

INTERVIEW I

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INTERVIEWEE: CHARLES A. MORRIS
INTERVIEWER: Ted Gittinger
PLACE: The Hilton Inn, Austin, Texas

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G: You [first] came to Vietnam in June 1964?

M: June 1964 through June of 1965. My assignments during that period, for about the first six weeks I served as J-2 adviser to the I ARVN Corps. Then there was a greater need for a J-2 adviser to the III ARVN Corps so I was transferred there in the same capacity. I served under--I don't remember his actual name, but we called him Pop Warner [?], Colonel Warner, the senior adviser in the I ARVN Corps while there, and under Jap Wilson who was senior adviser--

G: Is that J-A-P?

M: Yes, Jasper Wilson. And in the III Corps he had followed Coalbin Willie Wilson.

(Laughter)

G: Was the army full of characters in those days?

M: Got his name because he insisted on painting all coalbins white.

(Laughter)

G: So that somebody could be kept busy repainting them.

M: Right. Well, Jap was a totally different character but equally as much a character as was Coalbin.

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Actually I had really not enough time to get my feet on the ground while I was in I Corps as the J-2 adviser there. I did find an ARVN intelligence officer by the name of Thiep, who was later transferred to their JGS, and ended up in JGS in Saigon, probably the very best ARVN intelligence officer that I have ever met.

G: This is T-H-I-E-P?

M: Phonetically it would be spelled Tip, T-I-P, but how he spelled it I really don't know. He had worked with the French as an enlisted man, I believe, or a very junior officer during the time that the French were involved in Vietnam and had learned a great deal about let's call it western ways of doing intelligence. Probably knew a lot more about intelligence, particularly in that part of the world, than most American officers did when they came on board or ever did after the limited period of time that they were there. A very fine officer. Wish I knew what happened to him at the end of the thing.

G: So you came down to III Corps then?

M: Down to III Corps, found myself with--I'm sorry to say I can't even remember my counterpart's name at this time; it was Thanh or Tuan. But he was a major, also had worked for the French, really a pretty fair intelligence hand, very gutsy individual, liked to get out with the troops, which was at that time a wee bit unusual for the Vietnamese. But he really did welcome an opportunity that I gave him there. Apparently my predecessors, whoever they were, had not been able to wrangle enough helicopter support to get him around to visit his outposts, outlying districts and provinces and so on. And I convinced my boss

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that if we were going to produce intelligence, we really did have to get out of headquarters and contact these local areas. So we had available to us at all times, except during very hot operations where all helicopter support--and it was limited at that time--was required for that operation, we might be without one. Otherwise, we had access to at least one Huey at any time that we needed it. And if we had to go into hot areas, we were given in addition to the passenger Huey at least one gunship escort. And I must say that this fellow was quite willing and often did take a few chances that on occasion I wished he wouldn't. (Laughter)

G: I see. What kind of intelligence set-up did the ARVN have in those days?

M: Crude, largely relied very heavily on human collection means, that is such low-level sources as woodchoppers, truck drivers that went from government-controlled areas into VC-controlled areas. I'm sure they had some that were not made known to us, because they had to protect their source and rightly so. But they did use human intelligence collection sources far more than sometimes we would have liked. And sometimes the low-level intelligence officer's success, or degree of success, seemed to have been measured by his superiors in terms of how many agents he had working for him, whereas in my own personal opinion, an awful lot of those agents were, if not double agents, worthless agents, pure liars, things of that nature. I felt that we got less than our money's worth from most of the so-called agents that ARVN had working for them.

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G: Were you involved in trying to upgrade that situation?

M: Yes. And within limits my counterpart in III Corps was responsive to that. Some people he kept on the payroll I definitely thought he was wasting his money with. Some I'm sure I didn't know about, because in order to gain their cooperation, from time to time we gave them a certain amount of money out of so-called ICF, Intelligence Confidential Funds, that they could use as they saw fit. Our hold over them was to some degree measured in how many dollars we gave them versus how many we withheld. At least that was one of the tools that we could use. And if we didn't like what they were doing, we'd withhold some money. It was a way of getting a message across, so to speak. We did the same thing if we didn't like what they were [doing] in the operational field. If we didn't like what they were doing there, sometimes one of the tools that we had employed was simply the withholding of the necessary air support that would be required to get that operation off the ground.

G: Exactly.

M: And in the logistics field, the logisticians on the U.S. side would sometimes withhold the necessary logistical support to keep an operation off the ground, if we thought it was a silly operation and wasn't going anywhere.

G: So this was your leverage?

M: Yes, these are ways that we leveraged people. Plus persuasion. And one attempted to establish rapport with one's counterpart, too. I worked very hard at it; I ate things that I hate to remember. (Laughter)

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G: Give me some examples.

M: Well, about the worst thing that I think I can remember was raw pork. I could eat fish, even live minnows, with them, but when it came time to eat the raw pork, for some reason or other there was just a rebellion on my stomach's part.

(Laughter)

G: Wasn't it spiced or anything?

M: They had a very stinky sauce of some sort that they inevitably put out there that one could dip into.

G: Was this nuoc mam?

M: Yes. It helped, but it wasn't all that good.

G: And you did this in the name of camaraderie and rapport?

M: In the name of camaraderie, right. Much like the Koreans, when an adviser went on board ordinarily one of the first things that the counterpart offered him was access to women, wine, and song, in whatever degree that individual was interested. I'll say that the adviser who used any brains at all refused all of them other than at least in moderation. Basically, there was the typical Oriental attempt to--I don't know whether compromise is the right word or not. Maybe simply they felt--and the Oriental philosophy on the need of female companionship for the male is much different from our moral outlook on life. And I suppose that maybe there were Americans who--I'm sure there were--found this precisely up their street. But I've always taken the position, whether it was working with the Koreans in years earlier or working with the ARVN as I was in III Corps, that one had to keep his

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moral picture fairly clean in order to be able to bring himself to lower the boom when it was necessary to do so. And that I tried to do. I'm not trying to make myself out as a saint; I'm simply saying that I felt that I've always found that it was better to be professional with anyone that you dealt with.

G: How successful were you in your efforts to reform, other than getting rid of some of the agents that you felt were not useful?

M: Let's use your word of reform. I didn't reform him; I think it was a mutual exchange. We came to appreciate the strengths and limitations of each other. This man had been on the ground since the days that the French were involved in this thing. Let's face it, he knew more about that enemy that he faced. He knew more about the people among which the enemy was to be found than I could possibly know within the year that I had to stay there on that first tour. There's just no question about it, he was by far the superior intelligence officer between the two of us, in that environment. What could I do for him? Well, I could give him resources that he didn't have access to. I could give him the result of collection efforts that I'm not at liberty to discuss to this day, through getting the intelligence data sanitized and getting it to him in a way that, even though I wasn't telling him the source, I had a feeling he knew from having worked with the French, who did reveal sources to him from time to time, what sort of sources that I was using.

G: There is intelligence the knowledge of which automatically reveals the source, doesn't it?

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M: That's correct. But sometimes one can sanitize certain types of intelligence data when it's very critical to his knowledge and this can be fed to him under cover story of some sort, although it may be shallow. He knows he must respect this confidence, but it will at least cause him to start looking in a new direction and reorienting his thinking as to how he shall direct his collection effort that he has available to him. So I would say basically that I contributed far less to the end product, that is the intelligence data that was analyzed and produced, than did he with his resources. But I did support him, and I think it was a fair, mutual exchange of effort.

G: After you'd been there a year, if someone had asked you to characterize the quality of [the] ARVN intelligence effort based on the experience that you had, what would you have said?

M: I did say to General [Charles] Denholm once on a visit near the end of my tour when he was the assistant chief of staff for intelligence, Department of the Army, that they have some really fine people, that they have some dedicated people--and this in the intelligence field--but they are also highly penetrated and they know it. And that was the case.

G: Was counterintelligence that tremendous a problem?

M Always. Even at the end of my second tour in Vietnam. And in 1973 I helped General [Phillip] Davidson do a study on intelligence lessons learned in Vietnam. Our first and foremost lesson learned was that the counterintelligence effort, both U.S. and its allies, was the greatest single weakness in the intelligence field during the

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Vietnamese war. And I sincerely believe that. ARVN was penetrated. You had to tell them certain things; you had to clear certain allied operations through them. There's no doubt that the enemy knew far in advance of any major operation that something was coming and the general area that it was coming in.

G: Can you think of any examples of how this affected operations?

M: It often affected them by [the fact that] when we got there there wasn't any enemy to be found, whereas I know without a doubt there was a sizeable enemy force in the target area before we mounted the operation. B-52 strikes, for example, often went in and found nothing, hit nothing, when I know without the slightest doubt in my mind, beyond having physically been on the ground, that there was a major target in the area at the time that the strike was called for. But when it was delivered, the target had moved.

G: How much notice did you have to give for a B-52 strike typically?

M: I don't remember exactly what it was, but the target area had to be cleared with ARVN in most cases. There were free drop zones and you could go into those at any time, but if you were close to populated areas, close to ARVN troop concentrations, things of that nature, you had to clear those target areas with ARVN in advance.

G: But you don't remember how much advance--?

M: I don't remember how much. I can narrow it down to this point: there came a time during my second tour when we sometimes were able to divert flights in air from a primary target to--we could cancel the original target and move to another. But those areas always were--I'd

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say the minimum time ever was probably an hour's advance notice. There's little doubt in my mind that when you had to do that, you almost inevitably had to go through the telephone system to get the clearance. This meant that you stood the chance of being intercepted on the telephone lines, plus you stood the chance of the loss of information through the penetration agent. I think there were times when we knew that they had reacted in less than a couple of hours to an alert to change targets.

G: Did you ever catch anybody?

M: Not to my knowledge; there must have been some caught, but I don't know.

G: You wouldn't necessarily have been told, I suppose.

M: No.

G: Well, from that tour then in III Corps, you went to Hawaii.

M: Back to Hawaii, as chief of the production effort under General Phil Davidson, where I stayed for the next two years. Of course during that time we monitored the war as it continued in Vietnam, and although our interests were broader than that, I must say that we concentrated our effort on that, because it was the only war we had going.

G: Of course. Did the flow of intelligence go through CINCPAC then, through USARPAC on the way to Washington?

M: Yes.

G: So you monitored everything?

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M: We monitored. We did not intercept, evaluate, then pass on. When the intelligence data left MACV, that is, the Military Assistance Command in Vietnam, it went to virtually all ultimate recipients at that point. There was no intermediate stop at evaluation of the data and then passing it on up the line. Simultaneously it was sent out.

G: It was a finished product when it left MACV?

M: Not necessarily. Frequently it was raw reports that might be in the process of being evaluated in MACV. Any document that was translated, for example, in MACV, copies were made of that translation as soon as it was evaluated by their analytical effort there, and when it had the evaluation number on it, it was reproduced in sufficient copies to be distributed to whomever was on the distribution list. But that ranged all the way back to Washington and in some cases to many of our allied nations. So raw reports were going back quite often before they had actually been analyzed in depth and converted to intelligence in Vietnam. There was simply no way that anything that was known in MACV, for example, wouldn't sooner or later be known in DIA, CIA, army, navy, air force, Australia. The British got copies of it. Everyone that we were working with that had an interest in that war would eventually get the intelligence data that we had to work with that was, you know, considered of any value as intelligence data.

G: How was the intelligence picture evolving in those two years that you were in Hawaii? What picture of the enemy were you beginning to focus upon?

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M: As we escalated, he escalated, or vice versa. I don't know whether the chicken came before the egg or not. But certainly there was a matching, a gradual build-up. It was my personal impression that we made some very poor use of our military capability in that the national policy seemed to be, at least it seemed to me, that we will apply the minimum pressure necessary to convince this fellow to go to the conference table. And we stepped up, he stepped up; we stepped up, he stepped up. Sometimes maybe it reversed: he would step up a little and we'd have to counter his move.

Nevertheless, this fellow started out the war with largely what came to be classified as Viet Cong, with a few so-called advisers or logistical support people that might have been North Vietnamese Army. Now, you do understand that many of these so-called VC were actually people who had been sent down after the French got out of the business. They had been sent back to the South along with those people who chose to move to the South. They never did intend to be loyal South Vietnamese when they came back there. They came back, obviously, to augment the strength of the honest VC, that is the southerners or the northerners who moved south that wanted their own government under, let's call it a form of democracy as contrasted to that government offered by Ho Chi Minh, which presumably would be properly classified a communist government. There were, in my judgment, many, many people who didn't just volunteer to go south, they were sent south by the North Vietnamese government.

G: Why do you say that?

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M: They needed to send as many key people back to penetrate, if you will, the civil war effort that was actually back in South Vietnam. And there was a civil war going on to some degree back there. But as time passed, between let's say 1964, at a time when we were running the war on a gentleman's basis, i.e., if you were back at corps level, you took off a couple of hours for lunch, you had your siesta, and then you went back to fighting the war if there was one going on, to the time let's say beginning in 19--well, it started stepping up in 1965 and became progressively more dedicated to a continuing battle, if you will. The two-hour siestas went out and--

G: The seven-day week came in.

M: --the seven-day week came in. But this was a gradual sort of thing. By 1967 it had reached the point to where seven-day war, three hundred--well, no, that's not quite right; they still took out the Tet period and the occasional other holidays even in those days. Or tried to. But the war had intensified over that period of time, and the North Vietnamese did not send entire units down organized as North Vietnamese Army units until sometime after 19--I believe it was after 1965. And [it] might have been much later than that before we actually saw the first full-blown North Vietnamese regiments, divisions, what have you. The date I'm very, very--

G: It seems to me that I remember that the first reports, unconfirmed I think at the time, of a single North Vietnamese regiment present in the South was around December of 1964.

M: Could have been.

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G: But it had not been engaged. And then by the fall of 1965, of course, the 1st Cavalry Division had been heavily engaged in the Ia Drang Valley.

M: You're right, you're right there. But when I first got there in 1964, there were no known NVA organized units per se then engaged in South Vietnam. That doesn't mean at all that there wasn't a lot of North Vietnamese down there.

G: Were there a lot of North Vietnamese down there?

M: I think there were adequate numbers to virtually control what was then known as COSVN [Central Office of South Vietnam]; in fact, I think the key figures in the VC forces were probably NVA people. But that's memory and it's probably based on a personal opinion rather than hard evidence.

G: There were lots of accusations throughout the war that our major failing was that we didn't understand the nature of the war, we didn't understand the political nature of the war. As an intelligence man I would like you to comment on that statement.

M: I'm going to take you back to how we got in this mess to begin with, if I may, and this is Charlie Morris' version.

G: By all means.

M: Of course, we, under Eisenhower I believe it was, offered to assist the French, and they kind of folded out from under us and we were left holding the bag there. [Joseph] McCarthy we had about that time, somewhere around Washington, who was creating a great stink about communism being bad regardless of its form. Ho Chi Minh was known to

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be a communist. We didn't consider communists Tito-style; we considered communists Stalin-style. I honestly believe our political people were so endowed with the belief that communism was bad or they couldn't afford to say that it wasn't, [that] there were different versions of communism, that they simply had to, on the face of it, attempt to resist any advance at all of any gains on the part of communism. Harry Truman essentially laid down the rules and said, "Here's a line. Beyond this line communism shall not pass." And we very blindly followed that, not recognizing that--and this is retrospect on my part--had we said to Mr. Ho Chi Minh at one time, "We recognize that your countrymen aren't really ready for the type of democracy we have. A good benevolent dictatorship is probably the best form of government for your people at this time. Now, you know that we don't like China, we don't like Russia, and we know that you don't like either one of them"--which I believe to be the true case and this is kind of cold-blooded, mercenary sort of reasoning--"but let's see how many millions or billions of dollars it would take for you to just go ahead and become a benevolent dictatorship over here and serve as a buffer zone essentially between Russia and China and the rest of the so-called free world in this area."

But the political posture in the United States wasn't such that you could accept this line of reasoning. McCarthyism was with us, and we gradually, in my judgment, became more and more involved, each president saying as he came in with his administration, "I'm not going to be the first president to lose a war." And events that occurred

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simply began to push us more into the war, deeper and deeper, until finally when President Johnson became president, Lord only knows what sort of commitments he knew of that we, the public, had no idea about, as a carryover from John F. Kennedy. But he must have had some. He certainly didn't feel free to clean his house and start over with his own team. He certainly recognized as a politician he had to make his own mark on the political scene if he was going to get re-elected, and the Great Society was his way out of what his predecessor had thrown up to that particular point. I feel that in a sense President Johnson was trapped into doing precisely what he did, and that was committing more forces. In fact, under his administration we went from just shall we say a few hundred or a thousand or so advisory people to-- what was it?--about five hundred thousand people or nearly that, somewhere in that vicinity, by the time that he had made his little announcement that "I shall not seek, nor will I accept."

He had a hard political row to hoe there, as I see it, but I doubt seriously that he had any choice but to go on reinforcing or adding strength to the American effort that was then engaged. I think he had no idea, he really lost contact somewhere along the line with the American public sentiment, as it was changing from, say, 1964 forward through the rest of his administration. I think he made a mistake; any military man, I think, would think he made a mistake. We had the strength to have won the war. We had the capacity to win the war, and I think it's always a mistake of a politician to commit one's military forces piecemeal; rather than allow them to go in and win the

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damn war, to impose constraints on them. You cannot win a war if you are assuming a defensive posture; it simply will not work. You have to be allowed to go at this enemy with whatever force you're capable of. You have to be allowed to hit him where it hurts him worst. You have to be allowed to take calculated risks. Whether the Chinese and the Russians would have come into the war or not, whether it would have escalated and involved a nuclear war between the United States and the Russians and/or Chinese, I don't know. But I do know that I am convinced that had we followed [Douglas] MacArthur's thrust--and I don't fault Harry Truman for firing MacArthur--but had we followed the line of rationale that MacArthur used, we probably wouldn't have had South Vietnam at all. Because I honestly believe the communists will only be stopped from their little attempts to engage and pick off and nibble at you when they are convinced that you will employ the maximum power you have against them if that maximum power is necessary to stop them. They understand that language. They must be laughing behind their backs at us at the way that we have conducted ourselves during both Korea and Vietnam.

G: Fair enough. Now, as you were in Hawaii between your two tours and you were monitoring the flow of intelligence on its way out from MACV, did you begin to assemble any kind of a picture of who the enemy was, what motivated the enemy, why he seemed to be so resilient, what made him as tough as he was, all of these questions, I suppose, that an intelligence officer--that's almost second nature for you, isn't it?

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M: You seek to understand this; I don't believe our people ever did come to understand the Oriental. Let me retract that to the extent of saying most of our military people and very few of our civilian population ever really understood the Oriental mind, nor do they to this day. I don't profess to. I think I am closer today to being able to say what an Oriental is likely to do when certain pressure is brought to bear on him than at one time I would have been able to predict. But I don't know why he reacts the way he does. It isn't based on western philosophy; it's based on something that I don't understand about that individual to this day. He will put up with privation that is truly unreasonable.

Let's face it, on our side in Vietnam we had Vietnamese. They were just Vietnamese. On the other side there were Vietnamese, just Vietnamese. Same sort of individual, frequently from the same family; one would be on one side, one on the other, just as the blue and the gray in the United States Civil War. Now, why was this little fellow on the red side willing to sit out there in the woods and be eaten alive by mosquitoes, suffer from malaria, be deprived of adequate medical attention, have terrible rations compared to his counterpart on the other side, and yet be willing, when ordered, to march into almost certain death? As contrasted to the opposite side, where you had--and I'm not saying that this fellow on the other side didn't have his desertions, but we had a lot more AWOLs on our side than he was having on his side. I suspect the basic reason is that if he went AWOL on that side and they caught him, he was shot. If he went AWOL

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on our side and they caught him, he was probably beaten up a bit at worst. Now, there's a little bit of difference between being sure that you're going to get shot or hung as contrasted to the--

G: Of course, that doesn't explain why he went out in the woods in the first place.

M: Not because of a political belief, believe me. This much I am convinced of. I've read too many translations of diaries. That little fellow coming from the North wasn't doing this for patriotic reasons, by and large, although he did undergo intensive political indoctrination. I don't care if he was a private, he got his regular doses of political indoctrination. But the diaries didn't indicate that that little fellow was marching down there because he loved Ho Chi Minh. The diaries indicated that he was marching down there because he didn't have any choice; he literally believed that he had no choice but to obey orders. The discipline was that--

G: You think that's primarily the problem, the question of discipline?

M: Yes, I do. I think the Oriental soldier makes a far superior infantry rifleman than any American soldier we have today, on balance. Largely because he's stupid enough, if you will, to go out there and get shot at, whereas the American soldier, knowing full well we've got air power and artillery, he'll hesitate. Now, the American soldier will outfight the Oriental when it is a life or death situation, but the American soldier will come to hand-to-hand combat only as a last resort that simply cannot be otherwise avoided. The Oriental will not wait that long; he'll go, he'll fight. He doesn't ask, "What could I

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use as a substitute?" Maybe he's not smart enough. But he's a different breed. He doesn't think for himself; he's accustomed to taking orders and having his decisions made for him. He's never known anything anyway. What to the American soldier is unbearable living conditions is far better than this poor devil has experienced at any time in his life. At least he's fed regularly, we'll say. What he's fed may be totally unacceptable to the American soldier, but if you've never had anything and you're not given anything, it's no different from yesterday. But if you've had something, some of the comforts of life, some of the securities of life, and suddenly they're taken away, it makes a tremendously more important impact on you than had you never had them to begin with. If you'd never lived in a air-conditioned house, you probably wouldn't mind the heat down here in Austin.

G: Well, you'd accept it because there wasn't anything to be done about it.

M: That's right. But if you didn't know that there were ways, or you knew that it was totally beyond your capability to enjoy the better things of life, you'd accept that as your fate and life would go on. I've drifted.

G: No, that's fine. Didn't it seem to you, as it did to a good many people, that this war in Vietnam was developing into a very peculiar kind of a war by our standards of experience?

M: It sure did. I remember from time to time, and this was during the period when Vietnam was beginning to become a relatively unpopular

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sort of war, the children would come home from school and they'd ask me questions about it, particularly how we got involved, why we were in it, should we be in it, this sort of thing. As a professional soldier, my answer to them always was along the lines, "I don't know whether we should be in this thing or not." And I really didn't at that time; I didn't think I was smart enough to know. "But we are in it and we have been progressively pushed deeper into this war by several administrations. And with that in mind, I have no doubt," I said to them, "that we ought to win the damn thing. We certainly shouldn't lose it." And I believe that to this day. Having been put in it--although in retrospect I now say that we would have been better off had we backed Ho Chi Minh from the outset--we should not have lost the war, and in my judgment it is a crime that we lost the fifty-odd thousand dead that we did there, with so little, in fact nothing except shame, in my judgment, to look upon as having [been] achieved during that period of time. It truly aggravates me that we needlessly lost a war that we were progressively committed to by various administrations.

G: You went back then in what, 1965, is that right?

M: I was there 1964-1965, then back in 1967-1968.

G: Do you recall when in 1967 you went back?

M: June.

G: In June. Okay. General [Joseph] McChristian had just left, is that right?

M: That's correct.

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G: General Davidson had arrived and was settling in?

M: He got there in, I believe it was May. I got there on about the fourteenth of June, as I remember it, of 1967.

G: Was that at his instigation that you came over?

M: I have always believed that I was on name requisition there as a result of Phil Davidson wanting me in there as his production chief, yes.

G: I see. Okay. So you came in as the chief of intelligence production, is that right?

M: Right. That was to be my job.

G: Can you set the stage for me? Can you tell me what kind of situation you discovered on your hands, so to speak, when you arrived?

M: I got off the plane at about eleven o'clock in the morning. I was met by General Davidson's aide; he was out in the field at the time. The aide said, "Never mind about in-processing. The boss will meet you as soon as he comes back into town." About one-thirty General Davidson met me in his office and said, "Our first job is to write a briefing to be presented to [Robert] McNamara two weeks hence. Get with it."

G: Welcome to Saigon.

M: Welcome to Saigon. I never did in-process. (Laughter) Someone else did that for me. For some reason or other, McNamara's arrival was delayed; I think it was related to the Middle East war and a change in his schedule somewhere in there. But he was delayed another week or two, so General Davidson tells me that we really briefed McNamara on or about the tenth of July. So somewhere between the fourteenth of

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June and the tenth of July, I found myself doing two things: first, and of greatest importance, was helping him to prepare his first briefing for Secretary McNamara; second, he gave certain guidelines about wanting to streamline General McChristian's organization to better fit Phil Davidson's personality. Frankly, they didn't run things the same way. Phil likes to talk to what I'll describe as an inner circle of people. He doesn't like to have to talk to too many people to get his job done. And so he told me straight out, "Streamline this thing." And he asked me what--well, I don't know that he asked me, he told me to get whatever resources I needed to do the necessary study to accomplish the streamlining. And I knew that a guy by the name of Lew Ponder was coming in, an old friend of mine, an old personnel man--

G: Would you spell that last name for me?

M: P-O-N-D-E-R, Lewington S. L-E-W-I-N-G-T-O-N S. Ponder. He's basically an infantryman, first-class officer, organizationalwise, excellent man to do an organizational study. There was another man by the name of Mel Pasta on board, P-A-S-T-A, that I coupled with Lew Ponder to put together a reorganization study. Lew got in a few days after I did and I gave him the job, told him the same thing Davidson told me: "Get whatever resources you need together to do this study, and you've got about thirty days to get it done. We want to start reorganizing within about thirty days." Then I began to devote all my time to getting this briefing prepared.

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We briefed--General Davidson briefed; I ran his Vu-Graph in the rear.

(Laughter)

I think he referred to it as orchestrated his Vu-Graph in the rear, something to that effect. In any case, this briefing was, to the best of my knowledge and belief, the first time that the phrase "crossover point" was ever voiced to anyone in the U.S. hierarchy. General Davidson, in briefing McNamara, said, "We may be approaching the crossover point." And by that he meant that there were indications that we might at that time be putting out of action more people than the enemy was capable of recruiting from in-country sources and infiltrating from North Vietnam.

G: Do you know what the infiltration rate would have been at about that time?

M: Without looking back through the documents, I can only say that it would have probably averaged between six and seven thousand a month at that time.

G: That fits with my recollection. Now, what was the infiltration rate in the spring of 1968? Can you recall that? After Tet.

M: After Tet? In the spring of 1968? In January it was something over twenty thousand for the month, less than twenty-one thousand, somewhere in the range between twenty and twenty-one thousand. And bear in mind that might have been upgraded later on as more data became available. But when I left there--and I believe the official documents reflected it. The official documents, say, to the middle of

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1968, were still saying that the figure was somewhere between twenty and twenty-one thousand for January. Then it dropped down to something on the order of--and don't hold me to these figures--but somewhere between nine and fourteen thousand for subsequent months. But I know that later data in, say, 1969 indicated that there was more than one month in 1968 in which there was a figure greater than twenty thousand. It's just that at the time the 1968 documents were published we hadn't been able to collect the data to accept as confirmed, probable, possible, a total of that many.

G: Yes, I understand. Sure. My point in bringing that up was to suggest that with the benefit of hindsight, General Davidson may have been wrong. If they were capable of tripling their infiltration rate, as apparently they were when they felt the need, then maybe we hadn't reached the crossover point.

M: We had reached the crossover point. Remember how we defined that. We defined the crossover point as being [where] we were putting out of action more people than he was infiltrating and/or recruiting. And that even to this day I hold to be the truth. For a period of time we did indeed reach the crossover point. Now, where I insist that I made the mistake was in making the assumption, and I don't accuse everyone of this same mistake, I really came to the conclusion that maybe this guy was running out of men, running out of capability, as it were. Because indeed our best evidence then, and I still believe now, indicated firmly that we were putting out of action more people than he was able to replace, for a period of time. It was not until early

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November of 1967 that we began to see a change in pattern, and I have to be somewhat careful about security here. But we began to see early in November a change in activity then taking place in North Vietnam and Laos.

G: So this would have been a change in activity involving the North Vietnamese?

M: Involving the North Vietnamese regular army forces, if you want to call them that, that indicated that he was posturing his forces, or repositioning or changing his pattern of activities. To summarize, I came to the conclusion personally that he had finally made up his mind that we weren't going to invade North Vietnam, therefore he could afford to take his divisions that he had strung out up and down North Vietnam and either cadre them to death or move them in toto to a position where he could reinforce and make an all-out effort in South Vietnam. Up to that point he had, I believe, felt it necessary to retain a posture in North Vietnam that would enable him to defend against an invasion, either a hook around the DMZ or perhaps even a major landing somewhere in the vicinity of Haiphong, because his forces were disposed all through North Vietnam from the vicinity of Haiphong to the DMZ in such a posture as to be able to defend against an invasion from the sea. At that time, we saw activity that indicated--at least it indicated to me--that he had made up his mind we simply weren't going to invade. He could therefore take greater risks with those forces, and this activity indicated that he might be ready to take this risk.

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G: It's very difficult of course to recall the days before Tet and the frame of mind and what your thinking was, because we know what happened subsequently. It's hard to forget what happened subsequently. But what importance did you attach to this change in posture, change in rhythm?

M: Sufficient importance to the moment that I tumbled to it to insist that--well, let's back off for a minute with this. I saw that Phil Davidson was briefed immediately on this activity when it became apparent to some of our analysts. He thought it was important enough to where he launched an all-out collection effort geared to determining or filling the gaps in our knowledge of what really was going on up there. He even went to the extent of pulling me off my primary job, setting me out to one side with a few key and very highly qualified analysts so that he wouldn't interrupt the day-to-day activity that was ongoing at that time; let the rest of the production organization operate and relieve me of responsibility of its normal functioning.

We worked for about three weeks in this little study group, reviewing all the evidence that we had to be sure we hadn't missed something. It was at that time, the termination of that study effort, that I had concluded that indeed this fellow had made the decision if necessary to commit the majority of forces that he had in North Vietnam against the South. This conclusion on my part would have been reached no later than, let's say, the end of November or early December of 1967.

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Concurrently, Danny Graham's shop, Estimates and Current Intelligence, working totally separate from my group, gradually arrived at essentially the same conclusion, I believe, that at least a major effort was coming. By the end of November or certainly by the first part of December we were telling [William] Westmoreland that it's coming. We alerted Westmoreland in early November--Westmoreland was back in Washington; [Creighton] Abrams was acting in his stead. We first briefed Abrams. Abrams either prepared or had prepared a message to send back to Westmoreland in Washington alerting him to the fact that we had tumbled to a change in pattern in North Vietnam. There was indeed no significant change in infiltration at that time, and indeed there was no significant change in infiltration into South Vietnam for the duration of 1967, aside from the fact that there were forces assembled against Khe Sanh and against the DMZ area. But there really was no significant change in the rate of infiltration in the second half of 1967 as compared to the average rate of the first half of 1967, if you wanted to look it over, first half against second half.

G: Why did General Westmoreland testify on that Mike Wallace special that--?

M: He got caught cold, in my judgement, when he said yes, there was oh, twenty thousand--I believe he used the figure of twenty thousand.

G: That's correct.

M: He flat got caught off balance; had no chance to review the official records, and he was talking from a basis of a fourteen-year-old memory. And it's just a tragedy that the man was given no opportunity to

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review the official documents, because he knew the situation, it's just that he had forgotten it.

G: Now, let me back us up a minute. In May of 1967, as you probably know, there was supposed to be a National Intelligence Estimate written by the intelligence community in Washington. And a quarrel was precipitated over the issue of how many enemy there were in South Vietnam, if I may use the phrase, what was the order of battle?

M: You're using the month [of] May and I don't know that that's the month. I'll take your word for it.

G: In fact, I think May was when it was supposed to be written, finished--

M: Okay.

G: --and it didn't get written until November, primarily because there was a terrific argument over how do we count the enemy.

M: Right.

G: I would like you to pick that story up from the time that you became aware that there were discrepancies between what the CIA was counting and what MACV was counting, for example.

M: It may sound ridiculous to you, but I didn't have personal knowledge that there was a squabble going on until I was alerted in I guess it was September that a team was coming out from DIA-CIA, the Washington area, to meet with us on the ground to find out why we insisted on holding a lower figure than did--and I won't even say it was CIA-held, I'll say that certain people in CIA were arguing, and more specifically a fellow by the name of Mr. Sam Adams was arguing that there was a much higher figure.

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G: You were alerted that these people were coming out?

M: Yes. And they wanted to get on the ground with us and try to convince us that they were right and we were wrong, or at least--maybe that's a poor characterization of it. They wanted to examine the evidence on the ground.

G: How did you prepare for this meeting then?

M: As best I remember it, we really didn't do anything except get some analysts together. I don't know precisely that this is what happened, but we probably told Gains Hawkins as soon as he got back from Washington to get his analysts together and get ready to be responsive. Let's go over the evidence. Let's see what they've got; let's see what we've got.

G: Colonel Hawkins was in charge of the order of battle section, is that right?

M: I believe he was. I believe he was the senior OB specialist that we had on board. But he had a hell of a lot of people working for him. So to expect Gains Hawkins alone to defend the position that we held or to explain why we held certain figures would have been ridiculous. In the OB section I expect there was something on the order of a hundred people involved in putting the little bits and pieces together that made up the total OB. So Gains, I'm sure, would have had to collect his various chiefs from I, II, III and IV Corps--I believe [that] is the way we basically kept our records; it may be unfortunate, but that's sort of the way that we kept them within the respective corps areas, and then this was put together as a single package.

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But I remember no special preparations being made for it, because we were told that this was to be a working conference at which we were going to examine each other's evidence and attempt to reconcile a major difference between the figures that they held and the figures we held.

G: I see. Can you recall the meetings that took place?

M: I remember that we met for one and probably two or more days, or at least parts of the time, in MACV headquarters. There was assembled on our side of the table a number of OB specialists, and either Phil Davidson or I sat in on the conference, sometimes both of us, for brief periods perhaps neither of us. The other side was represented by--I believe Mr. [George] Carver was probably the senior person there. There were DIA representatives, possibly a representative from CINCPAC in observer status. But the key figure was Mr. Sam Adams of CIA, who was the individual who held that there ought to be I believe something on the order of two hundred thousand more people than we were carrying.

G: How many were you carrying, can you remember?

M: I think the figure at that time was something on the order of two hundred and--well, it was under three hundred thousand. It was probably between two-fifty and three hundred thousand.

G: So he was saying that you were wrong by almost a hundred per cent.

M: A considerable percentage, yes. (Laughter) Yes. However, he wanted us to carry in our OB certain categories that we weren't carrying and we felt should not be carried. For example, we did not believe it

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proper to carry the self-defense and the secret self-defense in the military order of battle. We did carry them in what was called the Phoenix program, but we didn't think that it was proper for us to carry them in the military order of battle. I understand now--nobody had told me at that time--that General Westmoreland had made an earlier decision to not carry them in the military OB, and I understand that at one time perhaps they had been carried in the military OB. But I quite agree that they should not have been carried in the military OB and were quite properly carried in what we referred to as the Phoenix program, which was used to tell people when they conducted an operation against an enemy-held target area that in this area when you get on the ground, you are apt to run into the following local defense forces and political infrastructure. When we knew it, we even gave them the names and we sent along with those operations national policemen to arrest the political infrastructure and the secret self-defense people. But it was a police matter, from our point of view, not a military operational matter. The military supported the national police in their effort to weed out these secret self-defense and the political infrastructure that might be in a hamlet that we attacked to bring under government control.

The military order of battle, we felt, should be confined to those forces--and I agree with General Westmoreland on it--which have a capability of bringing significant pressure to bear on opposing military forces. That was one part of the argument: whether or not we

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should carry these self-defense and secret self-defense forces in the order of battle.

Another part of the argument was the numbers of guerrillas. Mr. Adams wanted a significantly higher number of guerrillas than we were willing to carry. I remember telling them myself that "Look, fellows, you will agree with us that we have a pretty good handle on the main and local forces, the NVA units. We know there's no argument on the strengths that we are giving these people. On guerrillas there is an argument. We have a lower figure than you. We don't buy your evidence. We've looked at your evidence; we don't buy it. We will admit, however, that the number of guerrillas that we carry is a soft figure; we're terribly uncertain about that. It could be at least 40 per cent off, plus or minus, from what we're carrying. We won't quarrel with you. If you want to use a range on them, let's use a range; thirty-five to ninety thousand is all right with us. We won't argue with that. Because neither you nor I know what the actual figure should be, and there's just absolutely no way at this time that we can better quantify that figure than to give it a wide range in there. We happen to hold"--I think it was about forty-five thousand at that time. "You happen to want the figure to be somewhere in the neighborhood of ninety thousand. We won't argue with you too much about that as long as you'll grant us that the lower end of the figure is what we're carrying and the higher end of the figure is what you want to carry."

G: Well, what was Mr. Adams argument against that?

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M: I don't really remember, except that he insisted that we were grossly underestimating the number of guerrillas that were there. He was using as a basis some twenty-odd documents, but with one key document that had to do with Binh Dinh province. In Binh Dinh province, he seemed to feel that he had concrete evidence that where we carried let's say a thousand, I don't remember what the figure was, he could conclusively demonstrate that the enemy was carrying five thousand on his personnel roster, whatever it happened to be. But then Mr. Adams said, "Now, I have several other documents that are not quite as complete," and he was right, they weren't nearly as complete as the Binh Dinh document, which by the way we didn't buy; we knew that the enemy often reported through COSVN to NVA local successes that just really weren't true. He flat lied to his chain of command on how successful he was being, just as ARVN flat lied to the U.S. from time to time on how successful they were at pacification. So we discredited the validity of what this enemy had reported re Binh Dinh; just didn't think it was that good. We knew that Binh Dinh was one of the areas that he should have been more successful in than in most other areas of Vietnam.

But Mr. Adams then said, "This is a good document. It's valid. Now, there are forty-four provinces in South Vietnam. I have other documents that indicate that he has similar organizational capacity or organizational systems in them. So if we multiply"--and this is an oversimplification--"what he has in Binh Dinh, versus what you say he has in Binh Dinh, times forty-four, we'll come up with his actual

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structure and strength in all the provinces." Bear in mind, I'm far oversimplifying the argument.

G: But he did, you're saying, extrapolate.

M: Extrapolate. Extrapolate by going from what we know--which we didn't buy to begin with; what he said we know, we didn't really believe that the enemy had been that successful--to the number of provinces in South Vietnam. I frankly told Mr. Adams, if some vulgarity is permitted in this, that "Mr. Adams, you're full of shit."

G: I'd heard that reported.

M: And he quoted me in a Harper's magazine article some years later.

It was a poor methodology in my judgment then; I still hold it was a terribly weak methodology. Well, after a certain period of time--whatever period this conference lasted, it was at that time at a working level--there came the time when I saw that we had been over this ground many times and we were not moving from top dead center. We weren't willing to give; he wasn't willing to give. And I finally said, "Let's stop it. We aren't getting anywhere. Let's kick it upstairs and let our respective bosses decide the issue."

G: Was Mr. Adams the chief protagonist of the argument on that side of the table?

M: It was my judgment that he was--he was the one that was explaining how he had arrived at this figure. And you must understand that he not once used to convince us any sources other than captured documents or defector reports. We had other sources. I believe it fair to say that Mr. Adams, even if he was cleared for the sources and I do not

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know that he was or was not, certainly was giving no credence to what we held to be much more reliable sources than he had, or that he was citing.

G: What was Mr. Carver's part in all this?

M: Mr. Carver seemed to be willing to listen to both sides. Obviously, he was sent out there as the senior CIA representative, but I must concede that Mr. Carver appeared to take a balanced view in listening to the discussions from both sides, while I was present.

G: Colonel, you'll forgive me--and I realize this may be because you have, as you've said, oversimplified in order to make a point--but if Mr. Adams' argument was as flimsy as you make it sound, why wasn't it apparent on the face of it to a man, let's say, of Mr. Carver's judgment that Adams had no case?

M: Well, I believe it became that apparent to Mr. Carver as time went on, because ultimately when the SNIE [Special National Intelligence Estimate] was published, the compromise arrived at in that document came far closer to the MACV position than it did to the CIA position, and it was not until after Tet that they revised the figures that they used in that SNIE and suddenly subscribed in retrospect to Mr. Adams' position, which in my judgment was then and I still believe it was a mistake.

(Interruption)

G: --seem to be more willing to listen to both sides, and so on.

Now, this brings us up to Tet, I guess. You had said that there were indications as early as November of 1967 that something special

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was brewing, right? Did this picture become any clearer as time passed?

M: Yes, by--you know, to this day I have trouble remembering exactly when Tet was, except that it was sometime in February.

G: I think the first attacks were the night of the thirty-first of January.

M: Thirty-first of January, right. But I'll be safe in saying at least a week ahead of Tet, MACV J-2 had come to the conclusion in-house--now this is just within the office of the J-2, the people who sat down, like Phil Davidson, Danny Graham, Charlie Morris, and a few key analysts and management people had sat down and said, "What [does] the evidence indicate to us as to when this thing is going to break loose?" Clearly, it had been developing, and the closer we came to Tet, the more we knew about when it was likely to come off. At least we felt that way. As I remember it we got maybe a POW or a defector or something that told us it was coming on Tet. I can't be absolutely sure of that, but we certainly had enough evidence to indicate to us that he had the capability of attacking at any time of his choice and on pretty much of a countrywide basis. There was no doubt about it, he could launch a major effort against us, because he had moved his forces from the base areas in Cambodia and Laos to such a position that good targets were readily available to him. Plus he had stepped up his operations to some extent, ongoing operations. And we came to the conclusion that he had the capability of attacking at any time,

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that he probably would attack immediately before, during, or immediately after Tet.

At one time, we actually sat around that table, and I believe General Westmoreland was present when we said, "You know, the best bet is that son of a gun will attack at about the beginning of Tet." And I think General Davidson felt a little queasy about coming down so hard on a specific date, because he had been on MacArthur's intelligence staff at the time when MacArthur had gone out on a limb and said the Chinese will not come into Korea. And Phil Davidson is a little bit inclined to be somewhat cautious, after having been stung one time. So I suspect, I don't know this for sure, but he was instrumental in softening the warning message that went back to Washington, to saying essentially that he has the capability of attacking any time. He probably will attack at some time immediately before, during, or after Tet.

G: What did you think?

M: I thought it was coming during Tet.

G: You really did?

M: I really thought that he would use the first two or three days of Tet to further reposition his forces and then launch a coordinated attack countrywide. As you know now, he really screwed it up in that he didn't launch a coordinated attack. Apparently, some of the boys didn't get the word as to when the attack was to come off. So there were some abortive attacks early, and then the main effort came a bit later and came countrywide, pretty much countrywide.

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G: You had believed that the enemy was going to use the first couple of days of Tet, I would presume, to maneuver, using the cover of travel and so on, to get into position and then hit sometime during Tet.

M: Yes, that was my personal conclusion, that the best bet was sometime during Tet and that he would wait until the ARVN troops were well on their way toward home, which was typical of them during the Tet holiday season. As it turned out, as we've already said, he jumped the gun in some places and hit a little too early; in other places he got off I presume on schedule, but if it was supposed to have been a coordinated attack countrywide, it was poorly executed. Nevertheless, we knew from intelligence collection effort at that time that although it was not coordinated, it was still coming.

G: A lot of people have expressed the opinion that we were surprised by the target that the enemy chose to hit.

M: I was surprised at the extent--and notice that I say that I was surprised; I don't know how other people felt--but I was surprised at the stupidity of the man in that he was apparently willing to commit his forces against heavily populated, metropolitan areas, and in so doing he had to come far from his relatively secure base areas, therefore offering himself up as never before as a target to superior firepower and particularly air and artillery. I would have thought that he would have known that he simply could not sustain himself and enjoy any great amount of success. This, I think, is the second mistake in judgment that I made. In retrospect, this fellow recognized

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far better than did I that he was indeed losing control over too much of the population of South Vietnam. In other words, pacification was indeed beginning to work.

G: When did you come to that conclusion?

M: The latter, that I made a mistake in this?

G: Well, that the enemy had concluded that he was losing control.

M: I think [it was] well after Tet that I realized that he really had no choice but to offer himself up. Either that or go to the negotiation table. Because he was indeed losing control of the population, and he realized he was losing control of the population. But it surprised me that he was willing to go into places like Danang, Saigon, the other areas which were far removed from his relatively secure base areas, and in so doing he had to offer himself up to our artillery and to our superior maneuverability, our air power, and so forth. And we could not have asked for a better opportunity to destroy him militarily.

G: Let me interject something here, which I think is a continuing problem with intelligence, and that is how can you predict that the enemy will do something that suits you to a T?

M: You can't predict that he will do something that will suit you to a T. That's the problem. Intelligence is an inexact science, and so often when we make mistakes it's because we put ourselves in the position of the enemy. We attempt to project ourselves as being in his shoes as we see it. But sometimes we miss. He sees things much different from the way that we believe he might see them. In retrospect, I think

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this man really said to himself, "I've got no choice but to go in there and take my chances."

But he did make one mistake. He honestly assumed, I think, that there would be a general uprising in support of his forces. We were just as convinced, at least I was certainly convinced, there would be no general uprising of the population in support of the enemy effort. I think I was right and he was wrong in that instance.

G: I don't think there's any question of that one.

M: I think that [Vo Nguyen] Giap, in things that I've heard about Giap since the war was over, indicates to me that he knew very well that this wasn't going to work.

G: Is this General Davidson's opinion?

M: Yes. That General Giap had quite an argument with the hierarchy up there, telling them, "Fellows, we don't have the support of the population, and there's not going to be the general uprising, and this is going to get us hurt." And Giap was right, from a military commander's point of view, if indeed that's what he felt. Because the enemy in Tet was soundly defeated militarily. No question about that, that's not even worth arguing about. His losses were horrendous during Tet as compared to the losses or the setback that he imposed on the plans of pacification. And he really wasn't able to recoup for a major effort any time thereafter as long as American forces were available to resist.

To jump ahead a little bit, he must have been the most

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surprised individual in the world when President [Nguyen Van] Thieu made the decision to withdraw as he did--

G: President Johnson?

M: No, President Thieu.

G: Oh, in 1975?

M: In 1975.

G: I see.

M: He wasn't ready for exploitation phase; it took him several weeks, really, to start the exploitation phase.

G: I think they admit as much, don't they?

M: I don't know what they say now but--

G: What's the book, Our Great Spring Victory? It started off as a limited offensive and all of a sudden the whole country opened up and they didn't have the wherewithal to exploit it.

M: That's right. They were several weeks, really, launching the exploitation phase.

G: Let me ask you a question about something that you mentioned, and that's the enemy casualties at Tet. And this is a continuing theme in Vietnam, on the body count issue. We say, as I recall, we killed something like forty thousand during the whole Tet campaign.

M: I really don't know what the figure is, but go ahead.

G: And a conservative estimate is that for every one we killed we wounded two. Isn't that accurate?

M: It would be accurate to say that for every one that we killed, we

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probably put out of action, either permanently or for an extended period of time, one and one-half at least.

G: Okay. This comes, if my arithmetic is right, to something like seventy thousand, all told, killed and out of action for an extended period of time.

M: All right.

G: How many did we estimate were in the Tet offensive, about eighty-five thousand?

M: You are going to run into a problem with me on that. You're going to run into a problem with me because I have said, and I will always insist that this is a better truth: we identified as having been in contact with some eighty-five thousand, eighty to eighty-five thousand people, I think the figure is. Either eighty-four--something on that order. I just know, almost beyond a doubt, how that figure was arrived at.

G: Good.

M: It was arrived at in the operational center reporting. An allied unit calls in and he says, "I'm in contact with the umpteenth battalion of the enemy out here." "You identified it as that battalion?" "Yes, we have. We've got a prisoner of war; he says this." "Well, what about the rest of the battalions of that regiment? Did he say anything about them?" "He don't know." Okay, at this point we can accept that battalion. That battalion equates to X number of people. We put it on the board that we've identified this battalion and so many people. We get another report that says, "We're in contact with a regimental-

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sized unit. We know it's a regimental-sized unit." And they convince us that it's a regimental-sized unit. We haven't identified the unit yet but we know--

G: How do they convince you of that?

M: I don't know how they convince us, but let's assume that we're convinced that it is a regimental-sized unit out there.

G: All right, let's assume that.

M: So we equate a regimental-sized unit to two thousand people. We don't know the identity of the darn thing yet, but nevertheless we'll accept it in the operations center at this time for two thousand. So we put two thousand; unidentified enemy regiment, approximately two thousand. Question mark. We go through the whole rigamarole from allied reporting, and finally when at the end of the stupid thing we total them up, we've got eighty-odd thousand identified. Now, does this mean that that's all the enemy forces that were available for commitment in Tet? No. Does this mean that that was all that was committed in Tet? No. The order of battle at that time said that this clod had something on the order of two hundred and fifty to three hundred thousand people available for commitment. Included in that two hundred and fifty to three hundred thousand is certain support forces. The figure of eighty-five thousand is absolutely wrong, in my judgment. It's what we identified as the best guess of the forces in contact.

G: Okay.

M: It is not what he had available to commit in Tet. He had whatever he had out there in the bushes. I'll bet you, if you'd go back through

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the OB, you would find that there were any number of enemy units known to be in the location that were not ever identified on the operational report boards in Saigon.

G: Don Oberdorfer's book on Tet says, and I think he got this from General [Fred] Weyand, that at one point the General was becoming very concerned because he had just about committed everything he had in hand, and if any more new attacks showed up he wasn't going to have anything he could counter with very effectively, but that he looked at the OB board and said, "By golly, just about every unit in my area that we have identified has shown up someplace." And he interpreted this to mean, well, they've shot their bolt. They've committed everything they've got, I don't have to worry about a fresh attack.

M: He might be right in his area.

G: He was fighting in III Corps, in Saigon.

M: In the III Corps area they probably committed every unit, and we probably identified every unit as being in contact.

G: Do you think Tet was a total effort then?

M: I think he made a major effort, and I think he thought he was making a major effort, but if he was shrewd at all--and let's move up to I Corps area, I ARVN Corps area--he withheld forces in reserve to commit, just like we would, in support of success. And he did not commit forces where there was not an opportunity for success in other areas. In other words, if in II Corps area he made a thrust and it was obviously repulsed, he wasn't finding any soft point there, he might very well have forces out here in reserve that he did not commit.

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G: Why did he hold the NVA units in reserve every place except Hue, apparently? I think [in] Hue the North Vietnamese went in, but virtually no place else.

M: The VC didn't show him any opportunity of success in the other areas. Real success.

G: You think the NVA were being held to exploit success?

M: I think they were being held to march in and wave the victory flags if there was a popular uprising in support of him, which never came in the Saigon area, nor did it come anywhere in the metropolitan areas of II Corps, nor did it come in the major metropolitan or population areas of the Delta.

G: Okay. Now let me ask you something from a personal--

M: Now, that's my thinking.

G: Okay. That's what I want. Do you know General [William R.] Desobry?

M: I know who he is; I believe he was down in the Delta area.

G: He was the senior adviser in IV Corps.

M: He was the senior adviser in IV Corps, yes.

G: That's right. Okay. He had a press conference about two or three weeks before Tet; he was leaving. And he said, and I'm paraphrasing a little, that the Viet Cong in IV Corps were poorly motivated, poorly trained, and the ARVN definitely had the upper hand in his area. And of course as he was saying this, we know now the local force and guerrillas and some main force units were infiltrating into their--I don't know whether you call it line of departure or whatever. (Laughter)
We know that knowledgeable civilians in places like My Tho and Can Tho

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were quietly moving out and going somewhere else, and nobody was saying anything to the Americans apparently. This, of course, had not a good effect on public opinion. It was regarded as another light-at-the-end-of-the-tunnel, we-have-turned-the-corner sort of statement. Why didn't we get any inkling--it seems to me we didn't get any inkling--from the Vietnamese people that these guys were moving through their midst?

M: The Delta was a totally different war. The IV Corps war was a different war entirely from I, II, and III Corps. If there was a civil war going on at all, it was in the Delta, at that stage of the game. That was truly the closest thing that you had to a true VC war.

G: And by this you mean an indigenous insurrection?

M: The enemy forces were made up primarily of people indigenous to the-- oh, there were North Vietnamese advisers, there were political officers. The political infrastructure was undoubtedly subordinate to the North Vietnamese government, but if you could find any semblance, really, of a civil war at that stage of the war, it would have been in the Delta. And I never did understand the war in the Delta. I doubt if the Vietnamese understood it. You'll remember, the big thing down there was [that] almost all that tremendously rich rice bowl was owned by absentee landlords that lived in Saigon or elsewhere, or in France, even. I certainly didn't understand it, what was going on down there, and I don't believe anybody else did. It should have been a separate country maybe. (Laughter)

G: It almost became a separate country.

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M: It almost became a separate country, yes.

G: The French, of course, had treated it as a separate country; that was Cochin China.

M: Yes. But you cannot compare what was going on--and I can't explain what was in General Desobry's mind at that time. He was known as a very fine officer. I doubt seriously that he was just outright lying; he probably was giving them maybe a wishful thinking assessment, but I suspect he probably was saying what he hoped was the trend and believed it was the trend.

G: Well, let me rephrase this, now. He has essentially made an intelligence estimate with this statement, has he not?

M: Yes. But he's also about to go home, and he's been there for a number of years. He did not stay just one year.

G: No.

M: He stayed a long time and he had a personal commitment in that area. And sometimes one can stay on a job a bit too long. I feel that maybe General Desobry was left in position a bit too long and given far too little attention from Saigon, in that the glory wars were not being fought in the Delta. The glory wars were being fought in I, II, and III Corps.

G: This is because the Delta was the Vietnamese war, and the rest of it was ours.

M: And it was always real small actions, by and large. Oh, there were occasional large-scale actions, but on the whole it was knock off this little outpost here, or invade this VC area here and regain control

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over this hamlet, or open a school there, or very tiny little actions. Cumulatively very important to pacification, individually almost insignificant.

G: We stayed out of the Delta, by and large, didn't we?

M: We, American-wise, stayed out of the Delta.

G: And so did the North Vietnamese, by and large.

M: So, indeed, did the North Vietnamese. I believe they stayed out of it largely because they felt that there they had a strong foothold in people who would resist, initially Saigon, and I suspect that they said to themselves they may also resist North Vietnamese domination sooner or later, but we'll deal with them when we have to. I don't know that, but it's entirely possible, because that's a different country. We'll deal with it when we have to.

G: As a layman, it's tempting for me to make this leap in the dark into the intelligence field, that Tet must have been an intelligence bonanza once the dust settled, as far as POWs were concerned, defectors, new units identified, suspicions confirmed, suspicions unconfirmed, and so on. Is this an accurate way to look at it, from an intelligence man's viewpoint?

M: It was a point in the history of that war when there was utter confusion in the intelligence community, the local intelligence community. There was so much unprocessed data available to us until we simply did not know for sure where we stood. We had a wealth of data, but not analyzed, not sifted through. All we knew was that we had been essentially right in the assessments leading up to Tet and that

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now there comes the time when we really have to sit down and have a little period of calm in here to go through unevaluated holdings and sort it out.

G: How long did it take you to get that calm period?

M: I don't know. I left Saigon and went to Hue-Phu Bai as Abrams' J-2 when they sent him up as MACV Forward.

G: Yes.

M: So I really don't know what happened back in MACV, but I do know that they had so damn many prisoners of war, so many defectors, so many captured documents, until--I can only imagine the state of confusion there was back there in trying to catalogue and analyze and sift out the gems that they had. Yes, they had all sorts of ore back there, but in order to get the gold out of it they sure had a lot of washing to do before it. . . .

G: I see. How long did you stay with General Abrams at MACV Forward then?

M: Well, he stayed up there as--that headquarters existed for approximately thirty days, and I stayed there until he left, and then stayed on as General Rosson's G-2 of Provisional Corps, Vietnam.

G: PROVCORPS, they called it.

M: PROVCORPSV, yes.

G: So did you get back to Saigon in your old capacity then?

M: Never.

G: Never. So you were never able to go back and take stock and see how the picture had changed, if it had changed?

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M: No. At the end of my tour I went back and spent about three or four days preparing an exit briefing, which I was to present to, first, the army headquarters in Hawaii, and then from there I was to go on back to Washington, D.C. and debrief back there. But during that time I really didn't--you know, that old DEROS [Date Eligible to Return from Overseas] fever got me, too; I'm ready to get the heck out of there.
(Laughter)

G: I understand.

M: In fact, there was a humorous thing that occurred to me on the way out from PROVCORPSV, if you don't mind my burning a little tape here.

G: No.

M: A friend of ours back in Hawaii, Joe Hoover [?], had asked me if I could pick up some elephants when I was in Vietnam.

G: Elephants?

M: Yes, these. . . .

G: Oh, the plaster elephants.

M: Plaster elephants.

G: Sure, okay.

M: Well, I'm up near Monkey Mountain, up where the durn things are made, in the I Corps area there, and so I procure a couple of stupid elephants and I've got them all crated up and packed nicely. The morning that I was to fly out, the crachin weather had closed in, and we had to go out across the Street Without Joy, out over the ocean at water level, and go down the coast and then come back in at Danang. As we were going out at water level--there's a door gunner on each door of

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the Huey, you know, and I've got my elephants stacked over here right by the one door gunner--one of those little black pajama guys started shooting at us, and the door gunner swung his gun around real quick and he knocked my stupid elephants out of the helicopter. (Laughter) He looked back over at me and I said, "Shoot, goddamn it, shoot! The hell with the elephants." (Laughter)

(Interruption)

G: --the attack on Khe Sanh was broken off by accident.

M: By accident, on our side. The B-52s, as you know, were capable of delivering very accurately.

G: Oh, yes.

M: But there was at that time a restriction on bringing them any closer to our positions than I believe it was a thousand meters.

G: Yes.

M: One night, one string of bombs--and this is the only accident that I know of on the part of the B-52 bombing during my association with them, at least where they deviated to this extent from the established pattern--but one planeload of bombs were dropped within about two hundred yards of our front lines.

G: That's pretty close for those bombs.

M: It shook our people up; it collapsed some bunkers. There were no fatalities but we had some people that were really shook up. Nevertheless, the enemy had over a period of time moved closer and closer and closer to us on a pattern not dissimilar to that that he had used against the French in Dien Bien Phu. The very next day we began to

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notice, after that stray one ship's drop and that string of bombs, the withdrawal of enemy forces from the siege of Khe Sanh.

G: That's interesting.

M: Now, I could be wrong, but the coincidence is rather remarkable, that he had continued to lay siege to Khe Sanh up to the time when some B-52 bombardier dropped and the plane happened to be in the wrong place.

G: How long was it before we were able to get anything like a clear picture of what Tet had accomplished or failed to accomplish?

M: I think by the time that we had re-established, firmly, control over all of Hue City, and that would have been roughly I believe about three weeks after the enemy had launched let's say his semicoordinated attack countrywide, it was quite clear to us on the ground that he had made a mistake, that he had indeed suffered a major military defeat. At that point we began to have time to start clearing up--well, we started what was known as a Tet counteroffensive, if you will, to launch attacks to clean out the pockets, to restore some semblance of order, to regain control over pockets of resistance in the population in the areas that he had for a short period of time taken over. Now bear in mind, I'm up at Hue-Phu Bai at this time, so I don't know how this picture went throughout the balance of the country, but in our area up there, within no more than a month after he had launched his attack, the farmers were back out following the oxen, the old areas that had been what we referred to as pacified were basically back to, if there was a norm, they were back to normal operating procedure, by and large.

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G: That's an interesting point, because there were reports that pacification had been set back X number of years by Tet at the time by contemporary reports. And a great many people now believe that that was untrue.

M: I can only speak for the two northern provinces as I saw them. Within a month after he had launched Tet up there, in my judgment people had buried their dead and they were back at the same old pattern of activity that they had been before Tet occurred. I sensed up there kind of, well, among those people--and they were mostly military people, and I'm talking about the ARVN now--a feeling of "by golly, we've pulled it off." The 1st ARVN Division was a proud outfit.

G: Who was commanding then?

M: I wish I could remember his name; he was without a doubt one of the finest commanders that they had, but--

G: It wasn't Thi [?] anymore, was it?

M: No, no. General Westmoreland would remember his name in a moment, but I can't pull it out of the hat.

G: Well, I can look it up; it's not important.

M: But the division commander of the 1st ARVN Division and his people were, rightfully so, a proud outfit. They never really lost all of Hue. An awful lot of people in the United States thought that Hue was absolutely lost to the enemy, but there was never a time when ARVN did not retain a foothold in Hue. True, the North Vietnamese were flying their flag over the old Citadel up there, but one of the proudest days of the ARVN 1st Division was when they pulled that old flag down, too.

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And it's also true that they had a heck of a lot of U.S. naval gunfire support and a lot of U.S. air support to do it.

G: Which we had been reluctant to use for a while, had we not?

M: That's right.

G: Let me ask you this; I ask a lot of people this about Hue. The North Vietnamese went into Hue rather than the VC, and that seems to have been a unique case. Is that the way you read that situation, too?

M: I think they carried some VC in there. They had some sapper units that were VC; they had some local forces that were VC. It's true that they did in fact move--now, I've got to be careful--whether they moved the units from Khe Sanh to exploit what they hoped to make a success out of Hue or whether they cadred those units, to this day I'm not certain of. But I do know that soldiers that we captured in Hue identified themselves as being members of units that we had at the same time been carrying out at Khe Sanh.

G: And you were never able to establish whether the whole unit had moved down or not?

M: That's right. Whether they had cadred those units for replacements, whether they had moved, say, a battalion of a regiment, a regiment of a division, or whether in fact they had moved the entire division from out there.

G: Why did the North Vietnamese show up in Hue and not someplace else?

M: They damn near succeeded in Hue.

G: Oh, I see.

M: And it would be very logical for them to reinforce success.

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G: Okay.

M: There was a period of time in there when the ARVN 1st Division had a very, very tenuous hold on any small part of Hue.

G: Have you read Oberdorfer's book on Tet?

M: No, I haven't.

G: When did your tour end, again, please?

M: Late May or the first of June, probably late May of 1968.

G: Okay. By that time I gather you had pretty well satisfied yourself what the effect of the Tet offensive had been on the VC themselves, is that correct?

M: In my area I had.

G: In the northern part.

M: In the northern two provinces, which PROVCORPSV was responsible for.

G: Who was watching the store back in Saigon while you--?

M: Phil Davidson was back there, and a guy by the name of Jeffries [?], Colonel Jeffries, took over my job when I went forward as MACV J-2 Forward.

G: Okay. Were you aware of any significant changes in the order of battle that were made as a result of Tet intelligence?

M: At that time?

G: Or ever.

M: Later I was aware of--in fact, at that time I became aware of the fact that following Tet, as soon as things calmed down a little bit, there was of necessity a period in which after the chaos people try to start examining where they stand. During the chaotic conditions that

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surrounded the Tet offensive, the order of battle people certainly didn't have time to process all of the data, and I've already alluded earlier to the fact that they undoubtedly had tons of data back there that they hadn't had time to sift through. Well, they started looking at that time for a reassessment of the formal OB, if you will. I know that would be a perfectly logical thing to do; I know that in my case Danny Graham visited me. I'm sure they sent staff officers out from MACV J-2 to all the various commands, trying to get an update handle on what the enemy order of battle ought to be now that we've got Tet out of the way.

Danny came to visit me, and during that visit he asked me for a briefing on how I carried my enemy force and I said, "Well, I'm carrying them as combat effective." And he said something to the effect [of] "Jesus, you've just beat the tar out of these people up here. How come you're still carrying them as combat effective?" I said, "Well, Danny, the DMZ, you know, is about thirty miles right up here; I know he is infiltrating people through; there's infiltration coming through. Don't know the extent, don't know exactly what types, don't know where they're going, but I know there's infiltration because we're constantly having firefights. And I know where their line of communication is. And I know, too, that he can hook easily around the DMZ and send forces in over there. We're close to his base of supply. So I've got no choice, as I see it, but to carry the forces in my area as combat effective until I have grounds for concluding otherwise." He said something to the effect [of] "They've just

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had the hell beat out of them. I don't agree with you." I said, "That's all right, Danny. I don't care how the hell you carry them back at MACV, until I have concrete proof to the contrary I'm going to carry them as combat effective up here. Prudence tells me that's the way I ought to do it."

I don't know what he did when he went back to MACV; I don't know what he debriefed and reported to the people back there, but I suspect he probably recommended carrying them at a lower level of combat effectiveness than I. And I'll say this. In retrospect, Danny was closer to right if he did that than I was, because at no time during the balance of my tour were they able to demonstrate a significant capability equating to that of a well-equipped, well-organized enemy force. But I still say that prudence in my position dictated that I carry them at a combat effective level until I had concrete evidence to the contrary, and rational appraisal on the part of MACV J-2's office would have permitted them to carry them at considerably less than combat effective. And as it turned out, they would have been right if they carried them that way, and I was wrong. But I don't regret. . . . (Laughter)

G: Well, I was going to suggest, is it possible that if you hadn't taken that stand, the logical conclusion would have been that you would have told General Abrams, "Don't worry, General Abrams, they ain't gonna hit us again"? And that's a dangerous thing to say.

M: That's a danger--oh, by this time, now, incidentally, it isn't Abrams I'm talking to, it's Bill Rosson.

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But I'll give you a little story about Abrams one night that scared the living daylights out of me, while we still had the MACV Forward. He had been out visiting troops all day, and he came back in and called me into his office and said, "Morris, I want to try something on you for size." And he gave me an intelligence situation briefing as he saw it at that time.

G: That's rather the opposite of the way it usually works, isn't it?

M: That's the very opposite. I listened to it and I really couldn't take issue with what the old man said. He said, "What do you think about that?" And I said, "It's highly probable that your assessment is right."

G: What was the gist of what he said?

M: Basically that they didn't have the capability to continue their offensive against Hue, that they were so weakened until we were at this point capable of launching a Tet counteroffensive in our area. And at that time, mind you, he was holding out the better part of the 101st Airmobile Division, U.S., in reserve, and a lot of it was surrounding Hue-Phu Bai, where our headquarters was.

G: Was he thinking seriously of going all-out then?

M: This leads up to my follow-on. When I said, "I see no reason to take great issue with your assessment of the situation," he turned, picked up the phone, called the 101st Division commander, which was [Olinto M.] Barsanti, and said to him in a few words to commit every damn thing he had in an operation considerably removed from Hue-Phu Bai.

G: You mean he denuded the headquarters defense?

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M: We had not one infantry rifle company defending Hue-Phu Bai within twelve hours after I'd made the mistake of agreeing with him.

(Laughter) We had intelligence specialists, personnel specialists, air force mechanics, cooks, bakers, what have you, defending the perimeter of Hue-Phu Bai.

G: Did any of them shoot each other?

M: Fortunately not. But fortunately we didn't get attacked, too, because we couldn't have defended ourselves against a paper tiger. (Laughter)

G: I was going to ask if you oiled your .45 after that.

M: I sweat, and I made up my mind that never again when the old man asks me a question like that would I do anything except [say], "General Abrams, can I have a few minutes to think this over before I answer you?"

G: Very wise.

M: But for about forty-eight hours I sweat blood, because I wasn't that sure his assessment was correct. But he was one of these fellows that believed that if you've got an opportunity to succeed, time is of the essence, let's get on with it.

G: That sounds like the armor mentality.

M: The armor mentality, which he was.

G: Let me throw a big one out here. You have been, I'm sure, asked many questions since the Mike Wallace special took place last January, I guess it was. Did you see the show?

M: I did.

G: What went through your mind as you were watching?

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M: The greatest miscarriage of justice that I've ever seen, of personal knowledge. You know, I thought that he did a real hatchet job on Westmoreland.

G: What were the major points that stick in your mind out of that?

M: The major thing was that there was no conspiracy; we were all over there doing the very best that we knew how to do. I won't suggest that there wasn't some--I've used the word in the past--political pressure, I wish I'd used public pressure, to bring the Vietnamese war to a successful conclusion. There certainly was. Anybody that read the newspapers, listened to the TV, or what have you, must have known that over the years there was public pressure to get us out of that bloody war. And if you translate that into the pressure that must have been on President Johnson, then he must have said to General Westmoreland, "We've really got to show some progress." I don't know that he ever said that to General Westmoreland, but he must have. He must have said, "My political life is hanging on the outcome of this bloody war, and we've got to get on with it." Pure speculation on my part.

G: Okay.

M: But there was no question that there was increasing resistance on the part of an element, a significant element, of the American public to getting us out of the war. Nobody in this country, I think, or few in this country, at least the majority in this country did not realize, and perhaps do not realize today, the bloodbath that has followed our walking away from winning that war. I get almost sick at my stomach

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when I think of the pious words of Jimmy Carter about human rights, and he points to Afghanistan or somewhere in that part of the world, and at least on the face of it doesn't even notice that Cambodia has gone down the drain, God knows what's happened in South Vietnam, really. But we know of thousands of boat people and we know a lot more now about the suffering that has resulted from our having not won the war over there, than if we had won the damn thing.

G: Yes.

M: I don't know whether I've drifted so far from your point or not.

G: No, no, that's fine. Some of the testimony produced on the Wallace show and since alleges that there was an effort to suppress evidence that there were a lot more enemy than we claimed there were. Let me be specific. Colonel Russell Cooley [?] asserted that a lieutenant colonel by the name of Everette Parkins--I have reason to believe you know who he is--

M: I do now.

G: --was fired in November of 1967 for being too forceful in asserting that infiltration figures should be much, much higher than they were. Will you comment on that?

M: He was fired at my direction, but for a totally different reason than what he gives. He was fired because he refused to obey a legal order, and the legal order was we need a better handle on the body count. Now, as far as I know, nobody in intelligence liked the body count as a measure of success or failure. But Mr. McNamara liked it, and so Phil Davidson called me in one day and said to me, "See if you can get

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a better handle on body count. We know that from captured enemy documents, defectors, POW reports and so on, that what these people are saying in these sources differs significantly from what the allied forces report was for a specific operation." Maybe I'm not making myself clear.

G: Give me an example, please.

M: Let's suppose that the 1st Division launched an attack out in the III Corps area somewhere, in a rubber plantation.

G: Are you talking about the Big Red One?

M: Big Red One.

G: All right.

M: And they report that they have killed, they have a body count of, let's say they report fifty. Now let's suppose that four months down the road we capture a document and in it we have evidence there that the enemy's actual losses during that battle was a hundred and fifty. Of that, a hundred were killed and fifty of them were dragged off the battlefield before we captured them perhaps; another fifty were so incapacitated through wounds that they had to be put out of action for a long period of time, if not permanently. So our actual enemy loss at that time was a hundred and fifty people; we've got fifty reported.

Conversely, let's suppose that the 1st Infantry Division had fired H&I [Harassment and Interdiction] fire out into an area onto a target area that they knew was inhabited by an enemy force, and they said, "Well, we shot five hundred rounds out there in so many minutes; we must have killed some, so let's report ten KIAs." And later we

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capture those documents and they say that "We had just moved out of this area just ahead of that TOT [Time on Target] that was launched in there." We capture a diary or something, and it says, "Fortunately, we had just gotten out from under it." So they didn't kill ten.

G: They didn't kill any.

M: They didn't kill any. What I'm saying is that it was up or down; it was higher sometimes; it was lower sometimes. What I told Parkins was this: take these defector reports, these POW reports, these captured documents, enemy medical records, and so forth. Isolate those that can be tied to a specific allied operational report for a specific battle. See if you can come up with a factor by a wide examination of these things, these isolated instants, which we might be able to apply to either American unit reporting or ARVN unit reporting, or across the country, across the board. See if we can apply such a factor. Just see if it's possible to do it. "Can't be done," he said. "It's a waste of time," he said.

G: Did he say this to you?

M: Yes. This discussion goes on for about thirty minutes, with my telling him, "Well, maybe you can't do it, Parkins, but try." And finally after a certain amount of having him tell me that it can't be done, it's a waste of time, I dismiss him and I turned to his boss, who sat through it all this time, and I said, "Fire that son of a bitch."

G: Who was his boss?

M: Well, his boss two echelons up was Ed Halpin [?], and Lew Ponder was deputy to Ed Halpin. And the reason he was fired was for refusing to

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obey an order to attempt to develop. Now, it turns out that Parkins was right. They went on; they assigned this task to a fine lieutenant; he tried. He really gave it an old country try and I'm told that they never really could develop a reliable factor.

G: You couldn't multiply by .7 and come up with something?

M: That's right. But he didn't get fired for not doing a job; he got fired because he refused a legal order to try to do a job.

G: This is interesting to me, because I, in my very limited experience, never encountered an officer who had been fired; now, I've encountered officers who had been relieved.

M: Well, this one was relieved, too--technically correct, he was relieved.

G: What happens to a man in a situation [like that]? What happened to Colonel Parkins, do you know?

M: He got an efficiency report, and I've never seen that efficiency report. I called Lew Ponder and I said, "Do you want me to write the report, or do you want to write it?" He said, "I'll take care of it." And he was present at the conference, and I happen to know from conversations with Lew Ponder since then that Parkins came to him in later years and asked him to intercede with the career management people, change his report, and Lew told him at the time--this was long before this documentary came up--that "No, I won't change it. In the first place, I can't change it; in the second place, I wouldn't agree that it needed changing."

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G: So we can conclude that Lieutenant Colonel Parkins got an early retirement out of all this?

M: I hope so.

G: Fair enough. One other item from Colonel Cooley. He says that General--then Colonel--Graham--

M: Lieutenant Colonel or Colonel.

G: Yes. Well, I believe by this time--

M: (Inaudible)

G: He's on the list.

M: Right.

G: --was instrumental in blocking reports from lower echelons on the way to--well, I guess on the way to General Davidson, ultimately, or General Westmoreland--to the effect that we were undercounting the enemy.

M: Could not have happened and I'll tell you why. He's talking about order of battle reports, I presume. Now order of battle took place in Ed Halpin's-Lew Ponder's shop; Danny Graham runs only Estimates and Current Intelligence.

G: And who does he work for?

M: He works for me.

G: Okay. And who does Lew Ponder work for?

M: Lew Ponder works for Ed Halpin; Ed Halpin works for me.

G: Very well. So if anybody was blocking reports, you were blocking reports?

M: Absolutely.

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G: Okay. All right, we've established that. Did you block any reports?

M: I didn't block any report that I considered to be a legitimate report ever, and I don't remember any report that I ever blocked.

G: Okay. Fair enough. Did somebody ever come to you and say, "Colonel Morris, we're undercounting these guys drastically"?

M: I'm told that somebody did, i.e., Parkins. And I'm told that I rejected that report rather harshly. I have absolutely no memory of a second incident involving Colonel Parkins, which would have in effect been the first incident. What he got fired about I've already told you about. I'm told that there was an earlier incident in which he brought me a study; it is alleged that it was a quote, "JCS study" on infiltration, which I rejected in no uncertain terms as--I wasn't going to send that thing forward. I have no memory of that incident whatsoever.

G: Okay. In what fashion was all of this terribly complicated data computerized? I realize that's an awful question to ask, but--

M: No, I understand what you're driving at. In the first place, you've got to understand that at the time that I was at MACV, we had only one computer and it was not--I'll use the term all-source cleared. Only that intelligence that could be made available to the ARVN could go into that computer. And that computer was under the control of Ed Halpin's people in CICV [Combined Intelligence Center, Vietnam]. It was jointly manned and operated by both ARVN and U.S. forces, mostly U.S. forces. But we were attempting to train ARVN to use it at the same time.

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G: What does that do to the allegation that somebody went in and changed the computer base?

M: Danny Graham could not have done it, and that was the allegation.

G: Who could have done it?

M: Ed Halpin's shop was the only one that could have possibly done it.

G: Well, I'm forced, then, to ask what do we make of the testimony of people like Commander [James] Meacham, who says, "The DIA people have been snooping around here because they know we've monkeyed with the figures, but they're not sure how to get at it"?

M: Haven't the foggiest notion what he's talking about. I really don't. I'll tell you this: that Meacham was a naval officer; he didn't really have a firm grasp of ground order of battle; he certainly didn't--now, I better not say he certainly didn't--I don't believe he had a knowledge of computer techniques per se. He might have known how to make out a creation sheet, but I'm not sure that he did. He wasn't associated with the computer operation; Captain Lanahan [?] was the operations officer in CICV that really handled the computer operations. He was in charge of computer operations, and he was an air force officer and a top-flight little kid. I ran into him in later years in the Pentagon, in 1973 or 1974, at which time I believe he was a major, and he was even more impressive there than he had been in Vietnam.

G: This tape is confidential until you sign off on it, so I'll feel free to ask, you may not feel free to answer, but that would be all right. You have recently, I believe, given a deposition or testimony, I'm unclear as to which.

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M: I am in the process of being deposed, yes.

G: All right. And you may want to say, "Further deponent sayeth not" at this point, I'm not sure. What seems to be the burden of the argument that the figures were fudged, at this point?

M: I'm unclear. I can truthfully answer I'm unclear at this point.

G: Well, let me think of how to proceed for a second.

(Laughter)

(Interruption)

G: --say that the documentary missed something vital.

M: Well, I think one of the things it missed was that there were people over there so dedicated to the task at hand in intelligence. Many of them were working up to hundred-hour weeks, and I don't know anybody that was working less than a fifty or sixty-hour week. I mean, I'm talking about the low-level analysts now. They were working their butts off to try to do within their sphere of influence or responsibility that which was right, as they perceived their job. And it sort of burns me that people don't recognize that there was a major effort being made to support the troops in the field, and that there was really indeed a sense of responsibility felt by the vast majority of the people in intelligence for the task that they had to accomplish. I know the night that I ran into [John L.] Michalski early in November--

G: Who was this, sir?

M: Jack Michalski. Early in November. The reason that I found it unusual to find him there, I simply had been working well into the night; it must have been somewhere around midnight that night, and I

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walked through the area in which he worked and here's Jack and his sergeant sitting there with data spread out all over the desk, all over the wall, maps with pins in it, raw information documents that they were working with. And I recognized that Jack should have gone off shift at five o'clock, but certainly even allowing for overtime, he should have been off shift by eight or nine o'clock at night, and here he is about midnight. So my natural question to him was, "What the hell are you doing here at this time of the night?" And Jack simply said to me, "I'm trying to get my ducks in a row to enable me to convince my boss that I've got enough data here to brief you and other people that something different has changed. Something different is going on in North Vietnam and Laos than has been in the past."

Well, it's this sort of dedication that you found not just in little isolated pockets. It's this sort of dedication that you found most common throughout the whole structure of, I'm sure, not only intelligence, but certainly within the intelligence organization that was there. These guys did not take their jobs lightly. They all--by all, I mean at least the vast majority of them--recognized that there were infantrymen dying out there, and if they could do something to permit those infantrymen maybe to live and make the other fellow die, why, that was their responsibility. And they took it seriously.

But sixty to hundred-hour weeks were not at all unusual in MACV at that time. Most people were working seven days a week; I know of no one that was working an eight-hour day.

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G: Can you give me any gist of the burden of the kinds of questions you were asked or the kinds of issues that came up during this deposition that you've just been through? Or would you prefer to leave that sealed until the case is over?

M: I think we better leave that sealed; I don't mind providing you a copy of the word-for-word transcript of the deposition after I've had a chance--I have reserved right to edit and sign it.

M: Certainly.

M: And I think at this point it would be better if we left it until I have signed the thing under oath, and I'll tell you in it there will be things that I'm not particularly happy about, but I'll live with them. But they are basically--in substance they're asking similar questions to those that you are asking.

G: Well, let me ask you this: what is the question I haven't asked that you'd like to answer?

M: There was no conspiracy. We were doing our dead level best to do the best job we possibly could. There could have been no conspiracy unless it involved me, Davidson, Westmoreland, Danny Graham, Ed Halpin, Lew Ponder, and dozens and dozens of others that won't concede there was ever a conspiracy to deceive the American public. Or the Congress. Or the President of the United States. There was no conspiracy to deceive.

G: Were you happy with the figures--if you had it to do today, if somebody stuck the order of battle in front of you today and said, "This

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is the order of battle as it was carried in April of 1968, or March of 1968, or whatever--"

M: I'm perfectly happy with the official figures that are on record, whatever they are, to this day, during my tenure there, because I honestly believe them to be the very best figures we could come up with at the time. Now, to say that they're accurate, they probably aren't. This guy didn't send us morning reports. He didn't even send us after-action reports. (Laughter)

G: Well, what is the furor all about?

M: The furor--and I may be oversimplifying--is that one man, Sam Adams, has been carrying on a vendetta, a personal vendetta--and by the way, Sam Adams had at the time this vendetta began, as I understand it, approximately two years in CIA as a low-level analyst. Now, you don't learn intelligence in two years.

G: How was he so able to turn the CIA on its head so easily then?

M: I don't think he turned CIA on its head. [Richard] Helms never bought off on Sam Adams, as far as I know. Carver says that he never really bought off on Sam Adams, as far as I know. I think this is what Carver is saying. At one time he said that "I was perfectly willing to compromise," and those aren't his words, but this is the gist of what he said. The SNIE that was ultimately published following the Saigon OB conference was closer to the MACV figures than it was to Mr. Adams' desired figures. It was a little higher than MACV carried, as I remember it, so somebody in CIA finally said that, well, the military has primary responsibility for OB and you haven't convinced us that

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they're wrong, so let's go with the military. And that must have been Mr. Helms or Mr. Helms' deputy or somebody that was empowered to make the decision for CIA.

G: Do you remember when you saw that SNIE?

M: Strangely enough, the first time I saw that SNIE was at a press conference following the CBS documentary.

G: Oh, you went to that press conference?

M: Yes.

G: What did you think of the SNIE when you read it?

M: I thought it was pretty accurate. It basically said that the numbers portion of the thing is pretty close to what MACV carries, and it gave him a capability of continuing a protracted war simply because we weren't capable of--and this is me, now, that's saying this part of it--we aren't going to invade, so what's to keep him from carrying on a war for an indefinite period of time?

G: Let me ask you something--this goes back to something else--about infiltration. This is a hypothetical question, but it's really not. Let's say that a North Vietnamese division moves down out of North Vietnam and into Laos, parallel to the border of South Vietnam past the DMZ, and stops a few miles on the other side of the Laotian border and deploys. When do we start counting those people?

M: I won't count them until we identify them as being in--

G: Let's say it was the NVA 325th Division; that's the Capitol Division, I think.

M: Right. We don't count them until they come into South Vietnam.

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G: But what if they're in striking range of some lucrative target?

M: We count them in the Laotian order of battle.

G: I see. Okay.

M: That doesn't mean that we aren't considering them at MACV headquarters as being available to influence the situation in South Vietnam.

G: Have I described a situation that existed?

M: I think you have, pretty accurately. Now, once they have been committed in South Vietnam and they back up into a base area, that doesn't mean that we drop them from the OB.

G: I understand. When do you start counting them as infiltrators?

M: Infiltrators into South Vietnam, and that's always what we did, after we had first picked them up in South Vietnam.

G: Okay. They had to cross the border before you counted them.

M: They had to cross the border and they had, for the most part, to come into contact with somebody that could identify them. Because I've got to protect certain intelligence sources.

G: Would the NSA be unhappy with you if you didn't?

M: I'm not going to answer that question.

G: Very well, sir. Is there another question I haven't asked that you would like to answer?

M: Gee, you come from an original school of question-askers. (Laughter)

G: Well, I've run out of questions, but I have the feeling that I have not exhausted the source.

M: Oh, you could talk for days on this, really. All I could do would be to sum it up as I wish to hell we hadn't lost the war. And we didn't

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lose the war on the military front, but we lost it on the political front, we lost it on the home front, because of public pressure against our politicians which resulted in political pressure to do things that even the politicians must have known were the wrong course of action.

G: Let me ask you something very specific. What was your personal perch to observe the Tet offensive? Where were you when the thing broke?

M: When it broke in Saigon, I was in BQ 2. I got in about ten o'clock that night, went to bed dog-tired. Sometime thereafter--and I don't know what time it was--between my BQ and a cemetery there was a stone wall that went up about four feet, and bullets started ricocheting off the wall of the BQ. My bed was centered under a window on the cemetery side. I got up, I pulled my bunk around the corner so that it would be over in the corner out of the line of fire of the thing; I went back to bed and I went to sleep.

G: That's extraordinary.

M: There was nothing else to do. I was tired, I needed the sleep, the fighting that was going on out there, there was absolutely nothing I could do to alter it, so what the heck. You might as well try to get a little sleep, because things were going to get tougher in the future.

G: What time did you get out of bed then?

M: Probably about sunup, whenever that occurred, and the fighting was still going on out there, and by that time the fighting had spread pretty much. We were right adjacent to Tan Son Nhut, and parts of Tan Son Nhut had come under fire. In fact, we had lost control over maybe

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the first two or three hundred yards of the runway, and we'd lost control over about the last third of the runway. One interesting comment I remember, because I couldn't get back to MACV headquarters at that time--there was enemy forces in between our BQ and the headquarters--I went up on the roof, and some guy up there had a radio that could tune to the tower-to-aircraft conversation. And I remember one incident as being peculiarly humorous in a combat situation. The tower warned this Pan Am pilot as he was coming in--and he had to be a World War II pilot because of his reaction--the tower said, "Be advised that the first part of the runway is under small-arms fire and the last third of the runway is under small-arms fire." We're up on the roof and we can see the plane that the guy's talking to. The captain of the plane came back and he said, "I won't need it, that's okay, I won't need it." (Laughter) And so the plane went down real sudden-like, flattened out, and from the time the wheels touched the runway until the time that he stopped and started taxiing off, there was nothing but blue smoke where his wheels were locked.

(Laughter)

I never saw a 707 take such a short amount of runway in my life.

G: Sounds like a pretty good man.

M: This guy undoubtedly knew what he was doing.

G: So when did you get to work that morning?

M: About an hour or two later the MPs came down with--they had some APCs, and some of us got in jeeps and some got in APCs, and we ran an escorted convoy back up to the headquarters, which was roughly a mile

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away, something like that. Then I didn't leave the damn headquarters from then until. . . . I guess it was a week before I got out of that stupid headquarters.

G: Where did you sleep?

M: Mary Curry [?] and I slept together. (Laughter)

G: You're going to have to repeat that name, and I'm going to make a note right here that Mrs. Morris is here.

M: Mary Curry was General Davidson's secretary and she normally worked--she was a WAC, a lovely person--about fifty feet [from me], her office was about fifty feet from mine. But at night in the headquarters--she had gotten in from her, not BOQ, enlisted quarters someway or other, I have no idea how she had managed to make it, because she had to come about halfway across Saigon. But she got in the same day I did and naturally she couldn't get back to her quarters either. And there were on occasions a few bullets moving through parts of the MACV headquarters out there; it was not a masonry building.

