

Rough Transcript
Sgt Wildrich (Will) Barnard, 20 IFB (21 July 2016)

Deployment(s): Afghanistan/Kuwait 2013

Interviewer/Transcriber: LCol M.C. Vernon

Note: *Quotations are not 100% verbatim*

Timecode	Content
0:20	Was doing office work. Was at stable point in his life to accept the opportunity. Stable relationship. Fiancee was supportive. Encouraged him to pursue his passion. Family knew it was a matter of time, based on his interests. Fiancee “pushed me into this, to get this over with, I’d been talking about it for so long. Have a good tour. We’re so proud of you.”
2:15	Expectations? No idea, but had heard many stories. Training was in Edmonton with 1 Svc Bn. It was shorter than previous Afghan tours. Streamlined, long days. Ready to go in half the time. His job was to be convoy commander. Learning how to issue orders. How to react in certain scenarios. Really adequate training. The job he trained for was the job he did overseas—as second-in-command, however.
4:15	Hopes? Wanted to help. Odd to say that. “I’m a big fan of protecting the little guy. Helping Afghanis who weren’t able to protect themselves.”
4:55	First impressions? Fast and furious descent at 0400, still dark outside. The smell was not pleasant, the feces in the air. Hot and humid. Shuffled into hangar without weapons or frag vests. “Never felt so vulnerable in my life.” [This was in Kabul] When sun came up, he heard the “ominous” prayers over the loudspeakers. “Creepy but not off-putting. What have I got myself into?”
6:30	Temporary accommodations in a modified H-hut. Picked up in up-armoured Toyotas and drove to Camp Phoenix to get their missing kit. It was about 35 Celsius. “Felt vulnerable, looking out window. Everybody looked suspicious. No such thing as traffic rules. Everything is disorganized, but nobody’s hitting each other. Disorganized organization.”
8:00	At Phoenix for two days in a massive hangar. Didn’t sleep on airplane at all, so he slept hard at Phoenix. Awoke at 0600 following a car bombing at the front gate, shooting up in bed, then going back to sleep. “Didn’t faze me at all, I was so confused.”
09:00	His job was based out of Camp Eggars. Some shade from trees. Low door frames, “like an Ewok village. Adobe brick, handmade.”
9:45	Main job was to transport VIPs or instructors to ANA and ANP. Left the wire several times a day, or not at all. Not confident on his first day. Had to learn how predecessors did it, safety concerns to address.

	Comfortable by second or third week.
11:25	Lost of paved roads, so IEDs weren't a big concern. Some rocket attacks. Often enough to head off complacency. Traffic was heavy until Ramadan, "eerily quiet" for a time, then busy once it's over. Very stressful, but a good stressful. "Didn't need a coffee or energy drink before heading out. You are the priority on the road. You feel powerful in a way. Massive antennae in vehicles, jamming technology. Sounds like a lawnmower in the back of the vehicle. Sometimes it would stop working due to crypto or electrical malfunction. Kept jammers in middle of convoy to provide protective bubble. Kids loved to throw rocks at us. There was a midget who loved to hide in potholes. He'd jump out and wave to us. We'd have to be sure not to drive over him."
15:00	They drove in armoured SUVs, sometimes American Suburbans. No gunners up top.
15:30	Reg/Res relations? In his section there was one sore Regular who resented a friend was denied a spot by a reservist. "He didn't feel I was his leader. It took me three weeks to earn his respect."
16:25	On or around September 11, the sirens went off. He grabbed his pistol and left the gym. Ran to where their weapons were. Afghanistan had just won a soccer game and people were celebrating by firing into the air. Apparently, one Canadian was hit by a ricochet in his calf. [Unconfirmed]
17:50	Biggest hindrance were ANA soldiers who weren't getting paid. They started targeting westerners to apply pressure. They would stop and try to search vehicles, "screaming for money." A friend had an ANA point his AK at him. SOP in such situations was to GTFO—get the fuck out/away. The ANA soldier lost his job the next day. ANA leaders had no time for this kind of behavior. This situation lasted about two weeks.
19:45	They were looking for money. They wanted it. But almost nobody carried cash on them. The kids were crazy. They'd jump on vehicles and beg for money while hanging from the vehicle. One held on for five kilometres before jumping off. All kinds of begging by Afghans.
21:00	They were ordered not to give out money, food or water. Otherwise, they'd be bogged down by people seeking handouts. Soldiers delivered aid on separate occasions, to orphanages etc.
21:55	Leave? It was easy to get out of mindset, but it was "completely scary" sitting in the airport, and then when they were aloft the man beside him started to clip his toenails. "His feet just smelt like something else." In Dubai, 4-5 of them went to an Irish pub. Beer made it feel like they were back in civilization. He went on to Europe (Amsterdam, UK, London, France with his fiancée.) He went to Oktoberfest at the end, with one day to himself. Then he felt lonely. Sat in his hotel room watching movies, excited to get back to the mission and his buddies.
24:10	Final half was slightly demoralizing. He could tell the tour was winding

