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10 July 1970

DRAFT  
MACSOG DOCUMENTATION STUDY (U)  
ANNEX N

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APPENDIX B

COMMENTS BY THESE INTERVIEWEES  
ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE  
(In Chronological Order)

Name	Association with MACSOG	Tab
Col Clyde R. Russell, USA	Chief, MACSOG Jan 1964 - Jun 1965	A
Col William R. Becker, USAF	Chief, MACSOG Air Operations Jan 1964 - Dec 1964	B
LTC David H. Arno, USAF	Staff Officer, Air Operations, MACSOG Jan 1964 - Mar 1964 (assigned to Hq PACAF and TDY with MACSOG)	C
Cdr Kenneth N. Bebb, USN	Staff Officer, Special Plans, MACV J-5 Apr 1965 - May 1966 Chief, PsyOps Office, Special Operations, J-3, Hq PACOM Jun 1963 - Apr 1965	D
Col Donald D. Blackburn, USA	Chief, MACSOG Jun 1965 - May 1966	E
Col John T. Moore, Jr., USAF	Deputy Chief, Operations Branch, MACSOG Jun 1965 - Jun 1966 Chief, Special Plans Office Directorate of Plans, Headquarters, USAF Jun 1966 - to date: Jul 1969	F
LTC Ralph R. Garrison, USAF	Assistant Air Operations Officer, MACSOG Sep 1965 - Sep 1966	G
LTC Ernest T. Hayes, Jr., USA	Plans Officer and Strategic Technical Directorate (STD) Liaison Officer, MACSOG Oct 1965 - Nov 1965 STD Liaison Officer, MACSOG Sep 1968 - Jun 1969 Chief, Operations-34 and STD Liaison Officer, MACSOG Jun 1969 - to date: Jul 1969	H

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<u>Name</u>	<u>Association with MACSOG</u>	<u>Tab</u>	
LTC Vincent W. Lang, USA	Chief, Plans and Senior Advisor, Camp Long Thanh Dec 1965 - Nov 1966	I	1
Col Robert C. MacLane, USA	Chief, Airborne Operations Section, MACSOG May 1966 - May 1967	J	2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
Col John K. Singlaub, USA	Chief, MACSOG May 1966 - Aug 1968	K	12 13 14 15
Col Dennis P. Casey, USMC	Chief, Operations Branch, MACSOG Jun 1966 - May 1967	L	16 17 18
LTC Jonathon D. Carney, USA	Deputy Director, Operations-35 (SHINING BRASS/PRAIRIE FIRE, DANIEL BOONE/SALEM HOUSE, IGLOO WHITE) Aug 1966 - Jul 1967	M	19 20 21 22 23 24
Capt Bruce B. Dunning, USN	Special Operations Division, OSACSA, Staff Officer & Division Chief Aug 1966 - Nov 1969	N	25 26 27 28 29
LTC Kenneth W. McNiven, USAF	Assistant Air Operations Officer, MACSOG Sep 1966 - Sep 1967	O	30 31 32 33
Col Benton M. Austin, USA	Chief, Operations-35 (SHINING BRASS) Chief, MACSOG Operations Sep 1966 - Sep 1967	P	34 35 36 37 38
LTC Harold J. Rose, USA	Commander, C&C Detachment North, MACSOG Sep 1966 - Sep 1968	Q	39 40 41 42
Col Eugene A. Wahl, USAF	Chief, MACSOG Air Operations Section Dec 1966 - May 1967 Deputy Operations Officer Jun 1967 - Dec 1967	R	43 44 45 46 47 48
Col Robert C. Kendrick, USA	Chief, Special Operations Branch, Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations (J-3) Hq PACOM Dec 1966 - to date: Jul 1969	S	49 50 51 52 53 54
Col Robert C. Kingston, USA	Chief, MACSOG Operations-34 Mar 1967 - Aug 1969	T	55 56 57
Col Harold K. Aaron, USA	Commander, 1st SFG Jun 1967 - May 1968 Commander, 5th SFG Jun 1968 - May 1969	U	58 59 60 61

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<u>Name</u>	<u>Association with MACSOG</u>	<u>Tab</u>
Col George A. Maloney, USA	Chief, Operations Branch Special Operations Division OSACSA Jun 1967 - Apr 1969	V
Staff Sergeant Russell D. Allen, USA	Advisor, Operations-34 Reconnaissance Teams, MACSOG Aug 1967 - Dec 1968	W
LTC Jefferson Seay, III, USA	Liaison Officer, MACSOG, to the Strategic Technical Directorate Jan 1968 - Sep 1968	X
Col Robert L. Gleason, USAF	Deputy Chief, MACSOG Mar 1968 - Mar 1969	Y
Col Stephen E. Cavanaugh, USA	Chief, MACSOG Aug 1968 - to date: Jul 1969	Z

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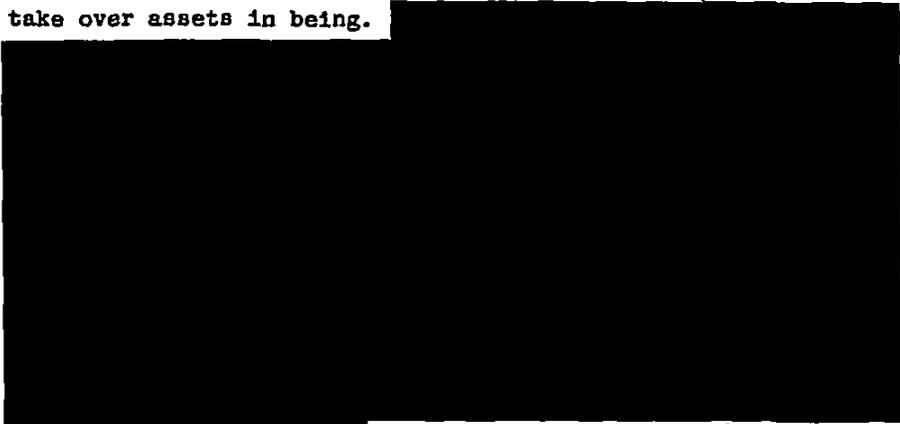
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COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

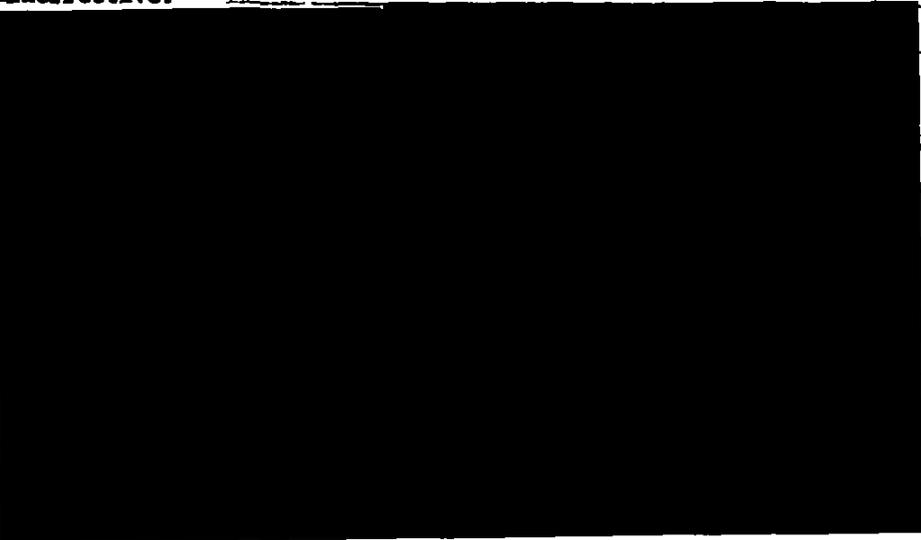
BY

COLONEL CLYDE R. RUSSELL, USA

. . . . Once . . . [OPLAN 34A] was approved and the military took over, everyone wanted immediate results. The biggest mistake in OPLAN-34A was the assumption that we would take over assets in being.



... a naval base commanded by a questionably capable major in the Vietnamese Army. Later on I did everything I could to get rid of him.\* He was entirely ineffective.



\* (TS) Interview of Colonel Clyde R. Russell, USA, pp. 1-2.  
\*\* Ibid., p. 2.

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. . . I . . . stress the importance of weather reporting 2

in this type of operation. We had to know the winds aloft to 3

get the leaflets in on-target. We needed accurate wind 4

information for paratrooper operations. We had to know the 5

tide condition, the wave condition, and the beach conditions. 6

We had to have weather information from below the surface of 7

the water up to 20,000 or 30,000 feet in order to run this 8

operation. I must say, that once we got the satellite weather 9

program over there, we had as fine a weather facility as has 10

ever been my pleasure to work with and it was required, it was 11

used, and was a real asset to the operations. We certainly 12

should make preparations for accurate weather reporting for any 13

operation of this type in the future.\* 14

One of my big disappointments was that we could not 15

start a resistance movement in North Vietnam. I feel that had 16

we been able to do that, get it started in 1964, we would be 17

in a much better position at the bargaining table today, and 18

we could have had a counter organization for the NLF. . . . 19

Looking back, had we started in 1964, I am quite confident we 20

could have quite a guerrilla effort going in NVN today and it 21

would have put us in a real good position from a bargaining 22

standpoint. I can't understand why, as a nation, we take such 23

a dim view of guerrilla warfare that we run and yet it's one 24

of the best operations that the communists have been running 25

against us. We must get beyond this, in my opinion, and get 26

into the guerrilla operation type thing if we are to face up 27

to Africa and South America where problems will come from in 28

the future.\*\* 29

\* Ibid., p. 4.  
 \*\* Ibid., p. 5.

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Tab A to  
Annex N to  
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During my time, we were restricted from going into Laos  
 at all, although the Vietnamese did make liaison with Vang Pao.  
 Vang Pao was running the Meo group in Laos and doing quite well  
 with what he had to work with. He was under-equipped at the  
 time and he had tribal problems which is true of that group  
 of people, but he was willing to cooperate with the Vietnamese.  
 My counterpart, Colonel Ho, visited this man on several  
 occasions. I sent Colonel Eddie Partain with him on one of  
 these operations. He was picked up by the US Embassy even  
 though we had cleared him for going into Laos. He was expelled  
 from the country with no questions asked. We were extremely  
 disappointed. At that time we were forbidden from sending  
 anybody else back to make liaison with Vang Pao. The  
 Vietnamese disregarded this and continued their liaison with  
 Vang Pao. I was concerned in that they might make an arrange-  
 ment with him and we would lose control of the operation and  
 have no influence. Of course, we will probably always have  
 influence through logistics and money. But, it would have been  
 very hard to control once they got together and made the  
 arrangements. Had Ho been more aggressive, I'm sure that he  
 and Vang Pao could have worked out something because Vang Pao  
 was willing at that time to cooperate in any type of cross-  
 border operations that we wanted to run from Laos into NVN.  
 I couldn't say that Vang Pao and Ho would have run successful  
 operations, but I did finally get Ho in when he was  
 uncooperative and threatened him with cutting off logistic  
 support for any operations through Laos. I told him we would  
 absolutely not support it until my government was read in on  
 it. He accepted this.\*

\* Ibid., pp. 5-6.

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Tab A to  
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I've covered maritime operations and again I think we  
 could have done anything up and down the coast within the  
 limitations of the weight of the ammunition and people you  
 want. We could have had complete control of the coast up to a  
 depth of three or four miles, in my opinion, and could have  
 done any type of operation from prisoner taking to putting  
 radios on the dining room tables or doing anything we wanted  
 to, e.g., blowing up water systems (which we did). When the  
 boats went in, the North Vietnamese people were scared and their  
 regional forces or national guard forces were no problem at  
 all . . .\*

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The air operations were more of a problem. . . . Our  
 problem here was what would our agents do once they got in  
 country? I don't think we'd have had a problem recruiting  
 people had we been talking about a guerrilla operation up  
 there where they could have gone up and recruited people and  
 started tearing up the countryside. It's hazy where the restric-  
 tion came that they could not recruit and we could not start a  
 guerrilla movement. We could never get concurrence for this  
 in-country. CAS would not concur in this effort, the ambassador  
 was not strongly for it even though the military wanted to push  
 it. While I was there, the paper never got out of country  
 requesting that we start a strong guerrilla effort up there. I  
 do know at one time in one of the briefings that we were told  
 to tell the team that they would not make contact with the  
 populace in the north and at that time it became strictly a  
 psychological operation as well as an intelligence collection  
 operation. You don't collect much intelligence when you're  
 hiding in the hills trying to protect your life. Really, they  
 were running around the woods dropping a few hand-printed  
 leaflets and it was a totally unacceptable operation. We should

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\* Ibid., pp. 7.

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Tab A to

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have real strong guidance on what we want these people to do 1  
 and, of course, my fixed opinion is it should be a guerrilla 2  
 effort.\* 3

When we took over, we found we had a number of so-called 4  
 agents who were not qualified for anything. They had been 5  
 on the payroll for a good number of years and they liked the 6  
 pay, but when we got ready to commit them, they were not eager 7  
 to go. We did commit most of these people without very high 8  
 expectations at the time they were launched. We didn't expect 9  
 them to come up on the air in some instances; we knew they would 10  
 surrender immediately upon landing, and they did. This is one 11  
 of the reasons for our lack of success in the first of the 12  
 airborne operations. Later on, when we got confidence in the 13  
 teams and, again, I feel this is due to more adequate training 14  
 and more rugged training to where they were properly trained 15  
 and properly motivated, then we had less trouble in infiltrating 16  
 the teams and getting them to want to go. The original assets 17  
 we had in this effort were not capable of going anywhere and 18  
 we had to get rid of them; at the same time, we couldn't turn 19  
 them loose in South Vietnam because they'd been briefed and 20  
 rebriefed on operations in North Vietnam. Our solution was to 21  
 put them in the north; many of them were captured.\*\* 22  
 ---I do feel that once you commit teams that you must do every- 23  
 thing you can to support them if you're going to have the 24  
 effort succeed. You can't abandon people because invariably 25  
 the word gets out and the rest of the teams will know. So, 26  
 once you make up your mind you're going to quit supporting 27  
 the people you have in an area, you better cancel the entire 28  
 operation because its chances of success are real limited. I 29  
 don't know how many of the teams were compromised. We had this 30  
 one instance where we used codes and recodes and cipher codes 31

\* Ibid., pp. 7.  
 \*\* Ibid., pp. 7-8.

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 Annex N to  
 Appendix B

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and I am sure that, with enough pressure, they compromised the 1  
 codes even though it's a difficult one to compromise. In the one 2  
 instance where we had the airplane badly shot up, we were 3  
 convinced that that team had been compromised and yet, after 4  
 the shooting, they did come back on the air and said that 5  
 they had heard the shooting in the distance. It was a mountain 6  
 or two away. We were never able to really determine whether 7  
 they were compromised or not. It's one of the real problems 8  
 of this type of operation to know whether they are or not. ARIES, 9  
 living in a highly populated area sent out long, long messages 10  
 and has been doing this for years -- you worry about his being 11  
 compromised, whether he is or not; yet, some of the information 12  
 he sends out is fantastic. The messages right after the first 13  
 air strikes were raw do-it-again type affairs and you wondered 14  
 if a man would truly send something like this out, encouraging 15  
 you to make more air strikes, had he been compromised. You 16  
 can't follow this line of reasoning, and yet the man was 17  
 extremely enthusiastic when we launched the first air strikes 18  
 in the north.\* 19

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\* Ibid., pp. 8.

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## COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

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BY

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COLONEL WILLIAM R. BECKER, USAF

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There were . . . some questions that were just simply 4  
 unanswered. We did at times seek answers to these questions, 5  
 but we did not stir up a great deal of interest in providing 6  
 us the answers. One of the unanswered questions really was 7  
 the extent of cover that the military personnel should be under 8  
 in their operations over there. Were we really going to try 9  
 to cover them in the sense that they were not acknowledged as 10  
 military personnel to anyone within the country, or only to a 11  
 select few within the country; or were they to be openly 12  
 military personnel within the country except to those people 13  
 that were going to be the agents, to be dropped outside of the 14  
 country and then consequently subject to compromise? We made 15  
 a long, gallant attempt to obtain some answers to this type of 16  
 policy question and drew almost a complete blank; there did not 17  
 seem to be anyone really interested in it as a significant 18  
 question of policy pertaining to the extent of cover we were 19  
 to provide the growing SOG operation as far as its aircrew 20  
 personnel and in-country presence were concerned.\* 21

There was also the problem of determining adequate cover 22  
 for the entire operation in the event of trouble. What was 23  
 going to happen in case we lost an airplane over North Vietnam? 24  
 We did not have an adequate plan and we had a little difficulty 25  
 trying to get even an inadequate plan that we had coordinated. 26  
 The plan simply was a repeat of what the CAS people had used 27  
 which was rather a thin and unimaginative sort of affair; and 28  
 it really did not answer any of the hard questions. The 29  
 airplanes that we were using (C-123s) were so obviously attribut- 30  
 able to the United States; i.e., the C-123 had never been sold 31

\* (TS) Interview of Colonel William R. Becker, USAF, pp. 5.

