

INTERVIEW II

DATE: November 8, 1982

INTERVIEWEE: DANIEL O. GRAHAM

INTERVIEWER: Ted Gittinger

PLACE: General Graham's office, Washington, D.C.

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G: General Graham, were there disputes within the intelligence establishment in MACV about the enemy order of battle?

DG: Sure there were. Sure there were. There were disputes within the military intelligence establishment and within the CIA establishment. Where a false notion has occurred is that there was a fundamental dispute between CIA as an institution and the military intelligence people as an institution. If you want to find out whether that was so or not, all you have to do is look at the National Intelligence Estimates, which are in fact the view of the director of Central Intelligence plus those of everybody else in intelligence. It turns out that in every case where a National Intelligence Estimate was written on what the strengths were in Vietnam, there was no dispute.

There were disputes within the services. I had disputes with people in DIA and a few people out at MACV as to what the strengths were. I in fact always believed we were too high, others believed we were too low, and I always went along with what compromise we made, because I never believed that we could get an accurate count of guerillas. So I was willing to be reasonable on it, although I always thought that MACV's counts were too high. There were others--in DIA,

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for instance, I remember a Major Barry Williams who believed that we were too low. I can remember people out at MACV who thought we were too low, and others who agreed with me that we were too high. And I know that within CIA the same thing was true. You had guys like [Samuel] Adams saying we were way too low, and others in CIA that agreed with me that we were too high. So, yes, there were disputes in intelligence about how many VC there really were.

There were also disputes about what should be counted, whether you should count as military opponents the political cadres or the porters, you know, people who get forced into forced labor for the VC and so forth. And those were all legitimate disputes, but there never was a dispute in which CIA came down and said, "There are X," and MACV said, "There are Y." That did not happen and that's eminently provable in the national intelligence documents. Once in a while somebody's view would spring to the top and be considered at high levels, but it wasn't because there was an institutional difference. When it got up to the top levels, the top guys in intelligence were able to agree on some number, and always on one that I thought was too high, and always on one that a guy like Sam Adams thought was too low. But that was the nature of the game, and to infer that somebody was conspiring to put out bad numbers and so forth not only doesn't show an understanding of what was going on, I think it just was sort of paranoid. It doesn't make any sense to me.

G: What responsibility did your shop have for order of battle intelligence?

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DG: Well, we didn't have any responsibility for order of battle. My shop had responsibility for estimates, and so we had our input into what the total strength of the Viet Cong was, and whether it was going up or going down, and what were the general military capabilities of the Viet Cong and so forth. So we had our impact on order of battle, and in cases where I saw the order of battle not making any sense, I'd challenge it. For instance, one of the reasons I thought the guerrilla order of battle was too high, let alone being underestimated by 120-130 per cent--which is what the quarrel on the CBS thing was about--was that there wasn't any guerrilla activity going on. From the time I got over there and I started going to the operations reports on enemy activity, I noticed that all of the military activity was being carried on by main force, local force, you know, regularized units, and guerrilla incidents were practically--well, they were extremely rare. I shouldn't say practically nonexistent; every week you'd get maybe five or six guerrilla incidents in each Corps area. But we were carrying like something on the order of one hundred and forty-five thousand guerrillas, and I said, "How can one hundred and forty-five thousand guerrillas do so little? This doesn't make any sense." So I'd keep pounding on the order of battle people saying, "I think you've got too big a figure for guerrillas."

G: Who had responsibility for order of battle? Was there a separate order of battle section?

DG: Yes. The order of battle was handled by an outfit called CICV, the Combined Intelligence Center, Vietnam, which included the Vietnamese

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and American order of battle specialists. It was in an entirely different building from me, and they were doing order of battle on the old sort of World War II style, where they would try to find out what a unit was called, and what its strength was and so forth. There was a tendency for a long time for order of battle figures to suggest an increase in enemy strength. They would have never said it was a real increase in enemy strength, because what they were doing was just discovering units that hadn't been discovered before, assigning a strength to them, which was usually pretty sloppy, you know, kind of by guess and by God. "It's called the umpty-umpth local battalion; most local battalions have about three hundred and fifty people, so it's three hundred and fifty people," and so forth.

But as they discovered new units, it suggested that the total number of Viet Cong was on the rise. Whereas when you looked at it from the point of view that we looked at it in estimates, in MACV, Viet Cong strength couldn't be on the rise. We did an input-output analysis. In other words, we would say, "Quite aside from whatever our estimated figure for total strength is right now, last month they lost so many killed, they gained so many through recruitment, and they gained so many through infiltration. We added in other odds and ends, like a guess as to how many were getting sick from malaria and so forth, all of these were not very firm figures, but when you took them all together and added them up, VC strength has got to be lower this month than it was last month, because they've lost more than they gained. So our estimate should show a reduction in the total strength."

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G: Did you have to take into account any possibility of inflated figures for body count?

DG: Oh, yes. As a matter of fact, we discounted them when we did the analysis. Because one could never tell. I knew perfectly well that a lot of American commanders simply would not risk their troops to go out and get an accurate body count. I wouldn't have, either. I think that if I'd been in the field with a combat outfit and they said, "Now you've got to go back out to the field and count the dead," I would have taken a by-guess-and-by-God [estimate] and given it to higher headquarters. Now whether that always turned out bigger or smaller, I don't know. I think sometimes that it worked both ways.

But the fact of the matter is we were being driven by [Robert] McNamara's way of accounting for the war to send in body counts. Commanders in the field were being asked to risk the lives of their men to go out and count corpses, and I never could understand that. The only reason I think it was ever done in Vietnam was to answer the rather strange addiction to figures of McNamara and his whiz kids. This is the only way they could calculate whether you were doing a war well or not, as to how many people you had killed. And it was a pity, but I always figured in calculating enemy losses and enemy strengths that chances are that it was going to break about even, but we fudged it downward just in case it was too high, and still it turned out that the VC, from months beginning about April 1966 until when we started doing this calculation, which was September 1968, had in fact almost every month been losing strength. Some months they would infiltrate

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more than they lost, but for the most part it was a downward trend in the total strength of the VC.

This later became called the crossover memo, although it was never called that inside MACV. As a matter of fact, after I did that analysis, as far as I know, it never got outside of MACV, because while General [Phillip] Davidson generally agreed with it, he didn't choose to distribute it further. So if I wanted to make a charge of conspiracy or something, I'd say, "General Davidson conspired not to send my marvelous memo on." (Laughter) The crossover memo.

G: Why didn't he send it?

DG: Well, I honestly don't know why he didn't send it. My guess is that it sounded to him like something that somebody would take as a light-at-the-end-of-the-tunnel rationale or something like that. Well, you know, and I wasn't absolutely sure I was right. That's just the way it looked to me, and I said it was the best estimate I could make. But it certainly wasn't something I'd say, "I swear by all the powers that be that this is correct." We just [had] a different way of looking at things, and it may or may not have been right.

In hindsight, when the Viet Cong offensive, the Tet offensive, took place, I was sure I had been right, because what my analysis suggested is that the Viet Cong had to be getting desperate. They were losing people faster than they could pour them into South Vietnam; this suggested that they had to do something frantic. After the offensive, I said, "By God, I was right. They got in such bad shape that they had to do something drastic." They tried it; it was a

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military failure, but thanks to the bloody press it turned into a political success. Had we taken what I said to begin with at face value, we'd have said, "By God, they're going to do something desperate," and we would have then not failed, I think, to take seriously parts of the VC plan for the Tet offensive that we didn't take seriously. And believe me, this is the only way we were surprised. In the documents that indicated they were going to pull off that offensive, they said, "We are going to attack the cities." And all of us said, me included, "No, that's got to be just pumping sunshine, because they're going to get butchered if they try to attack the cities." Which turned out to be the fact; they did get butchered trying to attack the cities. But what we didn't take into account is what a desperate situation they were in. The saddest thing, to me, is that as it turned out, instead of being portrayed as what it was, [which] was a frantic military maneuver that caused them great grief and strain, it turned out to be a political triumph that caused LBJ, for instance, to throw in the sponge.

G: General [Frederick] Weyand seemed to have had some kind of intimation that something big was going to happen at Saigon.

DG: Sure he did. As a matter of fact, I was at the WIEU meeting--that was the Weekly Intelligence Estimate Update, and that's how I had gotten most of my contact with the great powers that be, because they all gathered every Saturday. And I can remember Weyand saying, "You know, some of these people are acting like they really might try to attack the cities." But he wasn't very sure about it. He just said, "I

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don't know, maybe we ought to pay more attention to that." And in fact of the matter, there was one guy in our headquarters who also thought that that would happen, and that was old Charlie Morris, who was a pretty smart old intelligence guy. But the bulk of us said, "Aw, they're not going to do that. They would get clobbered!" So they subsided; Weyand subsided. I mean, he didn't make a big thing of it, neither did Charlie. It turned out they were right, that they were going to make a--

G: Didn't General Weyand maneuver his troops, reposition his troops to some extent--

DG: Yes, he did; yes, he did.

G: --based on--?

DG: Yes, he did. Now, he had a guy that was out in the boonies who was giving him pretty good dope at that time, a guy who later got exco-riated by Joseph Kraft when he went to Cambodia, a guy named Bill Pietsch.

G: What was he doing?

DG: Well, Bill Pietsch was running a human intelligence collection operation in III Corps, and old Bill was coming in and saying, "You know, I think these people are bad enough off that they will try this." I can remember him saying that to me before the Tet offensive. And another guy was Pete Wolkonsky, who was over there, who really didn't have an intelligence mission, and old Pete would say--

G: Could you spell that name?

DG: Wolkonsky? W-O-L-K-O-N-S-K-Y. Wolkonsky nearly got me killed in

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Berlin by saying something wicked to a Russian lady cop who had a submachine gun across her back. He was kind of a crazy man.

But I remember talking to him before the Tet offensive. He says, "You know, those bastards really might try to take Saigon and Can Tho," and so forth. I said, "Ah, come on. They can't make it." He said, "They can't make it, but they might try it." So Pete, Bill Pietsch, Charlie Morris, to some extent Fred Weyand were right about it. You know, they weren't adamant about it, they just suggested maybe we were wrong in not thinking that they didn't in fact mean what they said in all of these captured orders that we picked up, which in fact gave us the knowledge that they were going to attack either the day before Tet or the day after. The only reason we didn't say Tet itself until about, oh, twenty-four hours before the attack, was because the Vietnamese intelligence people insisted that "Nobody attacks anybody at Tet."

G: Of course, they had done it once before, although the historians remembered when it was too late.

DG: Yes. That's right. But you couldn't convince South Vietnamese intelligence that anybody would in fact attack anybody at Tet. Because, after all, for more than twelve years they had been allowing each other to go across the lines to visit families at Tet and so forth, and they just couldn't believe it would change.

The remarkable thing was, in fact, that [William] Westmoreland was able to get most of them to keep half of their strength at home for Tet. A few of them let more than that go. Some of them, like the

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guy up at Ban Me Thuot, wouldn't let anybody go. Of course, he was so offensive-minded that he really got Ban Me Thuot torn up, because he saw them coming out there and went charging out of Ban Me Thuot to attack them and missed them, and they just went by him into Ban Me Thuot. (Laughter) But you've got to give him credit. That officer knew they were out there, he believed his intelligence, went out and attacked them, but he missed them, and they went past him and went into Ban Me Thuot. (Laughter)

(Interruption)

G: Sir, can you recall--it seems to me that there were, in the summer and early fall of 1967, emissaries from Washington to Saigon and vice versa trying to iron out this--

DG: Numbers thing?

G: --order of battle business.

DG: Well, a lot of that went on just before I got there. [Joseph] McChristian had sent some guys first to CINCPAC and then to Washington to talk about order of battle figures. But that was really before I got there. I can remember old Gains Hawkins was part of the operation, and Gains came back, and I saw Gains one time in Vietnam, and he left within weeks after I got there.

G: And you came in May or June sometime?

DG: No, early July. Meanwhile, Davidson had taken over from McChristian. You've got to realize that these are two very, very different men and have a very different approach to intelligence. My bias is very much

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toward Davidson's way of operating. McChristian was almost pedantic in his attempts to make intelligence in Vietnam similar to intelligence in Europe during World War II, you know, sort of standard order of battle and so forth. Furthermore, he was a great empire builder, and I can remember Davidson calling that bunch of people that he found when he got there "Joe McChristian's First U.S. Intelligence Army." He had gotten everybody in military intelligence concentrated in Saigon; they were stumbling all over each other's feet. And Davidson, as I recall, cancelled four hundred spaces for intelligence guys within the first few weeks that he got there, which, of course, screwed up the bureaucratic patterns of a lot of people and caused animosity, and I think the animosity eventually resulted in some of these guys coming out and calling us names in the CBS program.

But the fact is you had two essentially different kinds of guys. McChristian's view of intelligence was the bigger the enemy force you can portray, the more support you're going to get to fight them. And Davidson's view was entirely different. His view was, "I don't give a damn whether it's bigger or smaller. Let's find out what the facts are." He was more inclined to take a look at what we were saying in intelligence and take a look at operations and see whether the two meshed up, which was never McChristian's view of how to handle things.

So from the time I got there, a clash arose between the old hands that had been there with McChristian, and Davidson's new view. As a matter of fact, he fired the entire estimates crew. He had them fired

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before I got there. He had got hold of me--because I had worked well for him earlier--to come out to Vietnam and help him because he was taking over J-2. He said, "What do you want to be, chief of current intelligence or chief of estimates?" I said, "Well, I'd rather be chief of estimates." And when I got out there, he had done away with the estimates crew and he says, "You are now chief of current [intelligence] and estimates." I was a lieutenant colonel. There were bull colonels all over the place and still he gave me that job. And the reason--and then he said, "Well, you go ahead and pick some estimators, because I just fired everybody who was ever involved." Because all the other guys were doing it a la McChristian, and Davidson didn't want any part of that. And he was dead right, because they were putting out stuff that didn't stack up, didn't make any sense. So he fired the lot of them.

G: Explain to me how a lieutenant colonel, if I may say, a Davidson lieutenant colonel, deals with a bunch of McChristian full colonels who are working for him.

DG: Well, luckily, I was a lieutenant colonel (P); I was on the promotion list. I was going to be a full colonel eventually, so that made it a little better.

G: Couldn't you expect some knives to be out for you when you got back to Washington?

DG: Oh, I had long knives out for me. I had long knives out for me, and it never ceased. Never ceased. I had long knives out for me for a couple of years after that, because in a way I go the way Davidson

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does. I mean, you know, screw 'em. What are you going to do to me? I never thought I'd be a colonel anyway. My old man was a WPA worker. I should be happy I got to be a lieutenant colonel. (Laughter) It didn't make any difference to me, except that it got in the way professionally. I had a lot of people give me a hard time, and they resented Davidson for putting this young punk in, being able to have as much say as I did. It really resulted in some of the sort of nastiness that I've encountered in the last year or so that came up in the CBS program. I'm sure of it, I'm sure of it. Shoot, to me it's just human nature; nobody likes to have some guy come in and upset their apple carts.

G: Do you remember a visit, I believe it was in September of 1967, when Sam Adams was I believe accompanied by George Carver?

DG: Yes, I remember that very well.

G: I gather that was a tumultuous meeting, was it not?

DG: Oh, yes, it sure was, because first of all, you know, it was perfectly obvious to all of us that what had happened was that CIA had gotten so tired of Sam Adams pinging away at them, they were going to let Sam Adams come out and have his say finally with the people out in Vietnam who were putting all this stuff together. Well, Sam Adams got up, and his character is to stand up and insult everybody who has a different point of view, or accuse them of some kind of chicanery. Whereupon he turned everybody that was listening to him into utter hostiles. I mean, even if he'd had a good idea, he could have never sold it the way he was trying. He finally got the guy--he wasn't talking to me,

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because he was talking order of battle and talking to Charlie Morris' guys, not mine. I sat there and listened to him.

G: Can you describe the scene? Set the scene for me.

DG: Oh, well, here we sit in one of our briefing rooms at MACV, and George Carver gets up and says, "Well, now, here's one of our analysts who has a different view of guerrilla strength, and he would like to present his views to you." And up gets Adams, and he starts in by saying, "You know, you're not just wrong, you're 120 per cent wrong, because here's the truth, and here's a document from which I've extrapolated." It turns out the document was captured in late 1966, and the date on it was early 1966, talking about how many folks there were in various kinds of operations in Binh Dinh province. Everybody's sitting there, giving him the stockholder's stare, and the more insulting he got, the madder they got, and at the end, Charlie Morris got up and he said, "You're full of shit!"

(Laughter)

G: He's keeping it on a real high plane.

DG: Yes. "You're full of shit."

(Laughter)

So he went home hurt and disappointed, but as a matter of fact, I interceded with the old man. I said, "God, we don't know how many guerrillas there are either. Look, George Carver is pretty much on our side; he's got to go back with something. Why don't we kick the guerrillas up another fifteen thousand? We don't know either." And so we did, not really believing there were that many more, but sort of

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to try to patch things up with the reasonable people at CIA. You know, I didn't believe it for a minute that there were another fifteen thousand, but on the other hand I couldn't prove a figure. As I say, it was like trying to count cockroaches in a dark barn with a flashlight. You didn't know how many goddamn guerrillas there were, let alone have some guy out there in the boonies tell you, "I just saw a guerrilla, and we believe that he was a member of the self-defense militia," or the assault youth, or the village self-protection. You didn't know. A guerrilla was a guerrilla, and as far as the guys who were giving us direct reports from the field, no way in God's green earth that they could tell one guerrilla from another. A guerrilla is a guerrilla is a guerrilla.

So what Adams wanted to do was say, "Well, there are all these various categories, and now you have to, on the basis of documents, determine which kind of guerrilla is which." And in the end--this is something that should have come out in that CBS show but didn't--after the first Tet offensive, a division commander of the 7th NVA Division in Vietnam defected. He came over, and I remember interrogating him personally, and so does General Davidson, because the two of us went to talk to him. He was a tough son of a gun, and a great big guy for a Vietnamese; I'll never forget him. He was over six feet tall, and he was a Vietnamese.

G: Wow!

DG: And that's kind of rare. He had come across, and he'd been quite adamant, saying, "I'm not going to talk to anybody except President

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[Nguyen Van] Thieu." And in fact he wouldn't talk to anybody until he'd talked to Thieu, and then he talked to us. He said that one of the reasons he defected was because Hanoi had told him that within all of the villages down in III Corps, there were all sorts of additional troops of assault youth and various kinds of guerrillas, and he went into these villages to collect these people for the great Tet offensive, and there was nobody. Perhaps Hanoi believed what Sam Adams did, that there were all these people around. But here we have the testimony of the highest-ranking guy, I think, that ever defected in Vietnam, that says, "One of the reasons I defected is because all of these people didn't exist."

G: Was there a defector named Dac, or Don, who was a political organizer of colonel rank, do you remember?

DG: Oh, yes, yes, yes. As a matter of fact, there was one guy named Duc [?] who ran the Chieu Hoi center for us later on, who was a very good source for a while, but then I think later on began to sort of elaborate on things he didn't know all that well. But this fellow's name was Lam [?], I think--

G: Lam?

DG: Lam, who was this division commander.

G: Okay.

DG: He said, "Hanoi tells me to attack again, I got nobody to attack with. You've already ripped me up." He wouldn't do it. He said, "I'm just throwing my men in to be slaughtered," and he wouldn't do it. I'm not sure that's his name, but I think that's it. I remember I gave it to

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old--oh, shoot, the reporter that did the [book on the] Tet offensive
[Tet!].

G: Oberdorfer?

DG: Oberdorfer, yes. I started giving him a list of defectors to the other side, and I didn't tell him which side they'd gone to until he finally recognized a name. He started to put his pencil up, and I said, "Wait a minute. Do you think it's not a good story because they're all coming from the other side?" (Laughter) He said, "Okay." And he wrote it up. At that time he was working for the Washington Star. Don Oberdorfer. And he said, well, he'd send it in the way I had given it to him, but it never appeared in the Star.

But I remember this guy was one of them that I'd mentioned, because after Tet we got the goddamnedest bunch of ranking people, you know, majors, lieutenant colonels and colonels, and political officers, proselyters, and so forth, that came across. And it was pretty phenomenal, because those guys had figured that--unlike our press, they decided that the Tet offensive was a disaster, and a hell of a lot of them came in. But the biggest one was this 7th [Division] NVA commander. He's the guy who makes the case for my figures, which were lower than MACV's figures, that not only weren't there as many guerrillas as Adams was talking about, there were fewer guerrillas than MACV was talking about.

G: Do you know what became of him?

DG: No, I don't know. I don't know whether that man's alive or not. I hope he is, but I'm not sure. A guy who would know would be Colonel

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Thiep [?], who's in Paris now, whom I haven't seen since the war, but who was the J-2 at the time, the Vietnamese J-2.

G: Let me run a couple of names by you and see if they strike any recollections. Lieutenant Colonel Everette Parkins.

DG: Yes, Ev Parkins, I know him.

G: He was working with infiltration figures, is that right?

DG: No, not really. Ev Parkins was working mostly on analysis of enemy documents. He was getting them from Hank Ajima, who was running the--

G: Would you spell that one for me?

DG: A-J-I-M-A, Henry, a Nisei guy who was running the translation thing, and he'd turn that stuff over to Parkins, and Parkins was supposed to make sense out of it.

Let me tell you what happens to Parkins. The CBS show says that he was fired because he insisted on some big infiltration figure and nobody would buy it. That's not so at all. The guy that fired him was old Charlie Morris, and you can easily get fired with Charlie Morris because he's a hard ass. Charlie had told him several times to do something that was supportive of what I was trying to do in this input-output thing. He wanted him to check VC documents to see what kind of correlation there was between what the VC said they lost and what our body counts were, in order to get an intelligence check on the body counts to see whether we were too high, too low, or what. He told Parkins to do it once, and Parkins didn't think it was a very good idea and he didn't do it. He told Parkins to do it again, Parkins didn't think it was a very good idea and he didn't do it. He

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never got a chance to get a third order, because Morris said, "You're fired!" That's what happened to Parkins, and Parkins will tell you that, because Parkins is an honest West Point graduate. There's no way he's going to back up what CBS said.

G: Do you know where he is?

DG: No, but our lawyer has been able to get hold of him, I think. Now, I know Parkins did say one thing. He said, "You people are attacking Danny Graham, and I'm not going to be part of attacking Danny Graham." Parkins and I were pretty good friends. He was a West Pointer, so was I. There's just no way Parkins will bear out the story of CBS, and this is one of the things that is going to kill them in this. That, plus a lot of these other guys whom they sort of misrepresented their testimony, they're going to kill them when they get them on the stand.

G: Do you have any idea why they quote him the way they do?

DG: Sure they did. Because the whole program was in the charge of [George] Crile and Adams, and Crile and Adams were out to prove a point, and it didn't make any difference whether they could get the truth or lies. It didn't make any difference to them so long as they proved their point. And that's what they did. Even Hawkins will collapse like a house of cards when put on the stand. He's not going to back them.

G: It sounds like Parkins has got some grounds himself, if this is [true].

DG: Well, sure. He could sue them, too. I could sue them myself, if I wanted to.

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G: Well, maybe a hundred and twenty million [dollars] is enough.

DG: If he'll give me a million of it to keep this operation going,
I'll be happy. (Laughter)

G: Well, you have noncharitable in there--

DG: Yes. (Laughter)

G: --and he's already said it's [for] charity.

DG: Yes. We're charitable.

G: How about Colonel Russell Cooley?

DG: Russ Cooley, as a matter of fact, has admitted that he never met me. He came in, apparently, about three months before I left, which was way after the argument. And he told CBS, he said, "Well, I never met Colonel Graham," and admitted that he was only there way past the Tet offensive, like beginning in May or June of 1968. And all he was doing was repeating stories that he had heard over there in CICV about the quarrel that was really a quarrel between Davidson and McChristian on how to do order of battle.

Some of them got very upset, because in order to do it Davidson's way, you had to go back in that whole damn computer thing and say, "That's all screwed up, it needs to be changed," and they didn't want to do it. Davidson never pressed it hard enough to change anything, and Cooley told them that never was any piece of data changed in the computer banks.

G: In that connection there's another name here, Commander James Meacham, who I gather is a naval officer.

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DG: Yes, Meacham. Now, Meacham is a guy I did meet once or twice out there. I think he pretty much overlapped my term, or at least he was there about six months after I got there. Meacham's sole job was feeding the computer. He was in charge of the computers. What we were saying was going to screw up his apple cart no end, because as I pointed out to them--the way it came out in the show was I demanded they change the computer. But I was in no position to [do that] because I was not in their chain of command at all. But I told them, "You've got lies in your computer. For instance, you say that in 1965 the total strength of the VC was one hundred and thirteen thousand," which was the old Vietnamese figure. "And then you say in 1967 it went up to two hundred and forty-five thousand"--which was the first raise of the McChristian era--"and you're saying now it's up to two hundred and ninety-five to three hundred and five thousand. You know that's a lie, and yet you've got it in there as data points for people to look at to see what's happened with VC strength. You really ought to change that." Well, it didn't get anywhere, but of course it would have been a horrendous amount of work for Meacham and his crew to fix up the computer so that it at least told something that wasn't such an obvious untruth.

Well, I don't know, I think Meacham's operation had gotten all sorts of kudos from McChristian, and then it got sort of sneered at when the new gang came in and he resented it. Meacham is another one that once on the stand will back off like crazy, because I came very close to laying a suit on him for saying that--you know, you run

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through the thing the first time and it says Meacham said I lied. But then lawyers look at it and say, "No, he didn't. He said that lies were coming out of Danny Graham's shop." Now, we got to figure--

G: He also accused you of blocking reports, didn't he? At least that's the way it sounded.

DG: I don't know whether that was Meacham or Cooley that accused me of that. Maybe it was Meacham, I don't know.

G: No, you're right. It was Cooley. It was represented that Cooley said that you blocked reports and made him alter the record, both things.

DG: Yes. I don't know what he said about blocking the reports subsequently. Subsequently he said that the record was never altered. So already CBS has got a problem. Now whether he's got a problem depends upon the context in which he said these things, but CBS has got a serious problem for having aired that as a fact.

G: In late 1967, about November, the administration asked Ambassador [Ellsworth] Bunker and General Westmoreland to come back to the United States to report--

DG: To report on progress.

G: The progress offensive, it was called.

DG: Yes. (Laughter)

G: Were their statements justified, do you think, or do you [inaudible]?

DG: Oh, I think they were. I think they were. I think that the fact of the matter was that the attrition of the VC at that juncture had got to the critical stage for them. I think that that critical attrition was the reason for the Tet offensive. So I think that what Bunker and

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Westmoreland said at the time was really fully justified, and had the subsequent Tet offensive been properly reported, and had not there been a certain panic, or something, over in CIA, that what Bunker and Westmoreland said back in that November time frame would have been fully justified, and everybody would realize today that was right.

The only reason they don't think it was right today was the Tet offensive. The Tet offensive was in fact a disaster, but the newspaper people did a remarkable job of snatching defeat from the jaws of victory. I can remember that even the Stars and Stripes, which was being printed in Japan at that time under the editorship of a friend of mine named Colonel Sweet [?], came out and said, "Battered Tan Son Nhut Shelled Again." I'll never forget that, because I was living at Tan Son Nhut and I thought, "Jeez, if that kind of headline is hitting the United States, my wife is going to be scared to death, because she knows I'm in Tan Son Nhut." When they put out that thing--they put it out after eight or nine mortar shells had been plumped around somewhere in the vast expanse of Tan Son Nhut--the reality was that if you wanted to see where a communist shell had ever hit Tan Son Nhut, you had to get an AP, an air policeman, to take you there to show you where the shell had hit. That's how battered Tan Son Nhut was. I wrote that to Sweet, and I said, "For God's sake, surely Stars and Stripes can get it right." But that's just an example of what happened with that Tet offensive. You would have thought that the VC had cleaned our clocks, when in fact the VC were in terrible shape.

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I remember that shortly after the Tet offensive we began to get reports from the people who were running the Ho Chi Minh Trail, screaming about their inability to keep people under control, going the wrong way up the Ho Chi Minh Trail. They were in terrible shape. But as soon as the President came out and said, "No more bombing north of the seventeenth, and I'm quitting," that whole thing stopped and turned around. It's a real travesty that that sort of false impression could bring a president down and cause us to lose a war that despite the fact that the military had one arm tied behind its back, it had won.

Another thing happened that was a disaster--which I used to lay at the feet of Westy for a long time, I don't anymore--was this business of asking for more troops. If you look at the record, the first thing Westy did was say, "I don't need"--and I forget what the number of the outfit was, it was an armored reconnaissance regiment that was in Fort Lewis ready to come on across. He said, "I don't need them anymore, because the Tet offensive--they've screwed themselves up so badly that I don't need them." Which is the way the whole government should have reacted. But unfortunately, back here in the Pentagon, all the planners saw the Tet offensive as a way to ask for more troops so that they could reconstitute the total reserve and so forth. And they used the Tet offensive for a reason to ask for more troops, which just gave the press a field day, saying, "My God! They need another two hundred thousand troops to prosecute the war in Vietnam."

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G: Did you see General [Earle] Wheeler when he came out?

DG: Yes, I did.

G: Did you brief him?

DG: I briefed him. And I'll say this much for Bus Wheeler, that--I briefed about the intelligence situation. Then the J-5 got up and briefed about how many more troops we needed. And I can remember Wheeler saying, "For God's sake, Westy, your intelligence brief doesn't jibe with your J-5's brief." And of course it didn't.

G: What did the J-5 ask for?

DG: Well, I forget what it amounted to in total numbers of troops, but it approached this two hundred thousand line.

G: Well, the stories are that it was General Wheeler who prompted the two hundred thousand request.

DG: Well, that's right, because I think--and I'm just guessing now, I really don't know, because that was not my side of the story--I think that what happened was that the Pentagon planners and the MACV planners got together and said, "Here's a good chance to straighten out some problems," that really did need straightening out, "and we're going to do it on the basis of the Tet offensive," and the two hundred thousand came out of it. Now, it may have been that--from what Wheeler said at that juncture suggested to me that that wasn't Wheeler's machinations, it was substaff machinations. And I'll say this much for Westy, he never told me or Davidson, "You've got to change your intelligence pitch so that it'll support this thing." As a matter of fact, Westmoreland at one juncture said, after complaints

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from Davidson and [John] Chaisson, who was the smartest marine I ever met, he was. . . .

G: How smart is that?

DG: Well, you don't have to be overbright to be the smartest marine.

(Laughter)

But no, really, Chaisson was an extremely bright officer, and they were dead set against telling the enemy story any different from the way it really was, and as far as I know, nobody pressed them to do so. Certainly Westmoreland never did. Westmoreland never said, "No, you've got to tell a different story in order to support two hundred thousand." He said, "Tell the intelligence story the way it is." You know, if you wanted to look at Westmoreland as some kind of a sneaky conspirator, the thing he should have done in that case was to say, "I want the intelligence thing to jibe with what the J-5 is asking for." He never did that.

G: Which explains the contradictory picture that the newsmen were apparently puzzled by. Westmoreland is saying, "We've dealt the enemy tremendous blows, and he's staggering, and I need two hundred thousand more men." That was the anomaly, wasn't it?

DG: Yes, it was. I tell you, even as a--now, by that time I was a bull colonel, and I sat there saying, "Jesus. Should I go to this four-star general and say, 'You're screwing it up?'" (Laughter) You know, because I couldn't understand.

G: The answer's always no, isn't it?

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DG: The answer for most bull colonels, and including that one, was no, I shouldn't do that. But sometimes I regret that I didn't. It didn't make any sense. They were reeling back on their heels and he was delighted that they were, but on the other hand, up comes this two hundred thousand.

Now, I don't know as well as many others do what the real genesis of that two hundred thousand number was, but I cannot believe that it originated at MACV. Because, hell, there were very serious considerations of breaking down the whole damn force into little groups of a platoon of Americans and a platoon of Vietnamese and going out and taking over every village in the country.

One of the things that we did run into in the intelligence field--and here's where I blame CIA, and I blame them with cause--we found after Tet that there were [a] bunch of messages coming back to Washington saying the VC have taken over the countryside. I couldn't get--you know, there were still a bunch of special forces guys out in the countryside, and they said, "Hell, no." And I went to the guy I dealt with in the Vietnamese side, and I said, "Are you getting reports that the VC have taken over the countryside?" He said, "On the contrary, they've got it knocked out in the countryside. No problem." But still these reports are going in, mostly out of IV Corps. And they were going back to Washington without any comment or without any chance to comment on them by MACV. We were getting them back from Washington; the CIA guys weren't telling us what they were saying.

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I took a chopper and I went down to Can Tho, because I was getting infuriated by this stuff, and went to see the CIA people. I think it was a guy named Wood [?] who was running the show. I said, "Where are all these reports coming from that the VC are running the countryside?" "Oh, they are." I said, "Now, wait a minute. Tell me where the reports are coming from." "Well, they're coming from our agents in the field." I said, "And who's running the agents in the field?" "Well, they're being run by our agent handlers." I said, "Where are your agent handlers?" Ah! They were in Can Tho behind barbed wire and sandbags. I said, "Did it ever occur to you that they're putting in this kind of report so they don't have to go back out in the country, for fear?" "Oh, well, you are impugning the courage of our people." I said, "You bet your ass I am. Now, I want you to give me some of them, get in this chopper of mine, because I'm going up to Dong Tam [?]"--or someplace up that way--"where the VC are supposed to be running everything, and we'll see whether they've got control of the countryside." Not one CIA guy would go with me, but there was one young lieutenant there who was supposed to be a province adviser, and I said, "All right, well, you, you son of a bitch, I can order you. You get your ass on the chopper."

Okay. So they go on up there. And Colonel Thiep, from J-2, ARVN, had given me this captain to go with me, because I didn't speak that good a Vietnamese. We go up to this place that's supposed to be VC-infested, and land on the chopper pad, and a little old RF-PF guy comes bouncing across the field with the butt of his M-1 hitting the

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ground about every third step and he's just all smiles and he reports. So I asked him some questions through the ARVN guy. At one juncture I felt that he hadn't really given me the right answer, and I said, "Now come on, tell me precisely what that man said." So he said, "All right. What he said was that they never had it so good, because both the ARVN and the VC had gone to town and nobody was stealing the chickens."

(Laughter)

Which story I think got all over Vietnam.

But the VC had not taken over the countryside, you see, and the only way you could prove it was to go out in the countryside. Otherwise, these CIA guys, all holed up in the capitals behind sandbags, would keep reporting it. Most of them weren't Americans, you see, they were hired Vietnamese, and they were just scared to go back there just in case they had taken over the countryside. This story of the VC taking over the countryside got back here to Washington, and Washington, being a place that loved to believe bad news, believed it. That put a sour note on the real good results of the Tet offensive.

Another thing that did a good thing for the VC was the inclination of the American commanders to keep all of the troops in around the cities just in case, when they should've been out taking over the countryside themselves.

G: I was going to ask about that.

DG: Yes, I think that was a great waste of military capacity. They had already broken their picks; there was no way they were going to come

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back and attack the cities. God, they'd had their clocks cleaned. But suddenly they drew into a shell and, God, it took weeks and weeks to break them out of these "Let's protect Saigon, let's protect Can Tho, let's protect Nha Trang--"

G: Sir, let me ask you this. From the things that I have heard, the background of the Tet offensive has been pretty well gone over, I think. Oberdorfer's written what I understand is a pretty good book on it--

DG: Yes, it's a damn good book.

G: And the elements that were surprising, the elements that were not surprising and so on, are pretty well known. One question that I have never addressed or heard addressed very well was--and it seems to me this deserves a good answer. It's understandable why we didn't interpret their meaning. There was a lot of noise in the intelligence; there were thousands of documents. It was all a little unbelievable that they would attempt something like this. But how could they move their assault troops into their attack positions with no more inkling trickling up through our intelligence channels from the friendlies? Surely some of the friendly or neutral populace must have known that this was happening.

DG: Oh, I don't believe they did move in--now, for instance, up at the Iron Triangle, we knew they were pouring in there. We had a lot of low-level reports. That never surprised me that they were up there. It never surprised me that they were getting ready for an assault. The only thing I didn't figure that they would do was to start out one

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dusk at a dogtrot for Saigon. I didn't think they would do that. I thought they were going to attack Bo Mon [?] and places up closer to the Iron Triangle. I don't recall these people getting in close with our not knowing it. Now, there may have been some, but I don't recall that. They were coming across toward Hue, and they were coming across toward Quang Tri, and we knew that. As a matter of fact, one of the ways [we knew was] we were following their damn radios, and we could see that little radio would move from one place to another, and we'd say, "Jeez, these people are moving in for an attack." But the thing that we never did really say [was] "and they're going to attack Saigon and Can Tho," and so forth. We just figured it would be so suicidal that surely they're not going to do that. They're going to attack something else. And that's where we made our mistake.

But we didn't make a mistake, I don't think, on showing that they were in close. There was some very clever infiltration tactics that we didn't pick up when they got into the cities, where they came in under guise of woodcutters and had mortars inside logs and stuff like that. That was damn clever, and it resulted in things like seventeen men attacking the Embassy. That was a covert operation on their part, and very good. But getting into the Iron Triangle? Sure, we knew they were coming in there. Coming in against--well, there were a couple of preliminary battles up in III Corps. I forget, there was one place where it was a disaster for them; they just laid them out like wheat.

G: That was the previous December?

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DG: Yes, yes, December, that's right. It was up there--

G: Kontum? Was it around Kontum?

DG: No, it was up in the far edge of III Corps, and they got them with beehive rounds out of 105s, and they just laid those people out like cordwood. It was a real slaughter.

G: Were you able to recapitulate the movements of any of these units as they assembled and came from POW reports or anything? How long does it take them to put their act together and come into Saigon or Kontum or someplace?

DG: They did it in the way that they had normally done. They usually took about a week or ten days to get their people in place to make a substantial attack. They had learned over the past year that you didn't get them all in one place or somebody would come roaring in there with gunships and tear them up, and they'd screw up their operation. So they took their time, kept them fairly well scattered out until within eight or ten hours of attacking, and then suddenly they'd come all together.

G: That takes very good coordination.

DG: Not bad. And some of it was good. Now, the fact of the matter is there was a huge coordination foul-up in the Tet offensive, which resulted in the attacks in II Corps taking place at the wrong time.

G: Twenty-four hours early?

DG: Yes. They screwed it up.

G: It's been reported that General Davidson told General Westmoreland, "That's going to happen down here tomorrow."

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DG: He did. Oh, yes. He did, he did.

(Interruption)

They did some remarkably bold things that in fact did surprise people, but those were tactical surprises. For instance, when they came roaring in there with satchel charges and blew up a bunch of choppers. Hell, the people up there--that was at, what was it, Danang, Kontum? Someplace they came roaring in and did that. It wasn't Kontum.

G: It was probably Danang. They had remarkably bad luck with their aircraft.

DG: I think it was Danang, yes. I think it was Danang. Well, you know, the goddamn marines never know what to do with that shovel. (Laughter) They blew up a lot of choppers. But that was real bold individual action by individual sapper units. The sappers were better than their fighting troops and so goddamn bold and well carried out that had there been a Tet offensive or not a Tet offensive, they'd have probably surprised them. It was too close in; they just couldn't believe that something like that would happen. They'd sit around with their thumb in their ear and these guys would surprise them. We had a few instances like that.

And Hue, the 1st ARVN Division just deployed in the wrong place. They came in beside them and got into Hue, and then it took us a while to get them out because we didn't want to blow the place up. But eventually we got them out.

G: Did we revise the enemy order of battle significantly as a result of the intelligence we gained at Tet?

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DG: No. No, not really. There was a downward revision, strangely enough, in the number of guerrillas right after Tet, because they just--the horsepower wasn't there, and we said, "Jeez, eighty-five thousand? Where was our two hundred and forty-five thousand?" That's what we were carrying. Where were they? We knew damn well they were committing everything they could get their hands on. They had guys with huge wounds on them, still with stitches in them, and they'd committed them to battle, and they scraped up these kids out of villages that didn't even know how to get their weapons out of cosmoline, let alone operate them. So we knew they were throwing everything they had, and eighty-five thousand--we said, "God, we must be too high."

But there was some pressure on the sort of--and this is another thing that infuriated the old standard order of battle people. We'd say, "For God's sake, one outfit that attacked Nha Trang"--or somewhere up close, it was up in Binh Dinh province, anyway--came roaring in, and it was an outfit that had been up in the hills of II Corps for a long, long time, hadn't been in any action, that we knew of, for years. They came roaring down out of the hills, and one time intelligence screwed them up. Because they had got a report--we got this from their commander afterwards--that there was a big barracks there, and the South Vietnamese had evacuated half their troops, let them go on Tet leave. So they consolidated the rest of the troops in one end of this long barracks. The commander had got this report from his agent that one end of the barracks was open. The other end had the troops in it, but he got screwed up on the direction he was looking at

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the building from. And the goddamn VC commander comes and he pours all his mortar rounds into the wrong end of the building, which [had] nobody in it, and comes charging in the end where the ARVN are waiting for him with M-16s and just blew their butts away, just laid them out.

Okay. Here is an outfit that, first of all, we'd been carrying as like a four hundred and fifty-man battalion, and they attack with about two hundred people, and lost about a hundred and fifty of them, captured and killed, and the order of battle people were going to put that battalion back in the order of battle at four hundred and fifty men. Now, this is the sort of fight I got into back in Washington in May when I came back and I found that these guys in Washington were still carrying outfits like that at the same strength they'd carried them before Tet. I said, "That's preposterous! Here's what happened to that unit. Now don't tell me that somehow they've made up all those casualties."

In terms of total strength, as a matter of fact, our MACV figures went from two hundred and forty-five [thousand] down to two hundred and five thousand, or something on that order. I'm not quite sure, but it did drop [in] total numbers and should have. Because after all, they lost twenty-seven thousand guys in the first two days of that bloody offensive. That was a third of the people that they'd committed. Those people were easily countable; you know, it wasn't wild-assed guesses, because they were in town and they were stacked up, like in Quang Tri, like so much cordwood. So there wasn't any doubt about what they'd done.

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G: How many of those could have been other than full-scale combatants?

DG: Some of them were. Some of them were other than full-scale combatants. Some of them were what we had been counting as guerrillas, because at Can Tho, for instance, they came in and they made that one rush at Can Tho. They got their butts whipped, and ran away or got shot. The advisers in Can Tho hooked trailers onto jeeps and ran out after them and picked up brand-new AK-47s--which is what they were really after--brand-new AK-47s, trailerloads of them, still in cosmo-line. Why? Because some of these alleged guerrillas had been put into the fight. So some of those kids lying around there--and some of them, it was just a pity, you know, thirteen, fourteen-year-old kids, they'd been scarfed up by the VC to be part of the weight of the great what they called General Uprising. Well, they got killed, and of course you didn't kill as many as ran, but you killed a lot of them. A lot of them obviously had never fired a weapon in anger in their lives, but they were among the casualties.

But at Quang Tri, for instance, those people were stacked up in Quang Tri and they had a big victory parade around them. It was kind of macabre, but they did it. And those people were uniformed, and mostly North Vietnamese instead of South Vietnamese.

G: I just have a few odds and ends I'd like to clean up here, unless you've got some more that--

DG: No, go ahead.

G: One of the things that cropped up in the press time and time again and bothered a lot of people about our operation in Vietnam were the

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allegations of mistreatment of prisoners during interrogation and otherwise. Do you have any firsthand observations to offer on this sort of thing?

DG: No, I don't have anything firsthand, but I could tell you, my view is that the South Vietnamese, when they got hold of a VC, were not inclined to treat him like a nice enemy soldier captured. Too many of them had had their kids' heads chopped off and things like that, and they just didn't have the same attitude toward a Viet Cong that we did. And if they needed to really give him the once-over in order to get the information, they would. So I don't have any doubt about the brutality of the South Vietnamese toward the VC, and I forgive them for it immediately.

I do know of a case where old--oh, the guy that shot the fellow with the--

G: Oh, the Chief of the National Police, wasn't it? [Nguyen Ngoc Loan]

DG: Yes. That's right.

G: [Nguyen Cao] Ky's protege.

DG: Yes.

G: He's in the country, too, isn't he?

DG: Yes. He's running a bar somewhere. He got one VC who was going to play the great martyr, and he wanted to be tied up and shot for refusing to give information. He said, "No, no. That's not what's going to happen to you. We're going to put you on a bicycle, and we're going to push you out in front of a truck, and the goddamn truck's going to run over you, and that's going to be the end of you."

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You ain't going to be any martyr to anything, but you're going to be dead as hell, because a truck ran over you." And that guy started to chatter. (Laughter)

But these guys, they'd been dealing with the VC, what, toward the end of the war, almost twenty years, and their attitude toward them was not the same attitude we'd have toward a German prisoner in World War II or anything like that. That had been a long and vicious affair, and people's families had been butchered and so forth, and these guys--you know, the South Vietnamese, I really believe the only reason they ever treated any of them with any kind of Geneva rules was if we were around. If we weren't around, I am convinced that they would use any kind of method necessary to get the information they needed. You just don't get into a war like that and expect sort of Western rules of civility to apply. As a matter of fact, it always seemed to me a real shame to jump all over Thieu for not running a perfect democracy in his internal war. When Abraham Lincoln had an internal war, he removed the right of habeas corpus.

G: Of course, Lincoln didn't have any tiger cages on Con Son Island.
(Laughter)

DG: Well, no, no. And you know, the tiger cage thing was a gross overstatement of the case down there. I--

G: Did you have any connection with CIA's interrogation network or setup?

DG: No. No, I didn't.

G: Well then, you weren't targeting the infrastructure?

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DG: Well, you've got to realize that my duties had to do with substantive intelligence. I took all information I could get from anywhere and tried to make sense out of it. Only on occasion when I doubted all sources would I go out myself and try to get information, or where it was a case where some guy had some special kind of information that I thought was critical to overall intelligence views, such as this division commander, would I involve myself in the collection business. So I don't know a hell of a lot about that, and there are certainly a lot of people who know a hell of a lot more about it than I do. So my view of how they handled prisoners and so forth is pretty much secondhand. It wasn't my game.

G: I asked you before we turned the machine on about the Son Tay raid. The book [The Raid] that I was referring to, the man's name is [Benjamin] Schemmer--

DG: Oh, yes, yes. Now I know who you are talking about, yes.

G: Fighting uphill all the way, I was reluctantly brought to the view that the raid was a good idea, and it was well planned, and that there is very little blame to attach to anybody.

DG: Absolutely correct.

G: Is that the way you read it?

DG: Absolutely. It was a superb operation. The only guy who got hurt, got hurt [when] he sprained his ankle in a jump. Intelligence-wise, it was perfect. I'm very proud of the intelligence that went into that. The only thing that was wrong was that when they got there, the prisoners weren't there. When the go time came, I know from being

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chief of collection in DIA at the time that things were about fifty-fifty. There were a lot of indications that, yes, they're still there, and a lot of indications that, no, they weren't, and people could say there were more against than for, and so forth. But I think that Don Bennett, who was then director, DIA, and who had really the final say on this as the chief of military intelligence, said "Go."

He said later, and I would have done the same damn thing, he said, "I had to put myself in the position of one of those POWs, and having some intelligence officer back in Washington say, 'Well, it's sixty-forty against, therefore don't go,' and my butt rots in a prison camp for another couple of years. Hell, as far as I'm concerned from the intelligence point of view, go." I think Don Bennett was absolutely right on it. He's been absolutely wrong on a lot of things, but he was absolutely right on that one.

No, anybody who tries to find fault with the Son Tay raid, they cannot find professional fault with anyone on that and shouldn't even try, because that was--though they hit a dry hole, it was a splendid operation from both the operations and intelligence point of view, and nobody should ever criticize that.

G: The POWs who've been questioned about it generally seem to think that the North Vietnamese were pretty shook up by the Son Tay raid.

DG: Oh, sure they were, because here was an American thrust that went right into the middle of North Vietnam and out without a man lost. Now that's going to shake up anybody. Certainly if the North Vietnamese had made a plunge into Loc Ninh or something like that and

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out again without a scratch on them, why, we would have been pretty shook up about it. They had every right to be shook up.

G: Were you chief of DIA in 1975--

DG: Yes.

G: --when the final [inaudible] occurred?

DG: Oh, yes, when the disaster occurred, yes.

G: If my information is correct, you were [William] Colby's deputy for the intelligence community.

DG: Before that, yes.

G: What went wrong?

DG: Well, I'll tell you, you were between a rock and a hard spot as an intelligence officer in those days, because the first real problem was that panic hit the South Vietnamese when they found out we weren't going to support them anymore. Thieu then decided that the only way that he could then survive was to abandon the Highlands. He gave an order to pull out, which started dominoes falling all over Vietnam. Early on it looked to me like he could consolidate and hold III and IV Corps, but the extent of the panic was beyond anything I could have
pa imagined. God, it was enough to make you cry, to see the whole thing just collapse.

G: From a strictly military point of view, did you think it would have been possible to hold a truncated part of the country, to establish a defense line north of Saigon somewhere?

DG: Yes, I think it could have. I think it could, and some of the Vietnamese commanders thought so, too, and as a matter of fact, a

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rather sharp and successful battle did take place north of Saigon. It would have been possible had not panic have already set in. That was deadly.

I still key the final collapse to the Vietnamese belief that they had been deserted by their only mainstay, and that there was no way they could hold out against a North Vietnamese Soviet-supported effort with no support from the United States.

G: The numbers would seem to puzzle a layman who was examining it. The invasion force, as I recall, was somewhere on the order of a hundred and twenty thousand, ten divisions, somewhere on that order.

DG: Yes. That's it.

G: The South Vietnamese, although scattered, were clearly numerically superior.

DG: Yes.

G: And they folded like a house of cards.

DG: Yes.

G: And the critics all jumped up and said, "Well now, look. You've had how many, fifteen, twenty years to put a South Vietnamese army together, and this is the end result."

DG: Yes. I really don't know how to answer that. I do point out to people like Sam Adams, who insists there were six hundred thousand of them at the Tet offensive, that if that's so, how could--the final collapse of Vietnam, there were less than two hundred thousand--[they have] accomplished it?

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I think that it was a collapse of morale that will collapse anybody. After all, there were more Italians at the battle of Caporetto, too, about four to one, when the Germans changed uniforms with the Austrians and came charging across and absolutely wrecked them. There is no force, no matter what its size, that's going to stand up against a determined enemy when panic hits it.

G: What did Napoleon say about morale is to material as three to one, or something like that?

DG: Yes, that's right. That's right. And that's true, that's true. And I think this was the case there, that the morale of the South Vietnamese was just destroyed by the suggestions coming out of the United States that we were no longer going to support them, absolute strong indications that we were no longer going to support them, which of course the North Vietnamese propaganda machine was trumpeting to them, and they just folded in panic.

G: There are some indications--I'm sure you were following it--that the North Vietnamese themselves were surprised at the rapidity of their advance and [inaudible].

DG: Yes, they were. They outran their supplies and all sorts of things because they were coming down so damn fast. They came down faster than I believed they could move, you know, just physically came down faster than I believed they could move, even against no opposition. Of course, this says something for the caliber of those North Vietnamese troops, but, God, as strung out as they got, Jeez, they could--air offensive could have, you know, just--well, it hurts me to

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think of what could have been done. A lot of things could have been done to halt that thing. We were in no mood at that time to do anything.

G: Our country had washed its hands.

DG: Yes, we had washed our hands of them, and when they saw that, they washed their hands of themselves and collapsed. It's a pity. It's a real pity.

As a matter of fact, I don't think that invasion would have ever taken place had it not been for Watergate. I don't think that they would have ever chanced it, because massing divisions like that, they'd tried that once to take Khe Sanh and they lost three divisions. That area around Khe Sanh had so many blown-up North Vietnamese bodies in it that the locals came marching out of there and said, "We can't stand it, it stinks too much up in our territory. We've got to wait until all that flesh is gone." Now, that's the sort of thing that could have happened to the North Vietnamese in the kind of offensive they pulled, had the United States said, "All right, you've breached the Paris agreements. We are now coming in with our B-52s." And those people would have--you could have blunted that offensive in a hurry. And then the South Vietnamese would have fought, too, and that would have made all the difference in the world.

G: Yes, they fought in 1972.

DG: Sure, they did. They fought--hell, you know, the difference between the South Vietnamese army before Tet and after Tet was truly remarkable, and that's about the time we should have started to Vietnamize.

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Before Tet, I used to take young intelligence officers who had only been in country a couple of months out with me into the field to talk to the Vietnamese. Charlie Morris would detach some of these youngsters, and [we'd] go out into the field and talk to Vietnamese intelligence guys. One of these young lieutenants who'd only--you know, the Vietnamese captain or lieutenant had been in country fighting this war for God knows how many years, and an American lieutenant would say, "I think that the 105th local battalion is not there, it's over here." And the guy would just pick up the sticker for the enemy unit and move it to where the American lieutenant said, when the American lieutenant--shoot, he had no real reason to counter the South Vietnamese. But after the Tet offensive, and I'd go to a South Vietnamese unit and one of my youngsters would try to tell a South Vietnamese intelligence officer what was what, he'd say, "Oh, no. No, you're wrong. This is the way it is."

Now, that's just a little indication of what went on. After Tet, when you'd try to deal with the South Vietnamese, they wouldn't even admit that American artillery or air had anything to do with the success of the Tet offensive. They'd say, "We beat them." And in a way, they were right, because in the Tet offensive, with the exception of the Embassy, the VC assault was against South Vietnamese and wasn't against Americans. And the South Vietnamese, with half their people gone at Tet for the most part, whipped their butts.

From that point on, to me, the South Vietnamese army could have handled the thing. From that point on, instead of doing what did

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happen, saying, "We're going to stop bombing, and so forth," we should have said, "All right, we are now going to turn the ground war over to you. We're going to keep our navy and our air force--we'll give you air support, naval support. The rest of it's all yours, baby." Start withdrawing. Don't ask for two hundred thousand troops, start withdrawing. Well, the whole political scene would have been different, and the whole war would have been different, because I think at that point, the South Vietnamese were so damn cocky that I'm sure they'd have been delighted to shoulder the burden at that point and get the goddamn Americans out of their hair. Because we were inflating their economy and all sorts of things that were bad for them.

Yes, a lot of could-have-beens in the Vietnam thing.

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview II

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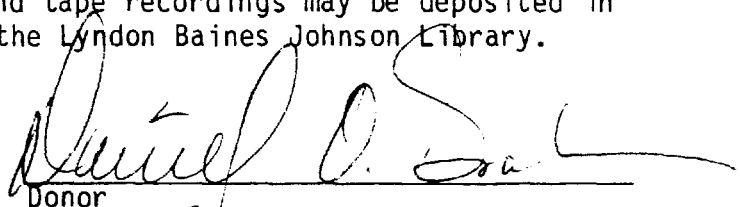
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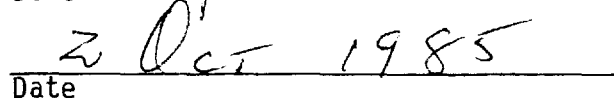
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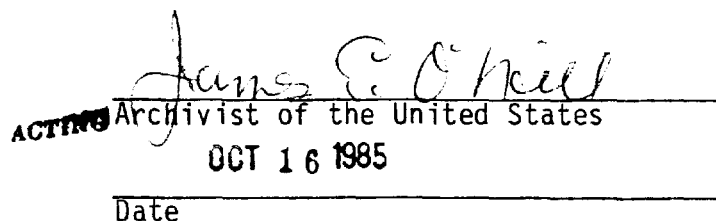
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