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MILITARY INTELLIGENCE

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Office of the Auditor General
Northern Command, Military HQ

Re: OFFICIAL INQUIRY: Kriil Engagement
Command Protocol Sierra
File # MI7729461S

MEMO:

To Deputy Chief of Staff (Military HQ),

Please find enclosed the transcript of Intelligence Officer [REDACTED] interview concerning the battle at Kriil Firebase on [REDACTED]. The interview was conducted at Military Headquarters, Umbra Division, Tiir.

Note that key names and dates have been redacted for security reasons. Please refer any questions to the Administrative Assistant to the SMA.

AG



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Interviewer: Alright, let's start. Begin recording.

Intel Officer: [Inaudible]

Interviewer: Understood... let the record reflect that this interview is part of the official inquiry into the Kriil Engagement of [REDACTED] and is being conducted pursuant to the revised command protocols instituted by Doctor C. Naabal. Please state your name and rank for the record.

Intel Officer: Intelligence Officer [REDACTED] Soban Combat Forces, currently assigned to the Command Carrier [REDACTED].

Interviewer: Were you serving as Intelligence Officer aboard the Command Carrier [REDACTED] at Firebase Krill¹ on the date in question?

Intel Officer: I was.

Interviewer: You understand that you are under oath and freely declare that the evidence you are about to give is accurate to the best of your recollection?

Intel Officer: I so declare.

Interviewer: Good. Who was in command of the fleet on the day in question?

Intel Officer: Captain [REDACTED].

Interviewer: Can you describe exactly what happened? From the beginning, please.

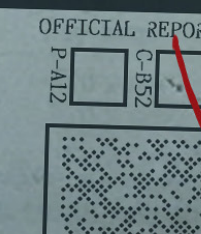
Intel Officer: At approximately 0800 of that morning Northern Command had transmitted intelligence reports of Gaalsien movements along the Tarsis Line². The Gaalsien had made several incursions in recent days, but had retreated back into the deep desert like ghosts every time our forces had attempted to intercept them. There was concern the Gaalsien were testing our defenses, preparing to carry out an attack. Captain [REDACTED] ordered us to move through the Faaern Gorge³, hoping to cut our intercept time down and surprise the Gaalsien forces by flanking them.

Interviewer: The Captain was familiar with that sector then?

Intel Officer: Yes, sir. Both he and I had run reconnaissance missions out of Firebase Kriil before it was overtaken by desert encroachment and abandoned in 1111 KDS.

Interviewer: Continue.

¹ An abandoned Coalition firebase once used for deep desert reconnaissance and supply missions.
² The Tarsis Line, named after the Coalition's Defense Minister Tarsis Naabal, is a line of early warning scanners and sensor outposts constructed and deployed by the Northern Coalition on the edge of the Great Banded Desert east of the capital Tiir. It was built immediately following the Gaalsien attacks on the north in 1110 KDS.
³ The Faaern Gorge is a natural geological formation in which Firebase Krill is situated.



Intel Officer: We entered the gorge from the west. As we arrived at the firebase we ran head on into a Gaalsien carrier group. Our recon units indicated one carrier and an unknown number of support craft present.

Interviewer: Unknown number?

Intel Officer: Our lead escorts were destroyed almost immediately upon encountering the main battle group. They barely had time to relay their coordinates. Captain [REDACTED] ordered the fleet to battle stations and began resourcing operations immediately, then brought the carrier's construction bays online.

Interviewer: You were setting up for a fight.

Intel Officer: Damn right. The Gaalsien had violated the Tarsis boundary and initiated hostilities by engaging and destroying our escorts. We were about to be head-to-head in a pitched battle with these bastards, closed in by cliff faces rising up on either side of us. I'm sure Captain [REDACTED] explained all this to you.

Interviewer: We have your captain's debrief, yes. But I'd like to hear exactly what happened from your point of view.

Intel Officer: I don't understand. Is there some kind of a problem here?

Interviewer: So, you started resourcing and had fired up the production bays. Then what?

Intel Officer: [Inaudible]

Interviewer: Excuse me?

Intel Officer: I said they made the first move. Sandskimmers. A dozen... more... went straight for our logistic modules and salvagers. Our carrier's point defense railguns slowed them down initially, but they weren't enough. Luckily we were producing AAVs to counter those Sandskimmers, but the Gaalsien production capabilities are much more advanced as I'm sure you're aware. They were overwhelming us. Shunting power into our new Armed Logistics Modules⁴ helped suppress the attack while we produced additional AAV's—standard procedure in this type of situation. Once we had the numbers, those Sandskimmers were nothing but floating scrap.

Interviewer: Go on.

Intel Officer: It was only the opening salvo of the battle, but we had weathered it well. We brought our resourcing operations back up to capacity and started production upgrades. We also deployed three Baserunners to retrieve a nearby artifact. Using the classic Hail-Pyke Maneuver⁵, and supported by AAV's, our Baserunners pushed toward the middle of the base. Everything was going well until...

⁴ A Sobani engineered upgrade to the standard Logistics Module, incorporating a short-range, targeted electromagnetic weapon that briefly immobilizes enemy units.
⁵ Named after two Sobani Baserunner pilots who first used it in 1113 KDS during an engagement near the The Shallows, it refers to a strategic artifact recovery method employing three Baserunners in a loose delta formation in order to maximize the effectiveness of their ECM launch abilities against enemy units.

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Interviewer: Until what?

Intel Officer: Until they came under attack from Gaalsien Heavy Railguns. Those units hit hard and are merciless if not countered quickly. But then, that's why we were in formation. We were prepared. The Baserunners launched their defensive countermeasures⁶, preventing the enemy Railguns from firing and limiting their vision. Just like that we had extracted the first artifact, boosting our carrier's power output and setting up our next move.

Interviewer: Whose decision was it to move your command carrier to the middle of the battlefield, exposing it to enemy attacks from all sides?

Intel Officer: That was a command decision, of course, but you already know that. I'm sure you're familiar with what the great Miirhan Soban said about controlling the battlefield.⁷ Every student at the Red Academy learns that their first year.

Interviewer: I am.

Intel Officer: Then you also know he was one of our greatest military minds. I don't think you, a S'jet.... I don't think you can argue with the military logic of such a move.

Interviewer: It is my job to ask questions Officer [REDACTED], not to interpret the answers. You would be best served to simply state the facts as you remember them. If you do so, this interview will be over soon enough and you can return to your ship. Think of this as nothing more than a bureaucratic formality.

Intel Officer: [Laughter] Sure.

Interviewer: Your command carrier took up position near the middle of the base. And?

Intel Officer: Our plan was to deploy armed logistic modules to control and defend the artifact sites. Gaalsien units had taken the high-ground to the southwest of our position. We engaged them with force, but they had a steady stream of reinforcements inbound. The assumption was that a Gaalsien Production Cruiser was located nearby. Deploying an armed logistics module and shunting into range we were able to sight the Cruiser. We immediately deployed our Railgun units to mark and eliminate the Production Cruiser. By destroying the unit we successfully hampered their production capabilities.

Interviewer: Marking the target?⁸ This was the first time the Soban had used this new technology?

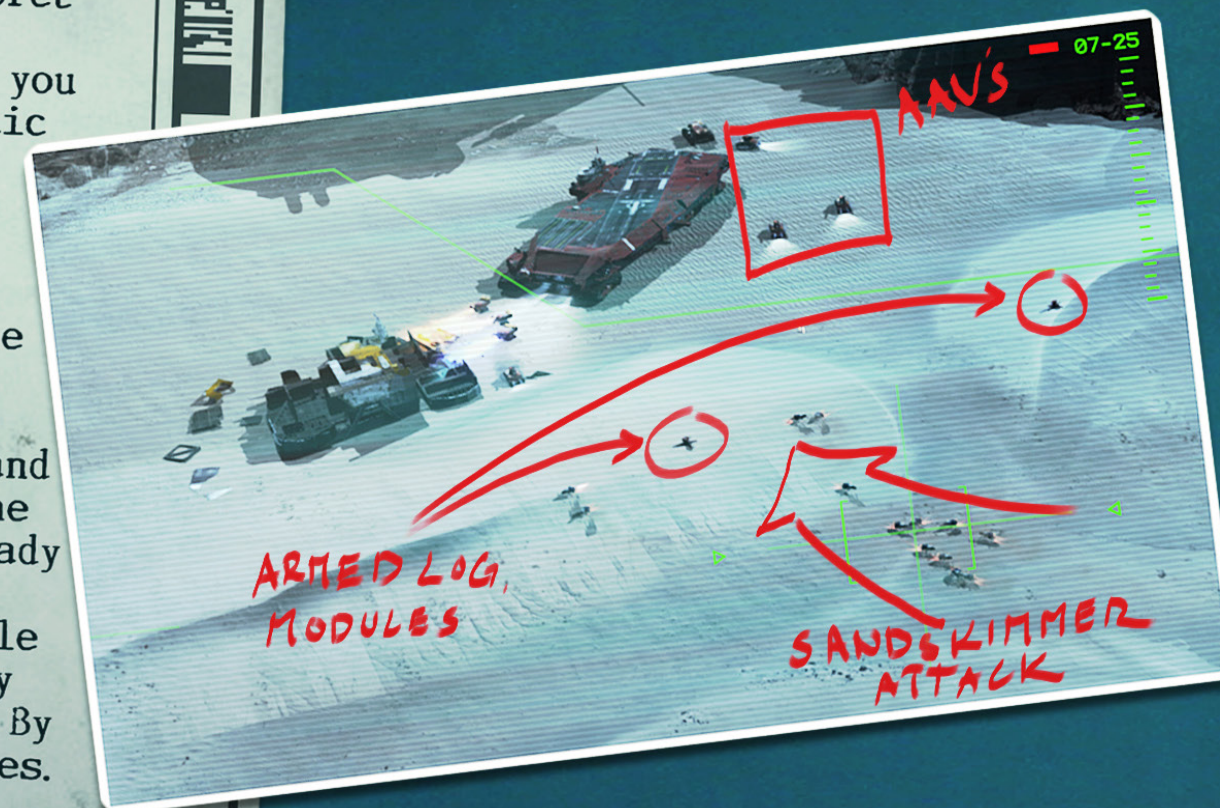
Intel Officer: Yes, and like I said, it worked extremely well. But the battlefield is a fluid and dynamic environment, a beast that cannot be tamed, only overcome with time and tactics.

⁶ Targeting Jammer: A deployable device that generates a disruption field, disabling weapons and reducing vision range over a defined area.
⁷ "Control of the battle space is not an illusion, but an act of will, in order to seize victory from your enemy, you must force moves and take chances."
⁸ Target marking is a Sobani Railgun battle tactic that utilizes a laser designator to mark high-priority targets, increasing accuracy and focusing allied fire.

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TARGETING JAMMER:
DISABLING GAALSIE
HEAVY RAILGUNS



Interviewer: What do you mean?

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Intel Officer: I mean the Gaalsien counter-attacked against our armed logistics modules and resourcing hub.

Interviewer: The position your command carrier had abandoned?

Intel Officer: Not abandoned. It was a strategic choice, and this counter was something we had anticipated as a possibility. Shunting power into our weapons, thanks to increased capacity due to artifact recovery, we were able to limit the damage and eliminate the enemy Assault Ships with the help of our Armed Logistics Modules.

Interviewer: But that wasn't the only counter the Gaalsien threw at you?

Intel Officer: No. [Sound of water being poured] A squad of our Railguns had bunched together and came under fire from an enemy Siege Cruiser. They were decimated by the artillery barrage.

Interviewer: A tactical error.

Intel Officer: Was that a question?

Interviewer: What happened next?

Intel Officer: We had destroyed one of their production cruisers and limited their anti-air capability as a result. That was a critical moment. The enemy likely had another production cruiser in service, but we had wounded him. The captain ordered two probes to be launched to pinpoint the location of the enemy carrier.

Interviewer: Really? To what end?

Intel Officer: I suspect the captain had a plan and he wanted accurate field intelligence before he set it in motion. Once in the air the probes moved quickly, covering hundreds of square kilometers... then one of them caught sight of another Gaalsien Production Cruiser. That's the last thing it saw, of course. The Cruiser shot it down. The other probe took longer to locate its target, but eventually uncovered the location of the Gaalsien carrier. It was being protected by an Honorguard Cruiser and a half-dozen Assault Railguns. With an escort group scouting beyond our sensors range, our tactical overview of the battlefield was beginning to coalesce nicely.

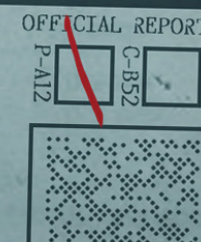
Interviewer: Escort Group One?

Intel Officer: Yes.