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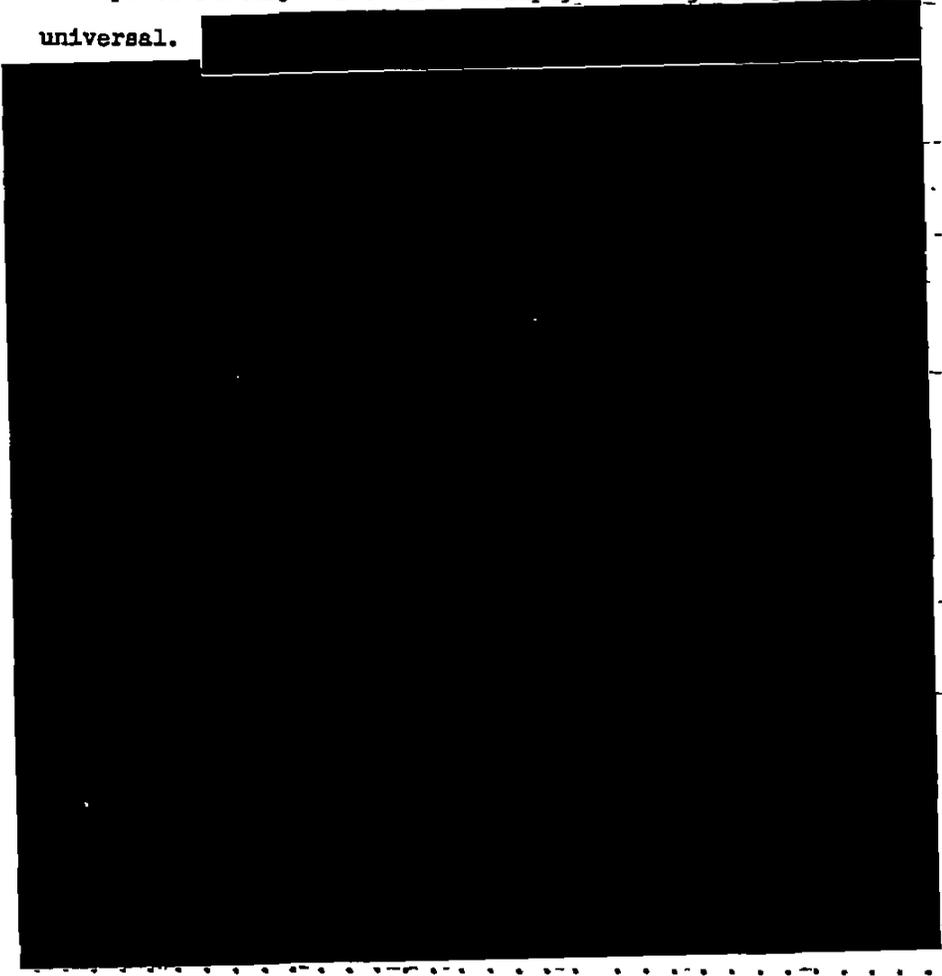
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on the commercial market abroad and no one would have bought it. 1  
 The plane was clearly identified as a US aircraft. There was 2  
 some attempt to sanitize them, i.e., to make them not directly 3  
 attributable to the United States Air Force. For example, there 4  
 were parts on the aircraft that had serial numbers stamped on 5  
 them that said the aircraft went through the depot at San Antonio 6  
 only two months before -- this type of thing. There was some 7  
 attempt to rectify this. The attempt, however, was far from 8  
 universal. 9



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\* Ibid., pp. 5-6.  
 \*\* Ibid., pp. 6-7.

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With regard to our resupply operations, one of the first  
 problems that we ran into was the teams' locations, i.e., the  
 locations where the teams were dropped or existed in place  
 when we took over the operations. At that time, we assumed the  
 responsibility for resupplying the existing teams and for taking  
 the teams that had been trained by CAS and emplacing them. Most  
 of the drop zones had already been selected. They were simply  
 waiting for suitable weather or for completing the last few  
 moments of training for emplacement. Washington had already  
 cleared the location where the teams would be emplaced. A good  
 part of our initial operations then were essentially already  
 cast in concrete. There was really no opportunity for a  
 dramatic shift in the operations. The teams were already in-  
 place and required resupply. A good part of the air operations  
 was concerned exclusively with resupply in the sense that the  
 air operations were so meager that all they were able to do,  
 and they were not able to do this very well, was to attempt  
 to keep up with the resupply problem as opposed to being able  
 to emplace new teams.\*

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\* Ibid., pp. 7-8.

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COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

LT COLONEL DAVID H. ARNO, USAF

.....

... one of the main problems was the fact that  
 CINCPAC never did write a 34A plan which tasked the components  
 to support the operation. As a result, we were operating from  
 a MACV plan which did not provide any clear statement of  
 responsibilities, functions, and missions of the components  
 toward 34A operation. This problem was reflected in the  
 obtaining of personnel, approval of the tables of distribution,  
 budgeting, providing equipment and basic support to aircraft  
 and this type of thing. For example, [REDACTED]  
 [REDACTED] we also  
 provided the necessary maintenance personnel; however,  
 there was no clear understanding as to just whom the maintenance  
 personnel were assigned to, how they were to be controlled, the  
 status of normal Air Force procedures, rules, regulations,  
 flying safety; these types of things were completely omitted  
 from any real guidance. Thus, the maintenance personnel working  
 on the aircraft had no clear source of spare parts. I feel  
 that had CINCPAC prepared an OPLAN tasking the various components  
 and forming a very definite organization for control of the  
 resources necessary for SOG operations that MACSOG would have  
 gotten much better support and, in the long run, would have  
 gotten it faster.\*

Some of the organizational problems, of course, overlapped  
 with the haste to become operational and were a little bit hard  
 to separate out as being one category or the other. For  
 example, the original 34A OPLAN stated a requirement for six  
 additional C-123 type aircraft. However, there was no statement

\* (PS) Interview of Lt Colonel David H. Arno, USAF. pp. 1-2.

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(PS) Interview of Lt Colonel David H. Arno, USAF. pp. 1-2.

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as to flying hours required, sortie requirements, this type of 1  
thing, upon which the air component that was to provide the 2  
aircraft could make any rational determination as to whether 3  
this was the real requirement or not. Also, there was no 4  
clear statement that the Air Force was, in fact, responsible for 5  
providing them. In the exchange of message traffic between 6  
MACV, CINCPAC and Washington the transfer of six C-123s was 7  
approved. There was considerable confusion in SOG as to exactly 8  
how they wanted the aircraft configured and what type of equip- 9  
ment they wanted aboard in the way of ECM gear, flight recorders, 10  
etc. Saigon had also stated that they wanted the aircraft to 11  
be sanitized without any clear definition as to what they meant 12  
by sanitizing the airplane. To the Air Force, sanitizing an 13  
aircraft meant completely removing all identification marks 14  
and serial numbers from the aircraft and all of its component 15  
parts, black boxes, etc. so that nothing on the airplane could be 16  
officially traced to the United States. This, as can be 17  
recognized, is an expensive and time consuming process since 18  
the airplane has to be completely disassembled and then 19  
reassembled. When this was explained to Saigon it was understood 20  
then that they did not require this degree of sanitizing. The 21  
decision was then made as far as sanitizing was concerned to 22  
merely paint the airplane, to remove the tail numbers, and to 23  
remove flight records or maintenance records from the aircraft. 24  
Once the decision was made for the Air Force to provide the 25  
C-123s, the Air Force responded quite rapidly. Special training 26  
schools were established to provide for the operation and 27  
maintenance of the ECM equipment and the personnel were then 28  
transferred to Saigon as rapidly as possible without leaves 29  
intervening.\* 30  
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\* Ibid., pp. 2-3.~~TOP SECRET~~

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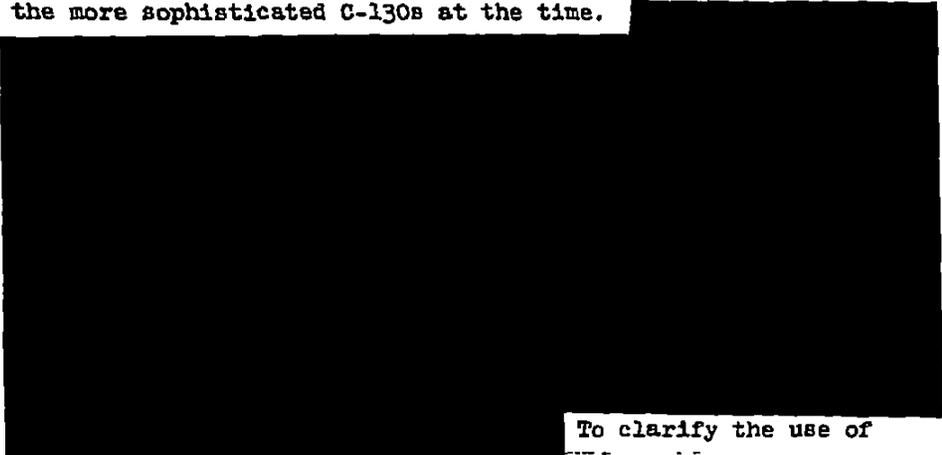
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With regard to selection of the C-123 as the aircraft to be provided to SOG, the Air Force was never asked its opinion as to whether or not this was the best aircraft or as to what type of equipment in the way of ECM gear, radars, flight recorders, navigation equipment should be provided on the aircraft to perform its mission. In all probability, at the time we were providing this aircraft in 1964, the C-123 was the best airplane immediately available for this use. We did not have the more sophisticated C-130s at the time.

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To clarify the use of the term "mission" here, I am talking about PACAF's or the Air Force's mission and responsibility to support this SOG activity. Although the flight crews were trained, this lack of assignment of specific responsibility caused unnecessary delay and an exchange of telegram messages between Saigon, Hawaii, and the States to provide for the coordination required.\*

Another example as to the implications raised by the lack of better or different organization was in respect to aircraft accidents. One of the SOG C-123s had an aircraft accident with US personnel aboard and immediately there came the problem of how do we handle this one. Since the aircraft was not flying under USAF regulations, was not even on the Air Force inventory, but did have Air Force personnel aboard, there was

\* Ibid, pp. 3-4.

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the question of responsibility for an aircraft accident investi- 1  
 gation who was to do it, was it to be done at all, what was 2  
 to be the classification of the accident investigation. It 3  
 wasn't until about the third accident involving the C-123s 4  
 that these problems were straightened out. I might add that 5  
 the SOG aircraft did have a rather high nonoperational accident 6  
 rate. It was felt at PACAF that this rate was attributable 7  
 to the lack of standing operating procedures and flying safety 8  
 programs that are normally found in an Air Force unit. As a 9  
 result of some of these accidents, the procedures were tightened 10  
 up and the operation was, in effect, run more along the lines 11  
 of a standard Air Force unit.\* 12

Another problem area which might be discussed is the 13  
 haste for the SOG to take over the CAS operations and to become 14  
 operational. I feel that had the SOG taken a little more time 15  
 to organize before initiating operations they could have been 16  
 accomplished much smoother and with greater understanding of 17  
 what SOG was really trying to do. Also, had some attempt been 18  
 made to establish the organization before assuming responsibility, 19  
 the required trained and experienced people could have been 20  
 assigned to SOG prior to its assumption of responsibilities. 21  
 To this end, none of the original Air Force personnel, at least, 22  
 assigned to SOG (PCS to SOG) had any previous background in 23  
 unconventional warfare operations. This is despite the fact 24  
 that at Hurlburt we did have a group of personnel there trained 25  
 and experienced in unconventional warfare operations and in 26  
 coordinating these operations with the Army. In the haste to 27  
 become operational, the original Air Force personnel were taken 28  
 from resources available to the 2nd Air Division. I say this 29  
 not to cast aspersions on the personnel selected because, in 30  
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\* Ibid., pp. 4.

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my mind, they did do an outstanding job of providing support 1  
for the air operations conducted by SOG, but they did this with- 2  
out a background of training and experience.\* 3

Also, as a result of the haste to become operational, SOG 4  
merely continued to do what CAS had been doing without any 5  
real change in direction, scope or effect on the program itself. 6  
CAS operations to that time had been less than spectacular and 7  
one of the main reasons for expanding the program was to obtain 8  
more effectiveness. This haste to become operational also 9  
relates to the basic organization itself. Had a JUWTF been 10  
formed, it is felt the necessary personnel would have been 11  
obtained prior to the headquarters actually assuming respon- 12  
sibility for the mission. This is particularly true since there 13  
was no real haste for transferring control of the operations 14  
and SOG continued to use CAS procedures and CAS assets to 15  
continue the operation.\*\* 16

..... 17  
In a closed and controlled society like North Vietnam, 18  
development of resistance movements is not an easy thing to do. 19  
However, in the early 1964 time frame, before the aerial 20  
bombardments had caused the massive relocation of Vietnamese 21  
from the major cities, it is quite possible that in the various 22  
tribal areas, particularly along the North Vietnamese-Lao 23  
border, a resistance base could have been established. 24

[REDACTED] 25  
[REDACTED] 26  
[REDACTED] However, it must be 27  
recognized that implicit in the development of this resistance 28  
movement is the moral responsibility to provide for the 29  
requisite safety, evacuation, etc., of indigerous personnel 30  
in the movement, etc., in case of need. . . .\*\*\* 31

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\* Ibid., pp. 4-5  
\*\* Ibid., pp. 5.  
\*\*\* Ibid., pp. 7.

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Although the current C-130s which have been equipped for covert operations are an improvement over the earlier C-123s, we still do not have the capability to at will insert unconventional warfare teams or resources into an enemy country in all types of circumstances, particularly night, bad weather, and mountainous terrain. Improvement is needed in terrain avoidance radar and navigation aids to make this possible.\*

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\* Ibid., pp. 8.

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B-n-18

Tab C to  
Annex N to  
Appendix B

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Appendix B

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COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

COMMANDER KENNETH N. BEBB, USN

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The cumbersome approval system that was established in the maritime program made it difficult for SOG to take advantage of current operational intelligence. If, for example, SOG planned a kidnapping at a specific village above the parallel, by the time they got the approval to carry it out, the situation would have changed drastically so that the mission would have to be aborted.

SOG Naval officers requested both on visits to CINCPAC and by message authority to put US nationals on board to improve the efficiency of the operations. This was denied on all but one occasion when we had the OIC of NAD Danang go out with the Vietnamese on an air-sea rescue mission prior to air strikes in North Vietnam. In summary, I felt that SOG should have had approval to conduct certain types of missions without going to Washington for approval.\*

In addition to being the action officer on CINCPAC Staff for the MAROPS, I was also the mine warfare officer for the 34A program. Admiral Felt devoted a great deal of effort in providing a few elite Vietnamese with aerial mine training so that they could under the 34A proposed mission plans carry out mining operations in North Vietnam to bottle up the SWATOWS (as Adm Felt used the term). In conjunction with MACV, we devised a unique plan of sheep dipping American carrier-based aircraft and naval pilots so that they could conduct mining operations in Haiphong and two or three of the smaller ports. The Vietnamese would fly missions from SVN bases (Danang). To train the Vietnamese in this mining operation in ALEs, the

\* (28) Interview of Commander Kenneth N. Bebb, USN, pp. 3.

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Tab D to Annex N to Appendix B

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Navy made preparations with their mine warfare people at 1  
 CINCPACFLT and at other commands to provide the mines and other 2  
 support equipment to carry out this mission. Adm. Felt sent 3  
 three naval aviators to Vietnam to work with the 34A Vietnamese 4  
 pilots and to train them in this mission. When they were in 5  
 the last part of their training, he sent me to Vietnam for a 6  
 couple of weeks to evaluate their training and to report to 7  
 him on my assessment as to whether they were capable of carrying 8  
 out the mission. With maximum cooperation from the Air Force 9  
 in Vietnam, the training was accomplished and they were ready 10  
 to carry out this mission . . . permission was never 11  
 received to conduct any mining with the 34A pilots up north.\* 12

. . . . . 13  
 Admiral Felt was extremely frustrated with the progress of 14  
 MAROPS during the winter of 1964. He ordered General Milton, 15  
 his deputy, and myself down to VN to find out why the PT boats 16  
 were unable to go out on their missions and why they were 17  
 always cancelled because of weather. We investigated this 18  
 for him and concluded that winter operations out of Danang in 19  
 VN were marginal and a great deal of time was lost because of 20  
 the high sea state and high winds. There was no solution for 21  
 this problem. But it was difficult to convince Washington that 22  
 mother nature had control of us during the Monsoon seasons.\*\* 23

. . . . . The full capability 24  
 of our UW forces was never used . . . . . Many excellent proposals 25  
 were recommended by SOG and supported by CINCPAC to conduct 26  
 submarine underwater SEAL operations in Haiphong and other 27  
 areas in NVN. During my tour in CINCPAC and MACV I can remember 28  
 no US submarine operations up north.\*\* 29

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\* Ibid.  
 \*\* Ibid., pp. 4-5.

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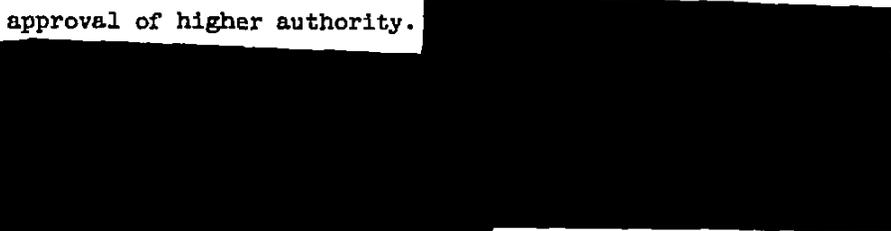
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COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

COLONEL DONALD D. BLACKBURN, USA

. . . The original agreement (CIA/DOD) . . . said that a resistance movement could not be organized without approval of higher authority.



The concern was that a resistance movement might get out of control and on cessation of hostilities leave the people out on a limb -- the Bolovens operation is a case in point. To be really successful, a more viable national front organization and more flexibility in operational techniques were needed. My idea was to establish cells in the north and develop a system to extract people from the north for external training and reinsertion as well as inserting people from SVN who were Northerners. Indigenous assets from areas contiguous to NVN would have also been useful in such an operation if permission to recruit them could have been obtained. The modus operandi that prevailed amounted to a "one way street" for the team personnel with no hope of return.\*

I developed a plan for a front organization and briefed the country team. The idea was that phantom agencies would be established in Paris and Hong Kong, etc., so as to provide plausible denials of controls by GVN and USG and give credence to the idea of a real resistance effort. This would be the national front organization, with the low-level movement conducted by infiltrated teams, tribal contacts in the north-west area of NVN, and other oppressed elements of the population.

