(S) OPTASK RCB provides a menu of pre-planned responses (PPRs) for encounters with surface contacts during independent operations. They include: (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a)

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] The Patrol Officer, with overall responsibility for mission execution, directs all aspects of boat operations, is delegated the authority to direct PPRs and escalation of force, and has (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a) for the patrol. The Boat Captain possesses (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a) authority for self-defense of his boat.<sup>5</sup>

(S) Neither of the RCBs was equipped with functioning (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a). Each RCB was armed with a .50 caliber machine gun and an M240 7.62 machine gun. (b)(6), the RCB 802 Coxswain, was not in at his assigned station and the engines were shut down, preventing 802 from maneuvering. (b)(6) (Patrol Officer/RCB 805 Boat Captain) attempted to communicate with the boats by marine-band radio on channel 16, but neither RCB was able to establish radio communications with the approaching vessels. Although neither RCB was equipped with visual recording equipment as required by OPTASK VISUAL INFORMATION, (b)(6) in RCB 805 recorded video footage of the interaction on her personal cell phone.<sup>6</sup>

(U//FOUO) As the boats approached, some crewmembers observed a flag and eventually identified the vessels as Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGCN). (b)(6) ordered the RCB 802 gunners to back away from their weapons so as not to appear intimidating. At the same time, (b)(6) ordered the RCB 805 gunners not to chamber rounds in their weapons because he believed the approaching boats had the advantage and he did not want to escalate the situation. RCB 805's Coxswain attempted to maneuver between the boats and RCB 802, but could not block both IRGCN patrol craft at the same time. Many crewmembers believed, contrary to their pre-deployment training and the CJCS Standing Rules of Engagement that they could not engage in self-defense unless the Iranians fired first.<sup>7</sup>

- (b)(6), believing that he was off the coast of a Saudi island, did not properly assess risk, tactical vulnerabilities or the need for heightened self-protection.
- (b)(6) failed to meet the standards of Navy Regulations 0918 when he did not post an adequate watch, direct the crew to don protective equipment, and man their weapons in order to prevent being taken by surprise.
- (b)(6) acquiesced in (b)(6) departure from his watch station without permission to take over engine repairs, leaving RCB 802 without a Coxswain.
- (b)(6), overall responsible for the safety of the Patrol and possessing weapons release authority, failed to adequately prepare for the possibility that the approaching boats were hostile.

### Capture

(U) (b)(6) completed repairs at approximately 1627 and started the engines; COGENT data shows both boats making way at 1628. As RCB 802 attempted to accelerate, the two Iranian boats maneuvered into its path and pointed their weapons at the crew; (b)(6) directed RCB 805 to “go, go, go” via bridge-to-bridge radio. (b)(6), seeing the Iranians charge their weapons and point them at RCB 802 crewmembers, refused to move RCB 802. (b)(6) reinforced the need to move, but (b)(6) refused, believing that he would have gotten a fellow crewmember shot. He later characterized the exchange as “this dumb conversation with [(b)(6)] about how I am not going to drive.”<sup>8</sup>

(U) The Code of Conduct for members of the U.S. Armed Forces<sup>9</sup> is succinct:

1. I am an American, fighting in the forces which guard my country and our way of life. I am prepared to give my life in their defense.
2. I will never surrender of my own free will. I will never surrender the members of my command while they still have the means to resist.
3. If I am captured I will continue to resist by all means available. I will make every effort to escape and aid others to escape. I will accept neither parole nor special favors from the enemy.

4. If I become a prisoner of war, I will keep faith with my fellow prisoners. I will give no information or take part in any action which might be harmful to my comrades. If I am senior, I will take command. If not, I will obey the lawful orders of those appointed over me and will back them up in every way.
5. When questioned, should I become a prisoner of war, I am required to give name, rank, service number, and date of birth. I will evade answering further questions to the best of my ability. I will make no oral or written statements disloyal to my country and its allies or harmful to their cause.
6. I will never forget that I am an American, fighting for freedom, responsible for my actions, and dedicated to the principles that make my country free. I will trust in my God and in the United States of America.

(U) Faced with (b)(6) disobedience, (b)(6) chose to try to “talk his way out” of the situation rather than engage and defend his boat. (b)(6), seeing that RCB 802 had not followed and hearing (b)(6) on the radio say “stop, stop, stop,” ordered his coxswain to slow down and return to 802.<sup>10</sup> At this point, a third boat approached from Farsi Island with six to twelve more armed men, followed eventually by a fourth boat. Again (b)(6) ordered the RCB 802 gunners to stand back from their weapons. At Iranian direction, the RCBs nested, and the crew of 805 moved onto 802, leaving their weapons behind. The Iranians ordered the crewmembers to remove their body armor, kneel on deck, and place their hands behind their heads. (b)(6) ordered them to obey. Once the crew complied, Iranians boarded and seized the RCBs, searched them and the crew, photographed the crew, struck the U.S. flag, and replaced it with the flag of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps. (b)(6) activated an emergency position-indicating radio beacon (EPIRB), but the boarding Iranians saw and confiscated it.<sup>11</sup>

(U) During the boarding, (b)(6) identified himself as the officer. (b)(6) (RCB 802 Coxswain) and (b)(6) (RCB 805 Engineer) were forced at gunpoint to drive their respective RCBs toward Farsi Island, escorted by the four IRGCN vessels. COGENT data shows the RCBs making way at 1713, and stopped at Farsi Island at 1753. Once the RCBs moored, all the crewmembers were blindfolded and taken ashore. They were walked at gunpoint

to a tent for a short period, and then to a room where they would remain for the rest of the night. Their blindfolds and restraints were removed, and armed guards were placed outside the room.<sup>12</sup>

- *IRGCN forcible interference with RCB 802's progress violated international law by obstructing the exercise of innocent passage.*
- *The cumulative effect of inadequate unit and higher headquarters planning, negligent violation of force protection directives, mechanical failure, and poor tactical decision making by (b)(6) and (b)(6) left almost no feasible option for evading detention by the IRGCN. In that context, (b)(6) disobedience when ordered to move RCB 802 may have prevented a worse outcome.*
- *IRGCN boarding, search, and seizure of the RCBs and the search and seizure of the crew violated sovereign immunity. This violation was compounded by hauling down the U.S. flag and replacing it with the IRGCN flag, and the photographing and video recording of the crew for propaganda purposes.*
- *(b)(6) appropriately identified himself as an officer when detained by the IRGCN.*
- *(b)(6) showed presence of mind and fighting spirit when she attempted to activate the EPIRB.*

### Interrogation

(U) Once in the room, the crews were provided fruit and water. Their captors filmed them eating; (b)(6) encouraged the crewmembers to eat despite being filmed, because he was not sure when the next opportunity would be. Approximately one hour later, two men, one in uniform and one in a civilian suit, came to the room and asked who was in charge. (b)(6) identified himself, and the men began interrogating him, asking what the RCBs were doing, where they were coming from, and where their "mothership" was. The crewmembers related later that (b)(6) managed to evade most of their questions, and provided information that was common knowledge when he could not. During this round, the interrogators focused exclusively on the Lieutenant.<sup>13</sup>

(U) Two other men returned later and interrogated the crew as a group, asking similar questions. Several reiterated (b)(6) response, that they were transiting from Kuwait to Bahrain and that there was no mothership. When the interrogators responded that they did not believe the

RCBs capable of a voyage of that distance, (b)(6) and other crewmembers laughed and said “yeah, I wish you could tell my people that because we told them these boats can’t do that,” or words to that effect. When asked, some crewmembers provided name, rank, and serial number, while others provided date of birth and position in the RCB as well. At some point, (b)(6) told the interrogators that they were only required to provide name, rank, and service number, and that any other information offered was “conditional” or “of their own free will.”<sup>14</sup>