Interviewer: I see.

Intel Officer: With this information in hand we were clear to execute our plan of attack.

Interviewer: And what was that plan?



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Intel Officer: Having taken out one of the enemy's Production Cruisers, and having bolstered our power reserves through artifact extraction, Captain [REDACTED] made the decision to launch an attack against the enemy carrier itself.

Interviewer: A bold move.

Intel Officer: Yes, it was.

Interviewer: And inherently risky.

Intel Officer: Have you ever been in battle? Ever had to make life and death decisions, knowing your actions could cost the lives of hundreds of men and women under your command, all in a split second?

Interviewer: Whether or not I've been in battle is irrelevant here.

Intel Officer: You're wrong. It couldn't be more relevant. I don't envy the Captain, having to make those calls, but I trusted him with my life—we all did—and he didn't hesitate for a second once he had the information he needed. He knew, that in that moment, to hesitate could mean the difference between victory and defeat. It's that kind of conviction that is the hallmark of great commanders.

Interviewer: And dead ones.

Intel Officer: [Laughter] I don't care for those who would second-guess such decisions, decisions made in the heat of battle, especially when those people have never been in that situation.

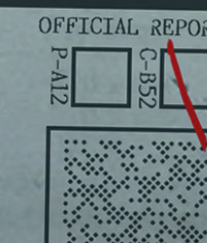
Interviewer: Duly noted. For the record... I understand... far more than you know. But please, continue.

Intel Officer: We wanted to have the advantage once the shooting started, so we needed to pull those Assault Railguns away from the carrier. Attacking the enemy's secondary resource line where our probe had located their Production Cruiser was the answer. In order to do that we ordered Escort Group One to attack.

Interviewer: And the feint worked?

Intel Officer: It did. Our probe was still airborne and we could see the Heavy Railguns moving out, away from the carrier. While this was happening we had ramped up production on two additional Battle Cruisers. With three total, we set course for the enemy carrier. If we could get close enough we were confident the multi-phase railgun turrets⁹ on the Battle Cruisers could wipe out the enemy's Honorguard Cruiser and support units before turning their attention to the carrier itself.

⁹ Leveraging the Naabal's railgun technology, the Soban Battle Cruiser has four multi-phase railguns instead of the more traditional dual heavy cannons.



Interviewer: Getting close enough to neutralize the range advantage of that Cruiser can be a problem.

Intel Officer: Uh... yeah... it can be. For sure.

Interviewer: Go on.

Intel Officer: We had enough AAV's in reserve to support the Battle Cruisers. So we set off, leaving behind a Support Cruiser to manage our resource operations while the Command Carrier brought up the rear.

Interviewer: You were risking everything with, as I see it, no fallback position.

Intel Officer: The Captain took a calculated risk based on field intelligence and years of battle experience. If you want to call that risking everything.

Interviewer: Go on.

Intel Officer: As we approached the Carrier we could see a second Honorguard Cruiser deploying out of the back of it. As I said, the battlefield is always dynamic. But we still had the advantage... they were situated too close to the carrier. It would ultimately prove a fatal error. Our AAV's immediately deployed smoke as a blindside blocker to—

Interviewer: Neutralize their range advantage.

Intel Officer: Exactly. It allowed our Battle Cruisers to close distance without taking heavy damage. Once at close range they were able to chew the hell out of the enemy. After the two Cruisers were eliminated, the enemy carrier didn't have a chance.

Interviewer: And those Heavy Railguns the Gaalsien had sent off to protect their resource line?

Intel Officer: They were on us fast, but not fast enough. Having divided their units we had bought ourselves the time to seize the tactical advantage, and with our Command Carrier's power shunted into weapons, the old girl provided an effective shield for the Battlecruisers to finish their work.

Interviewer: Very good.

Intel Officer: Is that all then?

Interviewer: Not quite. Your fleet retreated from the battlefield before completing mop up operations. You allowed an unknown number of Gaalsien units to escape. Why?

Intel Officer: You know why.

Interviewer: In your words. Please.

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Intel Officer: We were fired upon out of nowhere. Multiple missile strikes, seconds apart. We lost one of our Battle Cruisers and three AAV's before we could even identify where the attack was coming from.

Interviewer: So you didn't see the enemy?