\* (S) Interview of Colonel Donald D. Blackburn, USA, pp. 1.

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Tab E to Annex N to Appendix B

\* (S) Interview of Colonel Donald D. Blackburn, USA, pp. 1.

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For instance, So Kha Tien (phonetic) an evacuee Meo chief from Northwest NVN, was willing to lend his support in recruiting and establishing contacts locally available in SVN as well as in NVN. The idea would be to collect intelligence and establish cells and contacts. Ambassador Lodge was briefed and endorsed the front concept. In addressing this matter to the JCS through CINCPAC the intent and concept was misinterpreted or misunderstood by members of the latter staff. It was construed to be tied to the GVN. Therefore, CINCPAC forwarded the plan to JCS with a recommendation for disapproval. This was unfortunate because, with publicity, it could have been a parallel to the NLF and could have provided something more credible than the Sacred Sword of the Patriots League to tie operations to. A viable cause would have been the basis for successful operations rather than using money as a team motive.\*

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Assuming that SOG was charged with "deniable" missions by its 34 Alpha Charter, why was it necessary to treat MAROPS in the same light as the bombing halt? . . . . . However, the logic behind deniable operations that were lending credence to the Sacred Sword activities has been destroyed. In essence we have shown our hand behind the operations that were to support it. It can't be reconstituted. . . .\*\*

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\* Ibid., pp. 2.  
\*\* Ibid., pp. 3-4.

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COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

COLONEL JOHN T. MOORE, JR., USAF

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I spent most of my time at the outset, digging into the  
air operations themselves and noted several things. First,  
that we expanded the agent operations up North, we were  
stretching the range limits of the aircraft. I noted also that  
we were extremely limited operationally because of the capabil-  
ities of the C-123. We had to fly in the light-of-the-moon  
periods and even then we were limited to flying at times when  
the moon was at least 30° above the horizon. It all boiled  
down to the fact that out of any single complete moon phase  
period, we only had four days in which we could operate. This  
meant that if we failed, by virtue of bad weather, to get an  
operation off in that four-day period, we were automatically  
forced to reschedule it for the next moon period. Another  
important limitation on the C-123 was its inability to fly in  
weather at low altitude. All these operations had to be  
conducted at low altitude to avoid radar detection and the air  
defense threat. We prepared a study, which I personally con-  
ducted, to highlight these mission aircraft shortcomings and  
concluded that we needed an especially configured C-130 to  
overcome the operational limitations imposed upon us. We  
submitted this study to CINCPAC and it eventually ended up in  
the Joint Chiefs of Staff. However, this was not the first  
time that C-130s for this mission had been requested. MACSOG  
records indicated that there had been several attempts to  
obtain them; however, they had always been turned down. We  
felt that one of the reasons was that there was not sufficient  
justification for the C-130s. The purpose of the study really

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was to document in detail the shortcomings of the MACSOG air capability and to fully justify getting an improved capability. Eventually, we were successful, although I had finished my tour with MACSOG before the modifications on the C-130 aircraft were completed and they were delivered to the theater.\*

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With respect to the air operations, I noted that they were categorized as being covert in support of covert ground operations, namely the agent teams in NVN. Looking into this, I found that, in fact, we were using third country crews, namely the Chinese [redacted] to fly the C-123s. These aircraft were especially configured for the mission with defensive equipment, etc. Moreover, there were approved cover stories [redacted]

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[redacted] Neither of these was

very plausible. They were rather weak, in my opinion. [redacted]

[redacted]

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\* (TS) Interview of Colonel John T. Moore, Jr., USAF, pp. 1-2.

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Tab F to  
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The fact that

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they were Chinese was rather close hold information.\*\*

The aircraft themselves were not sanitized to the extent that they could be plausibly denied as being a US Government airplane. The only sanitization of the aircraft that had been done and was done before each mission was to remove all tags and any of the other documents or papers that would indicate the unit of assignment. None of this accompanied the airplane; however, even a superficial investigation into any parts of the airplane would have indicated it was being maintained with USAF aircraft parts coming out of US stocks. All the equipment on board the airplane was military equipment. Navigational, communications, and ECM equipment were fairly common to quite a number of US aircraft. All the manufacturer's plates clearly indicated that they were made in the United States. There is a significant aspect of this. The reason why we did not press to get the aircraft sanitized and did not ask that the C-130s coming over be sanitized was the fact that, by the time I arrived there, we had already started the bombing operations up North. There was an overt presence of US military aircraft over Vietnam and this, in effect, negated the requirement for the air effort itself over North Vietnam to be covert. It was quite easy to explain the presence of a USAF C-123 up there. The only thing that we had to be concerned about was a forced landing or crash of the aircraft with the agent personnel

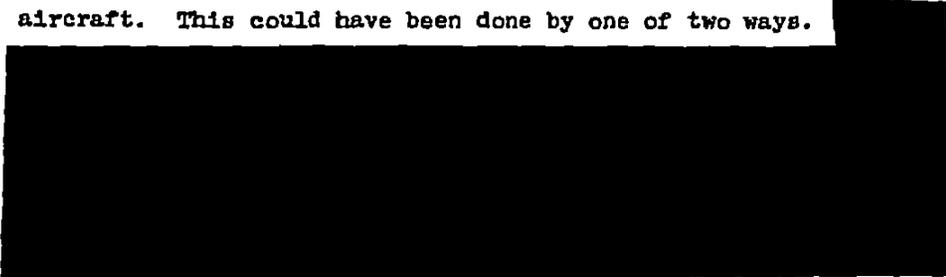
\* Ibid., pp. 2-3.  
\*\* Ibid., pp. 3.

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themselves aboard and, of course, since they were Vietnamese, 1  
 we could even explain this by saying that we had evacuated 2  
 these people out of a forward area and were taking them back 3  
 when the pilots got lost and flew in the wrong direction and 4  
 got over North Vietnam when he shouldn't have been there. This 5  
 was the cover story that we planned to use but the point is 6  
 that there really was no requirement for the air assets themselves 7  
 to be covert. This existed from the time that I got over 8  
 there to the time I left and until November 1968, when all air 9  
 operations up North ceased.\* 10

If, in fact, we would have had to conduct a true covert 11  
 air operation up North by virtue of the fact that there was no 12  
 other US presence there, then we would have had to develop 13  
 much better covert assets, in terms of crew documentation, 14  
 cover for the presence of both the crew and the aircraft and, 15  
 of course, sanitization of the aircraft. There are several 16  
 ways this could have been done. The aircraft could have been 17  
 sanitized; however, this would have required setting up a 18  
 completely separate supply system for aircraft parts from 19  
 other than US military sources. Also, we would have had to 20  
 develop a cover arrangement to account for ownership of the 21  
 aircraft. This could have been done by one of two ways. 22



Any cover entity that we created for ownership of the aircraft 28  
 and the crews would have automatically excluded anything associated 29  
 with South Vietnam as well as the United States, at least the 30  
 US Government. I doubt seriously if this type of a cover would 31

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\* Ibid., pp. 3-4.

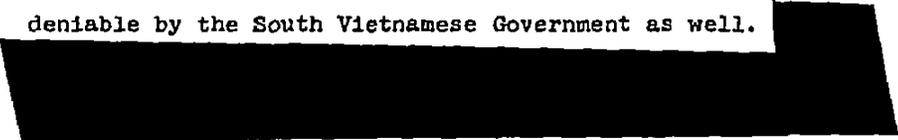
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have been very plausible in this area of the world because of the rather scant civilian air operations in the area. If we had been forced to go to a covert operation, probably we would have had to discard the idea of trying to keep the thing deniable by the South Vietnamese Government as well.



One might ask why we did not establish a cover using the SSPL. To do so would have involved establishing the credibility of the SSPL in considerable depth. There would have to be realistic sponsorship of the SSPL because of the fact that you just don't acquire expensive assets without having some strong financial backing behind you. Of course, at this time all of MACSOG's attempts to establish the credibility of the SSPL in depth were disapproved -- such things as building a front organization in Saigon backed by an office in Paris, a movement in Paris, and something similar to the National Liberation Front which the Viet Cong established in Paris, Algeria, and elsewhere. Even attempts to publicize the fact that the SSPL were engaged in a resistance movement in the North and that there really were dissident North Vietnamese opposed to the present government in North Vietnam and to their policies were not approved at the Washington level. Due to its transparency, this pretty well ruled out using the SSPL as the cover entity sponsoring the air operations up North.\*\*

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... MACSOG did not have the capability to really make its air assets truly covert. I think one can say the same thing about the boats but to a lesser degree. The boats had a much better beginning insofar as cover was concerned

\* Ibid., pp. 4.  
\*\* Ibid., pp. 4-5.

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in that they were foreign manufactured; at least, the NASTYS 1  
 were. however, the basic beginning was ruined by putting 2  
 all US equipment, such as radar and communications that were 3  
 clearly of US military manufacture, on board the boat. In 4  
 addition, the equipment was manufactured under US military 5  
 contracts. No attempt was made at the time the boats were 6  
 configured to put commercial equipment aboard, for example. 7  
 The crews on the boats were Vietnamese. There were two or 8  
 three of the boat crews that had come from North Vietnam and 9  
 that could have been categorized as members of the SSPL. Of 10  
 course, I think you also could have brought in the other boat 11  
 crews, even though they were from South Vietnam, because they 12  
 could have been recruited by the SSPL. Here again, though, 13  
 when you start talking about covert boat operations, you have 14  
 to go back to the same thing that you do with the air. You 15  
 have to have some sponsor to attribute these things to and 16  
 the SSPL to which they were attributed was not credible to 17  
 the depth that was necessary to stand up under close scrutiny. 18  
 It was just too obvious by virtue of the operations themselves, 19  
 e.g., the close coordination that was effected between the 20  
 FLOWMAN operations and the overt US naval presence up there. 21  
 Several times, when our boats were in trouble, US Navy aircraft 22  
 off the carriers in the Yankee area came to their assistance 23  
 gave away our operations. Damaged boats returning home were 24  
 being picked up and escorted by a US destroyer. This close 25  
 association between the overt US naval forces and the FLOWMAN 26  
 forces would just about blow any cover that the latter were 27  
 really and truly non-US oriented or non-US sponsored. I don't 28  
 think you can honestly state that the boat operations were 29  
 truly covert either.\* 30

31\* Ibid., pp. 5-6.~~TOP SECRET~~

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Appendix B

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One other thing that was absolutely necessary, in my 1  
 opinion, to conduct covert agent team operations up North 2  
 using SSPL as sponsors would have been the development of 3  
 a resistance movement. None of these teams was ever able to 4  
 survive up there, and all the best indications are that none 5  
 of them really did survive and remain under our sole control. 6  
 Most of them we believed were doubled against us. These set- 7  
 backs can be directly related to the absence of a resistance 8  
 movement. As a matter of fact, some of the original directives 9  
 that we had when I got there said that the teams were not even 10  
 allowed to make contact with the local natives. Later, this 11  
 was changed slightly; there could be some limited contact made. 12  
 Everything that the teams used, even food, had to be supplied 13  
 to them. Although we had the capability to do this and did 14  
 it, this was not the proper way. If we could have truly given 15  
 the teams the mission of organizing a resistance movement, 16  
 it would have done two things for them. First, it would have 17  
 given them strong motivation, which they lacked, to successfully 18  
 evade capture, and it would have put them in contact with the 19  
 local population, which in turn would have allowed them to 20  
 develop the capability for at least being completely independent 21  
 of subsistence. They should have been able to live off the land. 22  
 This way, we would have had a much more viable asset than we 23  
 ever achieved.\* 24

As to why we didn't get approval for instituting a 25  
 resistance, everytime we requested authority to develop it, 26  
 we were told from Washington that this was against US national 27  
 objectives and aims in Vietnam. It is true that a resistance 28  
 movement would have been counter to our overt national objectives. 29  
 The United States was not advocating actual overthrow of the 30  
 North Vietnamese Government; we made this statement several 31

\* Ibid., pp. 6-7.

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times from the highest level. Of course, ostensibly, a  
 resistance movement would have aimed at that. However, this  
 tying together at Washington, the seat of government, a covert  
 operation and judging it against overt national objectives, to  
 me, is an error. I think this is what we have been suffering  
 from. We will never be able to get a truly covert operation  
 going if we are going to continue to do this. . . .\*

In my opinion, you cannot have an agent operation of  
 guerrilla teams or anything else like this operating behind  
 enemy lines without some degree of cooperation from the native  
 population, friendly or coerced. There must be a safe haven.  
 You can't develop this in a hostile country unless you have or  
 develop friendly natives. The only way you can get someone  
 friendly to you is to win him over to your side. From this  
 standpoint, I would have to say that MACSOG was really denied  
 the capability to conduct its first and primary mission (covert  
 operations) over and in North Vietnam. If we had been granted  
 authority to start a resistance movement, would it actually  
 have been feasible? The answer to that, in my opinion, is yes.  
 We had several very good contacts with people in the South who  
 had left North Vietnam almost at the time of the division of  
 the country. I don't remember the name of the tribe (it was  
 either some of the Khas or Meos -- I'm not sure which). One  
 of the strong leaders of these tribal people was in South  
 Vietnam and he had the contact whereby we could recruit people  
 from assets available in South Vietnam and which had come from  
 certain areas in North Vietnam. We had good agent assets  
 available that could have been put up North and made contact  
 with their families and their relatives still living in North  
 Vietnam. This would have given us a good beginning. Of  
 course, we would have had to introduce them in strength, I

\* Ibid., p. 7.

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Tab P to  
 Annex N to  
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think, to overcome opposition from the local population until such time as they could have achieved enough friendly support from the indigenous people there. It was also quite feasible to start this capability along the Lao-NVN border and gradually spread it eastward into North Vietnam from that base area.\*

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Another good source of people which could have been developed in a resistance effort were the Catholics up North. There were enough of those present and enough evidence that we had available to us to indicate that they were, in fact, actually dissatisfied with the North Vietnamese Government. They were possible candidates. We had several plans to evacuate some of them from North Vietnam. From the standpoint of available assets, I think it was feasible to begin a resistance movement and I think it could have been sustained if we were willing to put the effort into it to establish the credibility of the resistance movement itself and to keep it plausibly deniable of US sponsorship.\*\*

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... one thing that handicapped MACSOG's operation from the very outset, and continues to do so today, is the fact that the covert operations MACSOG proposed to conduct were often disapproved with the statement that they were not in consonance with US overt national objectives or aims in Vietnam. For example, resistance, which I covered earlier. The continued attempts by MACSOG to get approval to organize a resistance movement were never intended to achieve anything more than the appearance to the North Vietnamese that there was a resistance movement. We never really entertained the thought that we were going to try to overthrow the government. We did want to create the impression in NVN though that dissidents in NVN were

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\* Ibid., pp. 7-8.  
\*\* Ibid., p. 8.

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doing so. These attempts were turned down on the basis that they 1  
 were incompatible with US national objectives. It is incorrect, 2  
 in my opinion, to weigh or judge a covert operation against an 3  
 overt national objective. The very fact that the covert 4  
 operation has to be deniable by the United States should not 5  
 inhibit us from accomplishing something that is contrary to 6  
 our stated national objectives. This apparent inability at 7  
 the seat of government to separate the two continues to cause 8  
 us trouble and will continue to unless we can change it. I 9  
 think that serious attempts should be made to get a recognition 10  
 by both the State Department and the White House that a covert 11  
 mission should be decided on its own merits and not weighed 12  
 against accomplishing publicly stated national objectives. 13  
 Take a resistance movement, for example. It's true that we did 14  
 not want to overthrow the North Vietnamese government. We only 15  
 wanted to exert enough pressure on them to make them cease 16  
 their operations in South Vietnam. By the fact that we would 17  
 create a resistance movement in North Vietnam with the 18  
 ostensible purpose of overthrowing the government, and the fact 19  
 that this was being done covertly the United States should be 20  
 able to stand up and say, "We had nothing to do with that." 21  
 It's not contrary to our national objectives because we're not 22  
 doing it. Somehow or another this point seems to get lost or 23  
 it is just not recognized, and consequently, we are never able 24  
 to really conduct a significant covert agent program.\* 25

At the outset of my tenure, there were a considerable 26  
 number of restrictions placed upon MACSOG with respect to 27

\* Ibid., p. 15. 28  
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Tab F to  
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getting approval for individual missions. Most of these, 1  
 however, have been gradually lifted and the procedures have 2  
 been pretty well simplified. Now I think that I'd have to say 3  
 that MACSOG has the latitude to operate without any undue 4  
 restrictions. Any time you are going to conduct a covert 5  
 operation, you cannot get the authority away from Washington. 6  
 There are too many political implications and there is too 7  
 much at stake with the United States vis-a-vis the Free World 8  
 — the risks of exposure are too high and could cause grave 9  
 embarrassment to the United States.\* 10

My association with covert operation, of course, began 11  
 with my tour of duty with MACSOG but has continued up to the 12  
 present time. It has been my observation that the best arrange- 13  
 ment for conducting covert operations is one wherein it is a 14  
 joint military-CIA effort. The CIA has the basic charter to 15  
 conduct this type of an operation and the only time that the 16  
 military gets involved in peacetime, or has a charter to 17  
 get involved in it, is in support of the CIA. There can come 18  
 a time, as is recognized in NSAM-57, that such operations by 19  
 CIA can get to the point where they exceed CIA resources, at 20  
 which time the military is brought into play. In fact, if 21  
 the operation becomes big enough (and this is exactly what 22  
 happened in MACSOG), the military will take over the responsi- 23  
 bility for conducting the operations, with CIA then assuming a 24  
 supporting role. In other words, they just switch chairs. 25  
 This envisages that both parties are going to be participating 26  
 in the operation. As we know from history, when the military 27  
 took the MACSOG operation over from CIA, CIA gradually, and 28

\* Ibid., pp. 15-16. 29

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almost completely, withdrew from the operation. [REDACTED] 1

[REDACTED] I think 2

this was wrong. This should have been a continuing joint effort 3

and I think that CIA should have continued to play a very strong 4

part in the MACSOG operation. This is the way we should go in 5

the future. What we need is a joint forces and a joint effort 6

and unless it gets into practically a little war of its own, I 7

don't think CIA should be allowed to drop out of it. My own 8

personal opinion is that the military should never have taken 9

over MACSOG operations completely. I don't think it got that 10

big really. I don't have the exact figures but I don't think 11

the total US military ever exceeded 150 to 200 people. I may 12

be wrong on these figures but this is not too many, particularly 13

when they are not involved in the actual operations themselves. 14

The majority of these are in a training, administering, 15

supervisory and planning role. I don't see why we couldn't 16

have done this as a continuing joint effort. The reason for 17

this, and I think we should keep this in mind in the future, 18

is that the expertise that the agency acquires in peacetime in 19

conducting covert operations is lacking in the military. It's 20

not completely lacking because the military has people detailed 21

to duty with the agency and in this way we do acquire some 22

experience in running covert operations. . . . \* 23

. . . . . 24

. . . at the time we were conducting covert operations 25

I think we had the best that were available at that time as 26

far as assets were concerned. We were developing the capabi- 27

lity to introduce a much more advanced covert air capability 28

into North Vietnam when it was overtaken by events. In other 29

\* Ibid., pp. 16-17. 30

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Appendix B

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words, the requirement for a covert air operation over North 1  
 Vietnam ceased. There was no more requirement for it. We 2  
 would certainly not commit this costly asset to fulfill a 3  
 requirement that didn't require a covert capability. As concerns 4  
 R&D for a covert capability, I just have to say that the very 5  
 nature of a covert operation, if you are going to keep in mind 6  
 the US Government plausibly deniability aspect, is that any 7  
 equipment you are going to introduce into that country or which 8  
 is liable to come into the hands of the enemy, such as an air- 9  
 craft if it crashes or is shot down, you have to be very careful 10  
 of. It has to be sanitized to begin with. Most of the time, 11  
 we would have to use US manufactured equipment. We've either 12  
 got to do one of two things with it. If we use the most 13  
 advanced technology, then it is readily recognizable by the 14  
 fact that we are this far advanced in technology. There are 15  
 only about two countries in the world having this capability 16  
 -- the United States and Russia. If the operation is to be 17  
 covert, we have to keep in mind that whoever is the sponsor of 18  
 this covert operation, the guy who is going to be accused of 19  
 running it, has to have access to the equipment, a logical 20  
 access to it. We don't have an R&D program just for covert 21  
 operations. We may in any one specific covert operation come 22  
 up with a specific requirement for something and then we will 23  
 go all out to get it. We spend all kinds of money, if that's 24  
 what is needed to get the job done. There are some good 25  
 examples of this, where we have put out \$2 million for one 26  
 little damned box to do a specific job. The box was sanitized 27  
 at the time it was being developed so it would be non- 28  
 attributable. This is the way it is done. There is no way, 29  
 in my opinion, to set up an R&D program for covert operations, 30  
 per se, like you do in the various Services for normal 31

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hardware. There is no way you can orderly do this, at least, 1  
not in the Military Services. It is in the province of the CIA 2  
to do this.\* 3

Insofar as the Air Force is concerned, there is an 4  
organized program for R&D -- continued development of the 5  
Air Force's capability to conduct covert operations. However, 6  
this is such a close hold and sensitive program that I'm not 7  
at liberty to discuss the details here.\*\* 8

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\* Ibid., pp. 22-23. 29  
\*\* Ibid., p. 23. 29

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## COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

LT. COLONEL RALPH R. GARRISON, USAF

. . . I would like to point out that during my tour we  
 never lost a C-123 airplane and only occasionally would we  
 get battle damage from small arms fire. Most of this battle  
 damage was on airlift missions rather than on the OPLAN-34A  
 missions. Because of the defense build-up in NVN, other  
 methods of resupply of the already infiltrated teams had to  
 be established. Working with 7th AF we set up the missions  
 whereby teams were resupplied using F-4 aircraft. These F-4  
 missions were very successful. Our operation included both  
 Chinese crews and VNAF H-34 and A-2 crews. It also included  
 the air assets of 7th AF and US Marines which were blended  
 together, in my opinion, to accomplish a very successful  
 mission in SHINING BRASS, OPLAN 34A and Psy Ops operations.\*  
 In my opinion, the principal problem area in the OPLAN  
 34A operation was weather insofar as resupply is concerned,  
 which also applied to infiltration operations. Since the only  
 vehicle that we had for operations during my tour for  
 infiltration was the C-123, our infiltration efforts were  
 severely hampered getting into NVN. This was because of the  
 defense in NVN which would not permit overflight of the C-123  
 to the areas of concern. We would use American helicopters to  
 infiltrate the teams into the northern Laos area which sub-  
 sequently moved over into NVN. There were AF CH-3s that were  
 flown out of Nakhon Phanom. Again, 7th AF gave us support in  
 every instance which, in my opinion, couldn't have been  
 improved. Although we lost no American helicopters in this  
 OPLAN-34A mission, we did lose one A-1 that was supporting a  
 helicopter operation in northern Laos.\*\*

\* (TS) Interview of LTC Ralph R. Garrison, USAF, pp. 2-3.  
 \*\* Ibid., p. 3.

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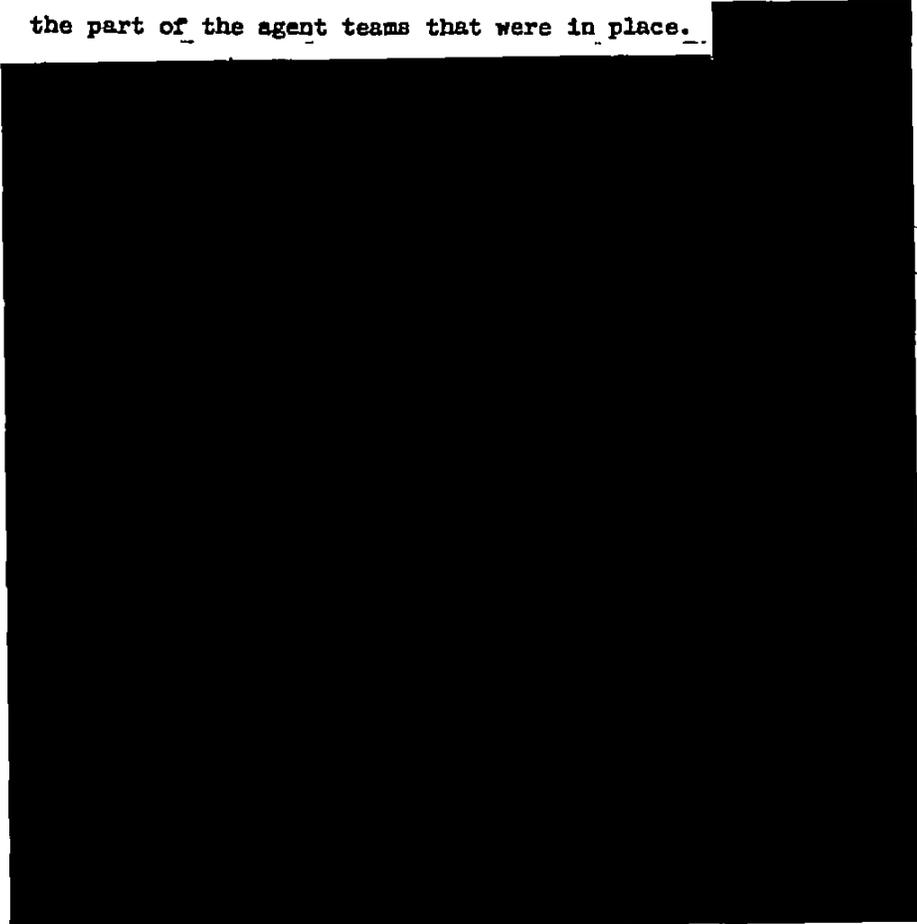
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COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

LT. COLONEL ERNEST T. HAYES, JR., USA

. . . . A number of agent teams were already in place in North Vietnam when I first came to SOG in 1964 and subsequently we infiltrated one or two teams and conducted resupply operations to those that were already in place. These teams that we infiltrated were actually reinforcements of existing teams with groups of individuals who had been trained as a team at Camp Long Thanh. There had been little real intelligence and practically no concrete evidence of successful operations on the part of the agent teams that were in place.



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\* ~~(TS)~~ Interview of LTC Ernest T. Hayes, Jr., USA, p. 2.

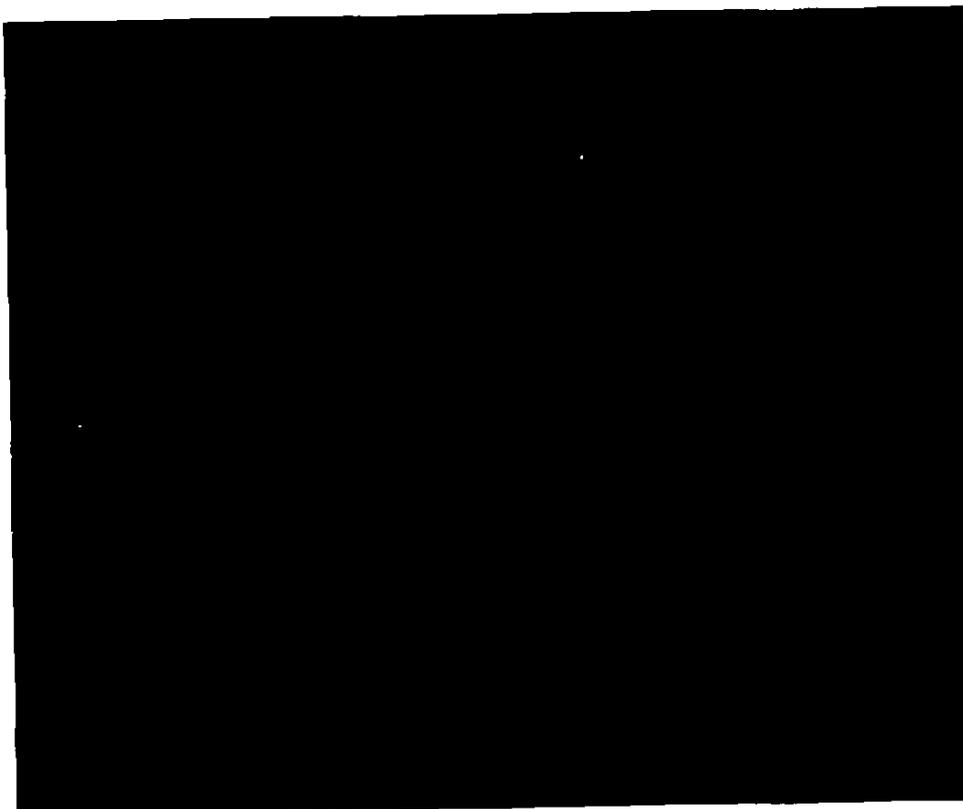
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We had a special delivery technique that was involved. The bundles would be rigged with a 100-foot extension on the riser so that the bundle would actually dangle down from the jungle canopy if it landed in the trees. We used a beacon on one bundle of every resupply drop that would send out a signal that could be picked up by a small transistor type radio that was carried by the team. We were quite chagrined to find out at one time that we were sending in beacons that were on a different frequency than the beacon the team had set up on the drop zone, so we had to again establish a standard operating procedure that would insure the team was instructed to either set their radios on the frequency for the resupply bundle or to turn off the beacon that was located on the drop zone.\*\*\*

\* Ibid., pp. 2-3.  
\*\* Ibid., p. 3.  
\*\*\* Ibid., p. 4.

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The members of the teams were chosen from groups that were native to the operational area and we had several different tribal groupings among the various teams. This was of interest in our communications with the teams because only one of the counterpart operations officers was fluent in the tribal dialects and we relied upon him completely in translating messages to and from the teams.\*

... On one occasion we decided to operationally test a team and the technique we decided on was to assign a sabotage mission to the team to plant explosive charges on a bridge. . . . The team subsequently reported that they had gone to the target and placed their explosive charges. We then requested aerial coverage of the target and we did find that there appeared to be a large crack in the bridge. The one failure we had was that we had no previous coverage of the target, so it was possible that the damage existed before the coverage we requested.\*\*

Giving missions to the teams was a challenge to us because we actually lacked enough detailed information to come up with a well founded target. We did, in fact, come up with the idea of trying to drop rockets to a team so that it could emplace them and fire them remotely against the Dien Bien Phu airfield. The rockets used were 4.5" variety and we tested these at Camp Long Thanh where they did prove successful. We came up with a device for laying them by azimuth and for elevation using a protractor and we actually used firing tables that were obtained from ordnance experience. The rockets were dropped into the team operating in the Dien Bien Phu area; . . . however, I have no knowledge that the rockets were ever actually fired at the target.\*\*\*

\* Ibid.

\*\* Ibid., pp. 4-5.

\*\*\* Ibid., p. 5.

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We were confronted with a weather problem during the Monsoon season that frequently would result in moon phases going by in which we could not fly a single mission. In the early stages of 1965, we really did not have trouble with the enemy antiaircraft threat; however, this later became a very real threat that we could not get to the teams that were in the northeastern portion of North Vietnam.\*

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In planning the resupply missions or the reinforcement missions to the in-place teams, weather and any information that we had on enemy antiaircraft would result in coming up with sometimes three and four different flight routes into the drop zone that we could use for a particular team. This really didn't present a problem to us because we would have a different available cargo load given to us for each of the several planned routes. In making up the resupply bundles, we would always designate one or two bundles as having primary equipment that the team needed and then the follow-on or add-on bundles would contain more or less a standard resupply of food and sometimes blankets or other clothing. This system proved quite successful and we even worked in a variation later on in which we had one aircraft resupply two different teams on the same mission. This was in the southwestern portion of North Vietnam, the Dien Bien Phu/Lai Chau area . . . Incidentally, we did discover that we had more success in operating in the Dien Bien Phu/Lai Chau area than we did in the northern or the northeastern portion of North Vietnam. This was primarily because of weather. . . .\*\*

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\* Ibid., p. 5.  
\*\* Ibid., pp. 5-6.

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. . . . The weather also caused us to come up with a 2

system whereby we were ready to run a mission to any one of 3

the agent teams on any particular day. The determining factor 4

would be the weather report on that particular day. The day 5

being the 24-hour period in which the drop would take place; 6

whether it was in the evening or the early morning of the 7

following day. The early morning briefing which would be 8

held about 7:30 would have a very detailed briefing on the 9

weather and normally we would use all the aircraft available 10

if we had more than one or two targets. If the weather 11

permitted getting to two or three teams and we had two or 12

three aircraft, we would hit each of the teams. We had had 13

some very sad experience if, in fact, the reports we received 14

from the teams were true and correct. We had not been able to 15

resupply some teams for period of eight or nine months, even 16

one year. They would run out of food and we actually had 17

reports of agent members dying of starvation. Having realized 18

the dire straits that some of the teams had been put in through 19

lack of resupply, it was our policy that anytime we could get 20

to the team, with a reasonable period of time, say spreading 21

apart the resupplies two or three days, we would resupply them 22

as often as possible so they would have the opportunity to cache 23

the supplies and have some flexibility regardless of the 24

weather.\* 25

The teams would take with them a basic medical kit and 26

most often the medicine would be described as Tablet A, Tablet 27

B, Tablet C - to be used for such and such a symptom. We 28

managed to get the teams through most of their sicknesses though 29

we did have several that died of illness, possibly pneumonia or 30

TB contracted after they had been infiltrated. We had one 31

\* Ibid., pp. 8-9.

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instance in which an agent had broken a leg on infiltration 1  
and by sending to the team instructions obtained from a 2  
doctor here in Saigon, we were able to tell how to splint the 3  
leg. Fortunately, after the accident, we sent in a pain 4  
killing medicine . . . and the man did survive, according to 5  
the reports.\* 6

. . . . . 7

. . . . Regarding the lack of success of our long-term 8  
agent teams in North Vietnam, I feel that this could primarily 9  
be attributed to the fact that we were taking people that had 10  
been native to the area at one time; however, they had been 11  
gone so long that it was the same as inserting a group of 12  
strangers into the area. I say strangers in the sense that 13  
they may have been familiar with the surroundings but they did 14  
not know any individuals in the area. This could be from 15  
their prolonged absence or from displacement of the population 16  
itself. At any rate, it was in a sense merely the process of 17  
inserting a group of strangers into an environment that was 18  
hostile to them. They just didn't know what to expect. I 19  
can think of one exception to this. This was a team that was 20  
sent into North Vietnam and the members of the team actually 21  
had a contact who was a relative of Colonel Binh who at that 22  
time was, I believe, the head of the STD. This team actually 23  
spent some four or five days on the ground before it was 24  
captured. In 1969, our Vietnamese counterparts managed to 25  
come up with a film that showed the mock NVN trial of these 26  
personnel. The case officer for the team, Major Antoine, 27  
recognized the members of the team, the team leader, the 28  
radio operator and the individuals and the equipment. . . 29

\* Ibid., p. 9. 30  
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The captured film very clearly showed the US markings on the  
paracnute webbing and "Made in USA" showed on several other  
items.\*

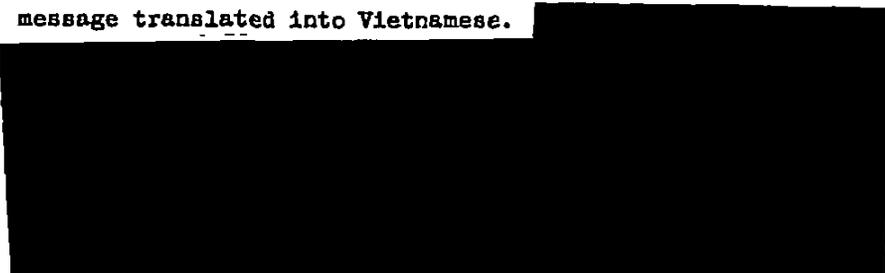
I think that the basic reason that we did not have more  
success with these teams was the lack of detailed information,  
a contact; the teams could have gone in and made contact with  
a friendly element. . . .\*

.....

I cannot recall any instance in which we provided any  
form of documentation to the team that would enable them to  
pass freely as bona fide residents of North Vietnam. We did  
use North Vietnamese currency when it was available and also  
from time to time we would supply old French silver coins.  
Money should really have been no particular problem to the  
teams; with the exception of EASY, and ARES none had been  
permitted to make contact with the local population. . . .\*\*

.....

. . . operations officers . . . normally went to STS as  
it was then named on a daily basis, usually twice a day. The  
communications procedures we had set up at that time involved  
writing the messages to the teams in English at the SOG Head-  
quarters and then going to the STS building and having the  
message translated into Vietnamese.



We rotated this around among the various operations officers  
and I would say the captains and myself were at STS daily  
spending anywhere from one to two hours there.\*\*\*

\* Ibid., p. 16.  
\*\* Ibid., p. 17.  
\*\*\* Ibid., p. 18.

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\*\* Ibid., p. 17.

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With the bombing halt, we had a standdown completely on  
 air operations over North Vietnam and that ended any type of  
 activity, resupplying or reinforcing the in-place teams. We  
 had two trained long-term agent teams on hand when the stand-  
 down and the bombing halt came about last November and we  
 subsequently used both of these teams on operations into Laos.\*

. . . . I am almost completely against the concept of  
 agent teams. I feel that we haven't made enough effort on  
 looking at each particular target area and putting our finger  
 on someone in the area that has access to what we want, whether  
 it is access to an installation we would like to destroy or  
 access to information that we are after. . . . We are putting  
 strangers into a hostile area. They have no base from which  
 to operate. I think that the doctrine for the conduct of  
 Special Forces operations should provide for the initial  
 infiltration of a pilot team to conduct an assessment to find  
 out if they actually can survive in a particular area and, if  
 so, then to bring in reinforcements has validity over here . . .  
 If we had to do this all over again, I think I would go back  
 and start out with the pilot team concept and pick out some  
 good Vietnamese Special Forces type officers and senior NCOs  
 who could operate in the jungles, assess an area, and conduct  
 a very detailed reconnaissance. I feel that before I sent  
 them in I would give them a lead as to some contact in their  
 operational area. If they made a successful contact in their  
 area, there would be little or no need for sending in  
 additional personnel to the area because this would increase  
 the chance for compromising the team. Instead, there should  
 be an effort to recruit the locals to get started with

\* Ibid., p. 18.

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operations. The team members would be Vietnamese Special 1  
 Forces personnel trained as we feel a good US A Detachment 2  
 would be. The team leader and the team sergeant and maybe a 3  
 radio operator and assist radio operator or medic would be 4  
 sent to make the initial assessment. If they went into an 5  
 unpopulated area where they could actually set up a base of 6  
 operation, set up a safe area, it would be possible to call in 7  
 a follow-on element; successful contact in a populated area 8  
 would permit recruiting.\* 9

Basically, here, we are faced with a much different 10  
 situation than we had during WW II when we were dropping 11  
 small two and three man teams into France, Denmark, and 12  
 Germany, where there were always friendly elements among the 13  
 population that were already organized and active. We were 14  
 dealing with something that was already in being. Here and in 15  
 North Korea, during the Korean War, we went into a complete 16  
 vacuum with regard to having support of any kind. Basically, 17  
 in approaching the problem of getting access into a denied 18  
 area, I don't feel that we have tapped what has been established 19  
 as the really correct approach, i.e., the third country type 20  
 operation. We have one lead at this time and I believe that 21  
 we are going to go ahead and make a request for it. This 22  
 would involve putting an individual through a long period of 23  
 preparation, putting him into the denied area openly on some 24  
 existing transportation system, commercial air or shipping, 25  
 and letting him live his cover. In this case, we might consider: 26  
 Where does the shipping that goes into Hai Phong originate? 27  
 How would we get a man on one of these ships? How could we 28  
 arrange contact between a member of the crew and an asset in 29  
 Hanoi? This is not the way we did it. We eliminated all of 30  
 these steps and just parachuted somebody into a vacuum. At 31

\* Ibid., pp. 19-20~~TOP SECRET~~

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the present time, we have taken the US operations officer who  
 is primarily involved in clandestine operations and are using  
 him to plan operations that are conceived and developed to  
 obtain clandestine access to a particular target. It is being  
 done in a professional manner. We cannot really state that we  
 conducted clandestine agent operations in North Vietnam. They  
 were more of an overt introduction of a commando unit or the  
 overt introduction of a group of people who had to hide. They  
 were actually hidden; they weren't passing as members of the  
 native population.\*

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The STRATA teams are entirely Vietnamese or Cambodian.  
 They are not as aggressive as US led teams and they won't  
 seek contact where at times I feel that some of the other  
 reconnaissance teams do seek contact. This is why the STRATA  
 teams, in some cases, have been successful in staying on the  
 ground for longer periods. Some of the reconnaissance teams  
 now go in on a linear reconnaissance, a roadwatch, a river watch;  
 some go in with the objective of taking a prisoner, sometimes  
 interdicting a road. These various missions may be assigned  
 to any RT; if a US led team is used and they see one or two  
 enemy, the team will go ahead and try and get the prisoners  
 or try and set up an ambush to either kill or capture them.  
 I don't feel that the Vietnamese-led teams would be as prone  
 to do this. They are more content to leave things quiet and  
 go ahead and observe.\*\*

\* Ibid., pp. 20-21.  
 \*\* Ibid., p. 21.

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COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

LT. COLONEL VINCENT W. LANG, USA

.....

Some of the Vietnamese agent teams were not isolated properly before going off on a mission. The Vietnamese camp commander had keys and access to the isolation area as did the US types. However, on more than one occasion, the camp commander, as a result of instructions from his Vietnamese headquarters in Saigon, would take some of these people out, a complete team, and put them back into the training program or give them a couple of days off for R&R. The Americans would find out about this team being out of camp after the damage was done; the people were gone and there was nothing we could do about it at that time. Frequently teams were put in the isolation area and for some reason or other the operation was aborted. The exfiltration was aborted and the teams would stay in the isolation area, on one case I know of, for up to three weeks. Then, somebody finally got the idea, we better quit this and get them back out. So, we took them out of isolation and that mission was dropped. Violation of isolation procedures had an adverse effect on security.\*

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\* ~~(TS)~~ Interview of LTC Vincent W. Lang, USA., p. 3.

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COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

COLONEL ROBERT C. MACLANE, USA

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..... The constraints on the teams were that they had to keep things low key. In other words, they couldn't go out and develop any intelligence nets of large numbers that could turn into resistance-type operations. Any sabotage targets that they were to hit had to be such that they were not too well defended. They were not supposed to provoke large-scale retaliation from the North Vietnamese forces or cause the Chinese or Russians to get in the act. Many of the agent teams weren't ethnic. They weren't familiar enough with the areas of operations. Therefore, they could not recruit in the areas they went into.\*

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..... I was always told by the CAS people that it was our national policy that we couldn't start any resistance movement up in North Vietnam. This is why our teams were small. They could not create too much of a problem for the North Vietnamese regime. Several times STS (our Vietnamese counterparts) had uncovered large numbers of assets for recruitment into the program. Of course, there were many strings attached to these recruits. Many indigenous people wanted to go back to their home areas in North Vietnam. They were willing to allow us to recruit and train small pilot teams to go in and work our Early Warning Observation Team

\* (TS) Interview of Col Robert C. MacLane, USA, p. 1.

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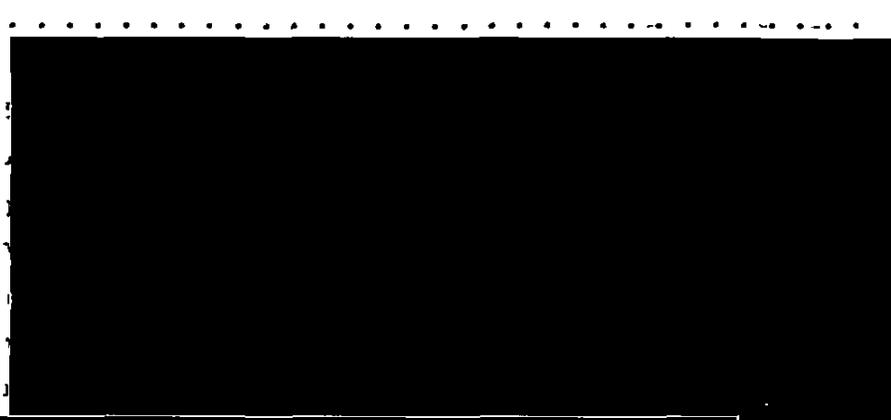
Tab J to Annex N to Appendix B

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(EWOT) type missions originally, but the agreement with them had to be that later on we would infiltrate more of their members, hoping to reestablish themselves in their old home areas in North Vietnam and eventually set up autonomous areas. The CAS people stated that we didn't have money to become involved in a large-scale resistance operation because we couldn't resupply the people and also we had to guarantee some kind of means of exfiltration for these people which we couldn't do at this time.\*

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Up in North Vietnam, we had no electrical source for the radios to plug in to. We did try to work with a smaller radio. We used several versions of it on a test basis over there. We were trying to get a radio with voice as well as CW. The reason we wanted voice was so we could talk to the aircraft as they flew overhead. To my knowledge, we still have not accomplished the procurement of the small, light-weight radio. One of the big problems we ran into with radio communications over there was wave propagation. We didn't have very long times when we could get radio contact with these teams. Many

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\* Ibid., pp. 4-5.

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times we lost contact with teams for months [redacted]  
[redacted]  
because of static in the air. Generally, what I would recommend  
for an agent team is to have a very small radio that one man  
could operate. It should have a CW as well as voice capability.\*

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When a team was initially infiltrated, they're excited,  
they have to gather all this heavy equipment and cache it  
along the line from the landing zone to their safe area. We  
always tried to put the teams in with enough equipment  
(supplies, equipment and food) to last them about three months,  
because resupply up there was rather hard due to the weather  
and drop zones being compromised. If the team jumped in or was  
put in by helicopter, it was a long time before they could get  
ready to talk on the radio. All the teams were afraid; they  
knew that was the most vulnerable time after they are  
infiltrated and they had to get away from their drop zone or  
landing zone. Yet, the powers-that-be always wanted to know  
in 24 hours or less if the team had reported and how things  
were going. To me, it is easy to see, lugging all the equip-  
ment, caching it, getting out of the initial infiltration area,  
that they could not work their radio without fear of compromise  
to themselves. Later on, when they were in position, the  
teams reported. They did try to come up on schedule but [redacted]  
did not acknowledge. This, I believe, was because of atmospheric  
conditions. Later on, the arduous living up there sometimes  
wouldn't permit the team to go out and crank up the radics

\* Ibid., pp. 3-4.

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because to set up the antennas and get to a high position for  
contact with radio [redacted] could take several days. You just  
can't set up that type of radio the teams were using in any  
location. They had to move around. It might take them  
several tries before they could contact [redacted]\*

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\* Ibid., p. 4.

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COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

COLONEL JOHN K. SINGLAUB, USA

. . . I initiated . . . an evaluation of the FOOTBOY  
 operations to determine those which appeared to have the  
 highest probability of success. This was done with a view  
 toward expanding or improving such operations and eliminating  
 those that were less successful or, in fact, were frustrated  
 by the enemy. Here, I refer specifically to the TIMBERWORK  
 teams which we considered early in the operation to have been  
 doubled by the enemy. While we concluded that the bulk of the  
 teams had been doubled, we decided to use them for some  
 deception operations rather than to eliminate the teams  
 completely. The FLOWMAN operations were expanded. In this  
 area, we introduced a completely new concept of systematically  
 interrogating the prisoners that were captured for the purpose  
 of collecting both operational and positive intelligence.  
 Previously, this intelligence had been used internally only,  
 but by this realignment we were able to produce intelligence  
 reports on North Vietnam that turned out to be the only real  
 source of human intelligence coming out of North Vietnam.\*

. . . as to whether the mission was feasible of  
 accomplishment . . . I feel that it was . . . but the  
 changing missions sometimes made it difficult to use the same  
 resources for the new mission. I specifically refer to the

\* (TS) Interview of Colonel John K. Singlaub, USA, pp. 2-3.

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situation which developed when the bombing of North Vietnam 1  
 started. Prior to that time, the agent teams were action 2  
 teams, i.e., they had been recruited, and trained as leaders 3  
 to conduct sabotage and demolition attacks against key 4  
 targets in North Vietnam. They had been infiltrated into 5  
 North Vietnam with that mission as their sole reason for being. 6  
 When the bombing started in North Vietnam, it was no longer 7  
 necessary to hand place demolitions to knock out bridges or 8  
 railroads. So, the decision was made to realign the missions 9  
 assigned to the agent teams. Unfortunately, a decision was 10  
 made to leave the same individuals in North Vietnam and to 11  
 convert them to roadwatch and intelligence collection teams. 12  
 I think that decision was a basic error because the recruit- 13  
 ment of the action agent is quite different from that of the 14  
 intelligence agent. The training is completely different and 15  
 the method of handling of individuals should be different. 16  
 The new mission of intelligence collection and the establish- 17  
 ment of intelligence collection nets was not feasible with 18  
 the type of people who had already been infiltrated into 19  
 North Vietnam.\* 20

Another difficulty encountered in attempting to 21  
 accomplish the mission was the constraints that were placed on 22  
 SOG which rendered parts of the mission impossible to 23  
 accomplish. It must be assumed that the establishment of SOG 24  
 meant that the United States wanted to establish a covert 25  
 capability to bring pressures to bear in a covert way against 26  
 North Vietnam. The criteria for the establishment of this 27  
 type of asset was that the operation could be feasibly 28  
 deniable, that it could be logically denied. Of course, 29

\* Ibid., p. 7. 30  
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the purpose of this deniability was to permit the government  
to exercise pressure on the enemy outside of its official  
public pronouncements of policy toward North Vietnam. When  
constraints were placed upon the operations of these teams  
and upon the recruitment and dispatch of additional teams that  
were tied directly to the overt announced public policy of the  
United States toward North Vietnam, it tended to subvert the  
original purpose of establishing SOG and made the mission far  
more difficult to accomplish.\*

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At least two reasons were given for this: (1) The US  
overt policy did not advocate the overthrow of the Ho Chi Minh  
regime. (Again this is a failure to separate the overt from  
the covert policies of our government, and I think it was  
wrong.) (2) There was a fear that a resistance movement in  
the north might get out of hand and might need continued  
support to permit the individual to survive in the event that  
we agreed to a standdown of overt overflights. (Again, I  
feel this is fallacious because we could have developed a  
capability for covert penetrations to resupply these teams  
with the essentials for survival even though we were  
continually denying that we were flying over North Vietnam.)\*\*

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This restriction against resistance operations made it  
exceedingly difficult to recruit good personnel into the  
program. The high-quality personnel who had been guerrilla  
leaders in operations against the French and who were  
perfectly willing to go back and attempt to activate their

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\* Ibid., pp. 7-8.  
\*\* Ibid., p. 9.

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organizations in the mountains of Vietnam simply would not be recruited to go back to the simple task of counting trucks or of running an intelligence net in North Vietnam unless there was some hope, some promise that they would be able to retrieve their former positions of power and responsibility among their own people. Since we could not promise them that they could ultimately lead their people in these areas, they not only refused to go as intelligence agents themselves but could not, in good conscience, recommend any of their tribal members to go on this type of mission unless it could contribute to their ultimate retrieval of their former positions. This made it extremely difficult to recruit people and is directly related to the refusal of authority to conduct resistance operations in North Vietnam.\*

The third problem created as a result of constraints placed upon our operations relates to those restrictions placed on the cross-border operations into Laos and Cambodia. These constraints forced us to apply the same type of gradualism in the escalation of the operations which was so singularly unsuccessful in the conventional operations against North Vietnam. The initial limitation was that there would be no aircraft overflights of the border. Later, a depth of penetration across the border was imposed upon the operation. We had restrictions which limited the number of operations that we could conduct in the course of a week or a month. Initially, there was no use of exploitation forces to exploit the intelligence found by a reconnaissance team. These restrictions permitted the enemy to adjust to these operations and to take actions to reduce our effectiveness. In my opinion, the early exploitation when the enemy was unable to develop defensive tactics and means of concealing his supplies

\* Ibid., p. 9.

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would have had much greater impact on the enemy. The resulting  
 gradualism permitted him to adjust his operations and to  
 reduce our effectiveness in the same way that the gradualism of  
 the US overt air campaign in North Vietnam permitted the  
 enemy to disperse his sensitive installations, obtain antiair-  
 craft weapons from the Soviet Union, and indoctrinate his popula-  
 tion to withstand the bombing raids. The enemy in Laos had  
 the chance to give instructions to his personnel on how to  
 counter our operations and certainly reduced the psychological  
 impact that we initially achieved by hitting the enemy in what  
 he considered to be his sanctuary.\*

A fourth type of restriction placed on our operations  
 which reduced our effectiveness was related to the use of  
 technology to assist us. We were denied the authority to use  
 chemical contaminants to assist us in destroying or rendering  
 useless the very large quantities of rice and other food  
 stuffs that we located in the enemy's supply lines deep inside  
 his sanctuary in Laos. It was physically impossible to  
 evacuate the rice. It was extremely difficult to destroy it  
 by fire or by other means on the ground. We could spread the  
 rice and hope that a rain would cause it to germinate or  
 dissolve, but in the dry season we found that, after we had  
 scattered several hundred tons of rice over an area, the  
 enemy would come back in and retrieve probably 75 to 80 percent  
 of it just by scraping it up. We requested authority to use  
 a chemical compound known as bitrex to place on the rice which  
 would render it unpalatable for human consumption and thereby  
 useless to the enemy. Some idealist in the chain of command

\* Ibid., pp. 9-10.

