13 August 2015

Military Reporters and Editors
c/o Medill School of Journalism
Attn: Ms. Amy McCullough
1325 G St NW Suite 730
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Ms. McCullough:

This is in response to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request seeking a release of the investigation following Staff Sergeant Robert Bales’ March 2012 killings in Kandahar Province, Afghanistan.

U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) conducted a thorough review of 121 records, totaling 768 pages. After reviewing the records, I am withholding 199 pages in their entirety and partially releasing 569 pages. The withheld information is exempt from release pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(1), applying Executive Order 13526, Classified National Security Information, sections 1.4(a) military plans, weapons systems, or operations; 1.4(b) foreign government information; and, 1.4(c) intelligence activities, sources or methods. Additionally, some withheld unclassified information, when compiled, would reveal classified information as defined in Executive Order 13526, section 1.7(e) compilations of unclassified material that reveal a classified association or relationship. Additional information is withheld pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(3) as it relates to 10 U.S.C. § 130b personnel in overseas, sensitive or routinely deployable units; (b)(5) inter-agency and intra-agency memorandum; and, (b)(6) personal privacy interests.

Because a number of requesters sought records regarding Staff Sergeant Bales’ AR 15-6 investigation, and the Command Climate Survey which is one part of the investigation, USCENTCOM has posted the releasable records in the USCENTCOM FOIA Library. You may access the records at www.centcom.mil, click on FOIA at the bottom of the page, select Reading Room and follow instructions to the link entitled “AR 15-6 Investigation – SSG Bales Incident, 11 March 2012.”

Accordingly, in my capacity as the Initial Denial Authority, by withholding this information, I am partially denying your request. There are no fees for processing this request since chargeable cost fell below $15. If you are not satisfied with this action, you may petition the Appellate Authority, the Director of Administration, Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), by writing directly to OSD/Joint Staff Freedom of Information, ATTN: Appeals Office, 1155 Defense Pentagon, Washington, DC 20301-1155. Your appeal must be postmarked or submitted electronically within 60 calendar days of the date of this letter, cite USCENTCOM’s case #15-0257, and clearly mark “Freedom of Information Act Appeal” in your correspondence. You may
submit an electronic appeal at http://pal.whs.mil/palMain.aspx. Once on the web site, select “Submit Appeal” and the next screen will require you to sign-in or register before submitting your appeal.

If you have any questions, please contact my FOIA Requester Service Center at (813) 529-6285, foiaoffice@centcom.mil and refer to USCENTCOM case #15-0257.

Sincerely,

Michael X. Garrett
Major General, U.S. Army

Attachment:
TAB A: AR 15-6 SSG Bales Incident, 11 March 2012