(U) The Iranians brought dinner to the room for the crews. (b)(6) again said they should eat while they had the chance, but when the Iranians began filming again (b)(6) told them to stop, and recommended to the crew that they not eat while being filmed. The Iranians eventually captured some footage of the crew eating. Shortly after dinner, (b)(6) and (b)(6) were escorted to the RCBs to establish bridge-to-bridge communications with USS ANZIO, and the Iranians brought blankets for the crewmembers. At some point after dinner, the building was overflowed by an aircraft that “screamed” overhead, causing concern among the captors and boosting the crewmembers’ morale. Sometime later, crewmembers were pulled out for individual interrogations in another room. Seven of the ten were eventually questioned; the only female Sailor was also the only one whose interrogation was recorded. While the interrogations were conducted, the crewmembers remaining in the room exchanged information about the questioning, until they were told to be quiet. Crewmembers response strategies and actual answers varied; some were honest while others lied or played dumb. Interrogators employed intimidation tactics such as slapping the table, spinning the captive’s chair, or threatening to move them to the Iranian mainland; no crewmember was harmed. In addition to questions about U.S. forces, the Iranians collected passwords to their personal phones and laptops. Some crewmembers refused to eat the food provided, and some attempted to maintain situational awareness by counting steps during movement and scanning their surroundings.<sup>15</sup>

- *Iranian attempts to film and photograph the RCB crews eating in order to use the images for propaganda purposes continued the violation of sovereign immunity.*
- *One RCB crewmember failed to uphold Code of Conduct standards when he made statements adverse to U.S. interests during the interrogation.*
- *(b)(6) failed to uphold Code of Conduct standards when he encouraged crewmembers to eat despite being aware of the video recording.*



**Apology and release**

(U) On the morning of 13 January 2016, the crew was provided breakfast and told that they would be released if they cooperated. They were instructed to eat and act happy while being filmed; (b)(6) told them to comply, and that they could disavow any statements made later. After taking some footage, the camera crew moved over to (b)(6).<sup>16</sup> An Iranian interviewer gave him a script, and a uniformed Iranian told him he had to apologize. (b)(6) reworded his responses to questions through several iterations. The Iranians told him that the crews would not be released unless he answered exactly as told. Although there were no weapons pointed at or near him and he was not threatened, eventually (b)(6) complied with the directions given and answered according to the script.<sup>17</sup>

(U) On completion of (b)(6) on-camera interview, the crewmembers were again blindfolded and escorted back to the RCBs. At 0924, USS ANZIO established bridge-to-bridge communications with the RCBs, and at approximately 1150 they got underway with IRGCN personnel onboard. After approximately two nautical miles, two IRGCN vessels approached and removed the escorting personnel. The RCBs then proceeded toward international waters escorted by three IRGCN patrol boats and an IRGCN helicopter. At 1255, the RCBs exited Iranian waters. By approximately 1300 they were alongside USS ANZIO, and by 1345 the crews had completed initial medical screening. They were moved by helicopter to USS HARRY S TRUMAN, arriving at 1438, and shortly thereafter departed by carrier on-board delivery (COD) aircraft, bound for (b)(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a) to commence the reintegration process. They arrived at (b)(6) at 1747, 13 January.<sup>18</sup>

- (b)(6) *failed to uphold Code of Conduct standards when he directed cooperation with the Iranian video production and acquiesced in making the scripted on-camera statement in exchange for the crews' release.*

<sup>1</sup> Ref (y), CI IV.G.10

<sup>2</sup> Command Investigation (CI) IV.G.2–IV.G.16

<sup>3</sup> Encl 6, 7

<sup>4</sup> CI IV.H.1–IV.H.16, IV.H

<sup>5</sup> Encl 152

<sup>6</sup> CI IV.H.18–IV.H.21, Encl 10

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<sup>7</sup> CI IV.H.24–IV.H.28, IV.H.48

<sup>8</sup> CI IV.H.51–IV.H.59

<sup>9</sup> Ref(C)

<sup>10</sup> CI IV.H.60-83

<sup>11</sup> CI IV.H.60–IV.H.83

<sup>12</sup> CI IV.H.84–IV.I.1

<sup>13</sup> CI IV.I.9–IV.I.20

<sup>14</sup> CI IV.I.21-IV.I.28, Encl 6

<sup>15</sup> CI IV.I.29-IV.I.65; Encl 11

<sup>16</sup> CI. IV.I.68-98

<sup>17</sup> CI IV.I.68- IV.I.98

<sup>18</sup> CI IV.I.6-19, IV.J.6-IV.J.19

## Chapter 7 - Recommendations

(U//FOUO) This investigation revealed significant deficiencies in tactical mission execution, supervisory leadership, operational planning, and TOC/MOC oversight. The recommendations provided below address those findings. This report concurs with the recommendations made in the Command Investigation and subsequent endorsements. A few of those recommendations are repeated in this section for additional emphasis.

### 1. Accountability

1.1 (U//FOUO) Based on the results of the Command Investigation completed in February 2016, (b)(6) (C5F) took administrative action with regard to the following personnel:

- (b)(6) (Commander, CTF 56)
- (b)(6) (Chief Staff Officer, CTF 56)

The Commander with jurisdiction over these personnel should consider whether additional administrative or disciplinary actions are warranted based on the additional Findings of this report.

1.2 (U//FOUO) The Commander with jurisdiction over the following personnel should take appropriate administrative and/or disciplinary action:

- (b)(6), Commanding Officer, Coastal Riverine Squadron 3 / Commander, CTG 56.7
- (b)(6), Executive Officer, CRS 3 / Deputy Commander, CTG 56.7
- (b)(6), Officer in Chart of the Kuwait task unit CTU 56.7.3
- (b)(7)(C), (b)(6), Riverine Coast Boat (RCB) 802 Boat Captain
- (b)(7)(C), (b)(6), RCB 805 Boat Captain / Patrol Officer
- (b)(7)(C), (b)(6), RCB 802 Coxswain

(C) When considering (b)(6) failure to obey an order of a superior officer, the Commander with jurisdiction in this case should consider the unique realities of the tactical situation. The confluence of inadequate planning by higher headquarters, mechanical failures, tactical misjudgments by the Boat Captains, and lack of RCB crew

vigilance limited reasonable action to evade and resist detention. (b)(6) subsequently reversed his order, recognizing that evasion would likely have produced a worse outcome. Nonetheless, (b)(6) failed to follow Engineering Operational Casualty Control procedures in that he did not maintain single engine propulsion to open datum from an unknown and potentially hostile island before effecting repairs. Additionally, he left his watch station without relief to assist with engine repairs.

**2. (U//FOUO) Review Coastal Riverine Force (CRF) disaggregation policies and procedures.** Recommend NECC and C5F take steps to review and improve CRF disaggregation policies and procedures, to include overseeing the flow of disaggregated forces into theater, reviewing and approving tactical placement of units, reviewing the command and control process for disaggregated units, and increasing oversight of disaggregated operations across multiple areas of operation. Leaders should ensure disaggregated forces receive appropriate enabling support and oversight.

- **(U//FOUO) Oversee flow of disaggregated forces.** Ensure CRF units flowing into theater participate in RIP/TOA or equivalent training to include a theater familiarization and acclimatization period.
- **(U//FOUO) Review and approve tactical placement of units.** Ensure CRF disaggregated force placement be thoroughly and formally planned in writing and approved by higher authority.
- **(U//FOUO) Review disaggregated Command and Control processes.** NECC in cooperation with C5F conduct a full review of CTF 56 communications C2 architecture and provide feedback to improve the efficiency of information flow and command and control.
- **(U//FOUO) Increase oversight of disaggregated CRF operations across multiple AORs.** In order to balance competing requirements, NECC should coordinate with Fleet Commanders to actively balance CRF distribution. Both administrative and operational chains of command should actively manage the dispersal of these smaller elements away from their assigned commander.

3. (U//FOUO) **Assess CRF sustainment training.** Recommend C5F, in conjunction with NECC, assess CRF sustainment training in theater to ensure it is sufficient and responsive to changes in mission tasking, with a focus on weapons proficiency, long range navigation, and other mission essential skills.
  
4. (U//FOUO) **Assess operational risk management procedures.** Recommend NECC conduct a detailed assessment of operational risk management procedures within the CRF and develop a plan of action to instill an active and ingrained safety mindset.
  
5. (U//FOUO) **Review and upgrade C5F Command and Control processes.** Recommend C5F improve command and control effectiveness by reviewing staff training and qualification requirements, assessing C5F command and control design, flattening CTF 56 command and control layers, formalizing its tasking process, and establishing a robust operational assessment process.
  - (U//FOUO) **Conduct Fleet staff training and qualification.** C5F should conduct a comprehensive review of headquarters training and staff qualification, to include planning, operational execution, and oversight of command and control.
  - (U//FOUO) **Assess C5F command and control design.** C5F should assess the Fleet and Force C2 organization and communications architecture to ensure they meet his information requirements and that they support direction of forces under his operational control.
  - (U//FOUO) **Flatten Task Force 56 command and control.** C5F should assess current operational C2 design and determine if communications layers should be removed. Specifically, C5F should identify and promulgate requirements for CTF 56 watchstander presence on the C5F watch floor to speed information sharing and facilitate command execution. An analysis of other CTFs may be warranted.
  - (U//FOUO) **Formalize tasking in accordance with planning doctrine.** C5F should promulgate tasking to CTFs via record message traffic in accordance with the Joint Planning Process where appropriate.

- (U//FOUO) **Establish a robust operational assessment process.** C5F should properly resource the C5F assessments cell. Develop a feedback process to promote faster incorporation of lessons learned from exercises and CONOPS experimentation.

**6. (U//FOUO) Improve Fleet communication effectiveness and follow-through.** Recommend C5F conduct a review all Fleet and Force Directives to ensure that they support commander's guidance from the operational to the tactical level, highlighting defense in depth and institutionalizing priorities through scenario-based training.

- (S//~~b(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a)~~) **Prioritize defense in depth.** C5F should ensure that procedures are in place to provide prompt and effective Joint defense in depth and that the C5F planning process properly and routinely sources the overwatch requirement.
- (S//NOFORN) **Institutionalize scenario-based training.** Scenario-based training promotes deeper understanding of Commander's Intent while improving response to the Iranian threat. C5F should emphasize immediate tactical actions over information collection requirements. This C5F action is ongoing.

**7. (U//FOUO) Review CRF employment.** Recommend NECC review CRF theater employment to determine whether the forces are effectively tasked within the capabilities and limitations of their boats and training regimen. ~~b(1) E.O. 13526 1.4(a)~~

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**8. (U//FOUO) Review CTF 56 staffing.** NECC should conduct a review of the CTF 56 staff billet composition and individual qualifications, including CRF expertise. NECC should consider creating a comprehensive pre-deployment training and certification process for Task Force staff.

**9. Ongoing Command Investigation Corrective Actions**

9.1 (U//FOUO) This investigation concurs with several corrective actions implemented by C5F. A full list of C5F corrective actions is included at Enclosure (XVII). These include:

- (U//FOUO) A Fleet-wide stand-down as well as a command climate workshop within CTF 56;
- (U//FOUO) A navigation “check ride” requirement;
- (U//FOUO) The revision of OPTASK RCB;
- (S//NOFORN) A scenario-based tactical discussion of the December C5F use of force message in order to ensure that all levels of command understand (b)(6) guidance with respect to Iranian interactions; and
- (S//NOFORN) Implementation of a “Sector Zulu” surface command and control architecture to ensure overwatch of transiting surface units.

9.2 (U//FOUO) This investigation concurs with several corrective actions implemented by NECC. These include:

- NECC designated CRF boat crews in the CENTCOM AOR as “high risk of isolation” and directed High Risk of Isolation training for all CRF boat crews;
- Conducting a review into navigation requirements, training, procedures, and standards as it pertains to green and blue water operations;
- Conducting a Readiness Kill Chain assessment for the Coastal Riverine Force platforms;
- Developing a command triad leadership and indoctrination course for Echelon IV and V commands, focused on warfighting readiness and combat effectiveness; and
- Exploration of synthetic scenario training options specific to the Coastal Riverine Force as well as other expeditionary units of action.