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concluded that this might be construed as the initiation of  
 chemical warfare, use of poisons, and denied us the opportunity  
 to employ this technology to assist us in hurting the enemy.  
 I consider that this was a short-sighted policy decision and  
 a constraint that definitely worked against the best interest  
 of the United States.\*

Another example of a restriction being placed on our use  
 of technology was the denial of an incapacitating weapon to  
 my unit. I requested of every scientist and every member of  
 the Research and Development community, who were cleared for  
 my operations and who were to provide us with new technology,  
 a weapon, comparable to that used for capturing wild animals,  
 that would incapacitate a man without killing him. I never  
 received this weapon, despite my best efforts to get it,  
 because some individuals felt they could not give me a weapon  
 having 90 percent or higher probability that the individual  
 would not die from the shot. This was contrary to what I was  
 interested in. I was interested in keeping him from dying and  
 he was certainly going to die if I didn't have some way of  
 incapacitating him. Our problem was that the man we really  
 wanted for interrogation would be killed in the process of  
 being captured. If we would have been able to hit him with an  
 incapacitating agent, his probabilities of survival would have  
 increased regardless of the type used. I again feel some  
 idealism crept into this decision and prevented a covert  
 operation, which is presumably deniable, from using the  
 technological superiority that has made our country great.  
 Again, we are tying our hands unnecessarily.\*

\* Ibid., pp. 10-11.

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There appeared to be a variety of restrictions and 2  
constraints placed upon our operations that adversely affected 3  
our ability to perform the overall mission. I'd like to 4  
mention a few of these now; perhaps we can recall some of the 5  
others later. First, there was the problem of the overt 6  
restrictions applying to SOG operations. By this I mean that 7  
there was a lack of distinction between the covert and the 8  
conventional operations when standdowns were applied to the 9  
SOG operation. This caused a complete compromise of the 10  
covert operations because it was just unrealistic to expect 11  
that the mythical resistance movement that we used as the 12  
cover for the conduct of these operations (I refer here to the 13  
SSPL) would standdown their operations because of the US stand- 14  
down which was announced publicly and was a part of an overt 15  
psychological campaign against the North Vietnamese and the 16  
allies of North Vietnam. The fact that the SSPL was forced to 17  
standdown at the same time that the US forces stood down exposed 18  
the very direct connection between the two, and this is what 19  
we worked so hard to avoid. I consider this to be a poor 20  
decision on the part of someone at the national level to link 21  
these two together.\* 22

A second problem brought about by restrictions is 23  
related to the efforts to conduct unconventional warfare 24  
operations in North Vietnam. We had a specific prohibition 25  
against establishing a guerrilla organization in North Vietnam. 26  
However, personnel were available to initiate a resistance 27  
movement, and the population in North Vietnam was receptive 28  
to certain motivations which would have placed them in 29  
opposition to the North Vietnamese communist government. 30  
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\* Ibid., p. 8.

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Leaders who had led the guerrilla movement in North Vietnam against the French were in South Vietnam ready to go back into North Vietnam to reactivate their resistance against Ho Chi Minh's forces, and attempting to cut communications lines and to reduce the effectiveness of the surface-to-air missile system. We were prohibited from establishing an anti-Ho Chi Minh or anti-North Vietnamese government resistance movement.\*

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[REDACTED]

The procedures established were relatively simple. Each month, my Operation-35 (or the PRAIRIE FIRE Operation) would develop its plan for operations into Laos for the next month. This plan would be developed about 15 days before the end of the current month. Sometime after the 20th of the month, I personally would go

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[REDACTED] to Udorn. There I would meet with Mr. Shackley,

the CAS Station Chief from Vientiane,

[REDACTED]

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I would be accompanied by at least one representative from OP-35. In addition to making plans for coordinating PRAIRIE FIRE operations into Laos, we would contact the J-2 before leaving Saigon to determine if he had any specific intelligence requirements he desired to place on

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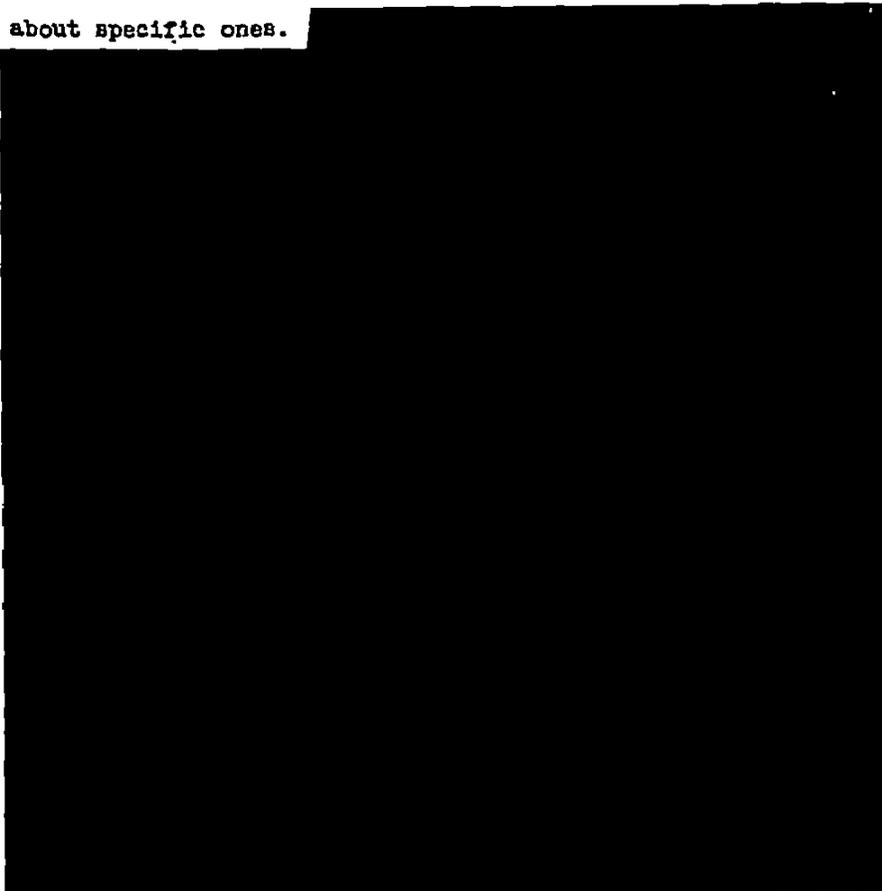
\* Ibid., p. 8.

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CAS Vientiane. The meeting would take place in the course of the morning and afternoon in Udorn, as I have mentioned. At this meeting, we would present a list of our proposed targets. I would give an analysis of what we intended to do on these and why we had selected the specific areas. These targets had been sent by coordinates to CAS Vientiane several days in advance. They would have them plotted and would ask questions about specific ones.



After the meeting, he would report to the Ambassador the subject matter discussed and relay to him any decisions that would represent new policy. This worked very well and we felt that [redacted] represented the views of both CAS and SOG in an excellent manner to the Ambassador.\*\*

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\* Ibid., p. 19.  
\*\* Ibid., pp. 19-20.

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\*\* Ibid., pp. 19-20.

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As I have indicated previously, I consider that it was 2

not only feasible to organize a resistance movement in North 3

Vietnam but that it was also quite desirable from the point of 4

view of exerting pressures on the enemy in a place where he 5

could least stand them. The enemy later, as a result of the 6

black psychological operations which we conducted in North 7

Vietnam, attempted to show that there was a resistance move- 8

ment in existence. He reacted to this in a manner indicating 9

that this was quite a sensitive point because both the enemy 10

and ourselves recognize that the hill people in North Vietnam 11

have traditionally been antagonistic to the Vietnamese who 12

occupy the lowland and have made life difficult for the 13

mountain people. It does not make any difference whether the 14

ruling group in Hanoi is communist or non-communist, as long 15

as they are Vietnamese, the ethnic minorities of the highlands 16

will oppose them. The Viet Minh, during World War II, 17

successfully employed the hill people in operations against 18

the Japanese. Some of the same hill groups later joined Viet 19

Minh in their anti-French operations although during World War 20

II many of these hill tribes were led by French or other 21

Caucasians and conducted very efficient operations under 22

French direction against the Japanese. The hill people are 23

interested in maintaining a level of autonomy that will 24

enable them to survive in their areas without being subjected 25

to any controls or domination from the lowland. It is this 26

basic animosity toward the flatlanders, toward the Vietnamese 27

of the flatlands, that sets the stage for a good resistance 28

movement.\* 29

\* Ibid., p. 20.

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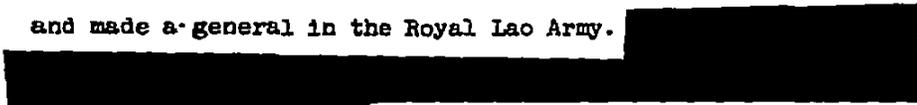
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Many of the leaders of these hill tribes took the opportunity of the withdrawal in 1954 to move south with some of their top leaders. This was necessitated in some respects by the fall of Dien Bien Phu and the withdrawal of the French who were leading the active anti-communist groups, but both the anti-communist groups and the anti-French groups sent people to the south and these leaders were under or in contact with the Vietnamese counterpart of MACSOG. They expressed a willingness to return to North Vietnam to recontact their people whom they felt certain were still loyal to them; however, were prepared to do this only if they were given some assurance that they would be permitted to organize a resistance movement and to use, as their primary theme, the creation of an autonomous area in North Vietnam.\*

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Not all of the leaders or followers of these hill tribes moved to the south. Some of them remained in-place in North Vietnam. Others, after the fall of Dien Bien Phu, withdrew to the west and took up positions in Laos. Those of this group who belonged to the Meo tribe were recruited and hired by Vang Pao, a Meo leader who had been received by the Lao and made a general in the Royal Lao Army.



They were not, however, exercising any control over the hill tribes such as the Black Thai and the Red Thai, and the several other tribes that at this point I can't recall. These people had personnel in the border areas who would have demanded that the program of establishing resistance would have to be treated by the United States as

\* Ibid., p. 21

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a regional matter, i.e., a matter which transcended the borders of several countries. This would have been difficult, I recognize, under our present alignment of responsibilities among ambassadors, but is something that could have been worked out with some effort and a little brain power.\*

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The measure of the feasibility of this operation must not be confused with the performance of these tribes in the roadwatch-type missions. The personnel who would have made good leaders of a resistance movement were the natural leaders of the hill tribes. These personnel were not only NOT willing to return as roadwatchers themselves but would not recommend to MACSOG any of their better personnel to do this type of mission. The leaders desired to retain the good, smarter personnel for future use, or they would not recommend members of their family to go back for fear that they would be captured on what was considered a very insignificant intelligence and roadwatch mission. I emphasize this point. Just because these TIMBERWORK teams were unsuccessful, it does not mean that this is a direct measure of the effectiveness of the resistance movement in that area if we had been permitted to organize one.\*\*

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I have felt for some time that there must be an acceptance at the national level that if we are going to use covert operations to influence our national policy objectives, i.e., if we are going to employ covert operations in the same way that the enemy does against us, we must accept the idea that such operations must be conducted in a manner that they will be

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\* Ibid., p. 21  
\*\* Ibid., pp. 21-22.

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deniable; further, that if they are inadvertently surfaced 1  
the government must, in fact, deny them to the extent possible. 2  
The policy need not necessarily conform to our publicly- 3  
announced national objectives and national policy. Covert 4  
operations are distasteful to many individuals who deal with 5  
our national policy matters. It may be necessary to conceal 6  
the covert actions from some of the top policy makers in order 7  
to add authenticity to the denials when they are made. Because 8  
they are not to be discussed publicly, because we want to deny 9  
them, they must be conducted in a completely covert and 10  
clandestine manner and their existence must be known to the 11  
absolute minimum number of individuals. This is necessary not 12  
only to keep the knowledge from the enemy but it is equally 13  
important that we not destroy the credibility of our senior 14  
leadership by having it deny existence of operations that a 15  
large segment of the population knows actually is taking place. 16  
I think that this is an important reason for limiting the 17  
access to this type of information. It is important that the 18  
knowledge of these operations be at a sufficiently high level 19  
that they are not running counter or not counterproductive 20  
to the other efforts of our government although that need not 21  
be a criterion; it is often desirable to conduct an operation 22  
that appears to be counter to our national interest for the 23  
reason of authenticity of the operation. This is particularly 24  
true in black operations, when you are trying to ascribe certain 25  
activities to a mythical organization that is not connected 26  
with the United States Government.\* 27

\* Ibid., pp. 36-37. 28  
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... I am ... convinced that the overall impact of 2

the covert operations was very beneficial to the United States. 3

The possession of this capability creates in the minds of the 4

enemy a strategic threat that he must at all times contend 5

with.\* 6

We do have some measure of its effectiveness by noting 7

and analyzing the comments made by the North Vietnamese in the 8

early days of the Paris meetings in which they wanted to make 9

sure that the covert operations were stopped as well as overt 10

operations. The enemy has, on several occasions, complained 11

bitterly to the International Red Cross that their citizens 12

are being subjected to acts of piracy off the coast of NVN. 13

This, of course, refers to the maritime operations in which 14

fishermen and other villagers were seized and interrogated for 15

the intelligence they possessed as well as for indoctrination. 16

Having talked to these personnel who were captured in NVN, 17

interrogated in SVN and returned to NVN, some of whom were 18

recaptured several times, believe that our covert operations 19

have troubled the enemy.\*\* 20

The enemy's detailed interrogation of a returnee is such 21

that the former considers it very, very important to keep 22

these personnel from being captured. He considers it a threat 23

to his security when they return because they have been 24

indoctrinated and treated in a way that might have caused them 25

to lose faith in the regime. . . One of the things that we 26

did, in a subtle way, to the prisoners was to not only cure 27

them of all diseases while they were being held (e.g., skin 28

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\* Ibid., pp. 40-41. 30

\*\* Ibid., p. 41 31

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diseases and others that were apparent - venereal disease, in  
some cases) but we also had to force feed them in order to  
increase their weight and the size of their stomachs. We would  
average over some 20 pounds added. Each individual who was  
brought south and returned to the north would have gained an  
average of some 20 pounds and, obviously, be in better  
condition than he was when he left NVN. This is an unusual  
circumstance for someone who has been in captivity. For some  
time after his return to NVN, his stomach demanded more food  
than the regime was capable of providing in its normal rations  
and this caused some dissatisfaction on the part of the  
individual. Of course, eventually he would lose the weight  
and return to his former skinny self. His people, his family,  
would then see that he was in better condition when he was in  
the hands of the SSPL in their hideout which was the cover  
story that the individuals came back with. This type of  
handling of individuals on our part is considered by the North  
Vietnamese to be a real threat to them because it is spreading  
dissatisfaction and, of course, it spreads news of a resistance  
movement and a mythical organization which the North Vietnamese  
aren't able to do anything about. But, in the minds of the  
farmers and the fishermen who have been captured, the  
organization is a very real one.\*

We also know that the enemy has been forced to react to  
the threat of the agent teams in the north. . . . one of our  
major programs there is a series of deception operations which  
is increasing the number of teams we have in NVN. These teams

\* Ibid., p. 41.

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are being created on paper only. We transmit messages to the 1  
 mythical teams, we drop supplies, we fly actual flights and 2  
 drop one bundle out which is never recovered and when it is 3  
 discovered it appears to be one of a large group of bundles. 4  
 This gives the impression that the enemy has another agent team 5  
 in his backyard and that this team has recently been supplied with 6  
 at least 10 bundles because bundle dropped is numbered 10 of 10. 7  
 This causes them to alert the militia and to spend a great deal 8  
 of time and energy screening the area looking for the team. 9  
 They interrogate villagers and reinterrogate them and all those 10  
 who have been suspected of supporting anti-communist activities 11  
 in the past are brought in for interrogation. This merely assists 12  
 in spreading distrust in the minds of the North Vietnamese 13  
 officials and likewise it harasses the people and causes them 14  
 to think less kindly toward the regime. The results of this 15  
 type of activity, again, I say are very difficult to measure 16  
 but are very real. How they cause the enemy to alter his 17  
 policies is something that we perhaps may never know.\* 18

I think in the area of the cross-border operations, we 19  
 could get into something more finite by listing the tons of 20  
 rice captured and destroyed that could not be used by the enemy, 21  
 the thousands of rounds of ammunition that we destroyed before 22  
 they reached their destination. We are able to present a fairly 23  
 respectable list of enemy soldiers killed or captured and great 24  
 quantities of trucks, radios, and weapons and ammunition that 25  
 have been destroyed after they have been carried laboriously 26  
 down the Ho Chi Minh Trail and stored in a sanctuary right near 27

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\* Ibid., p. 42.

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where they intend to use them. Loss of this equipment is  
 definitely hurting the enemy and it would not have been possible  
 without the cross-border operations. These operations have  
 detected large logistical complexes under the canopy in the  
 Laotian and Cambodian sanctuaries. In the case of Laos, these  
 have been attacked and destroyed. In the case of Cambodia, we  
 have with hand-placed demolitions blown up large ammunition  
 dumps.\*

I think it is important that we do not attempt to measure  
 the effectiveness of the agent team operations in the north in  
 the terms of the number of intelligence reports they have  
 produced because we know that these teams are all in the hands  
 of the enemy and any intelligence from them would be worthless.  
 So, even if we had been receiving material from them, we would  
 not have published any intelligence reports. When the casual  
 observer notes that we have some intelligence collection teams  
 in NVN, the first that he would ask is, "How many intelligence  
 reports have they produced?" The fact is that they have  
 produced very few and none of them has been significant. But  
 that does not alter the fact that the team is, in fact, bringing  
 pressure on the enemy. He has to devote a lot of energy to  
 answering our messages and is concerned that we have other teams  
 that he has not captured in the area. He is devoting a good  
 deal of the effort of his security to seeking out these  
 mythical teams.\*\*

While the agent teams in North Vietnam have not produced  
 a series of worthwhile intelligence reports, several of the  
 other operations have produced good ones. The maritime opera-  
 tions have produced meaningful reports from North Vietnam; in  
 fact, they have been practically the only human intelligence

\* Ibid., p. 42.

\*\* Ibid., pp. 42-43.

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sources in North Vietnam. There are large numbers of intelligence reports that have been written in the several years since we started increasing the emphasis on intelligence collection. When these are evaluated by the J-2 in MACV or later by DIA, they have found them to be largely in the category of very useful or confirmatory of other intelligence collected from other sources. Again, it is hard to say whether production of those intelligence reports has been worth the money and effort expended. I personally feel that they are.\*

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\* Ibid., p. 43.

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COMMENTS ON MACSGO'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

COLONEL DENNIS P. CASEY, USMC

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. . . When I first got there, the execution of the (air) missions was controlled almost exclusively by MACSOG. We put out the messages advising the intelligence activities of all concerned, where the mission was being run, requested that steps be taken to insure coordination. We found a little later on that these messages weren't being disseminated to the proper people and some of our maritime operations, for instance were being interfered with by friendly aircraft. One thing led to another and finally 7th Air Force insisted on coordinating all flying activities, including ours. This improved coordination and control of missions.\*

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\* (PS) Interview of Col Dennis P. Casey, USMC, p. 4.

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COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

LT. COLONEL JONATHON D. CARNEY, USA

.....

SOG's efforts at clandestine operations in TIMBERWORK and PRAIRIE FIRE were severely limited by the lack of adequate operational data for use in briefing, training and equipping agent personnel and team members. (The terms "operational intelligence" and "operational data" are synonymous. I refer to such as the habit patterns of the local inhabitants, security practices in effect, copies of passes and other documentation, etc.) This data simply was not available to the extent that operations were possible into denied areas that depended on the agent being able to pass himself as legitimate to the area, even only briefly. This lack of adequate data has been largely responsible for the continued dependence on black operations. A related problem has been the extreme difficulty in obtaining samples of NVA documents, uniforms and equipment for copying for use in these operations. The American passion for souvenirs has proven almost impossible to defeat. As an example, it took until the summer of 1968 to procure an NVA cap device (the red and gold star) for delivery to CAS.\*

In the last 8-10 months, sufficient intelligence has become available, primarily as a result of interrogation of PWs in response to SOG generated SICRs, to begin gray operations. SOGs Intel Division and CAS Saigon have been collaborating on the production of four volumes of operational data on NVN, each covering a different aspect of life there. When completed and if kept current, these will be invaluable to all future operations into NVN controlled areas.\*

\* (TS) Memorandum for the Record by LTC Jonathon D. Carney, USA, "Lessons Learned in SOG (U)," 20 November 1968, p. 4.

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There will be similar inadequacies and blocks to effective operations in other areas in which the military will have to operate if action is not begun in the near future to amass the data required. The Army Area Handbooks and CIA Country Publications such as the recent one on Thailand are simply not adequate for the task. As an example, there was not adequate data on Cambodia to permit agent operations in that country as of my departure from SOG.

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SOG's agent operations have been inept and unproductive. I am referring to what is now known as the TIMBERWORK program. To take some of the sting out of that fact, the CAS operation which SOG inherited in 1964 was no more successful. Unfortunately, SOG accepted the CAS modus operandi in toto and perpetuated it during the years. Only recently have the inadequacies of that approach been recognized; the event which dramatized its failure was the revelation that Team REMUS had been doubled for years.\*

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During my tour of duty with SOG, I gained knowledge of extensive duplication of effort in agent operations targetted against North Vietnam with the basic purpose of intelligence collection. CAS Saigon had greatly increased its efforts in the last year and was receiving continued pressure for further efforts from its Hq. The 6499th USAF Squadron was attempting operations. The 500th MI Group, Army, assigned to USARPAC under opcon CINCPAC was attempting operations from Thailand and sought FAR (Laos) cooperation. There was a degree of coordination and

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\* Ibid., pp. 5-6.

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a willingness for cooperation within all these efforts.

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Coordinated effort with the others

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was much less easy in that we did not usually gain knowledge of their plans until after a great deal of effort had been expended. My personal conclusion was that there was a large waste of assets in replotting old ground that had proven unproductive, in duplicatory efforts and in the command and control elements of the several units involved.\*

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Another aspect of my observations of agent operations targeted against North Vietnam is that nobody was having any success that merited the efforts expended. There are many valid reasons for lack of success and that is not the main issue. My main conclusion was that we, the United States, were wasting assets by attempting to solve the collection problem by a proliferation of attempts. I believe that responsibility for all denied area agent operations would better be given to the Central Intelligence Agency, with Service collection agencies subordinated to or placed in support of CIA. It is my opinion that CAS has a better base (for selection of agents, training, documentation, staging and for control during operations) than the Services can develop. I emphasize that this belief is pertinent to operations against denied areas such as NVN. The Services should continue to operate within combat areas on low level agent missions such as those in support of JPRC or other tactical operations.\*

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\* Ibid., p. 7.

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AS to the major problems that we experienced in the 2

SHINING BRASS type operation, which includes DANIEL BOONE and 3

IGLOO WHITE considerations, . . . . in the first place the 4

American commanders in the field did not know what we were doing 5

or why we were doing it or what the results were or why they 6

should commit their resources to support us. By resources I 7

refer here primarily to helicopters. The situation was extremely 8

difficult in regard to gun ship support which was the only timely 9

support that the troops on the ground could receive when they got 10

in trouble.\* 11

The Air Force responded with what they could with certain 12

exceptions. However, the time response was on the order of 13

three or four-fold as compared to what we could expect from gun 14

ships operating from our bases on the border. . . There was a 15

continuing conflict of interests in helicopter support. One of 16

the mistakes we made, and I participated in making the mistake, 17

was ramming through somehow early in the game an adequate 18

American helicopter unit dedicated to the SHINING BRASS work. 19

We had the 219th Vietnamese H-34 Squadron which did outstanding 20

service; they had no gun ships and they were plagued with 21

maintenance problems which may or may not have been their own 22

fault. There were never adequate dedicated helicopters, gun- 23

ships to support the program. US Air Force allegedly committed 24

a squadron of HUEYs based at Nha Trang to the support of the 25

program but the support we received from them was minimal; the 26

promises they made in regard to providing gun ship support in 27

terms of numbers of gun ships just never came through. There 28

was more slack in that arming program than anything I've ever 29

experienced.\*\* 30

\* (TS) Interview of LTC Jonathon D. Carney, USA, p. 2.  
 \*\* Ibid., pp. 2-3

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The US personnel in SHINING BRASS were initially all 1  
Special Forces personnel. We found that the average Special 2  
Forces trooper was good for something on the order of six 3  
missions in Laos on patrol. At the end of which time he had 4  
pretty well expended his nerve and courage. This was entirely 5  
understandable and is not intended to be a derogatory comment 6  
concerning these people. Some of them were good for 20 or more, 7  
others were good for one or two. A better system of rotating 8  
people through the patrolling activity would have been highly 9  
desirable. We need a larger manpower base which would allow us 10  
to rotate people between training or administrative or operational 11  
planning type roles and in the field. The base just never was 12  
large enough to provide the number of qualified people needed 13  
to perform the number of missions that were desired by Head- 14  
quarters MACV.\* 15

.... We experienced normal difficulties of equipment selection 16  
particularly in the radio area. Special Forces doctrine insists 17  
that they be equipped with CW manually-keyed equipment for 18  
communication with their base area. For a long time we permitted 19  
the people to carry the ANPRC-64 or 52 radio and found that it 20  
was hardly every used and was just another piece of equipment 21  
to carry with them. . . .\*\* 22

. . . . . 23  
. . . MAROPS was hindered throughout its history by the 24  
refusal to permit any American participation north of the 17th 25  
parallel. We were totally dependent upon the Vietnamese to 26  
perform these operations. . . Frequently there was a question 27  
as to whether the things the boat crews said happened up north 28  
really did happen. In most cases we were able to track the boats, 29  
know where they were, and have some indication of what they were 30  
doing, but the reports on what happened when contact was with the 31  
enemy were never fully reliable.\*\*\*

\* Ibid., pp. 3-4.  
\*\* Ibid., p. 4.  
\*\*\* Ibid., p. 13.

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COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

CAPTAIN BRUCE B. DUNNING, USN

.....

. . . . In the summer of 1964, the Tonkin Gulf incident occurred. This caused a temporary standdown in the maritime operations, particaly because there was some suspicion that those conducted in the same time frame as the Tonkin Gulf incident might have been partially responsible for it. This has been investigated very, very carefully and I am absolutely convinced that there was no relationship whatsoever between the OPLAN 34A maritime operations in July and August of 1964 and the Tonkin Gulf incident. We have been able to establish very definitely that both in terms of physical displacement of the forces involved and the timing that there was no connection. Allegations were made that the 34A maritime operations were provocative and that this was what caused the North Vietnamese forces to come out after the destroyers on the DESOTO patrols. I don't buy these allegations. If the 34A maritime operations were, in fact, bothering Hanoi so much as to cause them to react in that manner, I think they most certainly would have sent their boats out after our PTFs. Certainly, the PTFs would have been much more suitable targets for their boats than our modern destroyers. So, I am absolutely convinced there is no direct or indirect relationship between our maritime operations and the Tonkin Gulf incident. . . \*

\* (PS) Interview of Captain Bruce B. Dunning, USN, pp. 3-4.

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With respect to intelligence, there is no question that 2

SOG was able to provide a good deal of information that would 3

not otherwise have been available. This is particularly true 4

of information collected in the maritime detention program where 5

fishermen from the coast could be interrogated. A rather large 6

volume of information was collected from these fishermen, most 7

of which was low level. Much of it was hard to evaluate. The 8

information really fell into two categories: one was hard type 9

information, i.e., information on coastal defense batteries, 10

coastal defenses communications, etc. This type of information 11

could be evaluated rather well because we were getting similar 12

information from other sources, for instance, photo reconnaissance. 13

The other category of information, produced in large volume by 14

the maritime detention program, was of the soft type, i.e., 15

information on the attitudes of the North Vietnamese population, 16

on low level economic factors (legal prices, black market prices, 17

availability of goods, etc.), on the morale of the population of 18

the coastal population, on various resistance cells or dissident 19

cells that appeared in certain areas, particularly in the 20

Catholic-controlled areas. This soft information was terribly 21

hard to evaluate because we were not able to monitor the 22

interrogations themselves. We had to take the reports of 23

interrogations given to us by South Vietnamese STD interrogators. 24

We had the feeling back here in Washington for a long time that 25

perhaps these STD interrogators were giving us what they thought 26

we wanted to hear. We felt that some of the information was 27

much too optimistic. Its reference to dissatisfaction with the 28

cadre, the war effort, too, in a good many cases, people blaming 29

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the Hanoi regime rather than the Americans for the bombing, 1  
 seemed to us too good to be true. It wasn't until much later 2  
 when we got some confirming information, based on the debriefs 3  
 of Spanish emigres repatriated out of North Vietnam, that we 4  
 began to get a considerable amount of confirmation.\* 5

It is my feeling, with respect to this maritime intelli- 6  
 gence, that we have overlooked a big potential there and that 7  
 the soft type of intelligence was never properly exploited 8  
 back here in Washington. On one occasion, we tried to get both 9  
 CIA and DIA to show some interest in taking the mass of raw 10  
 information we had available here and have it thoroughly 11  
 researched by a competent team of behavioral scientists to try 12  
 and get a picture of what was actually going on among the 13  
 population of North Vietnam. Both agencies indicated no 14  
 interest. The only real interest we ever got in looking at this 15  
 type of information was from the Air Force. This was sometime 16  
 in 1967 when a team from AFCIN came down to talk to us. We 17  
 showed them what we had and they evidenced a considerable interest. 18  
 I thought for a while that this would result in somebody taking 19  
 all of this information and exploiting it properly but it died on 20  
 the vine. Interestingly enough, the motivation for the Air 21  
 Force interest apparently was General McConnell's personal 22  
 interest in trying to find out what was really happening to the 23  
 population of North Vietnam. Of course, his motive was rather 24  
 self-defensive in that it was based on the increasingly strident 25  
 criticism of the bombing, the type of criticism that implied 26  
 we were killing all of the civilians in North Vietnam, etc. 27

\* Ibid., pp. 5-6. 28  
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Nonetheless, regardless of his motivation, if the Air Force 1  
 had taken this information and applied the resources to exploit 2  
 it, we would have been better off. Nobody really did handle 3  
 this information. It is my impression, based on a considerable 4  
 search in Washington for entities concerned with this type of 5  
 intelligence, that nowhere in the US Government was there 6  
 anybody really looking in depth at the human situation in North 7  
 Vietnam, really immersing himself and watching on a seven-day 8  
 week, 24-hour-a-day basis as to the political and social dynamics 9  
 that were a function of the war situation and the bombing. I 10  
 view North Vietnam as our primary enemy and I think that we were 11  
 woefully neglectful in not looking at this human situation.\* 12

With respect to the intelligence gathered by the agent 13  
 teams, it was minimal at best. This whole agent team program, 14  
 I think, was rather ill conceived. The teams were so-called 15  
 black guerrilla type teams that were put in initially to 16  
 conduct physical harassment. Later, they were reoriented to an 17  
 emphasis on intelligence collection. If you are going to put 18  
 this type of black team, completely illegal team, into a denied 19  
 area, the only place you can even get it in is into a remote 20  
 area, and in a remote area there just isn't much intelligence 21  
 to collect. Consequently, the best you ever got out of these 22  
 teams was some extremely low-level information based on their 23  
 contacts with some Montagnards in the northwest and some other 24  
 local elements. A few of the teams claimed to have established 25  
 sub-agent nets. It now appears, of course, that this was 26  
 probably mostly fabrication because most of the teams were 27  
 apparantly taken under enemy control rather shortly after they' 28  
 were put in. You simply can't take guerrilla type, black teams 29  
 and put them in any area where they are going to be able to 30  
 collect intelligence of any value and still survive. Indeed, 31

\* Ibid., pp. 6-7.

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\* Ibid., pp. 0-1.

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our experience in North Vietnam is that the teams couldn't  
survive at all. This, I think, points to a fundamental  
principle of unconventional warfare: you cannot do much in  
the way of active operations in a denied area unless you first  
start out with the long, slow painful process of building some  
sort of a base of support in the population. In virtually  
every population you are going to have certain dissidents that  
may be exploitable. This was certainly true to an extent in  
North Vietnam among some of the Montagnard elements and some of  
the Catholics. To conduct effective agent operations in North  
Vietnam would have meant a long, slow process of organizing  
these elements to build a support base in the population. This  
we did not do, partially because we were denied any authority  
to conduct such activities in North Vietnam. Ironically enough,  
we were repeatedly asked why we did not and could not do the  
same thing to the North Vietnamese as they were doing to us in  
the South. The people asking those questions simply ignored or  
don't know about the years and years of slow, basic, low-level  
organization activity that took place in the South. In that  
connection, probably the best summary of how they (the Viet  
Cong) did it is Doug Pike's book on the Viet Cong and, of  
course, he emphasizes that organization is their forte.\*

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I think an example of the lack of coordination and the  
sometimes counterproductive efforts can be demonstrated by  
maritime operations. For a long time, the name of the game in  
maritime operations was to sink enemy junks. It was a real

\* Ibid., pp. 7-8.

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high point. When you had a mission in which you sank an enemy junk, this was a very successful mission. One of the big selling points of the program in Washington was to keep track of how many junks had been sunk and to say that, in 1967, we had destroyed 75 enemy craft. Of course, after the Navy started the SEA DRAGON Program, an interdiction program, 75 junks sunk in a year was peanuts. They (the Navy) were sinking that many in one night. They were shooting at everybody in sight.\*

It gradually began to dawn on us that maybe we were barking up the wrong tree. We had SSPL trying to set itself up as the dissident organization that had the best interests of the people of the Vietnamese nationality at heart and telling the fishermen along the coast how horrible the Hanoi Regime was and trying to develop support for the SSPL. At the same time, we had PTFs going up there purportedly owned and operated by the SSPL, and sinking junks all over the place. It gradually got through our thick skulls that this did not make too much sense, that we were not physically capable, with our resources, of interdicting shipping on a large scale -- a large enough scale to really make a dent. At the same time, by trying to carry out an interdiction mission, we were cutting our own throats insofar as trying to establish a rapport with the coastal population was concerned. This came about largely because the maritime people and the psychological people just didn't talk to each other enough and actually I give most of the credit for straightening this out to Colonel Tom Bowen who went out in early 1967 as chief of the PsyOps Group. We began to realize

\* Ibid., pp. 9-10.

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that if we were going to portray the PTFs as SSPL boats that 1  
 we had to make them act like the SSPL should act towards the 2  
 people and so we began to cut down on interdiction. We told 3  
 them that they should not sink junks unless there was good 4  
 reason. There were cases where sinking a particular junk, 5  
 perhaps a junk owned by a particular odious cooperative, might 6  
 have a psychological payoff. But the decision as to what to 7  
 destroy and what to sink should have been based on the 8  
 psychological objective that we sought to achieve.\* 9

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. . . with respect to FOOTBOY operations, I think that, 11  
 even with all the mistakes that were made and all of the 12  
 searching for proper means of doing things, overall this program 13  
 was a very, very significant one. I think probably we will find 14  
 out in later years that it had a rather significant impact on 15  
 the North Vietnamese regime. It is difficult to assess or to 16  
 prove the impact of operations of this type. It is particularly 17  
 difficult to do so with Americans, particularly of the military, 18  
 who tend to take a positivistic view and want to derive a well 19  
 defined input/output ratio. You just simply can't do this when 20  
 you are dealing with what are essentially psychologically based 21  
 operations. There is no question in my mind that the agent 22  
 team operations in North Vietnam did cause the regime particular 23  
 concern. As I mentioned earlier, we did not get a lot of 24  
 intelligence from the agent team operations and certainly we 25  
 never did much in the way of real physical destruction or 26  
 interdiction. However, I think there are a lot of indications 27

\* Ibid., p. 10.