Intel Officer: Not right away. They showed up on sensors as the missiles hit. The two carriers were just beyond the edge of the Gorge. Their silhouette configuration was one I had never seen before. Having just neutralized one enemy we were in no condition to engage two carriers and god knows how many support craft. The only sane decision was to retreat.

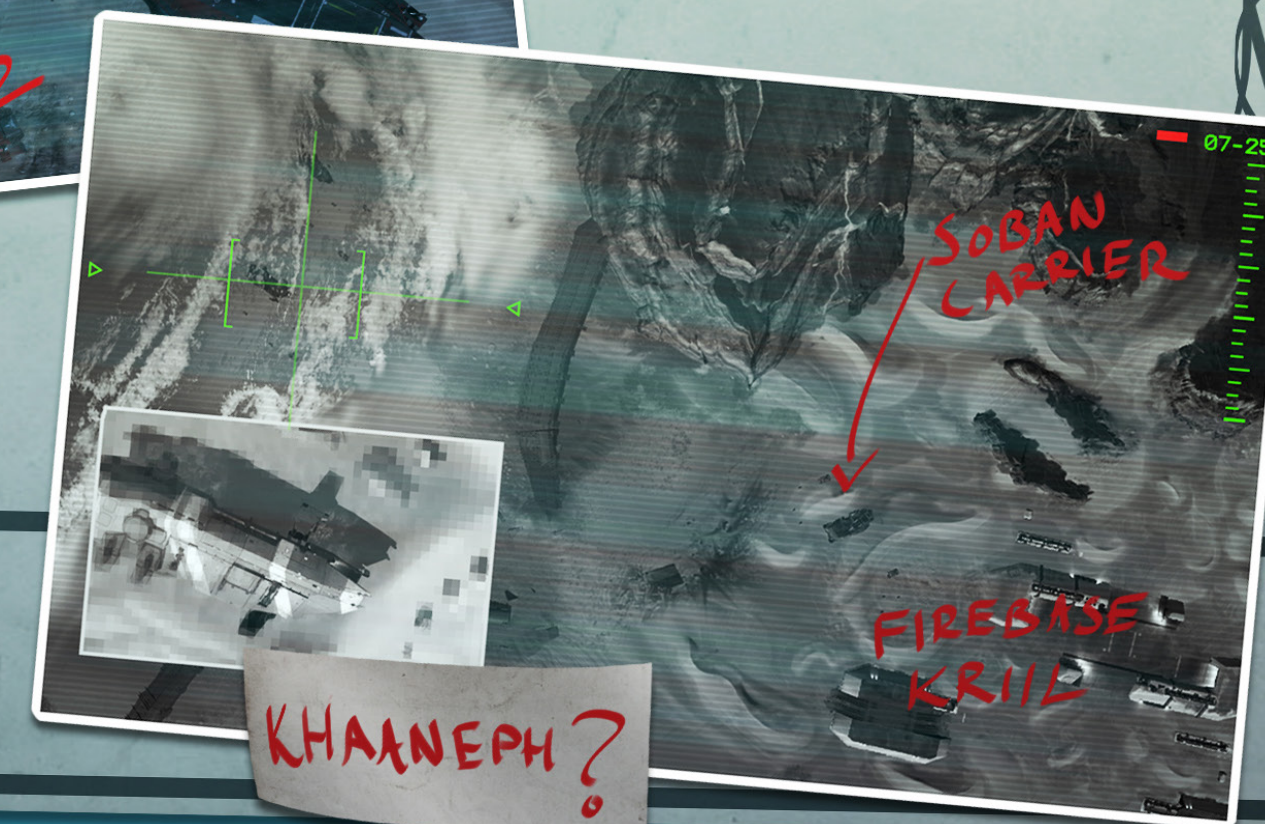
Interviewer: Well, thank you for your time Officer. As I said, I'm here simply to ask the questions, not interpret your answers, despite what you might believe. You've been very forthcoming. Thank you for your time.

Intel Officer: You know what they were, don't you? Who those carriers belonged to?

Interviewer: We don't know everything, but we have a good idea, yes. [Sound of people standing up from the table]. I've been authorized, at my sole discretion, to share some of the information we have collected as I see fit. And since you asked, and considering the circumstances... What I'm about to tell you is highly classified. It doesn't leave this room.

Intel Officer: Understood.

[End of Recording]



Interview conducted by Nathan S'jet
Deputy Director, Military Intelligence
Umbra Division

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