

INTERVIEW II

DATE: September 25, 1984
INTERVIEWEE: JONATHAN F. LADD
INTERVIEWER: Ted Gittinger
PLACE: Colonel Ladd's office, Washington, D. C.

Tape 1 of 2

G: All right, sir. What was your vantage point during the events that later became known as the Tet offensive? You were commander of the Fifth Special Forces?

L: Yes, that's correct. When the Tet attack started, I was on my way back from Hawaii. I had been on R&R, and by the time I actually got back to Nha Trang, the attack on the city was well in progress, and the local Vietnamese Special Forces troops and the U.S. Special Forces had actually cleared out most of the city of Nha Trang. The NCO academy, north of town, had taken care of their part of the thing.

One of the most interesting parts of Tet as far as I--in Nha Trang, that is--was that they had a large prison right on the outskirts of Nha Trang, in which they had not prisoners of war but South Vietnamese prisoners, and they had taken part in the defense of the prison. And one of the objectives of the attack, we found later, was to release all the prisoners, and the prisoners--they had given them weapons when the thing happened, and they helped fight off the North Vietnamese and VC [Viet Cong] that were attacking.

G: These were political prisoners?

L: Political prisoners and military prisoners and God knows what. I don't know whether some of them were just civilian prisoners, but they did

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help defend the city, or actually they defended the prison because it-- but they were just to the north of where the special forces quit. But I was really kind of stunned after it was all over to find out that these people had actually--some of them, not all--but some of them had actually helped in the defense. And I've got some pictures at home of some of the enemy that they shot outside the prison.

But then the town itself--the thing started with, I was told--the enemy was already in town, down around the restaurant areas where people normally went for a civilian dinner. There were great bundles of flags with the doves on them found that we later discovered were supposed to be handed to all the people who would rise up against the government. They didn't do it, but they found these bundles of flags and banners and whatnot.

We lost quite a few people in that fight, but within a day and a half, they had driven them completely out of the town, and very shortly after that had happened, then I left and started around to our camps. But I think I mentioned to you before that our outlying camps weren't bothered at all, because the enemy had bypassed them and were in the towns, Saigon, Danang, Qui Nhon, various places like that.

We had some interesting fights, too, with the Australians that were with us, SAS [Special Air Service] people. [They] had conducted themselves very well during this thing. As a matter of fact, we put in one of the Australians--I guess we'd call him a warrant officer--for the Distinguished Service Cross and subsequently found out that they're not permitted to accept a foreign decoration, but their people had taken it over and converted it over to a Victoria Cross, which he was able to get

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subsequently. But he was down in the Cham area to the south of Nha Trang, and that's about all I know about the Tet part around Nha Trang.

Now after that, General Westmoreland asked me--if you recall, the enemy in Saigon had taken over the Phu Tho racetrack, and they were there, and they weren't having much luck getting them out of the Phu Tho racetrack. And so he asked me if I thought the--not the special forces but our mercenary people would be able to do it. Very frankly, I think the reason was they felt a lot of people were going to get killed, and they were reluctant to put the Vietnamese army in, and the Vietnamese army was reluctant to go in, and they didn't want to put the U.S. people in, and they didn't give a damn much about my mercenaries that were. . . .

So anyway, we brought five battalions of Montagnards down out of the mountains and put four battalions of them on one side of the Phu Tho racetrack and spread the other one on the other side to stop them when they came through. And then I had a staff meeting and said, "Are you sure you've got everything out of there? Because they'll eliminate anything that's in there." And they said, "Yes. Go ahead." So we started them through, and they took all day long, but when they came out the other side, they had rats and cats and dogs hung on their belts, and they'd killed all enemy that was in there, but they also got everything else that was alive and took it home to eat. They also were stunned because when they came out the other side, we had one battalion to keep them from going on through Saigon because we weren't sure they knew when to stop. And we were loading them up on trucks, and the people in Saigon came out and gave them fruit and blankets. Of course, they had never seen a city before anyway; it was the closest they'd ever been to

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a town like that, and hell, they'd have stayed there forever. But I told them we had to get them out of here. They wanted to have a parade a couple of days later, and I said, "No way are we going to leave those people in town. We'll never find them again." So we loaded them on trucks and took them right around back to Tan Son Nhut and flew them back where they came from, but they went home laden, as I say, with cats, dogs, rats, and all these presents the people had given them. And that cleared up the Phu Tho racetrack.

That was about all that I had to do with Tet. Of course, there were a lot of other places where there were Tet actions going on, but the local commanders took care of them, and that was followed shortly, not too long thereafter, with the problems at Khe Sanh and Lang Vei.

G: Yes, I want to come to that. What was the provision at Lang Vei for an enemy assault? What were the contingency plans?

L: There was an old Lang Vei camp that we'd been in before, and then they'd built a brand new one. The new one was completely underground; even the radio antennae we'd had spread underground, and the dependents were, as in most cases, in a small village just adjacent to the camp. But our contingency plans were that one battalion of marines, if we were attacked, was to come from Khe Sanh, which was about six or seven kilometers away, and reinforce the Vietnamese Special Forces--CIDG [Civilian Irregular Defense Groups] was what they were called--in there. It was obvious there were going to be some heavy attacks around Khe Sanh and Lang Vei, and I'd been in and out of Khe Sanh and in and out of Lang Vei for about two weeks before that happened. And this one morning we got a message that our scouts had found tanks on the other side of the river

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from Lang Vei, and it was right on the river separating Laos and the north part of South Vietnam. So I flew up there in a helicopter, and I didn't go out and look at them, but I could hear engines that sounded like truck or tank engines, but they said their people had said there were tanks across the river. And so we had reported this to MACV [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam] and to the commander, obviously, at Khe Sanh. And a day or so later when the attack began in the morning, Dan Schungle, who was the special forces lieutenant colonel commander in that area, was in the camp.

G: How would you spell his name, sir?

L: S-C-H-U-N-G-L-E, Daniel Schungle. And they began to report to us that they were under attack and that there were four tanks that had attacked the camp initially. They had destroyed one on the road, but three of them had gotten inside, broken through the perimeter, and it was one of the first places, I think, at that time a weapon called the LAW [Light Antitank Weapon], which was a throw-away antitank gun, was used against enemy tanks. And they later reported that they didn't do much good against the front of the tank. They just sort of bounced off. One of the problems was there were two or three strings you had to pull to arm the thing. In the heat of a fight, they would break the strings in pulling them. They worked fairly well, but there was a lot to be done to make them better. I don't know what the status of that particular weapon is now. My God, that was 1967--1977--fifteen or so years ago; I don't know what it is. But anyhow, they did work in some cases. In one case, it loosened the turret, where the turret came up and then fell off the tank, but in most of them, the people that fired them told me later

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that they would fire and hit, for instance, the treads, and there would be just a great shower of sparks, and it would burn a hole right through the tread, but it didn't break the tread. It wasn't an explosive kind of force, and the tank would keep coming.

But we were in radio contact with Schungle the whole time. I had flown up there and gone to Khe Sanh and was in contact with them, and there was infantry and these tanks. They, all being all underground, the infantry couldn't get to them, but they said, "There isn't any damn thing we can do, except we can hold on here unless you get us out some way or get rid of them so we can get out."

So I went to Danang from Khe Sanh to talk to General Westmoreland and ask him to--I said, "There are three things we can do: We can either stay there and hold it to the end, or you can reinforce us with the contingency plan from the marines, or you can tell us to do our best and get out of there and abandon the place." And I said, "Now the marines--" I had talked to Colonel [David] Lowndes, who was the marine commander. He said he was not going to execute the contingency plan because it was a suicide mission, and he wasn't going to send his people over there to do it. So I said, "Unless somebody here tells him to do it, that's out." And I said, "I don't think we want to have them stay there and just hold off to the bitter end, so all you can do is, I think, tell me to abandon the place at the first opportunity." He didn't make up his mind, General Westmoreland, at that time. He said, "Well, I'll see you after lunch." I was miffed and a little upset, so I got hold of General [Creighton] Abrams, who was then the deputy COM-USMACV [commander, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam] and really

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the man who generally supervised the operational part of the thing, and I explained the same thing to him. And he said, "Tell them to get out of there." And he said, "Any help you can get from the marines, get it." General [Norman] Anderson, who was in command of the marine air wing, and I had been talking that morning between lunch and the time I got General Abrams, and he said he could have his people go up there and lay down on that infantry and tanks there, one of those--was it CBs?--or whatever it was. It was a--

G: Oh, yes. CBUs [cluster bomb units].

L: CBUs. He was going to use those, and he said, "I think we can clean that area out enough where you can get out." And so I flew back up there then. I told General Anderson, "All right, I'll call you when I've talked to Schungle and I'm ready to go." And so I told Dan what we were going to do, go up and just level the outside of the place with these CBUs. And he said, "That's great! You're not going to hurt us any." And in the meantime, he'd lost a couple of Americans and, of course, several of his own people, and he said, "They're beginning to try to throw things down the air vents. That's giving us some problems." And so I said, "What time?" And he told me whatever it was; I've forgotten, three o'clock or something. "Let the marines come in, the marine air wing, and just clean out that place." And he said, "We'll be ready to go." And we'd decided then that where they would go would be to old Camp Lang Vei, which was about a quarter of a mile away from the new Camp Lang Vei, to assemble because they were going to go out in different directions.

So the marines did come in on time, and literally Dan's people, once they started out, didn't have any trouble. There wasn't anybody

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left around there that was ready to fight. They went to old Lang Vei, and that's when I joined them there, and then they were going to walk back over to Khe Sanh. So at that time, they were out, and there wasn't any enemy around, and they walked all the way back to Khe Sanh. Never encountered anyone.

In the meantime, I went on back to Danang and then back to Nha Trang. But one of the sad parts of it was that when they got to Khe Sanh, of course, other than our American special forces troops, everybody was either a Vietnamese special forces--they had fifteen or eighteen of them--and the other two or three hundred people, plus all the women and children, were all Montagnards and people from the Highlands and indigenous types. So when they got to Khe Sanh, the marines came out and had them all disarmed and then told them to all go back into the hills. They weren't going to let them in Khe Sanh, and they didn't. They let my, whatever it was, twelve or thirteen Americans in and turned everybody else back into the woods and told them that they couldn't trust them; they might all be VC, Which is one of the things I have never forgiven the marine corps for, or Colonel Lowndes.

G: That was his decision?

L: That was his decision that they weren't going to let them in, even though I had in Khe Sanh about four hundred of the same kind of people that were there defending the south end of the Khe Sanh perimeter. But he wouldn't let them in.

G: When did you find out about that?

L: I found out about it the next morning when Schungle called me and told me that they'd turned all these people [out]; and we never did find them

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again. We never found any of them; we don't know what happened to them. They went back into the woods and they disappeared.

G: How far from home were they?

L: Oh, maybe some of them fifty miles, some of them eighty or a hundred, something like that. They could probably find their way back all right, but it was a hell of a note to get them out after they had defended the goddamned place and then get them up there and run them all away.

G: Were there any repercussions from all this?

L: No, none that I ever heard of. I mean, we griped about it. But it was just a different thing; for instance, around Khe Sanh at that time--it was on a mountain, leveled off, but there were mountains around it, and there were 122 [mm], I think it is, mortars and rockets and other god-damned things around Khe Sanh. When you'd fly in, as you'd go in on an approach, they'd start shooting at the airfield, and they weren't very good because they did hit a few, but not many planes did they hit. You could land, and the last fixed-wing I went in on landed and opened the door and turned around, and the guy just went right back out again, and they were shooting at the airfield the whole time. Then once he took off, then they'd stop.

But Colonel Lowndes had given orders that nobody was to leave the Khe Sanh perimeter, and what our people wanted to do, and what I wanted them to do was--you could see, and they could take fixes on, where these things were--to send patrols out there at night and, if nothing more, just destroy a few of these goddamned positions. I believe now, I am convinced--and at that time the G-3 of the--not the Third Marines, but whatever the marines were called there--was a friend of mine. [I'd]

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gone to the Army War College with him, and he's still a very good friend. I told him, "For Christ's sake, let's get our people out of here, and get somebody--if yours don't want to go, the marines, we'll send mine up, and we'll at least make them think somebody is not going to let them just sit there day after day." But they didn't even have to take any--I mean, other than from aircraft--any protective measures, because nobody ever came after them, because of this--and I don't know whether it's a marine corps concept taught on landing beaches that you don't go out; you just protect yourself in your beach area, but they were never permitted to go out. None of our people could go out. In fact, they never understood what we were doing out at Lang Vei.

G: What were you doing at Lang Vei?

L: We'd been there before they ever went to Khe Sanh, and we'd run this camp up there and were interrupting the enemy logistic routes. You know, go in and shoot up their people, check on what was going down through Laos, by sending people across the river. But they were there long before Khe Sanh ever got established. They were in old Lang Vei, and then they moved to new Lang Vei because we had a better position higher up, plus it was right overlooking Laos, and you could. . . .

G: Was it usual to have that kind of an underground set up?

L: No, they were fairly new. That was new. By new, I mean within the last year. We'd started to build--most of the camps were built like the marines were at Khe Sanh. You had dugouts and trenches, but your supply dumps, everything else was outside. We had dug this thing, and everything--the CP, the barracks living areas--it had slits that they could fire out of, but the basis of it was underground and under three or four

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feet of dirt. And they'd put antennae--as I say, their antennae were underground.

But it was a rather traumatic experience for a lot of our people, because nobody expected us to be turned away or expected the people to be turned away. We would never have gone there if we had known that was going to happen. But the marines were--frankly, they were scared at Khe Sanh. They were scared to death.

G: Were they afraid of getting ambushed if they came out?

L: They were afraid of getting them in their camp and that they would--as Schungle said, "You've taken their weapons away from them." And they got there obviously--there were the babies sucking teats; they weren't any Viet Cong army or something. They'd been the people who'd lived over there. But then really the one that I never was able to forgive them for was the fact that they didn't have guts enough to execute the contingency plan, and our people walked back, and nobody got hurt, and they wouldn't go because they were simply afraid. I think that they, at least the commander, was scared to death. I mean, he had that command way up in the hills, sort of a Dien-Bien-Phu type thing. No land contact; everything was by air. No land until they finally broke out and went back. But I think he was just afraid that--and a total misunderstanding of what the Vietnamese were all about. They were all gooks as far as they were concerned, the whole damn lot of them. I don't say "they," but I think Colonel Lowndes was--of course, he was under tremendous pressure, but he didn't understand the Vietnamese, he'd never even dealt with any Vietnamese. They'd come in, gone up there and set up their camp, and they didn't like us. We were down at the south end

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of the camp. They didn't like the fact they were there. They didn't like the fact we kept pressing them to, "Let's go up and get these people."

G: Did you appeal Colonel Lowndes' decision not to send the relief force?

L: Oh, hell yes. I did to Westmoreland, and I also did to Abrams, but I only had a matter of--it was a matter of hours until the whole damn thing was over. I mean, it wasn't much time to sit down and do a written appeal. I mean, General Westmoreland told me he'd think it over and tell me after lunch, which to me was too damn long. I wanted to know, "What do you want me to do? I'll do anything you want. We'll just stay there until they all die; we'll execute the contingency plan. Order them to do it. You're the commanding general. Tell them to do it!" I said, "He's told me he isn't going to do it. Or tell us to get out any way we can." And he said, "Well, I'll think about it over lunch and let you know." He was at a meeting for civic action up there at the time, to discuss civic action, and that's when I thought, "To hell with it. I'll just call Abrams and ask him." And he was the one who said, "Hell, there's nothing you can do. Just get them out of there any way you can." And I thought, under the circumstances, we did pretty well. We got a bunch of them out. But we also lost them all except the Americans, in the end, because they all got turned back into the forests.

G: Did we re-occupy Lang Vei after all this?

L: No, we never did re-occupy Lang Vei. I went in there several times, but we didn't re-occupy it as a camp. Maybe they did after I left, but they didn't--see, that happened in about February or March, and I left in

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June, and we had not re-occupied Lang Vei at the time I left. We went back in, of course, and they evacuated the tanks, because there were four destroyed tanks there, and they were the first tanks to show up in Vietnam.

G: Did we get all of those with LAWs [light antitank weapons], or did the air get some of them, or what?

L: No, the air got some, and I think they had 105 [106?] recoilless rifles that got some. The LAWs weren't very effective against the tanks. I mean, they said unless they hit them on the side or the back. In the front, it just really bounced off, and it didn't do a hell of a lot of damage.

G: Those were not heavy tanks either, were they?

L: No, they were T-30 something. They were not heavy tanks.

G: How did they get them across the river?

L: I think they just kept filling it up with stones and things and then just--they were very ingenious at that--how did they get them down to Lang Vei? I mean, I don't know how they got them that far down. And of course, later they had them down right outside of Saigon. They had not come through Vietnam; they'd come through Laos and parts of Cambodia.

G: I guess the Ho Chi Minh Trail was pretty much an improved--

L: Road, by that time.

G: --system, by that time. Yes. I think we talked a little bit about how you came back and retired and eventually went into the State Department, but I don't think we actually got you into Cambodia very much. What were you supposed to do? What was your mission?

L: When I came back, and I was here about eight or nine, ten months--I've forgotten what it was--but I was in the army staff at DCSOPS [deputy

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chief of staff, operations], and I decided if I was going to get out of the army and do something else I ought to do it before I was fifty years old, and I was about forty-eight then or something. So I asked for retirement after twenty-eight years service, and I think, in some instances, some of the people were delighted, so I was very quickly taken up on that. People like General Palmer, Bruce Palmer, no. He was then the vice chief of staff of the army.

G: Who was delighted?

L: General Abra--I think General Westmoreland was very happy that I--we never had any problem; I didn't particularly care for him, and he didn't particularly care for me. I mean, I can't say that there is anything I can put my finger on except I did tell General Abrams that "He won't make up his mind. I would just like him to tell us to do something, but don't go off to lunch and think about it."

But anyhow, I got out, and I was out for several months. After I had been out for maybe four or five months, six months, I got a call one day from Clark Baldwin, who was a general in the Department of Army Operations, and he said, "Would you be interested in going back into the Far East again?" And I said, "Not as an army officer. I'm not coming back in the army as a colonel. So just forget it." He said, "No, that's not what we had in mind." Then I didn't hear anything for maybe another three or four months. And I got a call from Al Haig one day, and--no, actually the call came from [Henry] Kissinger, because my mother had died, and I went to California to help straighten out her estate. And I got a call there, and it was indeed Henry Kissinger, and he said, "We'd like to have you come back and talk about serving in the

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Far East." And I said, "I'm really not interested, as an army officer." He said, "No, this would be with the foreign service." And so I said, "All right. I've got to finish this work I've got down here with my mother's estate. I've got to get tickets. I don't--when are you talking about?" And he said, "We'd like you to leave tonight." And I said, "I don't know that I can." And he said, "Let me put your friend Al Haig on." He was already on, I'm sure, but anyway, then Al came on. And he said, "We'll get your tickets." And I said, "I've got to have something here with the courts because I'm due in court Wednesday to talk to the judge about my mother's estate." And he said, "See what you can do on that, and then call me back." So I did. I called the judge, and he said, "Sure, you go ahead. We'll do it any time you can make it." And so I called them. In the meantime, they had already gotten me my ticket and arranged to have a flight. I was to arrive at Baltimore Airport at something like three o'clock in the morning. And I told Haig again, "Now I'm not going to go back as an army officer to mess around that area." And he said, "No, that's not it at all."

So anyhow, my brother drove me up to the airport that afternoon, and he said, "If they meet you in a 1932 Chevrolet, get back on the airplane and come home," because they said they'd have somebody to meet me. It was really kind of funny because all this was rather odd to me. But anyway, I got there, arrived at three or four o'clock in the morning, and there was a major there and a sergeant and a big old army limousine, and he said, "I'm your aide while you're here." That sort of stunned me. And he said, "You have an appointment with the President tomorrow at eleven o'clock, and we'll pick you up at about nine-thirty because

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General Haig and Kissinger want to talk to you before you see the President." And so then they took me to my apartment over at Crystal City, and sure enough the next morning they showed up. I went over there, and I talked to Kissinger and Haig; met Nixon briefly, and then went back and talked to them again, and they said, "We want you to go to Cambodia as a State Department officer and operate the President's new program, the Nixon Doctrine, where we give them the materials and they help themselves, but we don't send any troops." And I explained that I did not want to do it if we were going to do it like Vietnam, where our military took over and took over, until eventually the Cambodians were just puppets working around the United States military. "No, absolutely not. This is going to be Nixon Doctrine, and no Americans are going to be there except you people at the embassy, but there will be no American troops. They're there now,"--it was shortly after the incursions--"but they'll be out by the first of June, and then you run the show after that. You'll have," they started off, "forty million dollars to run it, which is a presidential determination on money taken from other programs."

And so I said, "All right. Now what do you want me to do?" They said, "Now you go over to the State Department and talk to Mr. [William] Rogers and Alexis Johnson." So I went over there and got there about lunch time, and I had lunch with them. And they were telling me, "You are going to go as an FS0-5"--which didn't mean a thing to me; I didn't know what ranks were in the State Department--"and your title is going to be"--and they told me what I was going to be, a political-military counselor in the embassy.

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So then I went home. And I called a friend of mine, a retired--now a deceased--State Department officer, Ray Leddy, who had been the diplomatic counselor at the Army War College when I was there, and he was really the only legitimate State Department guy that I knew well. So I explained all this to him, what had happened, and he said, "There are really two or three things wrong with this. First, if you go there as an FS0-5, you will be about the rank of a captain or a major in the embassy. They've told you, the President did, that he wanted you to deal with the head of state, Lon Nol, and with General Westmoreland and Abrams"--no, Westmoreland was already home--"Abrams, and with the Thai government." And he said, "As an FS0-5, you ain't going to deal with anybody. As a matter of fact, you aren't even going to leave the embassy without some other clown's [permission]. You tell them, you go over there the same rank as the top man so that you can leave whenever you want to, and that it is very clear that you take your orders from the State Department and not from the ambassador."

And he said, "The second thing is, you want all the privileges that they have. I know their wives and families are over there if they want them."

So the next morning I had an appointment with Kissinger, and I went back, and I told him that they wanted me to be an FS0-5 and that I had consulted some of my friends and that I--before I could say it, he blew his stack and told his aides to get Mr. Rogers on the telephone right away. And I must say Rogers was not there when they said that; that was Alexis Johnson and Green, Marshall Greene--[they] were the ones who I was having lunch with. So he said, "That's absolutely ridiculous."

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That's not what the President had in mind at all. You're to go over there, and you're to run the goddamn program, not be subordinate to those people at all." And after he had talked to somebody--I assume it was Rogers--and really chewed his ass out; they said, well, send me back over, apparently, because he said, "All right. You're going to get everything you want, and you go over there now and straighten that out with them, but they've already been told."

So I went over--of course, I had this car, and I went over to the State Department, and it was all just sweetness and light. No, I wasn't going to be [an FS0-5]. I was going over as the same rank as the guy in charge, and yes, I would have all the privileges of the foreign service. And then I got calls--it's very interesting--from Westmoreland and from Tom Moorer, who was chairman of the Joint [Chiefs of] Staff, and all the way through, I had insisted that I am in a civilian capacity, and they had said, "You're damn right." And I must say, General Westmoreland was very interesting because when I arrived the next morning--I was to leave the following night--but the next day I had appointments with Westmoreland and with Moorer and then, once more, back with Kissinger and Haig, and then I was on my way. But Westmoreland was very cordial to me. He was furious because at the time a newspaperman here named Joe Kraft had been over there and written an article about a guy who was in the Embassy in Cambodia as the attaché, and his name was Peach, and Kraft had written this article in *Time* magazine. And I had not seen the article. It was really a devastating article. He had interviewed Peach in Cambodia, and Peach, who, by the way, was a classmate of mine at West Point--but he was in the intelligence side; he'd always been in the

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intelligence side. But he had told Kraft that he was now in charge in Cambodia--it sort of reminded me of Haig's later statement--and that the problem with Westmoreland and Abrams was they didn't understand, indigenous-type warfare and that now that he was in charge over there, everything--and he called him--his name is Peach; it rhymes with screech--and he wears a jacket that looks like a good humor man's jacket. It was just a devastating article about this guy. And Westmoreland said, "Have you read this article?" And I said, "No." And I looked at it and I thought, "Gee, but that's stupid." But anyway, he said, "When you get over there, we're sending him messages now that you're coming over and that you're taking over at the embassy, and that he is to shut up and not talk to anybody unless he gets it cleared with you." And I said, "That's fine, General."

So that was about what I had to do, but Westmoreland was livid with this guy who said that he and Abrams didn't know what the hell was going on, but that he knew, and now that he was there and in charge--and he said, "He's not in charge of anything." Oh, he'd told Kraft that he was personally selected by Westmoreland for the job, and Westmoreland says, "You know, Fred," and he called me my name, "any order assigning an army officer says at the bottom 'By order of the Chief of Staff,' but I don't know every son-of-a-bitch that's in the Army. But he told him that I--and I'd never seen him. I don't know who he is. I want you to grab hold of him and shake him up." Anyhow, then I went to see Admiral Moorer, who was chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and Admiral Moorer, I am convinced, thought that I was just going to fall in line and be the Pentagon's boy in Cambodia. So I went into his office and he had some-

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body there--I don't know who it was; his chief of staff or someone--but he was pacing up and down and pointing his finger at me and saying, "Now, I'll be telling you this," and finally I said, "Admiral, are you aware that I am a foreign service officer, I am not an army officer, and that I take my orders from the State Department?" He said, "Aw, bullshit on that." And I said, "There isn't any bullshit on it. I don't take any orders from you or anybody else in the military. I take them from the Secretary of State, and if the President wants to tell me to do something, I take them from him. I'm here as a courtesy call, but I don't take any orders from you." He was really peed off, and to this day, he and I don't see eye to eye. And so his boy in Cambodia was suddenly backed off, and I'll follow this up with something very interesting later.

So anyhow, I went off and went to Cambodia, and I got there, and my friend, Bill Peach--I met him after I had been there a day or so, and he came in, and the first thing I had to do with him, he came rushing in one night--the first night I was there--and he had a report from Siem Reap that the enemy had attacked Siem Reap, and he had written this message to go to Washington that said, "In the classic tank-infantry form, with the infantry between elephants, on whose backs were mounted recoilless rifles that were firing into the"--I got that far, and I said, "Come on, Bill. Look, I've played polo all my life. You don't fire recoilless rifles from the backs of elephants." He said, "I got this from an eyewitness." And I said, "Who?" And he says, "There was a monk who talked to the mother of one of the sons of the people"--I just scratched it off, and I wrote on the bottom, "Siem Reap suffered minor

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attack during the night of"--I said, "Now send that, and leave all this bullshit out of here." He was heartbroken, but anyway, he did send it. And the next day, having nothing to do with me, his orders arrived--it was the second day I was there--telling him to get back to Washington immediately. He took me out to his house because he said, "I've got to get rid of my household goods." His household goods amounted to a bed and a couple of chairs, and a storeroom that I would estimate had three hundred cans of popcorn in it because, he said, when he was stationed in the Far East before, he had found out that the Orientals liked popcorn, and he had brought that to pass out to friends. He'd used his whole household-goods shipment to ship popcorn over from the United States.

So anyhow, Bill left; I didn't see Bill any more. I've seen him since a couple of times. But anyway, he just went off into oblivion, and he's really kind of a nice guy, but there's something wrong. I mean, this elephant thing just got me that night. Then I began to look around, and of course, the Cambodians at that time--I'd read in the newspapers or seen pictures of them mounted on Coca-Cola trucks going out to the battlefield, and really the esprit de corps of the Cambodians was wonderful compared to the Vietnamese. They were all fighting for their country, and the college students were out guarding the roads to Phnom Penh, and there were--it reminded me of pictures I had seen of the Revolutionary War of militia marching up and down the streets holding brooms over their shoulders instead of guns; they didn't have any guns. But, oh boy, the spirit was great. In the meantime, they had sent, of course, from Vietnam--they had gotten together four battalions of what had been my former Montagnard and Khmer Cham and other soldiers that had been in the special forces, and they all volun--

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(Interruption)

G: CIDG?

L: They were CIDGs, but they were the strike force people, and really they were the best we had. So they came over, and they were the guts of the Cambodian army at that time. Later, they recruited two more battalions of them from the special forces, but they were the guts of the Cambodian army. They were the only real army the Cambodians had, and unfortunately, over a period of time it was like using the fire department over and over again--they just wore them down to where after a year or so, there weren't many of them left. But they really held--

(Interruption)

--would go out on these trucks, Coke trucks and other things, sitting on the top and shouting and yelling; they'd go out and get themselves killed, but they confronted the enemy. Now, I think the enemy at that time was in pretty sorry shape. Prior to the incursion by the U.S. troops into the sanctuaries, they had sent the First, Third, and other North Vietnamese divisions toward Phnom Penh, because at that time Lon Nol had taken over from [Norodom] Sihanouk, and they'd kicked Sihanouk out. They'd closed the port, so that where the Chinese were shipping in weapons and things, they couldn't come in anymore, and I think they were going up there very lightly armed, because the Cambodians weren't worth a damn, and they were going to just scare the hell out of them and reinstate Sihanouk. But just at that time, when they were just out near Phnom Penh, was when the Americans and the Vietnamese crossed the border and went into the sanctuaries and took over everything. My opinion is that these divisions of North Vietnamese that were headed up toward the

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Cambodians, they didn't have any more batteries for their radios; they really didn't have any ammunition; they didn't have any medical supplies. So by the time I got there, which was really a month later, they weren't in much better shape than the dumb Cambodians. I mean, they just--so they really couldn't communicate with each other; they couldn't coordinate anything. So they sat around Phnom Penh, and while I had all these gloomy reports of how Phnom Penh was going to fall within a week or two days or ten days, they really weren't capable of doing anything. And, eventually, they all pulled back and went up to Kratie, up the river, and re-organized, and then got themselves started again, but the Americans and Vietnamese had taken over everything they had down in the Cambodian sanctuaries.

So when I got there, I found out that 80 per cent of the Cambodian army was armed with AK-47s and Russian weapons and that was the way they'd been trained, since our MAAG [military assistance advisory group] had been kicked out. So I went down and talked to General Abrams and said, "What are you going to do with all this stuff?" And he said he didn't know, and I said, "Give it to us because the whole damned army up there is [using it]."

So they did. They put it on barges and we hauled it up the river, and the Cambodians had about a year's supply of recoilless rockets, the Russian [models], and they had the AK-47 ammunition and their machine gun ammunition. Everything that was in those sanctuaries went to them, including all the weapons that were in there.

G: Yes.

L: So that saved me a hell of a lot out of my forty million bucks. I didn't have to buy U.S. weapons at that time. Then we began to scratch

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around. Then we had MIGs--you'll see in one of these letters--MIG fighters at the airfield, and we're trying to figure out how you're going to arm them. And I had, God, spooks all over trying to get MIG ammunition and MIG tires, and people out trying to buy from the Yugoslavians AK-47 ammunition on the sly. And the way we beat that was some guy finally wrote to me from Arlington, Virginia, over here across the river, and he says, "I've got an ammunition factory, and if you can send me some of the ammunition, I'm sure I can come up and make you the ammunition you want and set up the right" whatever it was--molds. So I did, and for the rest of the war we bought our ammunition cheaper than we were getting it anyplace else from this guy over here in Arlington, Virginia. And as far as I know, he's still making AK-47 ammunition.

[Laughter]

G: I wonder who's buying it now.

L: But God, we got it a lot cheaper. It was about--we were willing to pay like fifteen cents a round. He was selling it for about three cents a round, which was about what we were getting our M-16 ammunition for. So anyway, that was one of the interesting things that came out of the Cambodia business.

G: Why did they want you especially?

L: Oh, I don't think they wanted me especially. Now, I heard what happened. At least, later on, Al Haig told me that the President had a cabinet meeting. When he made the decision he was going to go in and help Cambodia, he had a cabinet meeting. And he said, "In line with the Nixon Doctrine, where I don't want any American troops over there and American forces, I want to help Cambodia. And I'm going to give them

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the money and the equipment that they need, but what I need is somebody over there to run the program that's a civilian. I don't want him to be a military man, and I'd like your recommendations." Then, Haig said, they all left, and Moorer and [Melvin] Laird, who were the chairman of the Joint [Chiefs of] Staff and the secretary of defense, now he said on the way home apparently they were saying, "Who in the hell are we going to recommend that's not a military man?" So when they got back, they had somebody call the White House and say, "Can we nominate a retired military [man]?" And they were told, "Yes, but he's got to be legitimately retired some time ago. He can't be some general you retire tomorrow, and then put him back on active duty again. Somebody that's already out and has committed himself to something else, yes, you can do that kind of a retired guy."

Now I don't know who the CIA recommended; I don't know who the Treasury or Justice [Departments] or whoever else was at this goddamn cabinet meeting, but apparently, I wound up being--you remember, I told you earlier Clark Baldwin had called and asked me if I would be interested. I said, "Yes, but not as a military type." And I think that way back then, they were feeling around, and I wound up being the Department of Defense nominee mainly because practically all of my--all of my overseas service had been in the Far East. I had been in the green berets; I had been there with the Philippine guerrillas. I knew the indigenous people quite well. But I think I wound up--as I say, I don't know how many others were recommended and got turned down or simply told them, "I'm not interested." But I wound up being the DOD nominee, and I think that's why Moorer, in one sense, thought I was going to be his boy.

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But I didn't know that at that time; I didn't find this out until later. But I wouldn't have gone as his boy anyway, because I didn't want to go that way. And the thing that I was going to tell you that was the biggest joke of all on them, was after I had been there about seven or eight months, they wanted to have a--CINCPAC, Admiral McCain, was the head military guy out in the Pacific. And they tried all kinds of ways--they, meaning Moorer and his people--to send a general or an admiral over to Vietnam [Cambodia], and the President kept telling them "No. That's the whole point of the thing. I don't want a military man. I've got somebody there that's handling it." By that time, things were going pretty well. And of course they didn't like it, because they didn't think--I'd decide I wanted to spend \$500,000 on medical supplies, and I didn't have to ask them. That was it. If I wanted to buy radios, I could buy radios. But I ran the program out of Cambodia, and it didn't go through the military, and of course they didn't like that one goddamn [bit]. The only one that was helpful was General Abrams, and he helped me in every way he could, and he was very happy with what I was doing because I was keeping the damn Vietnamese off his people's back, for one thing. And I think he thought I was doing a fairly good job up there.

But anyway, they finally decided, unbeknownst to me--Moorer and Westmoreland and the others--that they were going to ask the President to assign a CINCPAC representative to be in Cambodia to sort of just keep CINCPAC informed of what the hell was going on so that it would get out of the State Department channel, you see, because I reported generally through the State Department. They told that to McCain, and

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he said, "Yes, that will be fine; I'll have a CINCPAC representative. I'll have a representative over there." So they went to the White House and told the President and Kissinger and Haig that they would like to establish this CINCPAC representative, and they said, "Let us think about it." So then they sent a message to Admiral McCain from the White House, unbeknownst to Moore and Westmoreland, and said "They want to establish this, and we understand you're willing to accept it, and we would like to nominate Mr. Ladd of the State Department, who you know, and he's had long service, and you're are very well acquainted with him. What would you think?" He came back, "I'd be delighted to have him." of course, they didn't bring him in on the thing. He said, "I'd be delighted to have Mr. Ladd be the CINCPAC representative." So the next thing these dumb fuckers knew, the President announces that the CINCPAC representative had been appointed, and it was Jonathan F. Ladd of the State Department. It just killed Moorer and Westmoreland because it was exactly what they didn't want. They wanted somebody over there to put the finger on me. When I left--up at the top there, Admiral McCain, you can read that little thing there--

G: Pointing to a plaque on the wall.

L: --and it says, "My CINCPAC representative," I mean, when I left Cambodia. He was delighted; he came over, and we had a meeting. We met with Lon Nol, and I told him, "I'll report to you. What do you want? Daily?" And he says, "No. Once a week will be fine unless I send you a message." And so I would work up a message every Saturday and send it to him and give him the same thing that I was giving Abrams on every Wednesday, and I'd just tell him what the hell was going on, and he was

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happy, and I was happy, and Moorer was pissed off. But it was really ironic because they had obviously set this thing up, and they kept trying and trying. When they finally won was--you see, all this time, there was no MAAG-MAP [military assistance program] program, and what it was was presidential determination. The first forty million dollars the president took from Turkey and Korea programs. He just took twenty from one and twenty million from the other and gave it to me, and then I could spend it. At the end of that fiscal year, he decided he would take a hundred million. So the next year, I got a hundred million. Forty of it was to pay back the two that he'd taken before, which really left me with a sixty-million dollar program for the next year. Before the year--and I had a hell of a time explaining that to the newspaper people because they kept saying, "Ah, you've jumped--you've doubled in"--and I said, "Now wait a minute. We didn't double. He took the twenty and we gave that back to Korea, and he gave the other twenty back to Turkey, and I got sixty. So my first was forty, my next was sixty; I didn't double. But it did go up." But anyhow, that was how that started.

But then the Congress passed the supplemental aid bill, and in that supplemental aid bill they made Cambodia a MAP program, military assistance program, legitimate; and by law, all MAP programs are administered by the Secretary of Defense. So in effect, my job after the first year and a half just vanished because he then, by law, not personally, but--what do you call it?--by statute, the Secretary of Defense became responsible for the program. I had at that time two army officers, who spoke French, and I had one air force enlisted man and two

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army enlisted men who spoke French. So there were five people and me running the program that had been forty million and sixty million. We all spoke French; we used the Cambodian's records which were all in French, and then when the MAP thing changed, they replaced me and my five people with a general and 113 military people, and that was done like that. (Snaps fingers) They already had them all lined up, and they just took over and they ran the program.

And it then soon went to many more than that, two hundred and some. You couldn't possibly keep [the records in French any more]; they had to do it in English. So then we had to send all these Cambodians off to English school, so they could--instead of staying there and running the bullets and the beans and the gasoline, they were off in school learning how to--and the Americans began to run the program--learning how to speak English because they were changing all the records from French, which the Cambodians understood, to English. And they sent in teams. I remember one team came in, and they had sent up a gasoline boat that was a small, little, tiny tanker, and it would have our gasoline on it--every month. And they would put it in three big tanks, and they'd drain it off into fifty-five gallon drums, and they'd drive it around in trucks and deliver: "Your battalion gets your fifty-five gallon drum," and they'd pick up your empty. That wouldn't do, for Christ's sake. We've got to have American tankers that deliver that out there, and then we've got to have tank farms out at each of these battalions. The battalions were on the move all the time. Christ, by the time they got through, they had a whole--and they were trying to teach the Cambodians how to run this. It worked fine with these fifty-five

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gallon drums. We didn't need any more. We didn't have that many trucks until they started to feed them more trucks than they needed. And then I began to get--I got called back to talk to the Defense people because I was griping and saying that. "You're wasting a lot of money." What they'd do is go punch the computer in an American battalion that's got five hundred men in it, say, and so they've got five hundred ponchos, and they've got a thousand pairs of boots because they each have to have two pair of boots, and they've got six shirts, and they've got so many neckties, and that's what they were issuing. That's the way they ran it.

I just said, "All right. What do we need?" And I'd sit down with the Cambodians. "We need medical supplies. We need bandages. We need sulfa powders. We need disinfectant. We need splints." And we'd put all this down, "How much of that?" and then we'd ask for that. In the signal [area], "We need radios," and we'd figure out how many radios, backpack radios. Christ, this came out that every American battalion has got thirty-two trucks, two and a half ton trucks. They put thirty-two two and a half ton trucks. So I got so pissed off, I went back and I said, "There aren't that many paved roads. We've got something like a hundred and ninety battalions, and if you give them each thirty-two trucks, there isn't enough road space to park the goddam things, much less--besides, they haven't got that many people who know how to drive. The one that really gets me--look at this. Ponchos, five hundred for every battalion. They've been standing in the goddam rain for a thousand years. They never had a poncho. They don't need a poncho today. They wouldn't use it for that anyway. They'd sell it in the bazaar."

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But, "Oh, no. Every soldier's got to have a poncho." At this point was when I told Haig, "Just send me home. I'm a thorn in the side of the whole program because I think you're crazy. It isn't the way you and Kissinger and the President told me it was going to be. The Americans were not going to run it. They're already running the program. They've got the Cambodians spread so thin that they can't run their own war. Before you know it"--and they did. They had the embassy running the bombing attacks, and the Cambodians didn't even know what the hell they were bombing, which towns. They didn't tell them, and they--

G: Who was coordinating that?

L: Enders. Thomas Enders. By that time I had left, but he was the deputy mission commander. I mean, he was the--

G: Did we have an ambassador or a chargé?

L: Oh, yes. We had an ambassador, Coby [Emory C.] Swank. But he didn't know that was going on. You see, he didn't know Enders, his deputy, was running the program. They didn't tell him that. He and the military and Kissinger figured that out. They ran the program, totally unknown to the ambassador.

G: And did you know about it?

L: No. I'd already left, but I didn't know about it either. I was here, and Mr. Rogers--we got a call one day--you remember [James] Lowenstein and [Richard] Moose--Jim Lowenstein and Dick Moose worked for Senator Symington on the Foreign Relations Committee, and they went over there, and they were sitting around the swimming pool at the Phnom Hotel, Royal Hotel, and these newspaper people were there listening on their radio. And they said, "What are you listening to?" And they were listening to

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the embassy give the B-52s their bombing targets. And they said, "What?" And they picked this up and sure enough, they could recognize Enders' voice, and they recognized the general that was there at the time, [John] Cleland, telling them where to go and what the coordinates were. So they came back and blew this thing wide open, that the embassy is running the secret bombing attacks in Cambodia, unbeknownst to the Cambodians. So I didn't know it; Rogers, the secretary of state, didn't know it. The ambassador didn't know it, but the ambassador's deputy knew it; he was in it up to his asshole. It's really kind of fascinating, the way that thing worked out.

So the Foreign Relations Committee had subpoenaed Mr. Rogers, who was supposed to be in charge, like [Ronald] Reagan is supposed to be in charge of the embassy in Beirut. I mean, it makes about that much sense. But Rogers was--technically the Secretary of State was running it--to appear before Congress on a Monday morning to testify on the secret bombing. He called Laird, and he said, "I've got to go up there. Now, if I tell them I don't know anything about it, I'm going to tell them to get you, because obviously you must know." So Laird said, "Come on over, or send somebody over." And at that time I was Rogers' Far East-Cambodia-Vietnam special adviser. So he sent me over on a Saturday afternoon, and I was briefed, and I was aghast; I didn't know all this was going on. So they briefed me on the whole goddamn thing--

G: In Defense?

L: --at the Department of Defense; how this had been going on and how long it had been going on and who was running it. So I came back, and that evening I told Mr. Rogers. We sat up there, and I explained this whole

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thing. And he said, "It certainly makes me look like an ass." And I said, "Yes, it does. But it makes everybody look like one. But it's shocking that they had this thing going on and nobody knew. Even the ambassador out there didn't know, but his deputy was a part of it and working with Kissinger and the air force." He now is the ambassador to Spain, this clown.

G: Enders is.

L: Yes. He was ambassador to Canada, and now he is ambassador to Spain. But he was the one that was running the thing over there. I'll go on with the story.

Then we were going Monday morning. So Sunday nothing happened, and Monday morning early I met him, and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee was to meet--I'm sure it was Monday; it may have been a Tuesday at ten o'clock, and so I went up to Mr. Rogers' office, and riding up in the car I said to him, "Now, Mr. Secretary, whatever it is, I think you ought to be just straightforward with them. You know now what happened. If they ask you what's happened, tell them. If they ask you, 'Did you know?' if I were you, I'd tell them, 'No, I did not know.'" But anyway, he said, "Fred, don't worry about it. About five minutes after ten, it isn't going to make any difference anyway." All I could think of was, "Shit! The atomic bomb coming in or something?"

So we got up there and, of course, it was a big thing in the newspapers, and there were television things, and the press was in, and the room was jammed. You know the way these hearings are. And he and I went in and sat down, and [William] Fulbright came in and sat down, and Symington was sitting on his left because they go that way. Symington

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was the other side of the house, I guess. But anyway, Fulbright--and I'd been up there many times with him--he always has a little introductory statement--or had--and it was about a ten-minute little speech his staff had written for him. And he was saying, "It's terrible that we have these things happen." About halfway through his introductory speech, an aide came in and hit him on the shoulder, and he handed him this piece of paper, and he took his gavel, and he banged it, and he said, "I believe it's my duty to tell you--all I've just learned that the President has fired [H. R.] Haldeman, [John] Ehrlichman, the Secretary of Defense"--pandemonium! Those goddamn television people were jerking out their light plugs and trying to get out of there, and the press was running out, and everybody else was running out. In the end, it wound up that there was Bill Rogers and me sitting out in the witness table, and Fulbright and Symington, all the other members--the whole committee had been in there, and they were all gone. There was just the four of us sitting in there, maybe somebody back there, a spectator or two. And Fulbright then takes his gavel, and (thumps) "Call the committee back to order," and Symington leans over and said, "May I ask the witness a question?" And he says, "Why, of course, sir." And Symington says, "Do you know who is going to be the new secretary of state since the Secretary of State is fired?" And Fulbright says, "Defense, you fool! Defense! That's not the Secretary of State." And at that time, he went bam! bam! "This committee is adjourned." And we never had another hearing on the goddam bombing in Cambodia, because that Nixon thing broke, and then it just went to pot. But he hit that thing and he said, "Defense, you fool! He fired the Secretary of Defense. He didn't fire

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him!"

(Laughter)

G: That's funny.

L: And as I say, there were the four of us and maybe a couple of spectators in the back, and that was all that was left in the room. It had been just jammed with people, and he said, "I've got to announce that the President has fired Haldeman, Ehrlichman, the Secretary of"--I've forgotten who else; he had a list of them there.

G: You suddenly weren't the number one story in town.

L: Hell, we weren't the big story in town anymore. They all just took off, and we never again went up there and testified on the bombing in Cambodia. But subsequently I found out in talking to--by the way, you might think about Moose and Lowenstein, I mean, if you haven't already talked with them. They, on that Cambodia thing--when Enders later came up to be ambassador to Canada, they held up his nomination for six months because they gave him something like 155 questions to answer from the Foreign Relations Committee that he had to be extremely careful [about] because they had a lot of the goods on him. Eventually they let him go, and he got in.

G: He's in Spain now?

L: He's now the ambassador to Spain. But in the meantime, he was part of this group that--just before he went to Spain, which was about eight or ten months ago, he was the assistant secretary for Latin American affairs, and he was all involved in San Salvador and Nicaraguans and all the help we've been doing there, and he just slithered out of that in time and went to Spain. Subsequently they kicked out some of the CIA

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people that were involved, but he would have been right in the middle of that. But he was out by then. But I'm sure he had a lot to do with that. I think you asked me what I thought of these Vietnam programs and Cambodia programs that have been on the TV, this serial. [It was] very good for what they did, but they never, in the Cambodia side, ever brought up Kissinger's role, Haig's role, Enders' role. What they left out was as important as what they showed; never a word that they had anything to do with the secret bombing in there.

G: I take it you're familiar with [William] Shawcross' book on Cambodia.

L: Yes.

G: How would you characterize his treatment of it?

L: I thought Shawcross' book on Cambodia [*Sideshow*], and people have asked me--up to the time I left--now once I left, I really didn't know what went on in Cambodia. I've read in his book and read other places, but in the period when I was there, it was extremely accurate, and I can only feel that it was just as accurate afterwards. I mean, I don't know that, but I know that the part, as I've read it, up to when I knew for sure what was going on, it was pretty damn right down the line. Afterwards, I don't know because I've just, again, heard [things], read things, seen things. But the part I was involved in, he was pretty well right on the line of what was going on.

G: He does talk about your operation there.

L: But I mean he's neither--I thought he was pretty accurate in what he said.

G: Did he consult you on the book?

L: Very briefly. He talked to me maybe an hour one time. Had me to lunch, and we chatted over lunch or something. As I told people that asked,

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what I know of it, it's right. But, you see, it ran--I left in June of 1972, and his runs until sometime 1975 or 1976, and I just--I wasn't there. I wasn't interested in what was happening particularly, from a personal point of view, but they had--

G: When the military came in to administer--

L: Cambodia?

G: --the program, yes, was that General [Theodore] Mataxis' program?

L: Yes. He was the first chief of the--they call it military equipment delivery team, MEDT, or something like that, and he was the first chief of that. Now when he first came, he had his headquarters in Saigon, and [inaudible]. Then he moved up into Cambodia when they got organized, and they came up, and then he was replaced by a general named Cleland. I think he had come from the Joint Staff or something. Mataxis had come from the Americal Division to Cambodia. There's an interesting story on that, too.

When they set that thing up, the military equipment team commander was put under CINCPAC. Again, this is Admiral McCain out in Hawaii, although Abrams for the first year and a half was really the logistic supporter of my program, and of course anything they got, it had to come through Vietnam. And General Abrams told me himself--and bless his soul, [he's] dead, I mean--he was so damn mad; he couldn't understand why the first thing they did was ask him to pick a commander, and then on the second part of it was, "This commander will be under Admiral McCain," which made him not under Abrams. So he told me, "I have picked the general that I could least want in my command, to do that," and so he got Mataxis and gave it to him. Then from that time on, he never

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would speak to Mataxis. He would speak to me, as long as I was there as the political-military counselor, and every Wednesday he would send his airplane up and fly me down. And I'd go down early in the morning, meet with him, brief him on Cambodia, have lunch with him, and he'd fly me back again every Wednesday. But he never would discuss any of the business [with Mataxis]. He said, "As far as he is concerned, McCain is your [his] man. You [he can] talk to McCain."

But of course, everything came through--it's just one of those funny things. Why they did that, I'll never understand. And he was really livid. I mean, he could not understand that, why they--he was the four-star general out there running that program, so closely tied with Cambodia--he'd been running it for a year and a half, in effect. I'd been using [him]. He'd been helping me, but in effect he ran it. We discussed things like the incursions up in the northern part of Cambodia where the Americans went in and helped the Vietnamese--the Cambodians withdraw through there. He'd set up all the training camps down into Vietnam for the Cambodians, and he was just livid when this thing came out that they'd put it under CINCPAC.

G: Yes.

L: But he never spoke to Mataxis the rest of the time Mataxis was there.

G: But this whole thing is ambiguous, isn't it? What position does it put you in when General Mataxis comes in?

L: I really didn't have much of a position, but as Mataxis got all his help from Abrams and Abrams' command--and Mataxis just had a hundred-and-some people, but they were captains, lieutenants, majors, something like that. Here was Abrams with the whole MACV [military assistance command,

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Vietnam] staff and the logistics and the air force, and everything else came through Abrams. So I wound up being in a very awkward position because he would deal with me, but he wouldn't deal with Mataxis, and Mataxis was dealing with McCain. And of course, McCain and Abrams got along just fine; I mean, they weren't going to fight with each other. But it put me in--that was why I told Haig, "I want to go home." And I told him that; I told him that in April, and I went home in June because I said, "I'm a fifth wheel around here now. I have no function anymore. The President's determination doesn't mean anything anymore. McCain is giving Mataxis his orders of how to run this and what to do. I have nothing to do. I advise, but they don't pay any attention. I object to things that are going on. I am the liaison with General Abrams from Cambodia; Mataxis isn't." And when Cleland came, Abrams didn't have anything to do with Cleland either.

G: Did you have access to the ambassador?

L: Which one?

G: In Cambodia.

L: Oh, yes. Oh, daily. I mean, hell, he and I were great friends, and our wives were good friends.

G: He had no leverage to deal with this situation?

L: He didn't. I think if he'd wanted to, he could, but he didn't, and he let Enders--for instance, to give you an example of the kind of things that happened:

When Phnom Penh got surrounded they were going to set up these convoys to come up the river, armed convoys, to bring up the supplies. General Abrams called me, not Mataxis, down to go to the meeting on how

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they were going to set the convoys up. In the meantime, Mataxis and Enders are sitting in Enders' office deciding how it ought to be done. So anyway, they had a three-star admiral and a three-star air force general. Now the air force ran the air force over there. The admiral ran the actual boats up the river. And then they had a three-star army general who was to help, because the troops on the thing had to be Cambodians or Vietnamese. They couldn't be Americans. They had set up this thing, and I had all the plans, and I took them back up there and explained, "All right. These three navy-type patrol vessels will be out in front, and then there will be two or three troop ships so that if they meet resistance they can go to shore and put the landing [inaudible]. Back here is going to be the convoy, and on each side of the convoy is going to be so-and-so."

Anyway, I was explaining this to the Ambassador, Enders, and Mataxis, and after I got through--and I'd given them the names of the generals and the admirals, and they'll be coordinating with us. "Our job in Cambodia is, when they get the thing to Phnom Penh harbor, is to unload those ships as fast as we can and get them back out in the river so they can start back down again. Now that's our function. The rest of this belongs to them, and the U.S. Air Force is going to fly"--Enders says, "I don't think that will work." He said, "General Mataxis and I"--and then he brought out his charts on where they were going to put the ships and how they were going to run. And I listened to this crap, and I got through, and I said, "Tom, my suggestion is you go down there and"--Abrams hated Enders, anyway. I said, "I suggest you go down there and you explain that to General Abrams, that his plan isn't going to

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work. You might take General Mataxis with you, and you two go down there and explain that to him." "We can't do that." And I said, "You don't think I'm going to do it? I have never taken part in an amphibious landing. I don't know anything about amphibious [landings]. I don't know how to fly air cover. Our job that they want us to do is unload the ships, leave the rest of it up to them, and stay out of it. But if you want to, you go down there and tell him how that convoy is going to work."

Of course, neither he nor Mataxis were about to get off their ass, but they were making this big thing--Coby Swank, instead of saying, "This is ridiculous, Enders. This is the way they're going to run it," he didn't say anything. He just sat there. And I told him later, after we got back here, "I never understood why you didn't tell him, 'For God's sake, get off of it. You're not Napoleon.'" He'd never served a day in the military, Enders hadn't, in any sort, not even ROTC. But instead of telling him, "Oh, knock it off. This is what's going to happen," he didn't say anything. And I think that Enders in the meantime was doing his thing with Kissinger, and they were doing the bombing business, but we didn't know about it because the MEDTC had their own radio, through the military attachés with Washington, separate from the embassy's communication system. So there were two international communication systems working out of the same embassy, but not coordinated.

G: Maybe three. How about CIA? Didn't they have one?

L: CIA had theirs, too. So you've got the three of them. There were three of them operating out of there, and none of them coordinating with the other one. It was fantastic. I mean, the more I sit back and think

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about it and all the intrigue going on in this thing--but back to the thing.

Ambassador Swank was just--one, he wasn't interested particularly in the military side of the picture. But I've always felt that he was shafted. Of course, he came back and really got fired when the whole thing was over, and Enders was the reason he got fired, yet he never ratted on Enders in any way, shape, or form. Yet he knew it in the end, exactly what happened to him. He knew how he got shafted.

G: Was it connected with Cambodia?

L: Oh, Cambodia. Oh, yes. He came back, and nobody wanted him, so they sent him off down to the Naval War College as the ambassador in residence, and then he retired from their pet job [?] at--but he basically was a Soviet expert; that was his basic background in the military.

G: I see. Lon Nol was the--

L: Lon Nol was the president and, at first, the military commander there, but then they had an election and he was elected president.

G: Did you talk to him very often?

L: Oh, I talked to him all the time. The first six-eight months, I saw him daily, two or three times a day.

G: What kind of a person was he?

L: Very quiet. A philosophical kind of man. A Buddhist, a devout Buddhist, although many of the newspapers in those days would write about how he was surrounded by bonzes, the saffron-robed priests. I was with him eight months, and I never saw a bonze near him, and I saw him day and night and the middle of the night; I never saw a bonze near him.

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And yet, many of the people--I know there were people in the political section of the embassy who said in their reports--I'd read them--and they'd say, "He is entirely surrounded by bonzes who give him his spiritual guidance, and he makes his decisions on their--" I said, "You people have never seen Lon Nol. You've never laid eyes on him. I see him every day, and I've never seen a bonze around him. I see him in all kinds of"--but they wrote these reports and would send them in. But they'd get them from their "sources" around. Where they'd get them, I don't know. But I can say, with my hands on the Bible, in the eight or ten months that I saw him on a daily basis I never saw a single bonze near him, and yet, at the same time, reports were coming out that he was--

G: Yes. I think Shawcross says that Lon Nol was quite ineffective.

L: Oh, I think he was ineffective. I think he was not a--apparently at one time had been quite a dynamic leader of individuals. He had a lot of people loyal to him, but I don't think he was--Abrams and I had to really bear down on him, through me, to get him to evacuate those people out of what they called the Golden Triangle up in the north. They'd have been overwhelmed if they hadn't come out. But he wasn't going to do that until finally I just would go over at night and tell him, "You're going to lose. You've got all those people up there, and you're going to lose them if you don't evacuate them. We'll bring them through Vietnam, bring them back up and let them fight the enemy. But leave them up there, where you can't support them"--you see, at first, for instance, he thought, and he believed--through Haig--that Nixon was his very good friend.

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Nixon would write him letters, and he'd carry those and say, "Look. My friend Nixon just wrote me a letter, and"--President Nixon, he would say, promising him whatever he wanted. Then I'd go back and say, "No, don't do that. You don't want to give him tanks; you don't want to give them this and that." But he didn't believe--when we went into the sanctuaries in April and came out June 1, he did not believe they were going to leave, and I had to convince him by going around saying, "They are going to leave on the first of June. He can't afford, politically, to leave them there. The U.S. is going to leave Cambodia." Well then, when he finally believed it was when he changed his mind and says, "All right. Evacuate those people out," because he was convinced we were just going to take over. [He was] very naive in cases like that, and it wasn't all his--he is very naive, but I mean, Haig and then McCain and all kind of visitors would come in and say, "Yes, we'll do everything we can to help you." Of course, he would interpret that to what he wanted that to mean, not what they meant, that what was within their power they would do, but he would interpret it to mean they would do everything for him, and he believed that, I think, up to close to the end that they--but he and I, we really got along extremely well. God, we'd be down on the floor looking at maps. One night I went over and he had on shorts, like bathing shorts, and his leg looked like it was all tattooed, and I said to him, "Have you got a tattoo on your leg?" He said, "No. That's acupuncture," the things where he took his treatments with acupuncture, but I thought they looked like little blue tattoo marks to me.

G: What was he taking acupuncture for? Arthritis?

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- L: Damn if I know. I don't know. I mean, I don't really know. I never saw him with a cane, except when he had his stroke, then afterwards he did, but I'm talking about before he ever had that. But I don't think he was very sharp politically. He meant well, but he just didn't have it.
- G: I've always wondered, and I guess people could ask the same question about Vietnam, but why were the Cambodians so apparently inept as soldiers?
- L: I think that one, I think they never had the incentives that, let's say, the North Vietnamese had or the Viet Cong. Now the Cambodians were brave. God, they'd go out--but they really didn't know how to shoot their weapons. They didn't know how. The few people that did know, for instance, [how to] coordinate artillery with infantry and that kind of thing, they--I just don't think they ever really knew that. Although their officers, Lon Nol and most of the senior ones, had all been to France. A lot of them had gone to the French Military Academy. Many of them had fought in the Indochinese War with the French, in that war. Of course, we had some awful goddamn indifferent troops too, in the U.S., but they just weren't very motivated.

I don't think they really knew--the Cambodians hadn't really, other than those few Cambodians that had--I say few, relatively few--fought in the French Indochinese War, they hadn't fought anybody for God knows how long; I mean, they really--they're one of these--it reminds me, for instance, of the Iranians.

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- L: Let's talk about the Iranians. We were talking about why soldiers are not very good, but this is--when General Mataxis arrived, he--of course,

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it was very sort of laid back when I was there. I mean, I had my two guys. We all wore civilian--we never wore uniforms. They never wore a uniform. I couldn't. We dealt with the Cambodians and got along beautifully. Metaxis came in. At first he wanted everybody in uniform. The President had said he didn't want anybody in uniform, but then once they really got in, everybody knew the Americans were in there; then they let these guys wear their uniforms now and then. They had some sedans that they'd sent up, one for him and one for his deputy, who was a colonel, and then jeeps and things. They had all these cars going through these metal shops, and I was trying to find out what the hell was going on one time. God, the sergeants and the lieutenants would talk to me--what he'd done was had racks built, kind of like East Texas where you're from, and he had guns mounted behind all the seats and under the seats; in case something happened they could all get out and shoot. And I said, "What is all this gun business?" He said, "Well, if something"--I said, "What are you going to do? Shoot the Cambodians? If somebody shot at you on the street in Phnom Penh, who are you going to shoot? Everybody in sight? Ninety per cent aren't going to have anything to do with having shot at you." "We'll kill them all if they do that." I said, "You're out of your goddamn mind." Nothing like that ever happened, but that was the kind of thing. Then he set up--he tried to make it a military command, like an officers' mess, and they all had to be there at five-thirty. In the first place, I thought that was a *peasant* time to have dinner. But it sounded like an army mess hall, and they all had to be there to have dinner. Nobody could sit down until he came, and then they'd all sit down. They hated it; they really couldn't

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stand it, and then when Cleland came--he replaced him--but then very shortly after that I left. Cleland took my house, in which--my wife and I had a lovely home there, and he [Mataxis] didn't like that at all. He had enough sense not to do that. So he lived away from his people. And then afterward Mataxis went to Indonesia and was in the gun-running business in Indonesia.

G: Oh, I didn't know that.

L: Oh, yes. And now he's the commandant of cadets at the Valley Forge Military Academy. And my thought was, if I had a son that I didn't want polluted, I certainly would never send him there, but if I didn't care, I'd send him up there.

But anyway, back to the Iranian thing. We were talking about why do soldiers not fight? And it always reminds me of when I was in Iran, and I came home, and I was debriefed by--

G: When was that, by the way?

L: 1951 to 1954, and I was debriefed by Mr. Allen Dulles, who was CIA then. So he was asking me what the Iranians were like and could they really fight, and I said, "No, I don't think so. They remind me of"--there was a book called *Haji Baba of Isfahan*, and it was written by a Britisher about--in the mid-1800s, and he'd gone to the Far East and the Near East and seen the Persians. But Haji Baba was a little guttersnipe that was a pickpocket, but he works his way up through--gets a job in the imperial household and finally he winds up being the adviser to the Shah because of his very clever abilities and whatnot. So anyway, this one scene in the book, he and the Shah are standing in this pavilion, and out in the front are thousands of cavalrymen, and they're coming by in

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review, and the clanking sabers, and the bits and the horses, and the stomping, and the spears with the banners on them. And Haji Baba turns to the Shah and says, "Majesty, were it not for the fear of injury and death, we would be the greatest fighters in the world."

(Laughter)

And that's the way the Iranians impressed me when I was there for two years, that "Were it not for the fear of injury and death"-- but they wore all the sashes and the medals, and the Cambodians and the Vietnamese did the same thing. They loved to get all dressed up in fancies and the--

G: Why is it the other side fought as well as they did?

L: Oh well, God, I think they were motivated. Whatever it is that motivates that Communist People's Party side, they get motivated, and the other guys get into--I think there are bound to be some of them that get into graft and corruption, but I think when they do, they cut off their hand or they kill them or they do something, and it discourages them doing that. We figure they'd go out and live in the dirt and the mud for--now, I understand that there are some Cambodians now in the jungles like the Viet Cong were before, who are fighting against the Vietnamese, who now--and some of those Cambodians--one of them, I understand, is Sak Sutsakhan, who was the head of their army, and that he's over there. But I think if they really believe in what they're doing, they'll just sacrifice a hell of a lot and if they don't, they don't.

G: Yes. Did you know General Ed Black?

L: Yes.

G: Do you know what ever became of him?

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L: I haven't the faintest. Now that you mention the name, I haven't heard of Ed Black in several years. I can probably find out [from] these guys I have lunch with over at the Army-Navy Club. I mean, they would know. I just don't know. I haven't even thought of him. You know the way you just don't--

G: Yes. He was an old Indochina hand, in one respect and another.

L: Yes. I knew Ed quite well, but he's one of those guys--when I left the army, you see, and spent like six years in the State Department, and then now, close to eight-nine years in Harris [Corporation], I've just gotten totally away from them. And the guys will come into town and call me, and I haven't even thought of them because [inaudible].

Anyhow, shoot. But anyway, I don't know why they didn't fight. I think the Cambodians would fight like hell if they had some reason to, to protect their families and things like this. Now like we brought all those mercenaries up from Vietnam who were Cambodians. They had to be Khmer to get in that thing. But they were extremely well-trained. They knew how to coordinate mortar fire and artillery fire, and they knew what to do, but the Cambodians never really had that kind of training. I mean, if they'd had training, say, if a Cambodian infantry battalion had had training to where they fired rifles, and if any of them had fired their rifles at targets, for instance, for twenty rounds, I think he'd be unusual for that type of thing. And when you get down to where you're talking about corporals and sergeants and lieutenants to lead these people, they didn't have anybody. Schoolteachers would go out and take their class out, the males in their class, and he'd be the sergeant, and they'd be the troops. Although they did send them down to

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Vietnam to schools and they had an NCO school and whatnot. I just don't think they were ever trained really to--nor were they--I mean, the Cambodians, even though they went around without shoes on, a lot of them, and had feet that could walk on rocks, they still hadn't suffered hardships like you do in war. They weren't used to that kind of thing; neither are our people. I always used to say, in World War II there were, out of the whatever it was--what did we have? two or three million people in the army? Probably about a hundred thousand of them ever fought anybody. The rest of them were in some kind of a supporting role. There weren't very many fighters--by very many, I mean, what did we have in those days, twelve thousand men to a division? And we may have had twenty divisions or thirty divisions or something, and of those thirty probably only fifteen of them ever fought regularly. It narrows down to a very few that you're talking about. And the Cambodians just weren't there.

G: You've seen this from both sides of the border, I think, and I'm talking about the Khmer Serei movement. What do you know about them? What was their role in all of this? I know that in the late sixties they were a rebel group.

L: Yes, they were anti-Sihanouk people primarily, and we had recruited many of them into the special forces CIDG, for use in Cambodia and along the Cambodian border. And Son Ngoc Thanh, who was their--sort of leader--had been in the Cambodian government at one time or another; I've forgotten what capacity he was, but he was very highly respected by these Cambodians, and he did a great deal of the recruiting for the special forces to get these Khmer Serei. Now, we had some of them that

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were just used as regular CIDG troops along the border, and then we had another group of them that were used for primarily cross-border operations and assassinations and that kind of thing. But he was recruiting for both groups of people.

Now the ones that I had to do with were the ones that were in the regular CIDG camps. The SOG [Studies and Observation Group] people under, when I was there, Jack Singlaub and that crowd, they were the ones who ran the cross-border operations and would often use our camps as jump-off points. But they had two or three camps down around Ho Ngoc Tao [?] and Saigon and that area where they kept their people. They had another large camp up in Danang, up in that area in the north, but often they used ours as base camps where we had--like Lang Vei was, for instance, one of them they used to use as a jump-off point.

G: That's a long way from Cambodia, isn't it?

L: No, but these were the ones that were working up in Laos. These were the Lao people.

G: I see. Oh, okay.

L: But I was saying, now their people were all Laos and that kind, up in the north, but the ones down in the south, the Montagnards--the people they used around the central area were mostly Montagnard people.

G: And this was SOG.

L: It was all SOG. The way I got hooked up with SOG was, it was run by the U.S. Special Forces, basically, and all of those Americans were assigned to my outfit, the Fifth Special Forces Group, for accounting purposes. I had nothing to do with them operationally. But for instance, if one of them got killed, the messages that would go back would go from my

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outfit telling they were--the letter as commander--they would write the letters, and I would sign them, that "so-and-so was killed while on an operation in northern Vietnam," or something, and "we regret"-- whatever the commanders wrote. But my people never wrote those for them, but all of the Americans were assigned to the Fifth Special Forces Group. Not Jack Singlaub or his people in the SOG headquarters; they were assigned to MACV headquarters, but I'm talking about the operational types; they all belonged technically to me.

G: You paid them and so forth?

L: Paid them, took care of them, got their mail, and just that kind of thing.

G: But MACV was the operational control?

L: Yes, MACV G-2, with either Davidson or--what's-his-name before-- Christianson.

G: [Joseph] McChristian, yes.

L: McChristian. They were tied in very closely with Singlaub, who was also a MACV staff officer. He was not assigned to my outfit nor were any of his staff.

G: Wwhat part did CIA [play]? How do they fit in to this?

L: The CIA--in my operation, when I was there, they didn't fit into it at all except--let me begin in the beginning. When they first went over there, the special forces were all under the CIA, and they'd established these camps mainly in the Highlands to see if they could take these indigenous people and make them into mercenary soldiers. They found out it would work, and they had maybe a couple of camps.

Then they began to expand, and at each camp, they'd have from twelve to fifteen special forces soldiers. In there at that time would

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be a couple of CIA people, too. But as they found that these things were working, it got to be really too big for the CIA, and it was getting up from three or four to sixteen, eighteen, twenty camps spread all up and down. So then--it was called Operation Switchback--what they did was transfer the whole thing to the army, and the army began--now we're not talking about SOG. I'm talking about just the CIDG types.

However, in the U.S. Army, you can't give money and pay and what-not to mercenary soldiers out of appropriated funds, so what they did was the CIA, that had funded the other thing, continued to fund it although it was in the army budget. The army budget when I got there carried--like when I was there, it was about a \$140,000,000 program and that was put in in the army budget and appropriated by the Congress, and then the army would take that \$140,000,000 and give it to the CIA. I then used them as a bank. The banking was on Okinawa. So my connection with them was purely financial because, for instance, if I wanted to buy six 105 mm howitzers, I would buy them and, at the same time, I didn't have any of the gold problem, and I didn't have anything "Buy American." I could buy anywhere I wanted to. A better example would be rice to feed these camps we had. I had to buy tons and tons of rice. I found one year I could buy it cheaper in Korea. The next year we found we could buy it cheaper in India, and so we could send our agents out and price this stuff and get it at the cheapest price. On uniforms, for instance, I found that I could have them made cheaper in Taiwan and Korea than I could buy, for instance, a U.S. uniform--we used to have a thing we'd show, a U.S. soldier, a picture of him, standing with his fatigues and his boots and his hat and underwear and rifle and his,

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belts and canteen and everything. It cost, whatever it was, say about four hundred dollars to outfit a United States soldier. I could do it for thirty-two dollars, doing it by buying my clothes through Japan and--now, the things like a canteen; I used the Japanese canteen, which was just as good as the American. In fact, it was almost a direct copy of the American, a plastic canteen, but it was well worth the effort to save money. The same way with buying--I could buy rice at the lowest market value I could find it. Most of my ammunition and stuff like that, I had to buy from the Americans, but I could get that--and barbed wire I got from the Americans. And cement, I'd get cement from the Germans. But anyway, it was a very interesting kind of program because you go down there and you're pricing out what you can do the cheapest way you can do it, and just like those uniforms, we could outfit--Christ, the American army could outfit itself--if it would buy its uniforms from Japan, it would be a hell of a lot cheaper than buying them from where they get them in the United States.

So anyway, this \$130,000,000 program--so back to your question. All my banking and financing was done through the CIA, and beyond that, I had nothing to do with them. I didn't. Now the SOG people had a much closer connection because they were receiving CIA information that I didn't get, unless it came through MACV. Now, I also had the Vietnamese, but the Vietnamese Special Forces headquarters and ours were in the same place, and the Vietnamese had certain sources of intelligence that, when General Abrams [inaudible] presumably he was getting the same information I was getting from my people, or mine were getting theirs from the same people he got his, from the Vietnamese. I did have that

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source, but I didn't have CIA unless it came through the American side, whereas the SOG people worked directly with them more than--I knew what SOG was doing because I had been trained in that but, as far as my day-to-day operation, I didn't know what the hell they were doing. For instance, across the airfield from us, our part of the air field, they had their air force. I had my helicopters and airplanes which, were painted like American and Vietnamese airplanes. All their stuff was painted jet black, and they operated--and I never knew what they were doing. You'd see them out there loading up and going off. They'd fly in with a whole flock of these little Montagnards or Khmers or somebody. I didn't know what the hell they were doing, and they didn't tell me, and I didn't ask. I didn't know, and I didn't care what they were doing.

G: You didn't want to know?

L: The less I knew about them, the better. So really, I didn't have much to do with the CIA. Directly, I had nothing to do with them. During the time I was there, I can't remember I ever had any direct contact with the CIA except through my finance officers and this kind of thing, but personally, I don't--I knew Ted Shackley, who was the station chief in Saigon. I might see him at an occasional cocktail party down there, but never did I have anything personal to do with them.

G: Were you in Cambodia when they ran the attempted rescue mission at-- what's the name of the place in North Vietnam?

L: Oh, Son Tay?

G: Son Tay.

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- L: No. In fact, I was back here, and I guess I was out of the army by then. I don't know. Now that you mention it, I don't know. I might have been in Cambodia as a--
- G: Of course, that was run out of Laos, I guess, so--
- L: Yes, and it--but now, I'd have to go back and find out when that was. But no, I don't think I was. I think I was out of there. I think what happened was, that happened between the time I came back and the time I got out of the army. I think it was in--let me think.
- G: I think it was in 1970, but I'm not even sure of the date.
- L: I was going to say, that's just after I got out of the army. I knew [Donald] Blackburn and those guys that--I can't think of the air force guy's name, but Don Blackburn was mixed up in the planning for that.
- G: He was SACSA [special assistant for counter-insurgency and special activities]?
- L: SACSA, right.
- G: Yes. Did you know Bull [Arthur D.] Simons?
- L: Yes, I knew him. Dead now.
- G: Yes, I heard he was.
- L: Yes, I knew Bull. But I've heard all kinds of--I'd like to know some day what the truth is. That they knew there wasn't anybody there when they went in, and others have said, "No, they didn't know." They went in expecting to find somebody, and you just--I don't know. It's hard for me to imagine that they would have gone through with the thing if they knew there wasn't anybody there.

Anyway, it seemed to be just a tremendous way to lose an asset. Not lose it, but you give away the fact that you can do it. If you know there isn't anybody there, why go through the exercise?

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G: Right.

L: And yet I've had guys tell me, "No, they knew that that was a fact. They knew there wasn't anybody there, and they just had gone so far they decided to go ahead and do it." I just don't believe it. Maybe they did.

(Interruption)

This is when we had the airport attack. "The airport attack was inevitable, or something like it. Cambodian security was a farce.

I had warned them of it many times. They're amateurs at this business, however, and learn only by"--oh, God, this reminds me of [inaudible].

G: Just for the record, you're reading from letters that you sent to your uncle?

L: I'm reading letters I sent to my uncle.

G: Okay.

L: "They learn only by the road of hard knocks and bloody noses. Fortunately, they're fairly tough, and they do learn by experience. Most of the damage at the airport was to the MIGs and the French Peugeot [?] aircraft and to some Chicom ammunition stored near the airport. They did get three of our MAP helicopters, but that was all of my program that was lost. In a way, it may be best in the long term as we are now down to three types of aircraft: C-47, T-28, and UH-1 helicopters, all U.S.-supportable. Before, we had nine kinds, six of which were a real pain to support because of maintenance problems and the fact that they were Russian, French, et cetera.

"Matters are never, of course, as bad as our press corps reports them. This is a regrettable part of the entire affair. People at home

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don't get an objective picture of what's going on. For example, I don't believe General Abrams said that Cambodia had only five good battalions. I read this and another account and commented to him that those five battalions and the Home Guard had held off for eight months some five VC and NVA [North Vietnamese Army] divisions that it took the entire U.S. armed forces plus the South Vietnamese to hold off in 1968 and 1969.

"Since June, the Cambodians haven't lost any territory they didn't take back. With the passage of the supplemental aid bill and the establishment of the MED, I see a change in our direction of assistance. Our military friends in the JCS and DOD can hardly wait to take over now that it is apparent the Cambodians will fight if needed. I don't like the way things seem to be developing, and I believe it will be a mistake if we once more go down the old classic MAAG Street Without Joy.

Fortunately, I'm free to kiss it all goodbye if I think we are going the wrong way. I didn't ask to come here. I was asked to do the job when the odds were a hundred to one against it. The chestnuts were pulled out of the fire, and the vultures moved in. If the President gives me enough clout to keep this program on the right course, I'll stay with it. If he doesn't and I'm eroded away by those who want to fight the Asians' war for them, I will resign and go back home. In a sense, this has been my only real strength over here, in that I just don't care whether I make any of the normal powers happy: DOD, JCS, State Department, et cetera. One of the reasons"--I'm getting a little personal--"I got out of the army was I didn't believe we should fight other people's wars for them unless that war directly threatened the U.S.A. After my first tour in Vietnam in 1962 and 1963, I believed it

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would be folly to commit U.S. troops to the struggle. That's all under the bridge now, but I still believe it was a mistake." And let me just see. Some of it gets--I make a personal remark.

Now then. "As you probably know, I was called back to Washington for a week's consultation in late June. The program was strenuous: 7 a.m. to 7 p.m, with the mornings spent on the civilian side of the river and the afternoons in the Pentagon. On my return to Cambodia, the Ambassador left for his consultations. The basic issue under discussion at the time was the proposed increase in military strength to manage the in-country aspects of the Military Assistance Program. My position is, and always has been, that we require the services of enough people to do the job but no more. The DOD position apparently is to put in additional people and find something for them to do. I was quite successful in holding the line from June 1970 to February 1971.

"During that period, there was no congressionally-approved MAP program, and DOD was apparently willing to let the success or failure of the program rest on my shoulders. After the program became legitimate, however, DOD wanted its full piece of the action and has moved progressively to erode my management authority. For the most part DOD has been successful, as I didn't receive the full support previously enjoyed from the ambassador, the Department of State, or the White House. It's too bad, as I believe the program is now being oriented along the path of trouble for the Cambodians.

"Also, the developments I foresee spell political problems for the administration, which up to now has come out quite well with the Cambodian policy. Part of the problem is, of course, that with matters

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going smoothly in Cambodia, the Cambodian problem has slipped to the back burner of higher-level attention, and DOD could more or less maneuver at will. By the time I could get a little attention, my concepts were way behind the DOD and JCS power curve, and it would take drastic action to get them back on the correct track. Although I fear I have lost the immediate battle, I can live with myself as I constantly warned both the White House and State of what was going on and made myself very unpopular with DOD and JCS. I simply didn't have the horsepower or reserve support to do more than slow down the process. There are some belated White House and State Department maneuvers going on to get a better handle on the problem, but I would be quite surprised if they are more than marginally successful.

"In the meantime, I am getting myself involved in other matters that need attention, such as the overall national mobilization plan, veterans' affairs, et cetera. If the cards are dealt to bring me back into the management business, fine. If not, I'll complete the remaining months of my tour and then hopefully return to the States. In addition to the fascinating early months of this job, I must confess it's been educational to be a part of the hanky-panky that goes on at the higher levels to maintain vested institutional interests. Although the military is now crowing over the apparent success, I predict dark days ahead both for the military U.S. here, and the administration, which I fear has once more listened to the experts in Washington rather than to those on the scene." This is a little self-serving.

"I became so damn mad in June that I seriously considered resigning but didn't for these reasons: 1) I might still be able to inject

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some sense into the situation, remaining, quote, 'the loyal opposition;' 2) it would be just what the military would want me to do; 3) Betty and I are enjoying other aspects of our life in the foreign service and in Cambodia, and it would be stupid to leave a job that pays more than twice the salary I ever received in the army. My plans are now to complete the tour here and proceed home in June 1972."

Actually, I came home before that. Then it talks about my son being in school. But I just happened to think, I'd forgotten how bitter I was at that time. That's the thing; I'm not that bitter now. But in reading these, it's very obvious I was furious.

G: Did you have any allies in this?

L: The only ally I really had was General Abrams, but he couldn't really help me very much because, you see, my strength came from the White House primarily, and when I lost that--they just got carried away. I mean, if Haig--Al Haig and I were close, very close friends, and we are not today. We are acquaintances, but we're not the close friends we used to be.

G: Because of what happened in Cambodia?

L: Because of what happened in Cambodia, because I kept warning him, "The damn thing is going to fall apart on you if you--if it falls apart because the Cambodians can't do it, and we followed your Nixon Doctrine thing, then we've done all we can do. We haven't lost any Americans. And we can simply say that they simply didn't have it in them; they couldn't hack it. But the more you get into running it, and you start getting Americans killed, and then they get involved, and the next thing you know, it's a real, real major problem."

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G: He didn't agree?

L: Oh, he didn't agree at all because they were doing pretty well. As I say, as long as they were doing fine, they thought everything was great. If a little bit works, give them more, which I thought was wrong. Give them what they need. Like Lon Nol kept asking you for tanks. *Chars* [*d'assaut*, in] French. He wanted tanks. What he really was talking about was these personnel carriers, M114s, or whatever they are. Is that what they call them?

G: There are two kinds: 113s, I think, and 114s.

L: Whatever they are, those things that infantry troops ride around in. They look like a big box with treads on it, and that's what he wanted to run up and down the highways and then jump into the rice paddies. Like Vietnam, about half of them that got in the rice paddies got bogged down, and then you had to get another one to pull that one out, and you spent more time getting those dumb things--and the Cambodians had been getting along just fine without them. And they didn't have any fire-power, so you know they didn't do any good that way. I mean, it wasn't like a real tank. Besides, the Cambodians didn't have enough drivers.

They gave them a squadron of M113s, I guess that's what they were, which was fifteen of them or something like that. Then the next trip--every time somebody would come over, like McCain or Moorer or somebody, they'd promise Lon Nol something else, and so then they'd say, "Give them another squadron of"--I told them, "The first goddamn squadron was a mistake but for Christ's sake, don't give them two." But then they gave them two, and then they gave them three. That kind of thing, that was just an extension of this thing I mentioned to you earlier about the

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ponchos, something they absolutely don't need, but they'd give it to them. But the level of strata of competence in the Cambodian army, all the way from planning major logistics support for an army, planning strategic things, to things like driving trucks, was so thin; they just didn't have many people who could do that, that when they overloaded them, the Cambodians simply sat back and said, "Well, you do it."

And that's when the Americans began to take over, all the planning, all the direction, and trying to send a hundred guys off to Vietnam to learn to drive trucks. As I say, that layer of competence from the highest level, from Lon Nol's level--he didn't have a staff like Abrams had or like the JCS had, that had had years of training and concentration. Most of the time before this happened, they were all sitting around kissing Sihanouk's rear end, literally. I mean, that was what they spent their time doing. They didn't have training programs. They had fake training programs, but they just didn't have anybody, and that was what I--my point was, why overburden this already laden-down mule. I mean, it can only do so much. But that's not the way Al Haig, for instance, reacted to it. If they were able to hold them off because we gave them a thousand M-16 rifles, think of what they could do with twenty thousand M-16 rifles. What the hell do you do with all these damn AK-47's, which are just as good as the M-16? And we had an ample military supply of ammunition by that time. But then we had to go through this whole training program to train all these dumbheads from the AK-47 to the M-16, and the M-16 wasn't as good anyway, I don't think.

G: You worked for the State Department. Who gave you your instructions directly?

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L: You mean on a day-to-day [basis]? The ambassador let me do just about what I wanted to do, but I would say my real instructions came from the White House. They came from Kissinger and Haig.

G: Okay. So when you came back to fight a sort of rear guard against the military--

L: The Pentagon, sure.

G: --the Pentagon, could you call on anybody's aid or assistance or influence?

G: The problem really was, I went over to the White House and gave them a briefing on what was going on, and I told them what I thought was the problem. But by this time, they were enamored with the fact that the Cambodians, as they said, "They're so successful." When I went over there, when I was briefed at the White House and when I was briefed at the Pentagon and in CINCPAC and in Saigon, in all those places I stopped, believe me, it was disasterville. I mean, "If you can hold them out until we get the troops out of there in June, if you can do anything--just to keep it going until--and then anything after that will be gravy." And Haig, when I went out to the airport, he came up to me, almost tears in his eyes and he says, "God bless you, and good luck!" I mean, I had the most dismal picture of what the hell was going on.

And I got over--it's interesting. When I took the plane out of Saigon, there was one guy--it was a C-47 aircraft--there was one Oriental and me, the only two people on that airplane going to Cambodia. And when I got there at the Cambodian airport in Phnom Penh, over here were these mobs of Vietnamese waiting to get on that plane or whatever--and in the meantime, the Cambodians had taken them out to the river, a lot

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of them, and shot them and thrown them in the river. So this guy and I got off, and before we had walked from where the airplane stopped to the airport, they had broken through, and the military police were trying to hold them back, trying to get on that goddamn airplane to get out of Cambodia.

It was a quiet Sunday afternoon; nothing going on. Phnom Penh is a pretty little town, [with] big broad avenues, and all around were these school kids marching up and down in uniforms, and some of them didn't have any uniforms--as I say, it reminded me of the Revolutionary War--with brooms on their shoulders. Anyway, after I'd been there, I went in to get me a room in a crummy hotel because the people in the embassy weren't too happy at that time because they didn't know who this guy was. And so I had this room in a hotel, and the best place to live was at the Royal Hotel, it was called then. Later they changed it to the Phnom Hotel, but it had a swimming pool, and it had little bungalows, and then it had the big hotel part, a good restaurant to eat. So I met Arnaud de Borchgrave, who was a newspaperman there at the time, and of course he was very interested in me because he could dope out what the hell my job was, and I told him what I was there for, to help get the program started.

The embassy, which was headed by Mike [Lloyd M.] Rives, who was the--he wasn't the DCM [deputy chief of mission], but he was the head man at that time at the embassy. He had absolutely no interest in the military, and they had a little tiny--this guy Peach was in charge of the attaché section, and he got canned the day after I got there. But [there was] one officer, and then--but there was no place with maps of

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what the hell was going on. But Arnaud de Borchgrave, the Napoleon of Vietnam, I mean--Christ, his little bungalow--he'd gone down to Saigon and got maps, and he had all kinds of different-scale maps, and he had pins in them. And he'd go out and he'd talk to the commanders and find out where troops were, and he had little enemy red flags and little blue flags, and he told me, he said--I said, "Gee, this is great. I thought they'd have some kind of an operational room here," but they didn't. And he said, "You can use this until you can set one up." So one of my first trips back to Saigon, I told General Abrams, "I need maps and I need pins, and I need everything to keep track of the war. I'm using de Borchgrave's now."

So he gave orders, and by the time my plane went back that afternoon, I had all that stuff loaded up and took it back. In the meantime, they gave me--the embassy was set up in the servants' quarters of the ambassador's residence. Now, the residence was a big old place, but only Rives lived in there; he lived in there by himself. And out in the servants' quarters, the only room left was the latrine, which they gave to me for my office, and so I was in the toilet of the servants' quarters, believe it or not, with a single light bulb hanging down, and they had those bearpaw [?] cans along one wall and a bunch of urinals along the other wall, and that was my office.

G: Still in active use?

L: No, no. No, they'd at least stopped people going in there, but it smelled terrible. Anyway, it just fascinated people like de Borchgrave because here was supposed to be this guy come out, and nobody was trying to help me at all. So one of the French TV teams was leaving to go

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home, and so he went in to the manager of the Royal Hotel and told him, "I want that bungalow for Mr. Ladd of the embassy." And so I got a bungalow about the tenth day I was there, through him, through his--I couldn't have done it because they didn't care who the fucking Americans were. So then I could set up my own maps like him, and then he and I would work on these things together. But every night he'd go out, and there were two bridges across; there was the south bridge and the north bridge that crossed the river, and he'd go out and station himself on the bridge, and he'd tell me, "[I'm] waiting for the rape, waiting for these two NVA divisions to cross the river and rape Phnom Penh", and he wanted to be able to write about it and whatnot.

After I was there about two weeks, I said, "Arnaud, this is nuts, because they're just as bad off as the Cambodians. They would have done something by now. I've asked MACV to check, and there's no communication signals going on between them. I don't think they have any radios. They have to send someone running up and down the road. I don't think they're any more capable right now than these people are." He said, "Ah, no. The rape is going to come." He'd come in just bitten by mosquitoes from standing out on the bridge all night. Finally, he agreed with me. He said, "Oh, shit. I'm going to go over to Egypt where there's a real war going on." And he left and never came back. But every night he would go out and wait for the rape of Phnom Penh, and it never happened.

But what I'm saying is, I went in there, and then I kept reporting this. I said, "They're not doing any good." So then the Cambodians--I told Lon Nol, "Why don't we send a battalion out and just see if we

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can't cross over the river and take the other side?" And they did; there wasn't anybody there. And so then we went across the other bridge, and there wasn't anybody there. And so then they began to expand a little bit, and in the meantime, these guys were pulling out and going up to Kratie to reorganize. And of course these reports were--I was telling them, "The other side's no better than our people, and they've crossed the river." But of course it came out in the press that, "Victorious Cambodian Troops Retake"--whatever the goddam dumb town was across the river. They didn't retake anything; they just walked across the bridge, and there wasn't anybody there. One of the reasons I felt that way was that if Arnaud could drive out there every night in his jeep and park his jeep and wait for the rape and nothing happened, there couldn't have been anybody that was too interested in what the hell was going on.

G: Who was writing all these stories? Who was the press corps?

L: I don't know where the hell they were coming from, but when I got there, they had about a hundred press people from all kinds of nations: France and England and Australia and God knows who, and they'd get these reports. But in a nutshell, it was never the disaster I was led to believe it would be, holding on until June came, and the American troops withdrew, and still nothing happened. They recruited two more battalions of these Khmers, and we got them up there, and they began to take back more land. But, with the exception of a couple of times, nobody ever had to fight for anything, but they did take back land, and of course that made Lon Nol feel good. In the meantime, we also got those people out of La Ban Siec [?] and got them back in, and then they

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stayed--there were about two brigades of Cambodian troops and their families. The Americans went in and got them and pulled them out into Vietnam, and they stayed there, and Tran [?] supposedly gave them basic training and then sent them back into Cambodia, up through the Parrot's Beak area and into Cambodia.

G: What was the name of the first location you mentioned?

L: La Ban Siec.

G: Is that up in the Golden Triangle?

L: That's way up in the Golden Triangle area, yes. There's La Ban Siec, and I've forgotten the names of the other two places, but they--

G: Were these Meos or--?

L: Oh, no, these were Cambodians.

G: --or Khmer Cambodians.

L: No, these were *Cambodes*, Khmers, that were in the Khmer army that had been stationed there for years, like our troops at Fort Benning. They had just been there for years and years. But they took them out, and they were pretty well surrounded by the enemy, and it was just a matter of time before they overran them. So they got two brigades out and brought them back home, and they later behaved very nicely. Nobody ever got back up that far north again.

But the reaction, the official Washington reaction--I'm talking about like Haig and some of the JCS--was, "Oh, this is great. Everything is going just fine." It really was. Everything was fine because nothing was happening. And that's good, but it wasn't that some guy on a white horse came in and led the charge and drove the hordes out. I mean, the hordes just left, and they didn't come back for a couple of

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years. When they did come back--you remember the March offensive into Vietnam; they kicked the hell out of the U.S. troops and everybody else, and then they began to move around and beat on the Cambodians. By that time, they had completely re-equipped themselves and they were in damn good shape, and the Cambodians simply weren't up to fighting people like that. And I left just about that time when they were having their Chenla II operation, or something. I mean, they had names for these things. But they just got their butts whipped.

And then, of course, they got all along the river, and they had to put in these convoys because they'd just sit along the river with their recoilless rockets, and they'd just shoot the ships that would go by. Then they started bringing these armed convoys up, and that was a major effort.

But again, just when they got going well was when I came home. But I just think that the people, including Al Haig, said, "A little bit is good. Let's do it a little bit more and more and more." And I don't think they ever had to do that. In fact, they did it to the point where some of those letters, where I was making predictions, it exactly happened that way. The Cambodians simply quit because they were overwhelmed with things, and the U.S. was taking over anyway. They were sending in people to run their logistics program, their hospital program, the whole damn works. So they just sat back and said, "Okay, do it."

In the meantime, Lon Nol had had a stroke and he'd lost his grip, and he left Cambodia and went to Hawaii. They'd had him in Hawaii once--in fact, we sent him to Hawaii when he had his stroke, and then he

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came back, and then after I left, of course, he left. He got kicked out. I think they gave him a million bucks or something and told him to get out. I'm sure we paid it to get him to leave. Maybe more than that, I don't know. I haven't any idea. But I'm sure he wouldn't have left--he isn't penniless, obviously. He's got a nice place in Hawaii and sort of a retinue of people, supporters that are there.

G: Did you have any Cambodian friends that you made there?

L: Yes, some good ones.

G: Any of them get out?

L: Yes, Sak Sutsakhan, he was one of the last ones out. He lived over near the football stadium, and he and his wife and kids got on a helicopter at the very last minute and went up to Thailand and got out.

(Interruption)

What did you just ask me?

G: About the friends that you made in Cambodia.

L: Oh, I'd say one of the closest friends I had was the chief of the navy, Sur Ren Di [?]. Admiral Sur Ren Di. He was killed in the last few days. He stayed there and fought and then was killed. Sak Sutsakhan, who was probably my closest friend over there, was the chief of staff of the army when I went there, and then he became the chairman of their joint staff, and then he went to the United Nations as ambassador. He went back, and he was the last head of state of the thing. But he just got out by the skin of his teeth. They were actually driving, as I understand it, down the streets and around the thing, and they took off and went to Thailand. He's now back in Cambodia, fighting with these people in the jungle with Sihanouk.

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G: He's with the Sihanouk group?

L: Yes. And his wife is in California, and the children came here, and two of them have graduated from college, and they're still here, I assume. But he and Sur Ren Di were my closest friends, and then I knew lots of the others, and there are people here in town. For instance, the ambassador, when the whole thing fell apart here, the ambassador, Um Sim, who was at the Cambodian Embassy here, was a graduate of the University of Illinois in electrical engineering, and then he'd gone to MIT. Spoke English very well. And I got him a job with General Electric up in New York, and now he's working for Harris, but I didn't--he went down there and got that job himself.

So there are two or three, and then, of course, I knew lots of them. Now there are a couple of them here in town that run hotels, that went to hotel school after they got out, and one of them right across the street here at the Intrigue Hotel. But not a close friend, just a--but my three close friends have--one of them, as I say, Sur Ren Di, was killed, and then the prince was as good a friend as you can be with--Sihanouk's half-brother, who stayed there and was sort of a loyal opposition during Lon Nol's--Sirik Matak was his name, and he was a prince of the royal family. He stayed, and he was killed.

Now he was another fairly close friend. But as I say, the two closest ones are dead, and the other one's back fighting with Sihanouk. He simply couldn't adjust. You know how many of them came over here and became restaurant owners and hotels, and they--anything, but he came, and I always thought--it made me very sad. I've told my wife that. He believed that--at that time, I had just left the State Department and I

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didn't have a job, and I think he believed that I--he couldn't imagine that I wasn't a rich American. Now I did sponsor him and get him and his family out of the camp and got them started and helped them get an apartment here. To give you an example of the--and I worked like hell on that, but I was looking for a job myself those days. We got them out and got them settled up in Silver Springs, Maryland, where we found a place that they said they could afford, and about a week later he wanted me to come out and see his new car. And so I went out, and he had a Mercedes, a brand new goddamn Mercedes, and it--I didn't have any Mercedes, and it obviously must have cost eighteen-twenty thousand dollars, and I'm sure that during the time he was ambassador at the United Nations in New York he had put away money here in the States, and I don't know how much he had got out with him. I heard lots of them came out with gold sheets and one thing and another, but I don't know.

But anyway, he showed me his car, and then I tried--I got him a couple of consulting jobs with these think-tanks that wanted to make, like you're doing, historical studies of the thing; whatever became of them, I don't know. I imagine he worked for them for three or four weeks, but he didn't like that. He was used to being ambassador and chief of staff of the army, and I just don't think, as great a guy as he is--and he is a hell of a nice--guy, that he could adjust to being a hotel manager. It just wasn't in him to do that, and so they went to New York afterward, and they got an ice cream franchise or something. His wife used to write to Betty. She was a newspaper editor. And they got an ice cream franchise, and that, she said, wasn't going very well because he didn't want to have anything to do with it. So then they

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moved to California, and I don't know what he did, if anything, in California. And then the next thing I heard was that he had gone back to Thailand and into Cambodia and that--he had been an aide to Sihanouk when he was a captain or a major.

The interesting thing over there for instance, though, that I used to tell people--Sihanouk used to always talk about Lon Nol and his "running dogs" and all this sort of thing. I never heard a single Cambodian from Lon Nol on down say anything bad about Sihanouk. I mean, they'd say they were glad he wasn't there because he was-- he had all these excessive parties, and he'd make movies, and he'd make people in the army play the sex roles in movies, and he'd have parties that they used to tell--the Australian ambassador used to say they were--they'd last all night and all day, and nobody was supposed to leave until he left. And he liked to play a saxophone, so he'd get up and play with the orchestra, and of course you'd be there from eight o'clock at night until maybe ten o'clock the following night before he'd get tired and go home. He'd be playing, and he--that kind of thing they'd say, but none of them ever said he was a rotten, no-good skunk or something like that, and I never heard anyone really criticize him.

At Sak Sutsakhan's house, I remember he had a glass coffee table with an underneath shelf, and on it he had, like many of our families-- there were photograph albums, and while I was waiting for him one time, I was going through them, and he came in, and there were pictures back when he was Sihanouk's aide, and they'd gone to France, and he was in his white uniform, and of course, Sihanouk was in his prince suit, or whatever the hell it was. And there were pictures of Monique,

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Sihanouk's wife, and Sutsakhan's wife, who has--she was a newspaper--they were very close friends. Both striking-looking women. And then he'd sit there and talk about this, and, "This is when we went so-and-so"--there was never a trying to hide the past or anything like that; and I never found any of that in Cambodia. They never seemed to be--they didn't want him; they were glad he was gone, but nobody ever said anything bad about him.

Except Sirik Matak did. Of course, he couldn't stand him. That was his cousin. I mean, he thought he was a no-good bum.

G: And Sihanouk's back in Cambodia, too, I guess?

L: Now I understand, he's back with this group in Thailand fighting against the Vietnamese.

G: I don't suppose you ever get any feedback from that side of the conflict?

L: No, I don't really hear anything. I never really tried. Actually, I was sort of weary of the whole thing. I was weary of the problems there; I was very weary of what I thought--I still think--were mistakes that our people made, unnecessary mistakes; they didn't learn from the time before. I mean, they just had to go through it again. Shoot yourself in the foot or whatever you want to call it. And then, of course, I was definitely, totally wrong: I had thought when the end came that the real bloodbath was going to be in Vietnam where they were going to just--because Cambodians are generally gentle, nice kind of people, and I had always felt that if they'd let the Cambodians alone and not kept forcing them to fight that they would find a way to come to some accommodation with the Khmer Rouge, whether it was exactly what we wanted it to be or not.

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But they would find an accommodation with the Khmer Rouge, and that was the way I thought the thing had a possibility of ending, but not as long as they kept fighting against them all the time at our instigation, to keep going at them. And so when the bloodbath came in Cambodia, where they wiped out a third of the population after the--and it didn't happen in Vietnam. So I say, I was totally wrong. I was just completely mistaken in that.

G: Why don't you think there was a bloodbath in Vietnam?

L: I mean to the extent that there was in Cambodia. The people in Cambodia that got out later have told me how they went to the hospitals; they went to the convents, they just had people--and everybody out, and everybody to the country. Even if you'd just lost two legs, drag yourself along and get out, or if you can get someone to push a bed for you or a wheelchair, do that. But I don't think they did that in Vietnam.

They told me, the Swiss people or Swedish, or whoever was it was--the newspaper people who came back, and they said, "God, Phnom Penh. Nothing works," because they ran everybody out. "The sewage doesn't work; the water system doesn't work; the electric system doesn't work. There's nobody there to run it." And they just took everybody and put them out in the country, and those that didn't die were forced to work on farms. That's the kind of thing that I mean--where they now say that they murdered or eliminated one-third--they only had about seven million people there to begin with--about a third of the population, they feel was killed in that after-the-war purge. And of course, there weren't very many cities there. I mean, Phnom Penh was one, and the rest of them are really not very--Siem Reap was a fairly good-sized town.

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G: Why didn't something like that happen in Vietnam?. There were all kinds of predictions [inaudible].

L: That's what I--as I say, I thought it would, that that's the kind of thing--that they would go in, for instance, and shoot all the Vietnamese army officers. They did that in Cambodia; they eliminated all of them. But in Vietnam they didn't. They sent them off to re-educational schools, and I saw pictures of General [Dang Van] Quang, who was the head of the special forces, just a whole classroom full of these guys being re-educated, and that was a year or so after the thing fell. In Saigon they didn't go in and just eliminate the town. The guys that ran the electric shops stayed there and worked for them, and the guys that ran the sewage did their job--but that, I don't know. And yet one of the Cambodians told me that the--Pol Pot and that bunch--that when Dien Bien Phu happened in the fifties, and they left Cambodia--I mean, the French left--that the North Vietnamese took about fifteen or eighteen hundred Cambodian young people, in their teens and early twenties, and took them to Hanoi with them; and they never came home. And they were people like Pol Pot and some of those others that stayed up there for almost twenty years.

For instance, I talked to one. They captured him up around Siem Reap, and he was a major, Khmer Rouge major, who--they didn't capture him; he actually gave himself up. But he said that when they came down the trail, and from the beginning when they were in Cambodia, they were told that the U.S. forces had taken over Cambodia, and the U.S. army was running everything, and he said, "Of course, we got all stirred up to come back and fight." He said, "When I got here and found out there

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weren't any U.S. forces and the only people we were fighting were Cambodians, that's why I quit. I have never seen a U.S. troop," in the time he'd been there, and there weren't any. But he said that they had been told for the whole time the war had been going on that the U.S. was in there running--and that they came down to help throw out the dirty Yankees, and when they got there, there weren't any. There weren't even any Vietnamese. It was just strictly Cambodians fighting Cambodians. So I think they had a hell of a good propaganda program.

But this group, I heard later, a lot of them were really cruel as hell, I mean, to their own people. They'd been so brainwashed as to what was right and wrong, but they were largely--not the Vietnamese divisions, but Pol Pot's people were largely responsible for these purges they had. Again, whether that's true or not, I don't know, but it certainly surprised me because I thought they would find--of course, they weren't left to their own resources because it was just like the other; they had to come all the way in and defeat everybody, but I felt if you leave them alone, let them haggle with each other, and they'd find some way to come to some accommodation. As I say, it probably wouldn't be exactly what our leaders would have wanted, but neither is Tito in Yugoslavia exactly what we want, but it's not bad either. I mean, it's not on the other side. You *can* live with certain kinds of communism or socialism or whatever the hell you want to call it. Anyhow, that's about the only thing I can think about. I feel so damn sorry about the Cambodians, and I don't think there's a thing we can do to help.

Then, of course, we had these crazy things that happened afterward, that **Mayaguez** [incident] and all that sort of hanky-panky that I

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think were dumb. When I got there, they had just captured--no, there was a mutiny aboard a ship, and I've forgotten the name of the ship. I'll think of it in a little bit. But it was a ship that was going some place with ammunition and whatnot in it. But these two guys, mutineers, got the captain at gun point and made him go into Sihanoukville, which was--Kompong Som is the name of the real town. But anyhow, they surrendered themselves to the Cambodians, and the Cambodians brought these two mutineers up to Phnom Penh. They kept the ship, and then I guess they eventually let the captain and all of them go. But these two guys came up. One of them was a rather crafty, sharp kind of a guy; the other one was the most stupid, middle-western dumb-dumb you've ever seen. And so they put them in house arrest, but to feed them, they'd take them downtown to the Cafe de Paris or something, and they'd have their dinner at the cafe, and then they'd take them back to the house again. So the crafty one said to his guard, "I want to go to the bathroom." And he said, "Okay, go." And so he went in and went out the window, and they never heard of him again. He just disappeared.

But the dumb one stayed there. And so Bob Blackburn had the dumb one there, and the U.S. was going to come get him. They were sending marshals to get him. So Bob Blackburn said he could stay in his house, and he had a little book about space or something, and the Planet Moog or something, and he was very interested in the Planet Moog, and he read this book, and he'd show you his book on the Planet Moog. And Bob was having--he was the head political officer there--and he was having a bridge party one night, and the French ambassador and his wife were there and two or three others. And this guy was staying with Bob

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because they had to keep him someplace; the Cambodians had then turned him over to us. What he did, they put him out on the river. They had a prison ship out on the river, and he jumped overboard, and they said, "Oh, to hell with him." So they just turned him over--they brought him in the embassy one day and said, "You can take care of him. He's yours. We give him back to you." So that was when we sent messages, and they were sending these marshals out, but for the three or four days until they could get there, he stayed with Bob. So he came down and he was standing looking over the shoulders of these people while they were playing bridge. He didn't say anything, and he wasn't bothering anybody, and so when he went back upstairs again, the French ambassador's wife said, "Who was that young man?" And he said, "That's the mutineer off the"--whatever the hell it was.

G: Was it the *Eagle*?

L: Yes. The *Columbia Eagle*. So then what was really funny though is they got him a little--like the Cambodians had these wicker-basket type suitcases, and they got him a little suitcase. And they went down and they bought him a couple of shirts, and they had him all--so they drove him out in Blackburn's car, and the marshals were coming in, and they said, no, they wouldn't stay; they'd just pick him up and come back. So they came, and this plane came up from Saigon, and the door opened, and the thing came down, and one marshal comes out with a submachine gun, and the other one jumped out and shackled him hand and foot, and here's Blackburn's saying, "He isn't going to hurt anybody. He's been living with me for three days." And so they ripped open his suitcase and tore through it, and then stuffed it all--it was all neatly packed for him,

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and they put him on the plane and shut the door and took off, and that's the last we ever heard of him. But it tickled the hell out of Blackburn--not tickled him; it made him madder than hell at first because he said here they are standing there, and the guy is standing waiting for the plane, so they jump out with a submachine gun and shackles and take this poor bastard back.

G: Did you ever find out what that was all about, that *Columbia Eagle* business--?

L: I never did, and I don't--as far as I know, nobody else really did. Because this guy was--the sharp one, who ran it, and the dumb one just followed along, I'm sure, but why did they hijacked it, or
(Interruption)

Anyway, no, I don't know, and the *Columbia Eagle*, I'd forgotten--just talking to you, it just comes back to me, but I remember that crazy kid.

G: You were there during the incursion?

L: I was there, yes, during part of it. I wasn't there at the beginning of it. I got there about half-way through. I got there about the first of June--

G: Okay.

L: No, it wasn't, though--the first of April, May. Yes, I got there about the first of June because I guess they went out April to May, May to--I got there before they left, so I must have gotten there in May, because they went out the first of June.

G: As director of the MAP Program, I guess, for want of--what was your official [title]?

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L: I was a political-military counselor at the embassy, and I had charge of the direction of the United States Assistance Program for Cambodia, because it was not a MAP program then. It became one later.

G: You were not in any mainstream intelligence?

L: No. No. What I got was whatever they chose to give me. No. The CIA station chief became a very close friend of mine, and we worked together very closely. I had access to--for instance, on Lon Nol. They were very interested in Lon Nol's handwriting. He would write me these notes. They had some handwriting expert that was supposed to get some things out of it, so I'd give him these [notes]. We'd make a--

G: He was doing a psychological profile?

L: Some sort of a profile. He didn't, but he'd send them to Washington. But he'd never have any opportunity to get that kind of thing. I could get him on tape, too, which people couldn't do. I mean I'd talk to him, and I'd say, "Let's tape this, and I'll talk to General Abrams about it." And so it gave them some tape on his voice, and that kind of thing, but I wasn't brought into the intelligence.

Of course, the military attaché was there, and it was really kind of funny because two of the guys that were their communicators, had worked with me in the special forces. We had some very fine communicators, and they now worked for them. But then Mataxis would say some very uncomplimentary things about me in his--they call them back-channel messages, and then of course he'd give them to these guys in the attaché office to send. So they called me, down in my office--they were up on the third floor, and they called me, and they said, "How about coming up, colonel, and having a cup of coffee with us?" And I said,

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"Jesus, I don't think I can." And they'd say, "Yes, you'd better come up." And so then I came up and there was a cup of coffee, and here was this message sitting here. And then they said, "We want you to sit over here," and I said, "Oh, I'll sit with you," and they said, "No. Sit over there." The first time. And I sat down, and I looked, and then I got my glasses out, and I said, "Oh, yes." And then I read the whole damn back-channel message, and after that, they'd say, "How about a cup of coffee?" Boom, I was up there. (Laughter) Intrigue. Here they are; he was supposed to be sending these ultra-secret back-channels, and his radio operators, who had worked for me before, were letting me read all the back-channel messages.

G: That's great.

L: It was a weird, weird set-up.

G: Is the CIA station chief that you were referred to--is his name public, or is he still not--?

L: Yes. No, his name is John Stein. He was the chief of operations here until just recently, number two man in the CIA until just very recently. He's now the inspector general for CIA. But everybody thought I was the station chief because I had been a green beret; I had been in the army; I was a foreign service reserve officer, which they always are. And Stein was the consular officer; that was his cover. Of course, they blew up my car. They tried to blow up my house. He used to say, "You're the best cover I've ever had in my life." I'd say--

G: They blew up your car?

L: Yes, they blew up my car one day with a hand grenade, and the press-- everybody in the press, including Arnaud de Borchgrave--until, I think,

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in the last ten years he's believed me--but over there, the whole time
he was absolutely sure I was the station chief. I claimed, "No, Arnaud.
Honest to God, I'm legit." He'd say, "Oh, the hell you are."

End of Tape 2 of 2 and Interview II

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