We were all working around the clock, for practical purposes. But at night we'd try to get a little sleep, as time would permit. I had a couch in my office, and right next door to me was my executive officer's office, and there was a couch--no, there wasn't; there were chairs out there. She brought in one of these little old stretcher-type cots, and set it up out there. I guess she needed to be close to somebody she trusted for all I know. (Laughter) But I think Mary and I spent about four or five nights there, and I daresay that neither of us slept at identical times, because I'd be up working in the--well,

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at that time I had issued orders to the duty officer down in the special intelligence section, the Danny Graham shop, that I was to be called at any time that any significant raw intelligence report came in. And of course Mary had to contend with Phil Davidson all day long and sometimes well into the night. But he did usually try to get over to his hooch for a few hours' rest during the day, or the night, during the Tet offensive. It was a very hectic period of time.

G: The days and the nights kind of run together, do they?

M: You really didn't know whether it was daylight or dark, even though you could perhaps see out from there. It didn't make any difference; things were pretty tough at that time. This fellow made a pretty heavy effort and I think it's fair to say that we were concerned with the potential loss of such places as Hue; it would have been a significant propaganda victory for him if he could have really taken and held Hue. Some of the province capitals that we lost, you know, we could stand those losses, because we could always go back and get them and they were relatively unimportant. But to lose Saigon or to lose Hue or to lose Tay Ninh City, to lose Tan Son Nhut, Bien Hoa, this would be unthinkable, for more reasons than one. And there were threats against all of those areas, real, honest, sincere threats that you better damn well be on your toes and be able to advise the allied forces what the threat was. So you did not pass up an opportunity to look at raw data that might tell you what was threatening them.

G: Did you have occasion to talk to anybody from the media during all this time?

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- M: You're talking about during the Tet offensive, or prior to, or thereafter?
- G: Well, let's not leave out anything significant; let's take the whole case.
- M: We had in Vietnam really three categories of press people, as I might break them down. There was the hostile press, known to be hostile to our cause.
- G: Were these from particular newspapers, particular media, particular people, or--?
- M: Well, such people as--was it Peter Arnett?
- G: Yes, Arnett. He was hostile?
- M: Arnett. He was hostile. There were such people as Bud Merrick [?], U.S. News and World Report, that was objective and therefore considered friendly, if you will. He's a nice guy to keep briefed on what's going on. There's Joe Alsop that is ultrafriendly.
- G: Would you like to elaborate on that?
- M: Well, he is so friendly until he does us more harm than he does good. In other words, nobody's going to believe anything that Joe Alsop says because he's known to be a hawk, if you will. But Bud Merrick is in the middle. He's U.S. News and World Report, and he's very apt to be with one column over here that's pro and one column over here that's anti, and you readers make up your mind. And then on the other hand, there is the Peter Arnett that [writes], "There ain't no way that you guys can be telling the truth."
- G: How did you learn to characterize these guys?

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M: Well, you read their columns. You know what they've been told, you know what they've been exposed to. You also see some of them in the bars, writing stories that end up appearing that they've been on the front line at the time of the action.

G: That is a very common charge; I'm going to ask you if you can give me a specific incident.

M: Peter Arnett wrote more damn stories in the bars in Saigon than he ever wrote as a result of visits to the front lines that he represented himself as having visited.

G: Okay. The bar at the Caravelle Hotel?

M: Probably, probably. And he had a woman companion whose name I don't remember that did almost exactly the same thing.

G: American?

M: Yes. But I really don't remember her name.

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G: You were saying, sir, that Peter Arnett was known to you to write stories sometimes in the bars in Saigon. I think you were trying to characterize the members of the media that you knew of.

M: My impression was that Peter did a lot more writing in the bars from reports than were based on actual visits to the field, that he questioned people, he visited rear areas and got scuttlebutt and from this, almost from whole cloth, from time to time prepared stories that eventually appeared as if he had had firsthand knowledge of what was going on. And he may have from time to time had firsthand knowledge, but my impression was that he was not really the Ernie Pyle-type that

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got out and wrote from true, firsthand knowledge of what the GIs on the front line really had to say. It might be that he interviewed people back in the aid stations, and if you interview them in the aid stations, they're going to have a little different story than they would have if they had just really succeeded in taking the objective. (Laughter)

G: That's a good observation. You said you hadn't read Oberdorfer's book; did you know Oberdorfer at all?

M: I didn't really know him; in fact, I didn't know him at all.

G: Well, how about Peter Braestrup? Did you ever cross his trail?

M: I don't remember him much. Articles that were written by him from time to time, I think, perhaps I might have been exposed to, but I can't recall any specifics.

G: Did you ever have a journalist sit down and really try to pump you?

M: I had a number of journalists assigned to me to keep briefed, and the one that comes to mind was Bud Merrick. He was judged to be an objective reporter. He was assigned to me by Phil Davidson, frankly, as a person that I was to keep briefed.

G: Why did he tell you that?

M: Because he was objective. Those people who were known to be objective, and this is really all we were trying to do, was--well, I suppose it could be called a strategy or a tactic, but [Winant] Sidle, who was MACV's public information officer--

G: How do you pronounce this, is it Winant?

M: Sidle.

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G: Yes, but his first name was Winant Sidle, is that right?

M: You know, I don't know. I believe that's correct. It started with a W, I believe, his first name. But Sidle was apparently given the okay by the command to keep certain reporters briefed off the record, if you will, of what was actually going on.

G: Background.

M: Background, yes. And Bud Merrick happened to be assigned to me. Now, I said Phil Davidson assigned him to me; maybe it was Sidle, I really don't remember. In any case, Bud Merrick was assigned to me as a man that I was to keep briefed. Strangely enough, Bud called me up right after this documentary and I'm sorry to say that Bud's probably become an alcoholic. Maybe that's what war does to you.

G: I think it's a reporter's job hazard.

M: Yes, that could be. Anyway, at the time that Bud was in Vietnam, he was sharp as a tack, and he came to me sometime in early November--

G: Of what year was this?

M: --in 1967 and said, "My headquarters has told me to get my butt over into Laos, that there's something big going to happen over there, and I'm to get over there and cover it. But I'm not sure of what I'm going to miss if I go over there. What do you think? Should I go over there? Is there anything big going to happen?" And I gave Bud a briefing at that time, probably more than off the record because I trusted the guy, [more] than maybe security would ordinarily have permitted me to give a guy. I told him he was wasting his time to go to Thailand or Laos at that time, that it wasn't pointing in that

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direction, that it was pointing toward us was my best guess. And gave him a pretty good rundown on what was happening at that time. I didn't tell him my sources specifically; I simply told him that the activity that was taking place in North Vietnam and Laos was not aimed at Thailand nor was it aimed at Laos, the Vang Pao--the CIA war over in Laos--it was aimed at South Vietnam. If he expected to find a war in Laos, he was going to the wrong place.

But the Alsops were assigned to Westmoreland for off-record, or to Phil Davidson for off-record, or to Sidle for off-record, things like that. In retrospect, I don't think they helped us a lot; I think maybe they hurt us more than they helped us.

G: There are persistent stories that Joe Alsop had almost unprecedented access to things like captured documents, for example.

M: Well, yes, I had access to I think practically every level of intelligence that was available to us or anyone else for consideration, other than the political data, that which went strictly through State Department channels and had to do with the negotiations. Now I saw none of that. But anything that had bearing on the war-making capability, I believe it's safe to say that aside from so-called back channels, privy communications between, let's say, Westmoreland and [Earle] Wheeler, or Westmoreland and [U. S. Grant] Sharp, things like that, I had access to those things.

G: Did you brief General Wheeler when he came over in February?

M: No. Never. I've seen Wheeler; I have never talked to him at any time.

G: Did Joe Alsop have special access?

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M: Yes, it's a fair statement to say that Joe had inside--I don't know whether he had the clearances or not, but he certainly had access to information that most reporters did not.

G: Why?

M: Well, he was favorable to the [administration].

G: Was this policy?

M: I don't know why he had this access, but I do know that he was given favorite son treatment as far as being given off-the-record briefings, and probably it was because he was favorable to the administration's cause.

G: Have you seen any of the TV specials that have run on Vietnam in the last year or so?

M: I've seen one that was related to Cambodia, and perhaps Thailand was-- I think only one or two. I don't know whether that answers your question or not.

G: There was one that was in the D.C. area. I don't know how widely it was broadcast or whether it got throughout Virginia or not, called "The Ten Thousand Day War." It was a five-hour special.

M: Didn't see it. I've seen enough to know that there's a bloodbath going on over there, from casual TV reporting, from one or two documentaries that I saw concerning Cambodia and Thailand, and I'm absolutely astounded at the lack of Jane Fonda reaction to the fact that this is the result of our having gotten out of Vietnam at an inopportune moment. And I wonder how she must feel occasionally when she tries to sleep at night.

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(Interruption)

G: --people, is where were you, what were you doing, and what do you remember about the night of March 31, 1968 when President Johnson came on the television and said, "I will not seek, nor will I accept, the nomination of my party"?

M: 1968. Where was I, Margaret? 1968.

MM: You were in Vietnam.

G: March 31.

M: Still in Vietnam. I probably didn't hear his announcement. January, February, March--I would have been up at Hue-Phu Bai, wouldn't I? I very likely was listening for incoming rockets.

(Laughter)

G: Well, that was a rocket of a sort.

M: Really, at that time--let's see, March, April, May, June--we were probably engaged in either planning for or maybe even the execution of the relief of Khe Sanh.

G: Operation Pegasus.

M: Possibly. Now when it happened, I'm not sure, but that might have been about the time that we were engaged in that.

G: As I tell my marine friends, that was when the 1st Cavalry Division came up and bailed them out.

(Laughter)

M: They wouldn't like that.

G: No, they don't; they don't like it at all.

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Well, do you remember your reaction to the news that LBJ was restricting the bombing and not going to run again?

M: I remember being disappointed that we apparently weren't going to be-- well, I was kind of hopeful. I was hoping that since he had made his announcement that he would not run, nor would he accept, that he was saying that "I'm going to do what is necessary to bring this thing to a successful conclusion regardless of what it costs me." And I was a little disappointed later on, when he didn't really do that. Very frankly, that's my--whether that occurred at that moment or not, I don't know. But even in retrospect, I saw it as an opportunity to go all-out and do what he really thought was right, at that time.

G: Some of his earlier speeches after Tet were very hawkish.

M: Yes, they were, and they were welcomed by the troops in Vietnam, as far as I--at least--I better speak for myself. They were certainly welcomed by me because it never dawned on me that we were going to lose that war.

G: When did it dawn on you?

M: When Thieu suddenly ordered a withdrawal in an unprecedented action for a president of a country. There was really no reason to lose that war even after the U.S. forces withdrew, if Thieu hadn't made that unfortunate decision to back off.

G: So you came back in the summer of 1968, is that right? To what assignment?

M: I came back and took command of the CONARC [Continental Army Command] intelligence center at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and remained there

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for--I guess I had about three and a half years that I remained in that assignment. And following that, I finished out--I was transferred to the so-called MIS0--management information--job for Fort Bragg under General [John Hancock] Hay, recognizing that I had about a year and a half left to go and he needed some help on his automation on the post, and I wasn't going to be promoted, so what the heck? I might as well be hard-nosed and run automation for a while. (Laughter)

G: Why do you say "be hard-nosed and run automation"?

M: Because there was an awful lot of automation effort being wasted on Fort Bragg and in the army at that time, and John Hay recognized it, and wanted somebody that had nothing to gain or lose to become his post automation expert and try to convince the army that they could do better with their automation dollars than they were doing. And I will say this for John Hay, he had guts. He sat down one day and called [William] DePuy, who was then I believe deputy chief of staff of the army, called him direct and said, "My MIS0 tells me that we've got at least 50 per cent more automation capability down here on our post than we need, and in view of the need to save dollars at this point in time and since I believe him, why don't you send somebody down here to find out how he convinced me that he's right?" And DePuy did.

G: Did you know General DePuy?

M: I didn't know him personally; I know of him as CG of the Big Red One. Now you're going to ask me did I like him.

G: No, sir. How could I ask you that when you just told me you didn't know him?

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M: Well, did I like his reputation?

G: Well, all right. What kind of reputation did he have?

M: I thought he ruined more fine officers than any commanding general of any division that I've ever heard of in my life.

G: I know some people who would agree with that. Why did he do it?

M: I don't know. But I know he was unduly quick to relieve people; that much I'm convinced of.

G: So you retired, now, when?

M: June of 1973.

G: June of 1973. And you went straight to North Carolina?

M: No, I went to Tyler, Texas. We owned a home in Tyler at that time, and we stayed two years in Tyler, Texas and moved back to North Carolina.

G: Why?

M: Well, Margaret liked the area, and I didn't care where we lived.
(Laughter)

End of Tape 3 of 3 and Interview I

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