



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
1ST BATTALION, 32d INFANTRY, 3d BRIGADE,
10TH MOUNTAIN DIVISION (LI)
10663 5TH ARMORED DIVISION RD
FORT DRUM, NY 13602

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

August 7, 2013

To whom it may concern,

I am writing you to express my opinion on the characterization of service of SSG Robert Bales and what I believe contributed to his actions in Panjway. I arrived to Joint Base Lewis-McChord in September of 2007, as 3d Brigade was returning from Iraq. I was a new Lieutenant assigned to Charger Company, 2d Battalion, 3d Infantry Regiment when I first met Bobby Bales. We instantly bonded. Bobby was older than the normal Team Leader and I was older than the normal Platoon Leader, but that is not what I believe connected us. Bobby loved his Soldiers. He was always with them, guiding them, training them and caring for them. He was the quintessential Army leader. I loved him for that.

In February of 2008, I was moved to the Battalion Reconnaissance Platoon. Even though the move was good for my career, I was devastated. I loved my Rifle Platoon and I wanted to stay with them. Within a few months of being in the Reconnaissance Platoon, we needed a Sniper Section Leader. This position is typically filled by the most senior qualified Staff Sergeant in the Battalion. I knew Bobby would be perfect for the job, though he was still just a Sergeant, and truth be told, I needed a strong, passionate leader. Bobby got the job. The Reconnaissance Platoon had some serious discipline and leadership issues. Bobby was going to be my man to clean it up and he did. I relied on Bobby heavily. Not only was he in charge of the Sniper Section, but I used him as an Ad Hoc Platoon Sergeant in the regular absence of our actual Platoon Sergeant. I knew he was overwhelmed, but the Soldiers and I needed him. This was the first time I failed SSG Bales as his leader.

We continued to train hard. SSG Bales performed tremendously. He outpaced every other Sniper Section Leader in the Brigade. He led the Brigade Marksmanship Team to a First Place Finish in the Fort Lewis Marksmanship Competition, beating two hand-selected Special Forces Teams among many others. He was a Rock Star, but he was beginning to show signs of stress as he endured what we call "Performance Punishment." By the time we deployed in 2009, Bobby was handling nearly all of the Platoon's NCO business. He was also my lead vehicle and point man.

As part of our pre-deployment preparation we had to take a series of tests to establish a "baseline" to determine traumatic brain injury. SSG Bales and I were busy with other business so we did not go with the rest of the platoon. Instead, we went together on the make-up day. As we were walking into the testing center, SSG Bales

and I joked about how his "baseline" was being established after two deployments. At the time we thought it was funny. I don't think it is funny anymore.

SSG Bales was hypersensitive in the field and during vehicle movements. He seemed to see and hear everything. At the time, I saw this as a strength and our best defense in identifying and avoiding IEDs. I did not equate his hypersensitivity with stress, so I continued to use him in this nature. Throughout the deployment we never struck an IED. We were very successful. My decision to keep Bobby as the acting Platoon Sergeant and point man/lead vehicle commander was validated, but I had failed SSG Bales as his leader again.

When we got back to Fort Lewis, I felt great. We brought everyone home alive and though we knew many of the guys were hurting mentally there were not going to be anymore deployments for the unit. We had time to heal. I moved to Fort Benning, GA in August of 2010, though I remained in contact with Bobby and to my great relief Bobby was moved to my brother's company as a Platoon Sergeant in the same battalion. I knew Bobby would take care of Nick (my brother). My brother, in his letter, will provide more detail on the changes that occurred and the toxic leadership that existed after I left the Battalion, but I would make one simple comment: if you serve out of love for Soldiers and your senior leaders don't care about Soldiers, you are in a truly dark place.

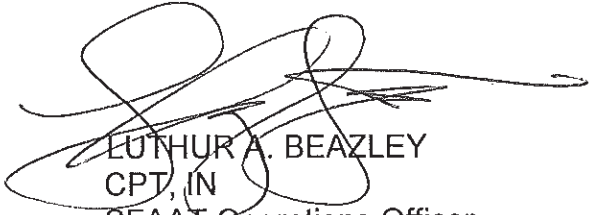
I graduated the MCCC at Fort Benning, GA and moved to Fort Drum in May of 2011. I deployed to Khandahar, Afghanistan in June of 2012. Bobby and Nick deployed in December of 2012 to Afghanistan. This was a surprise. Everyone thought deployments were over for 3d Brigade, 2d Infantry. This was Bobby's 4th deployment. Bobby ended up just south of my battalion on the other side of the Arghandab River. What luck. We were in touch via email and it was both a good feeling to know he was close and terrifying to know how dangerous it was in his area. My battalion was pushing the enemy into Bobby's area. We were fighting every day, driving the enemy south, across the river. Eventually our success in driving the enemy out, created a serious problem for Bobby's unit. There were even more enemy personnel in the area than before. I redeployed to the US on the 12th of March, 2012.

My brother called me to tell me something bad had happened on the day I redeployed. I immediately asked if he was hurt. He said no. I asked if Bobby was dead. He said no. I asked if Bobby was hurt. He said no and said he could not talk about it, but to look at the news. I told Nick I loved him, hung up the phone and went back to bed. Everything was fine. Nick and Bobby were fine and I was exhausted. My wife woke me up crying an hour later to show me what the news was. I was in disbelief. I still am.

I have reflected a great deal to try to understand or even justify how any of this is even possible, let alone real. I cannot speak for Bobby, but I believe he was finally overwhelmed by witnessing the deaths and injuries of the Soldiers he loved so much. When you love Soldiers as much as Bobby does and you have lost Soldiers over the last ten years, it wears you down. While many of us are able to handle it a little better

each time, it got worse and worse for Bobby. Finally, it was too much for him. He felt impotent in his most important job, protecting Soldiers, and he lashed out and then lost control as he began the deed. I believe, in his mind, Bobby was setting out to right a wrong. I do not believe he intended to harm women and children, but rather sought the men who were responsible for the recent attack that left a Soldier with an amputated leg, and then, once he began executing his self-imposed one man mission, the darkness that has been tugging at him for the last ten years swallowed him whole and spit him out when the deed was done. I know my friend has done wrong. I know he has done so, so wrong. Please have whatever mercy the law allows you to have on him.

Sincerely,



LUTHUR A. BEAZLEY
CPT, IN
SFAAT Operations Officer