	down and perhaps money was an issue as the quality of food obviously declined, from steaks earlier in the tour to “some kind of sliced meat substitute.” Like the meat at Arby’s. Breakfast was eggs. Money was short. Had he stayed longer, they would have gone back to hard rations.
25:15	There were quite a few people there who wanted the medal, and after 30 days (the time needed to qualify) they made no bones about wanting to go home. But he was gratified to see what they had accomplished and tried to stay longer. He got an extra month in Kuwait. He didn’t want to leave. He was in Afghanistan July-October, then a month in Kuwait.
26:40	Didn’t feel good about pulling out. The locals wanted them to stay. Wanted to go to Canada, but that wasn’t possible.
27:25	Felt like Canada was leaving Afghans in a lurch. US, UK and Australians were still there. “See you, guys. Bye.”
28:00	The danger in Kuwait was significantly lower. Non-existent. “You go from fully armoured vehicle in Kabul, with weapon, to Kuwait with no pistol or rifle. Garrison standard. I didn’t like how relaxed everyone was. Taking their time. It just irked me.”
29:20	There were still some higher-ups who lingered in Kabul after he left. But the majority came home in mid-October. Three waves of people came to Canada from last roto. The final wave was in Feb/March 2014. (He was the second wave in October)
30:20	Toyotas in Kuwait were not armoured, just speedy. They escorted vehicles. Some days spent doing nothing, long stretches of boredom. Almost unbearable.
31:15	Decompression? Three day stop in Cyprus. Briefings then “we drank our faces off. Went to a pizza joint and had so many beers—three! That’s all it took.” Mindful of the whisky girls and other “dangers”. These are girls who were looking for drinks at exorbitant prices. Huge tabs of hundreds of dollars, with the armed bouncers making sure soldiers paid. They were briefed on the dangers, told the stories.
33:15	How useful? Extremely valuable. “We joked beforehand that this is so we don’t go home and beat our wives. No one wanted to be that guy. It allowed everyone to blow off steam. There were massages, counseling, and reimbursable.” You’re still spending your money, but you get some of it reimbursed after submitting paperwork.
34:50	Landing in Edmonton was weird, during a freak snowstorm, went from 25 to -30 Celsius in one day. Had to go through customs. The bus took them from Edmonton airport with police escort back to the base in north Edmonton. Also had firefighters and the CF18 Hornet escort. “It was crazy, amazing, cool... even though I didn’t feel I’d done a great job. I know it choked up a lot of people on the bus. But we were also driving very slowly, 60 kph. Can we speed it up?” Hellos at the lecture training facility, “then everybody leaves. “ He’d told his fiancée not to meet him.

	It was a bit sad, but his CO and unit Ops WO drove up to meet him, so he had somebody. Plus a friend in Edmonton. "I was shivering the entire time with a ton of baggage." He decided to drive home at 80 kph, in spite of the bad weather, and got home by 0100 to greet his wife/fiancée.
38:35	Going into town the next day was a big mistake. Malls were full in December. Major culture shift for him: "I'm wondering. Where's my pistol? Where's my rifle? I'm feeling very unsafe. That guy's acting weird... I'm getting anxious, angry, flustered. I have to leave. I thought I had a better grasp on it than I did. Overconfident in my ability to control my emotions. Would snap at little things. Little things that never bothered me before. Irritable for first month. Easy to go from zero to a hundred. Wife knew it would happen. We talked through it. She had patience of an angel, but forced me to talk to her. Worked through it. Finally realized what was setting him off. " Had his wedding to plan at the same time.
40:30	Satisfying? Might not be right word. He'd go back if he could. "An empty feeling at the end of it. Would love to go back and finish what I started... Continue the work. Make sure those guys are OK. The orphanage building. Didn't feel we left the ANA fully-trained. Three-quarters trained. Great guys, hard-working soldiers. Hearts of gold. I miss that."
41:45	It put things into perspective. Eventually didn't care about trivial things, didn't need the latest iPad or newest computer. It was an eye opener. Professionally, it made him pay attention to detail. "You really need to pay attention to these drills. They'll save your life. I can tell you stories..."
42:55	It wasn't very exciting, but it was meaningful. "But not something they're going to make a movie out of." He's lucky to have a wife who supports him. Doesn't matter if he puts his name in for Latvia or Iraq. She pushes him. "With her support and I can push myself into these scary situations." He has his name in for Op REASSURANCE.
44:20	Used tour money to go to SAIT and get his EMT certificate. Goal is to work as a paramedic or to join the police.
	Additional visuals desired: