

INTERVIEW I

DATE: March 3, 1982

INTERVIEWEE: LYMAN LEMNITZER

INTERVIEWER: Ted Gittinger

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

Tape 1 of 2

G: All right, sir, please go ahead.

L: It was about that time that General [George C.] Marshall took over from Louis Johnson as secretary of defense. Three [French] cabinet officers came to Washington: the Foreign Minister, the Defense Minister, and I forget who the third one was, but these were big French names. I attended a conference with General Marshall in the State Department--the third member was the Finance Minister--and they urgently sought from Dean Acheson and General Marshall support for the French forces fighting in Vietnam in the action leading up to Dien Bien Phu. They urged that we have our light bombers--of which we had very few, known as the Boston bomber--they wanted all we had to come and assist them in the relief of the actions going on in Vietnam. You see, that brought it immediately under the military aid program, in spite of the fact that the military aid program was designed primarily to build up our strength in Europe. I know that at the same time the Korean War was under way, so that this was in 1950 that I'm talking about. General [Douglas] MacArthur was pressing hard for more air power to support the American forces in Korea, and I attended this meeting with General Marshall and we only had one squadron. General

Lemnitzer -- I -- 2

Marshall decided to split it, give half to Korea, half to Vietnam, to the French down there to help them. I don't know to this day whether they ever got there, but at least the decision was made to provide improved aviation support of the light bomber, the Boston bomber type, to the French and also to our forces in Korea.

G: Would these have been B-26s, was that the correct designation?

L: B-26s, that's right. That's it.

G: I remember that aircraft.

L: So your first question is, "Can you recall the point in your career when Vietnam first demanded your serious attention?" That was the item that focussed attention on Vietnam.

G: Were you involved in any way in 1954 when the French were asking for air support at Dien Bien Phu itself?

L: Yes, yes, 1954, yes.

G: Do you recall that in any way?

L: Now wait just a second. I commanded the 7th Division in 1951 and 1952, and in 1953-54 I was--so I was involved in the military aid program up until 1955. We'd gotten the military aid program under way. Our first appropriation was a billion point one, and then there was a considerable demand for aviation support for the French in Vietnam, in Indochina. Yes.

G: Were you present at that meeting when the decision was made that we would not send heavy bombers in support of Dien Bien Phu?

L: Heavy bombers?

G: Yes.

Lemnitzer -- I -- 3

L: No, I was not at the meeting, because--I'm talking about the meeting with the cabinet officers.

G: Right.

L: It must have been that [when] these three cabinet officers in 1950 came over, [it] was not Dien Bien Phu. Things were going badly in Vietnam; I'll put it that way. The French were losing out.

Now, I have one item that I wanted to be sure of with you. You said, "How did you first get your attention focussed on Vietnam?" Things were going badly, and after this meeting with General Marshall they were inclined to assist the French in any way possible in spite of the fact that we were having a terrible time in Korea. And we got reports that the French were not using our aid properly, that it was sort of being stacked up and it would arrive and it wouldn't be opened and wouldn't be distributed to the forces, and things were going badly. It was decided that we would send one of our representatives out there to see how it was going and see what we could best do to help them. The selection was Major General Graves Erskine. Does that ring a bell with you?

G: Yes. Yes.

L: All right, Graves Erskine, a Marine Corps general, went out to take a look at that whole area: Southeast Asia. And one message he sent back caused one terrific amount of controversy in this city. He came to the conclusion that the French couldn't win this war with their Beau Geste tactics of holing up in the fortified city areas at night and then trying to keep the country under control in the daytime. And

Lemnitzer -- I -- 4

that, the word "Beau Geste tactics", was the thing that really--when that hit the fan back here. So we weren't able to give too much to the French, because everybody was hurting, everybody was short of equipment. But I wasn't present at the time they decided not to send any heavy bombers down there, but they had all that they could handle up in Korea.

G: Right. This is not entirely on the subject, but I have to ask. Did you know General Samuel Williams in Korea?

L: Oh, Sam Williams. Hell, yes, he is a very good friend of mine.

G: Is he?

L: Yes, indeed.

G: Well, I like to think he is a friend of mine, too. I carry messages back and forth between him and General [Maxwell] Taylor every once in a while.

L: Where is Sam now?

G: He's in San Antonio.

L: He is?

G: Yes.

L: Well, hell, yes. Well, Sam was head of the military mission for quite a long time.

G: Right.

L: The reason I know Sam, one incident I remember very well in regard to Sam Williams was after the Geneva Convention and so on. It was our policy to help them politically, financially, security forces-wise, build up, and so forth. It became obvious to all of us that the

Lemnitzer -- I -- 5

French had done so little with the training of the Vietnamese to handle their own business that what they needed in the security or the military field more than anything else was leadership, military leadership. So it was at that time that I was directed to come up with partly a plan here in Washington, and people, to establish the Vietnamese military academy at Dalat. That's during Sam's time. And I picked two of the best people from the Tactical Department at West Point--see, I was either vice chief of staff or chief of staff of the army at the time--and two in the Academic Department, and they put together a program for building up the military academy at Dalat. On one of my many trips to Dalat later--I'm not sure whether I was chief of staff or not--but Sam was still there. And they had the first sort of graduation of senior noncommissioned officers and so on, and they put on a parade for me, and they took the music out of one of the divisions, and we had a small graduation parade at Dalat, the first products of our military academy. And Sam was there.

G: I think he was there between 1956 and 1960. He was there for four years, I think.

L: Well, it could be when I was vice chief or chief of staff of the Army.

G: This counterinsurgency business was a very fashionable sort of topic, as I recall, around the early sixties. Do you remember when this first began to surface and demand attention?

L: Yes, it was in 1960-61, and we organized a counterinsurgency unit down at Fort Bragg. I went down with--one of the first high-level people that visited. I went down with President Kennedy. And we went

Lemnitzer -- I -- 6

through; we saw some parachute work there at Fort Bragg. He was very much impressed with the people that had been glommed on from all over the services, and language difficulties and so forth. There were lots of possible uses for this kind of talent, working behind the lines in various areas, counterinsurgency, but the real focus of an effort to train people for it occurred in the late fifties, early sixties at Fort Bragg.

G: Yes. If I have read the history of this right, the Special Forces were deeply involved in this.

L: That's right. That's right.

G: And it always struck me as a little curious, because the Special Forces originally I think were conceived as a NATO--

L: Behind-the-lines operation.

G: --oriented organization to organize guerrilla forces. Now the concept is that they were going to use them in a counter guerrilla sort of concept. That transition is not clear to me. Was it because they would know more about it than anybody else?

L: Well, they were the kind of people that could speak the language wherever they were located. They were selected--that was one of the requirements, the ability to speak the language.

G: Right. There were a lot of East European types in Special Forces then, is that right?

L: Exactly, exactly.

G: Okay. Getting back to General Williams for a minute, I had heard that he was having difficulty with the Ambassador toward the end--

Lemnitzer -- I -- 7

L: Ambassador [Elbridge] Durbrow.

G: Durbrow, yes.

L: Yes.

G: Did you know about that?

L: Well, yes, we had a fair amount of that kind of difficulty. Here was something new. Here was something new, ambassadors having as a part of their activities a military organization and so forth, and this wasn't unique, only in Southeast Asia. There's one point I'd like to make right here that I've made in some of the interviews that I've had, that when they talk about the early days of the Kennedy Administration--because I've had a great many interviews; I was chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the time of the Bay of Pigs. The election was held in 1960; General Eisenhower was president. President Kennedy took over on 20 January 1961. And three months later, here was a major operation put together, when the government hadn't been settled down at all. Now, three months after President Reagan took over there wasn't very much trouble at all here. The transition that occurred during February, March, and the early part of April simply didn't jell sufficiently to put on a well-coordinated, well-planned operation. It wasn't the Joint Chiefs of Staff operation, it was a CIA operation. It was a covert operation. And that was responsible for a great amount of the questions that are being asked today, "Well, why the hell didn't they think this through more clearly?" Because the government wasn't thoroughly and carefully organized at that time.

Lemnitzer -- I -- 8

Now, immediately after the Bay of Pigs, then we get into the problem of Southeast Asia. And I was going to Southeast Asia about every six weeks with Secretary [Robert] McNamara.

G: Things were deteriorating kind of rapidly, were they?

L: Absolutely. So now I can go to May of 1961. I'm chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. I'm attending a meeting in Athens of the NATO defense ministers. It was one of our most important meetings up until that time, because it so happened that that was the meeting that we dealt with the problem of tactical nuclear weapons, for policy in NATO. This was in May, and about the day before our meeting was going to finish, the NATO defense minister meeting, we got a telegram from the President informing us that the Pathet Lao had broken the cease-fire moratorium in Laos and had come down and were on the banks of the Mekong. We were directed to get out, instead of coming to Washington, to come back by way of Bangkok, Saigon, Tokyo, and take a look and see what the situation was, and any recommendations we might have.

So on the last day we piled into a KC-135, one of the first ones we used for transport purpose, flew into Bangkok nonstop from Athens, transferred immediately at the airfield because we'd sent a message that we wanted to be sure and have a C-47 available, which we knew that the Thais had, so we could take a close look at the Mekong.

Secretary McNamara and I and George Brown, who was the military assistant of the Secretary of Defense, got into this pretty new C-47 and flew up and down the Mekong River at about two hundred feet to get



Lemnitzer -- I -- 9

a good look at the countryside. We found the river was no obstacle. It was in the dry season. You could walk across it in most places.

Then we landed at a couple of places in Thailand, I think U Taphao and Udorn, the names of two airfields. We found that the Thais were totally unprepared and incapable to stop any infiltration into Thailand as a result of this breakdown of the ceasefire up in Laos. And we spent a couple of days in Bangkok. Marshal Sarit [Thanarat] was the prime minister, and General Dawee [?] was the chief of the general staff. At meetings we recommended to Marshal Sarit--we thought that the thing he could do best--they had some isolated posts along the bank of the Mekong, sort of border posts. But now they assumed greater importance. We suggested that he put together a regiment of ranger-type people to man these posts and patrol the country in between. We considered ranger types so that if there was an attack of some kind, that we could reinforce them by parachuting a company or something into each one. Well, we got into a terrible row with Marshal Sarit. He would produce the people but he insisted to Mr. McNamara that we provide the equipment and training for them. And since the Thais were doing pretty well and we had lots of expenses up in Korea and other things that were going on, Mr. McNamara resisted that.

So that's how we left it. We flew from there over in Saigon, met with President [Ngo Dinh] Diem and the people who were there in the MAAG.

G: That was General [Lionel] McGarr at the time, was it?

Lemnitzer -- I -- 10

L: Now that I think about it, it was. McGarr, yes.

Then we flew all the way back by way of--we fueled up at Yakota [?], in Japan, and flew into Washington, arrived at about eleven o'clock at Andrews. Now, the reason I'm so familiar with the timing on this is that among my other activities, I was the chairman of the committee that selected the Thayer Award recipient each year at West Point. And in that year I was chairman--I had been chairman the previous year, too--we selected General MacArthur as the recipient. On this trip I always had my eye on getting up to West Point on Saturday morning, and that was pushing the schedule. And when we arrived at Andrews Air Force Base at eleven o'clock on Friday night--the ceremony at West Point was the next morning, about eleven or twelve o'clock--I was greatly relieved.

G: But you hadn't had much rest, had you?

L: No, not only that, didn't have much rest, but--so I had set up the airplane, by messages into my staff here, to get to West Point the next day. The next morning I was awakened about six-thirty by the phone and informed that President Kennedy was calling a special meeting of the National Security Council to hear the report of Mr. McNamara and myself on our visit to Bangkok. And it was at that meeting--that ditched my getting to West Point. I remember I got on the phone--General [William] Westmoreland was the superintendent--and I told him that it was impossible for us to get up there for this important ceremony. But I said "Be sure to get General MacArthur's speech recorded." He said, "Well, we've got people, stenotypists"--

Lemnitzer -- I -- 11

and I said "Stenotypists, hell, we want this on tape! It's a speech." Because I knew General MacArthur's speaking ability and as a result that's how we got the thing recorded. And I never got up there.

But now go back to the meeting at the White House.

G: I just want to interject, that's a very famous speech.

L: That's one of the famous speeches in history. Have you seen the MacArthur Corridor up here?

G: Yes. My best friend was in that graduating class that heard that speech.

L: Well, now to get back to the National Security Council meeting here in the morning, Saturday morning. Mr. McNamara and I indicated what we had found: the Mekong was no obstacle; the Thais had no reasonable capability to stop infiltration into northern Thailand, and we explained the difficulties with Sarit in putting the other force to ensure that that border was patrolled properly. And in talks on the airplane coming back, we'd indicated that this was a sort of a bold move by the Soviets, goosing these people along to move into Southeast Asia. We felt that the United States simply couldn't stand by and do nothing, and we agreed that we ought to put two U.S. garrisons only--primarily psychological--into Thailand immediately. The proposal I made at the time, and he approved it, [was] that we put in an infantry battalion with a tactical air squadron of the type of planes that were suitable, or useable, for this, one at the airfield at Udorn in northern Thailand, the other at U Taphao. One was an army battalion and an air force squadron, that was one--I don't know which was which--

Lemnitzer -- I -- 12

and a marine battalion and a marine squadron in the other. And this was a signal to get across to the Soviet Union that we were not going to stand idly by and see them overrunning Southeast Asia.

There was lots of opposition at this meeting. President Kennedy listened to our presentation, then he opened it up for discussion. The opposition kind of surprised us. They said it would be provocative and start off a--it was dangerous and provocative. But the President approved it on the spot.

G: Who opposed that? Do you remember who was in opposition to that suggestion?

L: No, I don't remember the personalities. But we had quite a few people that saw a difficulty with the way--about the same kind of people that are against putting any forces into [El] Salvador.

G: What do you mean by "the same kind of people"?

L: Well, the people who worry about the same things. They were worrying about them then as they do now.

G: I see.

L: That this was a major move. I attribute the prompt assertion of President Kennedy, that people say that the Bay of Pigs was a disaster because the CIA didn't plan it properly and changed a lot of things, and the President saw lots of mistakes that he made and decisions at that time, and I attribute it to--there weren't going to be any more mistakes like some of the things that he had approved at meetings; he overrode the opposition and approved it right there.

Lemnitzer -- I -- 13

G: I see. There was a development that I'd like to talk about a little bit that I don't think has got a precedent. This was when President Kennedy brought General Taylor to be his special military representative. That was kind of unusual, wasn't it?

L: Well, sure it was unusual, but here was a president who had no military experience at all, sort of a patrol boat skipper in World War II, and here we were getting into some serious problems both in Europe and out in the Far East. Mr. [Averell] Harriman had been out in that area about that time, too, as sort of a roving ambassador. Well, in order to assist the President in evaluating some of these things and following them, and evaluating each of the actions or lack of action, he just asked General Taylor to come over to the White House as sort of a military adviser. We in the Chiefs had no particular objection to that; we got along with General Taylor very well. I might just refer to the fact that going from General Eisenhower as president to President Kennedy, I had briefed President Kennedy repeatedly before the inauguration, three or four or five days before the inauguration, on our nuclear plans, on the problem of Berlin, not very much on Southeast Asia, but to inform him what was going on in Southeast Asia in the military aid and the MAAGs down in Saigon and so forth. That's all the experience he had in these fields, and I urged President Eisenhower in his contacts with President Kennedy those last couple of days, that he--I suggested various points that he should try to impress on the President[-elect]. And that was a very, very important time.

Lemnitzer -- I -- 14

But now we're coming to a phase after the Bay of Pigs where he's confronted with what to do militarily. And he reacted very promptly, just like he acted very promptly on the eleventh of August, later that year, when Khrushchev started the wall around Berlin. We went through another big meeting at the White House on that occasion, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff suggested, and Secretary McNamara approved, that we send a brigade up into Berlin, to let Mr. Khrushchev know that they aren't going to wall us out of Berlin. It wasn't his city. At that same meeting--this was a much bigger one than the one I'm talking about before--there were the same kind of concern that this would be a dangerous move, to try anything. It would be provocative, you see. Approved. And he approved sending two divisions over to NATO, to Germany. And that brigade which we recommended to go into Berlin stayed in Berlin quite a long while.

G: It was at about this time, I think, that a special Counterinsurgency Group was formed, and I have listed the members here as General Taylor, who was the chairman, and I think you sat on it; Allen Dulles sat on it and he was succeeded by John McCone later--

L: John McCone, that's right.

G: And so on and so on. What was the franchising directive? What were you supposed to do in the Counterinsurgency Group? Was this a policy group?

L: Well, look at the kinds of problems we were getting into. We had Cuba and we hadn't given up on Cuba, you see. The Bay of Pigs, though, was a failure. But how the hell do you deal with these problems? I

Lemnitzer -- I -- 15

forget if there were any others in Latin America about that time; I think there were some rumblings in Latin America. Now it's in Southeast Asia. This so-called Counterinsurgency Group dealt with clandestine operations, among other things.

Now, here's where President Kennedy differed in concept from President Eisenhower. President Eisenhower used the National Security Council as an entity, and I know President Eisenhower's philosophy on this. He wanted anyone who had a major role to play in what the National Security Council was dealing with to be present when the final decisions were discussed and made. President Kennedy, on the other hand, had another view. He preferred to put organized groups, like this Counterinsurgency Group, and pick certain people to be on that and exclude people that he didn't think were important. It's a question of personalities. There was a great difference in the functioning of the National Security Council between President Eisenhower, who used it to the hilt, and President Kennedy, who shifted over to the appointing of special groups to deal with special problems.

G: Do you think that one method is to be preferred over the other?

L: Oh, in my opinion, the use that President Eisenhower made was the optimum use.

G: Okay. This, I suppose, was prompted in part by Khrushchev's talk about supporting wars of national liberation, which--

L: Well, his meeting with Khrushchev at Vienna was a--he came back from that absolutely furious because he was--Khrushchev was goddamn rude to him and he didn't like it worth a nickel. That's where Khrushchev

Lemnitzer -- I -- 16

told him--when President Kennedy [was], as he was, very worried about Berlin, he was so sensitive about Berlin, and we didn't get the situation straightened out until a couple of months after the wall was started. What he was worried about is that on the auto routes, the Soviets were harassing us, and in the air corridors they were harassing us. They were having exercises, saying that it would be unsafe for the air corridors to fly, and we just decided that we were going to fly anyway, but we didn't have any passengers in some of the planes; they were military aircraft. But we let them know that they were not blocking us out of our rights of access to Berlin. He was afraid that on some of the rather sensitive incidents that we had with guards on the auto route, which is about 110 miles long, that someday there would be some American soldier or Russian soldier who would get exasperated and start shooting. He conceived that this was the way that World War III could start. And it was a goddanged sensitive situation.

Now, I think these counterinsurgency groups which you've got listed here, I remember all of them. Including Ed Murrow.

G: Yes. He was what, head of USIA, I think.

L: Yes, that's correct. Yes, you've got them all right here.

G: You mentioned clandestine activities that came under this group's fiat, now what kind of activities were being engaged in?

L: Putting people ashore in Cuba was one. We hadn't written off Cuba; Castro didn't have the damn thing organized very well. The one plan that CIA had for moving in had been changed and delayed and changed



Lemnitzer -- I -- 17

and changed, and then some of the critical parts of the whole operation were cancelled the night before it took place, critical items.

G: Why was that?

L: Because the guys who were running it thought that the political considerations in the United Nations would link the United States absolutely with the operation, you see. So they cancelled the critical air strike, without ever telling the Joint Chiefs of Staff or ever asking about it. They just decided to cancel it.

G: Now, as you say, we had not given up on Cuba, even so--

L: That's correct.

G: --and so there were other--

L: That was one possible place for an insurgency.

G: Was this Operation Mongoose? Was that part of this?

L: I don't remember the name. Could be.

G: Yes, I think General [Edward] Lansdale had some part in it.

L: Yes, it was General Lansdale's activities. If that's Mongoose, that's--very much.

G: What kind of success did we have with these activities against Cuba?

L: There was not much success evident. They weren't the kind of operations that gave any indication of succeeding or not succeeding.

G: Hard to measure.

L: That's right.

G: Did we lose agents frequently this way?

L: That I can't tell you, because we didn't trade that kind of information

Lemnitzer -- I -- 18

back and forth even if--if there was a major loss of personnel, it was so indicated, but the number of people were rather small.

G: How about in Southeast Asia? Did you oversee clandestine operations there as well?

L: Yes, I followed them closely. Sure.

G: Were these primarily CIA activities, army activities? Which arm of the government was primarily responsible?

L: CIA and military. CIA and military.

G: Now, in the summer and fall of 1961, as I recall, the South Vietnamese army was having a tough time.

L: Very.

G: Did we consider at least contingency plans at that time for sending in U.S. troops?

L: No, not in that particular period, not in 1961.

G: Now, I know that General Taylor and Mr. [Walt] Rostow went over that fall, and they brought back a long list of recommendations, and I think one of them was to send some combat engineers into the Delta in South Vietnam. How was that received? How did you--?

L: I don't know. I remember their visit, but that was not sending in military in the way that it was ultimately sent in by LBJ. No.

G: But they were--

L: I can't remember quite why it was combat engineers. Except--

G: I think there was a flood in the Delta at the time and it was thought--

L: Yes, that's probably it.

Lemnitzer -- I -- 19

G: --it was thought that the engineers could wear two hats, if necessary.

L: Yes. They were sent in there for engineering purposes rather than military operations.

G: Why wasn't that approved, that recommendation?

L: I don't know.

G: I know the President decided to send more equipment, especially helicopters, and more advisers, but not the engineers. Do you remember any discussion about that?

L: No, I don't. I don't.

G: Okay. Why did we decide to reorganize the military mission in Saigon? I think it was at about this time that we reorganized it from a MAAG to a MACV, under General [Paul] Harkins. What was the background of that?

L: It was for the same reasons that the thirty-ninth or fortieth proposed reorganization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was being proposed. They saw that conditions were developing in Vietnam where the functions of a MAAG, which were very restricted and limited, were becoming broader, and military advice and assistance in training, in security, and all of these things; it broadened the functions of a so-called MAAG into more or less an operation[al] military entity, which was a--let's see, what did they call it? Harkins was--he was not termed being a head of a MAAG.

G: MACV?

L: MACV, that's it.

Lemnitzer -- I -- 20

G: Who picked General Harkins? Was there any particular reason for his selection to head MACV?

L: Well, certainly he was one of the outstanding officers of the army. I knew Paul Harkins when he was G-3 for General [George] Patton in North Africa and all during World War II. Paul Harkins was one of the outstanding officers of the army. We knew that this was going to be a tough job down there.

G: I've heard that his diplomatic skills were pretty well honed.

L: That's right. That's right. He knew his way around and handled himself well. Yes, Paul Harkins was one of General Patton's star players.

G: Did you know he was the technical adviser for the movie Patton?

L: Well, so was I.

G: Oh, really? Well, I didn't know that.

L: Well, General [Omar] Bradley and I [were], not to the extent that Paul was. But when I was in--this is getting off the subject--

G: That's all right.

L: When I was at SHAPE as supreme commander, General Bradley was chairman of the board of Bulova Watch Company, and he used to travel to Europe very frequently. The people who were putting the film together urged General Bradley to come down to Spain, where it was being filmed, or go over the script and so forth to see whether it was doing all right. General Bradley and I worked with General Patton in North Africa and Sicily. General Patton landed in North Africa in Casablanca; he took over the II U.S. Corps, whipped them into a real

Lemnitzer -- I -- 21

fighting outfit after they'd been defeated in their first action at Kasserine Pass, and he was the overall commander in Sicily. I was involved in all the planning of these. General Bradley had the II Corps and Patton had the army.

When he was asked about this film, I talked it over with him a couple of times. He stopped at SHAPE, in France, and we both were concerned that they were going to portray General Patton in the wrong light, "Blood and Guts," and that he didn't care about the loss of troop [?] people, too tough, and he was profane, and everything. He was to a certain extent, but we both felt that General Patton was a very sensitive and sentimental guy, which most people don't realize to this day. So he used to come down to SHAPE and talk about what they were doing down in Spain, and advising them. I've got a list in my own hand where I wrote out several anecdotes that they could well include in the film, some of them humorous, some of them serious. They only got a few of them in.

The one I hated to see left out, I was up in his headquarters--I was a planner for Field Marshal Alexander, Patton was coming down through southern Germany; we were coming up Italy. We were going to meet. I was the coordinating planner back and forth between Patton's headquarters and our headquarters in Caserta, Italy. I stopped at one of the morning briefings in Patton's headquarters when the Third Army was rolling--God, they were just rolling--and I sat in on this staff meeting. At his staff meetings, he did most of the talking. So he was up there before the map and put his hand up and he covered the whole

Lemnitzer -- I -- 22

of Europe. He said, "We're going up through here like this."

Exaggerating to beat the deuce. A lieutenant colonel sitting over on the side of the map room said, "But, General, what are we going to do about these three hundred thousand Germans right down in this pocket?" And the Old Man--it just escaped him entirely and there was a silence of about twenty seconds. And then he screamed out, he said, "Ignore the bastards!" Which was his way of fighting. He went around them, cut them up for the people to come along behind to take care of them; that was his way of fighting.

G: A real armor commander.

L: That's true.

G: Were you happy with the way the film came out in the end?

L: Yes.

G: General Harkins said he was happy with it.

L: I was. I was, very. I worked with General Bradley on--he had lots of the script; he was more of an adviser than I was. But I think he stopped in my headquarters about three or four or five times while that film was being made, and we were doing our best to get Patton into the right light, "Blood and Guts" in some cases--for instance, I was there at the time of the slapping incident. I was there the next day, with Field Marshal Alexander, and I heard him explain to Field Marshal Alexander how he blew his top emotionally at the terrible losses that the 3rd Division had had when the Germans decided that they had to stop them on the northern shore of Sicily, or they couldn't make an orderly withdrawal across the Messina Straits. He

Lemnitzer -- I -- 23

just admitted that he just blew his top when he saw this kid sitting in this hospital on this bunk.

G: And was that slapping incident accurately portrayed in the movie?

L: Yes. Yes.

G: How was George C. Scott; did he capture Patton?

L: Oh, I thought he did a great job as General Patton. Yes, I was very pleased with the film. I would have liked to have gotten some of the incidents like this "Ignore them" and a couple of others, but--I give a lecture over at the National War College and the Industrial College of the Armed Forces on leadership, and General Patton is one of my principal examples. The greatest field commander of World War II, in my opinion.

G: I got to meet General Bradley before he passed away, I was very glad of that.

L: Well, I was very close to General Bradley during the war and when he was first chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and I thought he was one of the greatest.

G: I guess we had better get back to Vietnam a little bit.

Now, the spring of 1962 the situation in Laos got very bad indeed. Did we give any consideration to sending troops in to try to save that situation?

L: You see, I was involved up until October 1962. What was going bad is that the communists had gone from--first thing, let's get back to the Geneva Accords. They made four states: Cambodia, Laos, North Vietnam and South Vietnam. Then there was the question that the President got

Lemnitzer -- I -- 24

gummed up the other day in his press conference, that Ho Chi Minh and Diem did not agree in merging the states. It wasn't a question of Ho Chi Minh nullifying the vote; Diem didn't want a vote either, because they thought that the control of the North would overwhelm the South. Diem wanted a separate state, and Ho Chi Minh didn't want him to have a separate state. In this explanation I make to the collegiate world, Ho Chi Minh didn't give up on this one, so he started firstly a program of infiltration of agents. Didn't work too well, didn't work fast enough. Then he adopted a terrorist program. All around South Vietnam you had the leadership in villages and small towns murdered.

G: When does this begin, General?

L: The best I can remember, it began about early 1962, because I remember we flew in in a helicopter to one village where there were eight corpses laid out in the village square. One or two of them were schoolteachers, doctors, the political head or mayor, and so forth. And if my figures are right, it was estimated that about seventy thousand of the leadership talent in South Vietnam were murdered during this particular period. A village would have no leadership and then in would come some of these trained communist stooges from the North, and that's how they expected to take over. But that didn't succeed either, or it didn't succeed fast enough. And then we move into the period where LBJ found out--we moved into the period where terrorism didn't succeed well enough, and so they sent their organized military into South Vietnam, and that's where he made the decision to move in our forces.



Lemnitzer -- I -- 25

- G: How was Laos related to Vietnam in 1962, in this very early, very early time? What's the connection?
- L: Well, that's a pretty good question. The Laotian situation just absolutely baffled some of us, also with respect to its relations with Cambodia. There were different families involved, they had the head of it. The communists were pretty powerful in Laos, the Pathet Lao; that's the name they were given. It affected or--that doesn't quite-- it almost infected the whole area with communist ideology, subversion, and so forth.
- G: In 1962, the history books say that President Kennedy and Premier Khrushchev agreed not to fight, or not to confront each other over Laos, and that's why there was a settlement possible. What did you think of the terms of that Laotian settlement that Mr. Harriman negotiated?
- L: Well, I didn't get into the details of it, but I thought it was a reasonable solution. In retrospect, I would say now that the enemy got the better deal. I thought at that time it was a perfectly reasonable, equal settlement. But in retrospect I think they got a better deal, and particularly when they broke the moratorium, the ceasefire, and showed that they were not going to carry out the provisions of it.
- G: Did that give coalition governments kind of a bad odor in your opinion?
- L: I never could quite understand the government of Laos; it moved around and the head of the government had a brother that was always in hot

Lemnitzer -- I -- 26

water. It wasn't a very stable government, but by Laotian standards it was normal.

G: This is a spur of the moment thing. What does the term the Averell Harriman Memorial Highway mean to you? Have you ever heard that term before?

L: Yes. I've heard of it.

G: What do you think of it as a description of Laos?

L: That wasn't much of an incident. I heard about that later. But Averell had been out there and we had sent, at a time when it wasn't any of my business--I found out from him later--when he had visited with Durbrow in Saigon. Although we hadn't met, we came up with about the same answers. My messages back here through the Chiefs and his to the Department of State were sort of uncommonly hitting the same subjects the same way. We've often talked about it. I've talked about it with him.

G: You think Harriman got about the best we could have gotten?

L: Yes, I do. Under the circumstances, I did, yes.

G: Some critics, and they're not necessarily antiwar people, say that the thing he didn't get was sufficient guarantees that the Pathet Lao and the North Vietnamese would not take advantage of the situation. What's your opinion of that?

L: That they didn't take advantage of it?

G: No, that Mr. Harriman didn't get sufficient guarantees.

L: Yes. I think he got the best that could be accomplished at that time, because these guys were riding pretty much the crest of the wave, too.

Lemnitzer -- I -- 27

They were pretty strong and pretty effective in their way, and we were a hell of a long ways away. We had no power. He had no bargaining chips, and I say that it would be quite unfair to criticize what was obtained by Averell Harriman on the deal.

G: Okay, good.

In 1962, the equipment and advisers that had been sent as a result of the Taylor-Rostow recommendations had arrived. What was their impact on the situation in South Vietnam from your position?

L: Well, it couldn't have done very much by the time they got out to the forces and by the time they were trained to use it effectively and so on.

G: Yes. Do you think [it was] too soon to tell?

L: Yes.

G: Was there debate already about President Diem and his--some people were beginning to say that Diem was not the man; we couldn't win with Diem. Was this percolating back up to you by this time?

L: Before we talk about Diem, a term grew up in that area even after I left it, after I got back into Europe, there was a term known as the Acre of Diamonds.

G: That's the second time I've heard that.

L: Yes sir. The Acre of Diamonds. The material which we were sending in there was not being used by the French and by the Vietnamese, and it was being stored. The next time I ran into this I was commander in chief of the Far Eastern United Nations Command and governor of the Ryukyu Islands, in 1955, 1956, and 1957. Both in Japan and Okinawa we

Lemnitzer -- I -- 28

were getting that equipment out into Japan, repairing it and putting it into workable order. That Acre of Diamonds was converted into useable equipment up there in those plants that were set up both in Okinawa and in Japan.

G: The Acre of Diamonds that I heard of was a storage area somewhere near Saigon, as I gathered, where a lot of very expensive equipment had gathered and nobody knew quite what to do with it.

L: Didn't know it was there, didn't know what to do with it, and so it wasn't until in about 1955-56-57 when we just took it out, rehabilitated it, and issued it to wherever [it was needed], Koreans, or others.

G: Okay. What about--?

L: What about Diem?

G: President Diem. An interesting character.

L: Well, Diem always spoke in French, and I always had to sit in on these conferences with Secretary McNamara and myself, or the Ambassador and myself, and only got it through translation. No doubt a great patriot, but I can't believe he was the kind of forcible leader that [was needed] under the circumstances to be able to stack up effectively with Ho Chi Minh, who was aggressive. Diem was more of a suave politician, good leader, but then he was plagued with some of the people who didn't think he was the right guy and who finally murdered him.

G: When you handed over to General Taylor in, I guess it was September of 1962--is that right?

Lemnitzer -- I -- 29

L: October 1, 1962.

G: Okay. Would you assess what you thought the situation was in South-east Asia at that time? What was your picture; what was General Taylor's picture?

L: I would say we were in the period of the terrorism.

G: Were things getting better, going worse?

L: Getting quite bad, yes. I would say it was a very, very unhappy, unstable situation.

G: What did you think the prospects were? What could we do; what policy could we change?

L: Well, the only policy that hadn't been adopted--it would have been far better, generally speaking, if the Vietnamese armed forces had been able to pull themselves together and be effective, which they weren't then. There's where our problems were.

G: Some people say we trained them for the wrong war. What's your response to that?

L: Well, I don't know what war they were talking about.

G: Well, they say we trained them to be a U.S. road division--

L: Oh, I don't think we did that; I don't think we were. We used the kind of training that we used here. We followed the training pattern here in the United States for training people for our own forces. You can say that almost about anything, particularly when you have lost a war.

G: Easy to find out why you lost?

L: Yes.

Lemnitzer -- I -- 30

G: I see.

L: But no, they had superior forces, and they were all down in South Vietnam, too.

G: "They" meaning the other side, right?

L: Yes.

G: Yes. And then the Cuban missile crisis began to break.

L: Well, during that month of October I was here, in this building. I was settling a hell of a lot of personal administrative problems with my--I had asked President Kennedy--since I was taking over from General [Lauris] Norstad rather quickly, I had a lot of things that I wanted to clear up in the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and personally, before I went to Europe. While I was here I was in on most of the conferences that occurred during the Cuban missile crisis. I remember one very, very vividly. On Saturday afternoon there was an Army-George Washington University football game here. I was at it and [so were] quite a few of the people here in the Pentagon, and I got notified to stop back at the White House after the game was over. I stopped by the White House and they were gradually assembling. The President was not present, but LBJ was there, McGeorge Bundy. Gradual assembling of the National Security Council, I guess that's about the best way to put it, when Khrushchev sent his famous message, which said in effect, "All right, Mr. President, I'll take missiles out of Cuba if you will take yours out of Turkey and Italy." That was a famous message. There's where I had quite a discussion, an argument with LBJ.

Lemnitzer -- I -- 31

G: Tell us about that, please.

L: Because he said, "I think that's a good deal. I think that'll go a long way toward solving this particular problem." So when we took a break shortly after he said that, I went over and told him, I said, "Look, Mr. Vice President, it is not a good deal. Those are not United States missiles now. It's true that the United States manufactured them and made them available to NATO"--because I had been through all the meetings: the defense ministers' meetings, the military committee meeting, the council meetings, both around Washington and over there, first to get NATO to accept them as their missiles, and [then] to get Greece and Turkey to put their fate on the line and agree to become a target by putting them in Greece and Turkey. And I remember some of those arguments, they were long and difficult. I said, "These are NATO missiles, not United States missiles, and the United States would make the greatest mistake in the world to say, 'Yes, we agree to bring them out,' without consulting your allies." God, he couldn't see it worth a damn.

G: Is it true that sometime previously orders had been given to take the missiles out of Turkey?

L: Well, yes, when I got over there--I took over the United States forces in Europe on the first of November, that was the date I was supposed to go. And it's interesting, I left here about the same time that Dean Acheson left here, as President Kennedy commissioned him to report to the [NATO] Council meeting in Paris. I left about the same day on another military airplane with him. I was arriving in Paris to

Lemnitzer -- I -- 32

take over from General Norstad--the U.S. forces first, and then NATO's forces. When I got over there, and Dean Acheson had explained--and this was one of the times when he really performed in magnificent style. You know, the NATO Council was very unhappy that President Kennedy had made all these exchanges with Khrushchev without consultation, and it was just like that one message which I've referred to, "You take your missiles out of Turkey and Italy, and I'll take mine out of Cuba." There was no time for consultations. Dean Acheson made such a--I wasn't present, but I've heard many people say--magnificent presentation of the position President Kennedy was in, in this terrifically sensitive and dangerous situation. They changed their views, closed ranks, and unanimously approved what the President said. That was one of the most successful missions that Dean Acheson ever went on.

The Council then decided that this would not be a good time to change command of NATO, right at the height of the missile crisis. So I agreed, and General Norstad agreed, that we'd postpone it, and we tentatively selected January 1, 1963 as the changeover in NATO command. But on the first of November, I took over the NATO [U.S.?] command, which gave me an opportunity to get around to all the American forces, including Berlin, which was one of the ones I was particularly interested in. Then he stayed on for two months, and then on January 1 we had the ceremony to take over NATO's forces.

G: Do you remember meeting with President Johnson after the assassination in December of 1963?

L: Yes.



Lemnitzer -- I -- 33

G: Do you remember what that was about?

L: I was just calling on the President to tell him how things were going, sort of a report which I did frequently to President Kennedy, also the same kind that I usually did for the Secretary of Defense.

G: We have a little index card of the meeting, and it just says "Cuba" on it, it doesn't give any details. I thought perhaps you could elaborate on it.

L: This was 1963?

G: Yes, sir. December of 1963. Which would have been about a week after the assassination.

L: Well, we might have been discussing some of the carryovers of the Bay of Pigs and so forth, but I don't recall the details of that. I do have pictures up in my home in Pennsylvania of my meeting with him.

G: Okay.

L: No, that's 1962. Do you have any other later meetings with LBJ?

G: No, sir, I don't have any. Do you--?

L: I had one meeting when I came back. When I decided that it was time for me to--after [Charles] de Gaulle eased us out of France. This must have been--we were evicted in 1967. I remember in early 1969 or 1968 when I came back to tell the President that we had now made our big relocation from Paris into Belgium and into the Netherlands, and we'd closed out our EUCOM and SHAPE in Paris and in France, and I thought it was time to make a change; I would have been there six years, longer than any of my predecessors. So I had an appointment with him at the White House one day, and I spent my first day in here

Lemnitzer -- I -- 34

with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Secretary McNamara. The next morning I was scheduled to meet with the President, and I was going to tell him that it was time, I think, for a change. I had expected to only stay there three years and I had been there six, because they wanted me to stay; I was involved in the original establishment of SHAPE in Paris and General Eisenhower's organization, and I was glad to stay over.

I went from here up to Fort Myer, the visiting officers' [quarters], and got stricken with a hell of a case of appendicitis. I considered, from my Boy Scout training, that it was appendicitis. Had a hell of a time. It came right out of the blue, like that (snaps fingers). They got the post surgeon over and he immediately diagnosed it as appendicitis. So they got an ambulance and hauled me out to Walter Reed. I got there about eight o'clock at night, and General [Leonard] Heaton, who was the surgeon general at the time, came down and they x-rayed me and so forth. By this time the goddamn pain had disappeared. So I was chagrined as hell. About ten o'clock General Heaton came in and said they had the x-rays and so on. He said, "You've got a rattlesnake in there and you've got to get it out." I said, "Okay. You're the doctor." So about six-thirty the next morning they operated on me for appendicitis and removed it. I stayed in intensive care for about two hours, then we were wheeled back into Ward Eight, and there was the most big, beautiful vase of flowers you ever saw. And the card [read], "I've heard of lots of alibis to avoid a meeting with the president, but this one takes the cake. LBJ." I

Lemnitzer -- I -- 35

thought that was a wonderful thing. So I didn't get to see him on that visit.

G: That sounds very typical of him, in so many ways.

L: Yes, absolutely.

G: This is a very big question; I'm not quite sure how to get into it. But how did the war in Vietnam affect our military on the other side of the world?

L: Considerably. Considerably. In the first place, we were thin on experienced people: noncommissioned officers, junior officers, and so forth, in Vietnam.

G: Do you mean in NATO?

L: In NATO. And the people in the Department of the Army here tapped us to move experienced people out and get them to Vietnam. They were running out of bombs and other things that were in our stockpiles. Equipment of all kinds went to Vietnam. So our capability went down for the loss of both people and equipment, ammunition and so on. I understood this. We were thin all over the world, and the right thing to do was to move what we had and what we needed to where the fighting was going on. It never bothered me, except I didn't like to see our forces getting a lesser capability. But when I heard the media or some of our allies pointing out how we were weakening the situation there, I just bluntly told them that this was our United States equipment; it was there to serve a purpose, but the United States had a greater need for it where there's a fighting war going on, and we damn well had to accept giving it up until it could be properly

Lemnitzer -- I -- 36

replaced. We settled that one and I got fewer and fewer and fewer remarks about it after I answered a couple of the criticisms.

G: Did we tend to strip units rather than send a unit to Vietnam? Was that the--?

L: No, we didn't send units to Vietnam. No, that I would have considered a mistake, because I would rather have an American unit of 90 or 75 or 60 per cent strength and not have to change the United States' commitment for that kind of a unit being where it was. I was perfectly confident that when the situation permitted we would build back up and get re-equipped. That would have been a mistake.

G: Right. So it's clear that the war in Vietnam had to affect combat readiness of American units in NATO.

L: Sure.

G: How does that affect your contingency planning and war gaming and so forth?

L: It was pretty easy. You just have to accept the lower capabilities. We were glad to see the Germans coming along at this time, which was an element that took away some of the concern about our forces being pulled down temporarily, and it was on a temporary basis that we were accepting it without any discussion or argument, because we knew damn well what the requirements were. But that's about the--well, you just have to accept the lowering of combat capabilities.

G: Did this worry our allies? Did this worry the Germans?

L: Yes, they would make a few comments on it, but here's where I just wouldn't accept any, wearing my American hat, because it's an invalid

Lemnitzer -- I -- 37

criticism. That criticism is not justified. It's American equipment, bought and paid for and placed here to serve NATO, but there's a war on and they desperately need this equipment in Southeast Asia. Period.

G: And that put the lid on it?

L: Yes.

G: At the same time this was going on, there were two other things that I have heard affected morale, army-wide. One of them was, of course, the war. The war affected morale in many ways, I know. Another was the rather militant civil rights activities that were springing up, in some places in the army itself. Did this have an impact on American forces in NATO?

L: Not that I know of, but the question reminds me of something on the plus side, coming from all this.

G: Okay.

L: Then we began to get people from Vietnam that had combat experience into the American units over there and we were the ones that had the combat experience over everybody else.

G: Right.

L: Because of people coming from Vietnam that had experience in Vietnam. And that was a plus.

G: What kind of soldiers did they make?

L: They were combat troops that had been under fire, and no one else over there could say that. We had the [only] combat veterans of all of NATO.

Lemnitzer -- I -- 38

- G: Did these guys bring problems as well as expertise?
- L: To a certain degree, yes. But that's normal.
- G: I mean, that's pretty well accepted that combat-hardened troops tend to be kind of rowdy sometimes in a peacetime situation.
- L: But they took a lot of pride in the fact that they were Vietnamese veterans, that they'd been in combat, and they were damn well respected by the rest of the NATO forces.
- G: Were there any racial problems in the army in Europe at this time?
- L: Not any more than here in the States.
- G: Which was to some extent considerable.
- L: Yes.
- G: At least it got a lot of play in the press.
- L: Yes. But there's a tendency to overplay it, but during my time, I never considered that we had any problem that was anything over and above what was comparable to the United States.
- G: How do you handle things like that? How do you handle racial confrontations between troops in the barracks or downtown or wherever?
- L: Well, I don't know that we ever had any open racial problems, other than the--when the drug problem started to pick up a little bit, that exacerbated the situation somewhat. But you remember that our units were integrated, white and black. I happened to be in Italy when a black division, the 92nd Division, got all balled up, but they had never had anything like that in NATO.
- G: What happened to that division? I haven't heard that story.
- L: You haven't heard about the 92nd Division?

Lemnitzer -- I -- 39

G: Well, let's pretend I haven't, anyway.

L: The battle lines were drawn on Christmas time of 1944 across northern Italy. The 92nd Division was in the sector north of Florence, the west coast of Italy. About Christmas, or the day after Christmas, the Germans launched an attack against the 92nd Division, and they collapsed. This is a combination military and psychological attack. They used the minenwerfer, you know, the screaming shells, mortar shells, I guess.

G: Yes.

L: They used all kinds of fireworks, lights, and the division collapsed. I was sent up by Field Marshal Alexander who said, "See General [Mark] Clark and see what in the hell do we do now." There was a gap in the line right above Florence, through which all our equipment, support, was coming. General Clark and the Fifth Army didn't have anything to replace it, so we had to go tap the Eighth Army, which had an Indian division, just taken out of the line in the high Apennines, and had to move them over and put them in this gap.

G: I see. Did that division have white officers or black officers?

L: White officers. They had specially, highly selected officers, staff officers, commanders, battalions and so forth.

G: White?

L: Most of them white. And specially selected. When General Marshall came back from Yalta, he stopped in Italy to go further into this one, and it was decided that there would be no total--integration would be adopted hereafter.

Lemnitzer -- I -- 40

G: I see. Of course, the war only had a couple of months to run after that.

L: Well, that was 1944. We had to go through until May, 1945. Just as a sequence to this, in SHAPE we have some very senior German officers. One of the SHAPE staff--he is now a lieutenant general in the German army--making a farewell call on me--I made it a point to see them before they went back to their respective countries--this lieutenant general came in, and I kept on thinking, hell, I've heard this name all along, but I haven't had much chance to talk to him much, during the time that--he was there long before I got there, and he was leaving. I said, "By the way, what were you doing in World War II?" A lot of us talked like that. "Oh," he said, "I was in Italy. I was with the XIII Korps. I was the chief of staff of the XIII Korps." And I said, "XIII Korps? Goddam it, that's the korps that busted up the 92nd Division." I said, "Is that the korps that launched this attack on Christmas Eve against the 92nd Division?" And he kind of smiled, and he said, "Yes." I said, "Who the hell thought up that idea of a combination of psychological and military attack against the 92nd Division?" And he kind of got a smile, and he said, "That was my idea." Well, I could've knocked--well, I was surprised, but I thought, gee, it was a mystery. And I said, "Why in the hell didn't you fellows take advantage of it and drive through the gap that was created in the line north of Florence?" He said, "General, that attack was made by two battalions. That's all the forces we had in that area."



Lemnitzer -- I -- 41

G: They had nothing to follow it up with?

L: Nothing. No way. They were short of ammunition, short of transportation, everything. They just didn't have the means to follow it up. That's quite a sequence, isn't it?

G: That is. That certainly is.

In retrospect, from your vantage point, and realizing that you were in Europe at this time, fully occupied with problems there, what were your lasting impressions about the way we entered the war in Vietnam and the way we fought the war in Vietnam, and the outcome?

L: Well, I'm one of the strong critics of the way we fought the war in Vietnam. One day in Paris I got the [New York] Herald-Tribune there in headquarters, reading it in the morning, and I came across an item on the press conference that the President was holding, President Johnson. In that, I'm not quite certain how the question was phrased, but he made the announcement that we would never launch an aggressive attack against North Vietnam. That one really floored me. I thought that was the most unusual way to fight a war. We had all the means to launch an amphibious attack against them. We had all the means of bombarding Haiphong, knocking it out, and so on. You talk about fighting the war the wrong way! It enabled the North Vietnamese to put all of their military forces down and invade South Vietnam. In other words, they put a safety net around their whole [inaudible]. And I'm very critical; that is, to my way, the reason we lost the war.

G: It's interesting that you say we lost the war, because not everybody agrees that we lost the war.

Lemnitzer -- I -- 42

- L: I don't agree with them, because I think we lost the war.
- G: How would you respond to this? Let me propound a thesis to you and see how you respond. Suppose someone said, "Well, we won the war, and then we left, and then the South Vietnamese lost."
- L: No, I wouldn't agree with that. The Vietnamese were not capable of dealing with the enemy. The collapse of both the Vietnamese and our own forces was largely due to the general attitude back home here, in my opinion. There's no reason to believe that our war was supported. For a while during the Korean War, when I was over there I had a division in the Korean War--I began to feel somewhat the same way, that we were losing the war on the home front. With the magazines, papers, and all the things coming over, and that I think happened in a major way in Vietnam.
- G: What was your reaction when Congress voted to cut aid to the South Vietnamese? Do you remember that?
- L: I don't remember that very well. I was in Europe at the time.
- G: Let me ask this. This is one of those questions I ask everybody, no matter what their experience was. Do you remember the President's famous March 31 [1968] speech, when he announced he was not going to run again?
- L: Yes, I remember that.
- G: Where were you? Do you remember how you reacted to that?
- L: I was in France at that time. No, I rather came to the conclusion that he just felt that he wasn't up to it physically. And I tie that to--my feeling about it, physically, I go back to when I was chairman

Lemnitzer -- I -- 43

of the Joint Chiefs of Staff when I went down to LBJ's ranch with President Ayub Khan from Pakistan. He was vice president then. President Kennedy gave a big dinner down at Mount Vernon, and then he handed over to LBJ because Ayub Khan wanted to find out how they did wet farming in Texas and dry farming in Texas. The Vice President said, "Well, be glad to have you down to the Ranch and we'll show you."

G: Sir, can I interrupt you? I want to change this tape.

Tape 2 of 2

G: The time that you accompanied Ayub Khan down to the Ranch.

L: Yes. So we flew down to the Ranch. We had to stop in San Antonio. He was a great host. Going down in the airplane we talked about some military aid equipment for Ayub, with Ayub, but that was about all the business we transacted on the way down. At San Antonio we went to visit the Alamo, and then got into--I don't know quite how we got to the Ranch. Which is the--?

G: Probably took a helicopter from San Antonio. The Ranch is only about--

L: That's right.

G: --seventy miles.

L: Anyway, the next Sunday afternoon he had one of the greatest barbecues, about five hundred people. He had a family from every county in Texas they told us. People came from the dry side and Ayub could talk to them, and then [there were some] from over near Louisiana with the wet side and how they did their farming and so on. He passed out

Lemnitzer -- I -- 44

a terrific bunch of watches, and it was really one of the biggest and best barbecues that I have ever seen.

The next day he wanted to show Ayub several tracts that he owned. He told a story to me, Ayub, and Ayub's wife--there were only four of us in this--I don't know if it was a Cadillac, but whether it was a convertible--

G: Probably his Lincoln.

L: A Lincoln, yes, okay. We stopped, and this roadway had been bulldozed out so it was just one car width. We were driving along and he starts out and he said, "Well, I'd like to tell you how all this came about." He said, "When I had my heart attack, down here"--when was it, when he was vice president or what?

G: When he was majority leader, I think.

L: Majority leader? "This is so serious that you'll probably never be able to go back to Washington." And he said, "I had made up my mind, now what am I going to do?" So he got these three--I think it's three areas--and said, "Well, I just have to resign myself to raising cattle and driving around like this and seeing them and taking care of the farm, so to speak." He said, "It kind of scared me, but if that was the way it was, that's how I was going to arrange it. So that's why you see these roads," and they had a lot of deer on each one of those other places, and I linked it up with his announcement that he wouldn't run for re-election. Must've been health, or worry, and so I just came to that conclusion. Whether it was so or not, I don't know.

Lemnitzer -- I -- 45

G: Well, a good many people think it was at least a factor. Apparently there's a good deal of evidence that he had that announcement in his pocket when he made the State of the Union Address in January, and he just decided this is not the time, and he didn't do it then.

Do you remember anything else from that trip to the Ranch?

That's a real interesting story.

L: Well, I remember it was a very enjoyable trip from my point of view, and I thought he was the greatest host that you could possibly find anyplace. The reason I remember the trip particularly is the Chief of Protocol of the Department of State was with us. I think his name was Duke.

G: Angier Biddle Duke?

L: Angier Biddle Duke. When we flew back to Washington, they went on and flew to LaGuardia, I think it was. There they got into a--not a Piper Cub, but a Beechcraft, to fly to their particular home on Long Island. And after the takeoff from LaGuardia with this Beechcraft, or whatever it was, a door flew open, the plane crashed, and Mrs. Duke was killed. Having just been associated with them down at the LBJ Ranch, it made a terrific impression on me, and it sort of was a pathetic end to a wonderful period down there at the Ranch. That's all there was to it.

End of Tape 2 of 2 and Interview I

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION  
LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON LIBRARY

Legal Agreement Pertaining to the Oral History Interview of Lyman Lemnitzer

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code, and subject to the terms and conditions hereinafter set forth, I, Lyman Lemnitzer of Washington, D.C. do hereby give, donate and convey to the United States of America all my rights, title and interest in the tape recording and transcript of the personal interview conducted on March 3, 1982 at Washington, D.C. and prepared for deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

(1) The transcript shall be available for use by researchers as soon as it has been deposited in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

(2) The tape recording shall be available to those researchers who have access to the transcript.


(3) I hereby assign to the United States Government all copyright I may have in the interview transcript and tape.

(4) Copies of the transcript and the tape recording may be provided by the Library to researchers upon request.

(5) Copies of the transcript and tape recording may be deposited in or loaned to institutions other than the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

  
Donor General Lyman L. Lemnitzer, USA Ret.

12 December 1985  
Date

*acting*   
Archivist of the United States

DEC 30 1985  
Date