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that the mere presence of these teams caused a rather  
 significant diversion of North Vietnamese resources to internal  
 security missions. It caused the North Vietnamese regime to,  
 in many cases, suspect their own elements, particularly some of  
 the cadres. It was leading, in my mind, to a type of repression  
 that would have been counterproductive for the regime. This  
 impact was complemented by the impact of the maritime operations.\*

Maritime operations, I think, had several important  
 results. First of all, we did get a large amount of intelligence,  
 some of which was of considerable value. Other intelligence  
 was possibly of low value but a great deal of it was never  
 exploited, so you can't really assess its value. Secondly,  
 there was a very practical effect from maritime operations,  
 again in diversion of North Vietnamese resources. It is fairly  
 well established now that the boats, when they went North, were  
 fully tracked all the way. I think this tied up virtually all  
 of the North Vietnamese surface search radar installations.  
 Any night the boats were going up the coast, the North Vietnamese  
 put a considerable effort into diverting radar resources to the  
 tracking of these boats. We know that significant portions of  
 the coast line were alerted every time the boats headed North,  
 that both the regular coastal defense forces and the local  
 militia, or home guard units were alerted. To put in very  
 simple terms, this meant that one hell of a lot of people were  
 being kept awake all night, several nights of the week, week  
 after week, on the off chance that these boats might be  
 conducting an operation in that particular local area. This

\* Ibid., p. 26.

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type of harassment does have some effect. It gets rather old 1  
to the indigenous people after a while and it certainly doesn't 2  
help the situation as far as they are concerned. More importantly, 3  
the maritime operations, through the SSPL, established a rapport 4  
with the coastal people, particularly in some of the catholic- 5  
held areas. This rapport was recognized by Hanoi, caused them 6  
great concern, and reinforced the apprehension they already 7  
felt for the operation of agent teams in North Vietnam.\* 8

. . . The impacts of the FOOTBOY agent teams and maritime 9  
operations were complemented by the impact of psychological 10  
operations. The Voice of the SSPL was certainly tied closely 11  
into the maritime operations and tended to increase the credi- 12  
bility of the SSPL. Radio Red Flag, I think, probably was 13  
particularly important. Although we don't have too much readout 14  
on it, there were some rather good intelligence reports indicating 15  
that Radio Red Flag's credibility remained high for a long, long 16  
time. It is probably still high. There were indications that 17  
the North Vietnamese were never quite sure who was sponsoring 18  
Radio Red Flag. For some time, there were indications that the 19  
North Vietnamese, in fact, thought it was a Soviet sponsored 20  
station. There was one report that even attributed the manage- 21  
ment of the station to two North Vietnamese military officers 22  
who had defected to the Soviet Union. This type of thing 23  
obviously has a rather strong effect on the sense of security 24  
of the North Vietnamese leadership.\*\* 25

- Moreover, there are indications that our program was 26  
reaching its target audiences and having a considerable impact 27

\* Ibid., pp. 26-27. 28

\*\* Ibid., p. 27. 29

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on the thinking of people in North Vietnam. It is true that 1  
radio seemed to be reaching principally the upper strata of the 2  
North Vietnamese population. It is not true that only the upper 3  
strata has access to radios. Virtually every cooperative and 4  
every village has a radio available. It appeared to us that 5  
many of the poorer people were simply not adapted to radio 6  
listening. They didn't listen frequently to the radios. They 7  
didn't give the radio too much credibility. They weren't 8  
interested in listening to the radio. We had cases, for 9  
instance, where it was reported that cooperative managers or 10  
cadres in the villages were listening to our stations on their 11  
local radio. In many cases, however, we found that the 12  
villagers, fishermen particularly, simply didn't bother to go 13  
in and listen to the radio even though they had the opportunity. 14  
Printed media, primarily leaflets, seemed to hold a greater 15  
attraction for them. Most of our read-back on VOSSPL and 16  
Radio Red Flag came either from cadre who had rallied or from 17  
military personnel who had listened to these stations surrepti- 18  
tiously on their military radios. It was among these strata 19  
that we seemed to have the most impact with the radio operations.\* 20

Again; however, the psychological operations did tend to 21  
reinforce the impact of both maritime and agent team operations 22  
at probably three levels: first, in causing concern and a sense 23  
of insecurity on the part of the Hanoi regime; secondly, in 24  
establishing some sort of rapport with the North Vietnamese 25  
population; and, thirdly, in the direct influencing of attitudes 26  
and thoughts because changing the perceptions of a population 27

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\* Ibid., pp. 27-28. 28  
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is a terribly difficult thing to do. I don't think that we made a major impact there, but any impact is better than none. We really don't know how much impact we made. This is an awfully hard thing to measure particularly in a denied area.\*

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Overall, I think that the FOOTBOY Program evolved into a rather sophisticated program that was having a significant impact on North Vietnam. I don't mean to imply that we were winning the war through this program but, in terms of all the other things that were going on, it was having a significant impact. It is the type of program that you have to give more attention to in future contingency situations.\*

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With respect to the PRAIRIE FIRE and SALEM HOUSE Programs, I'm really not quite as close to the details of them as I am to FOOTBOY. However, I feel that both of these programs have more than paid for themselves.\*

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PRAIRIE FIRE started out as primarily a reconnaissance and information collection program. It was programmed from the beginning to be a full blown interdiction exploitation program but the initial operations were limited to reconnaissance and intelligence collection. Later, as the exploitation phase got underway and began to take effect, we began to see a shift in the type of encounters in Laos. In the early days, when only reconnaissance operations were being conducted, it was rather seldom that the reconnaissance teams ran into anything other than scattered support troops, and the resistance to our teams was not severe. As the program got into the exploitation phase, however, and we began to use exploitation platoons and

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\* Ibid., p. 28.

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the teams began to call in air strikes, we saw an increasing 1  
 shift in the type of forces in the PRAIRIE FIRE area from 2  
 support troops to combat troops. Ultimately, and up to this 3  
 date, it became increasingly difficult for our teams to 4  
 operate in portions of the PRAIRIE FIRE area, particularly the 5  
 portions close to the DMZ, opposite Khe Sanh and Ashau, and in 6  
 the tri-border area. Resistance there became increasingly 7  
 severe and it is severe at this time. Most of our losses occur 8  
 in these areas. This means that the enemy for one reason or 9  
 another was forced to commit more of his combat troops to 10  
 security missions in the PRAIRIE FIRE area. This meant, too, 11  
 he had less combat troops to cross over into South Vietnam. 12  
 Again, I can't overemphasize this because it is almost 13  
 impossible for us to tell exactly why this shift in type of 14  
 troops occurred. The timing seems to indicate to us that at 15  
 least PRAIRIE FIRE was partially responsible for the commitment 16  
 of combat troops to the PRAIRIE FIRE area but I don't for a 17  
 moment think this was the only reason. Obviously, as the US 18  
 forces in South Vietnam increased and as we moved into larger, 19  
 more conventional operations, the enemy himself was forced to 20  
 bring larger and more conventionalized forces down through the 21  
 PRAIRIE FIRE area and into South Vietnam. In addition, at the 22  
 same time, he had to station larger elements along the Laotian 23  
 border and the Laotian side of the border for support, training, 24  
 regrouping, etc. I don't think that PRAIRIE FIRE was the sole 25  
 reason by any means for this shift in forces, but I do think 26  
 that it probably played a part. This contention, I think, is 27  
 supported to certain extent by the indications that a good 28  
 many of the enemy base camps and high concentrations of 29  
 supporting installations appear to have been moved eastward 30  
 from the PRAIRIE FIRE area to outside of the PRAIRIE FIRE area 31

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on the west. My people tell me you can define the PRAIRIE FIRE  
 boundary line rather well just by looking at where the enemy  
 support installations are located. This would indicate that  
 the enemy feels he can no longer afford to put fixed installa-  
 tions into the PRAIRIE FIRE area. Again, PRAIRIE FIRE is  
 probably not the only reason for this. Overall, I think that  
 this program has certainly contributed to the efforts to inter-  
 dict enemy infiltration into South Vietnam. It certainly  
 hasn't succeeded in interdicting it completely, but neither has  
 the bombing or anything else. The program certainly had made  
 life considerably more uncomfortable for the enemy.\*

The SALEM HOUSE Program, of course, is limited to  
 reconnaissance and information collection only. There are  
 rather severe restrictions on where and how often the  
 reconnaissance teams can operate. The restrictions vary in the  
 three zones of SALEM HOUSE. Moreover, the SALEM HOUSE teams  
 are prohibited from deliberately initiating contact on their  
 own. They are not allowed to call in air strikes or artillery  
 support when they identify lucrative targets. In short, it is  
 largely a purely reconnaissance program.\*\*

There is a difference of opinion on just what the SALEM  
 HOUSE Program is achieving. State Department feels that it is  
 not worth the political risk involved. To judge SALEM HOUSE,  
 I think that you have to look at the whole picture of intelli-  
 gence collection in Cambodia. Obviously, SALEM HOUSE is not  
 the only means. You have to consider the SALEM HOUSE take as  
 it fits into the overall intelligence picture, derived not

\* Ibid., pp. 28-30.

\*\* Ibid., p. 30.

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only from reconnaissance operations such as SALEM HOUSE but 1  
 from sensor intelligence, aerial photo reconnaissance, other 2  
 airborne sensor reconnaissance, agent operations, and the 3  
 whole intelligence spectrum. SALEM HOUSE provides a means for 4  
 obtaining relatively reliable human intelligence in Cambodia, 5  
 intelligence based on human observation under US control. 6  
 Because of the limited mobility of the teams and the limited 7  
 area they can cover, the information derived is primarily of a 8  
 tactical reconnaissance nature. Too often in Washington, there 9  
 is a tendency to look for some very significant strategic 10  
 intelligence for SALEM HOUSE, and too often there is a failure 11  
 to recognize that the majority of the intelligence information 12  
 obtained through SALEM HOUSE is never reported back to 13  
 Washington. It is perishable tactical information which is 14  
 disseminated through intelligence channels in South Vietnam to 15  
 our field commanders there and doesn't ever go any further nor 16  
 need it go any further. The result is people in Washington 17  
 tend to look at the program and say, "well, we never see 18  
 anything significant coming out of it; therefore, it is no 19  
 good." When you look at it from the standpoint of operational 20  
 commanders along the South Vietnamese-Cambodian border, you 21  
 get quite a different evaluation. My feeling is that SALEM 22  
 HOUSE has been well worth the cost. True, there have been 23  
 some political risks involved. These risks have been increased 24  
 in a few instances by actions on the part of SALEM HOUSE teams 25  
 which might have been better controlled but these cases have 26  
 been relatively few. Overall, the type of human observation 27  
 and reconnaissance we are getting from SALEM HOUSE fills a void 28  
 in the intelligence spectrum which cannot be filled in any other 29  
 way. This being the case, I think the program is not only well 30  
 worth the cost but probably a good deal more than the cost.\* 31

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\* Ibid., pp. 30-31

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One practical side issue pertaining to intelligence is 2

that, in order to get it, we need to establish a reward 3

program and to advertise the program rather widely. With a 4

reward program being advertised, you are bound to get a good 5

many false alarms. You are bound to get people who are 6

fabricating information in an attempt to get a reward. Every 7

one of these reports has to be checked out thoroughly. This 8

means that, by establishing a reward program, you are creating 9

problems for yourself in diffusing your intelligence effort. 10

I think this is a necessary evil and something you just have 11

to put up with in that business. Another problem is the 12

timeliness of intelligence. Intelligence reports should be 13

checked out very carefully before you run an operation. Most 14

of the reports come from low-level and rather ill-informed 15

sources. This means that some kind of confirmation or verifica- 16

tion is necessary. Operational planning is necessary before a 17

recovery operation is mounted. Too often, by the time the 18

recovery operation is mounted, the intelligence is proved to be 19

out of date.\* 20

I think, overall, that JPRC is a necessary function. I 21

think that their work is important. I think the people out 22

there have been doing just about everything they possibly could 23

do improve the recovery rate. It is a terribly tough and 24

discouraging business. I think we would have been criminally 25

negligent if we hadn't established something like the JPRC. 26

The people who established this certainly were doing something 27

that was very necessary. It is just one of the hard facts of 28

war that we haven't had a higher success rate.\* 29

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\* Ibid., p 31. 31

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I might add a personal observation on the related matter of escape and evasion in general. It is my personal opinion that we have retrogressed since World War II in the escape and evasion (E&E) business. There have been some technical advances in gadgetry but virtually nothing has been done in North Vietnam to establish effective E&E nets. In part, this was because of the limitations placed by national policy on organized activities in North Vietnam, that is, activities to organize elements of the North Vietnamese population. There is a question in my mind as to how much potential we had up there. I don't know whether we could have successfully established E&E nets in North Vietnam or not. In certain areas, particularly along the coast where they were most needed and where the SSPL had achieved a certain impact, I think we may have had an opportunity to establish E&E nets, at least, low-level ones. How much they could have accomplished, I don't know. The fact of the matter is that to my knowledge we have done virtually nothing to establish these nets or an E&E structure. We have done virtually nothing to assist our captured personnel, who are instructed in the military code that it is their duty and responsibility to try to escape. It seems to me that this is rather hollow guidance when we do absolutely nothing to assist if they do make that attempt to escape. We know that there have been a number of unsuccessful attempts to escape (some prisoners escaped but were recaptured immediately) and that there have been very, very few successful attempts. Where the attempts were successful, notably in the case of Dingler, he had to make it out strictly on his own.\*

\* Ibid., p. 32.

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. . . on the development or improvement of equipment for 2

SOG-type operations. . . on boats that you have to develop and 3

to judge equipment based on the nature of your operations. 4

Particularly in operations that were being run in the North I 5

think the Norwegian NASTY-class PTFs were good boats, probably 6

about as good as you could find anywhere. There were some 7

maintenance problems but the major problem from the maintenance 8

standpoint was that the electronics were so sophisticated we 9

had to set up a repair facility at Subic. This, of course, 10

added some undesirable features from the security compartmentation 11

standpoint. I will say, based on some experience on boats 12

for covert actions, that there is always a propensity for 13

inexperienced personnel to assume that all you have to do is 14

go out and get yourself an indigenous craft and maybe dress 15

your personnel like indigenous ones and you can get away with 16

anything. This simply isn't so. I noticed this in Korea where 17

we had to use semi-indigenous craft (not indigenous to the 18

local area but similar to indigenous craft) manned by some old 19

fishermen. We were repeatedly told by our headquarters in 20

Seoul that these boats, since they were so like indigenous 21

craft, would never be recognized as outsiders. . . this simply 22

wasn't true. . . \* 23

This idea of using indigenous craft is pretty hairy. To 24

really do it right and to get away with it is an awfully tough 25

job. For one thing in most parts of the world, particularly 26

around Vietnam, any boat that isn't well known is going to be 27

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\* Ibid., pp. 50-51. 29

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spotted immediately. Just because it looks similar to the local boats doesn't mean a thing. This, of course, some of our Navy people have learned on MARKET TIME. They have gradually learned all sorts of tricks for spotting infiltration craft, even to looking for the fishermen who aren't sunburned in the right way and whose hands aren't calloused in the right places. It is very hard to really get away with posing as an indigenous craft crew. I think SOG's reluctance to use indigenous craft has been well-founded. They have recognized the problems. Although it has been suggested to them that all they have to do is steal a junk and sail into Hanoi and blow up the whole city of Hanoi, the SOG people have recognized that you just don't get away with this sort of thing.\*

There are a lot of small hardware items that can, and should, be developed for these types of operations. There are always priority requirements for smaller, lighter, longer range, more reliable communications equipment. Again, if you are operating covertly, you have to have communications equipment that can't be traced to you. There is a big danger, particularly with an organization like SOG which is assigned both covert and non-covert operations, that you are going to have people going off on covert missions carrying a PRO-25, clearly of US origin. Homing and marking devices are a problem that has never really been solved satisfactorily. There are requirements for certain types of weapons that have never been fulfilled satisfactorily. In this connection, there is a special operations branch at Fort Detrick that has done some

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\* Ibid., p. 51.

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excellent work in their special field. Though this work shows promise for these types of operations, none of its results is ready to be used. We probably wouldn't be allowed to employ such items anyway. Again, this is an area where, if we are ever going to do any good, we (the special operations planners) must talk directly to the decision-makers. We just can't conventionally staff things such as the Fort Detrick developments.\*

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I am concerned about the procurement and sanitization of equipment used in covert operations and the full backstopping of that equipment. This is a mandatory requirement. You can't just take a few name plates off or paint the thing black. You probably noticed the item in the newspaper the other day referring to Nha Trang and the back lot where large transport aircraft are all painted black. This sort of a short cut we sometimes take. We just kid ourselves when we talk about covert operations employing equipment of that type.\*\*

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\* Ibid., pp. 51-52.  
\*\* Ibid., p. 52.

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COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

LT. COLONEL KENNETH W. McNIVEN, USAF

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..... We had difficulties, communications wise, from 5

our facility in Saigon in handling air operations originating 6

from bases away from the Saigon complex. Because of security 7

requirements and the lack of hotline facilities, in many cases 8

our hands were tied in coordinating the Air Ops or the last 9

minute changes with the units that were involved. As a result 10

of our communications problems, we staffed a recommendation to 11

have an Air Operations Command Post which would have hotline 12

communications direct to air facilities and the base camps where 13

forces would launch from. . . .\*

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..... It took the C-130s an inordinate amount of time 16

to get combat ready in the theater. The C-130s were delayed 17

in starting their operations due to equipment requirements. 18

There was also an in-country training problem caused by the 19

move [redacted] to Nha Trang.\*\* 20

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..... From an Air Force standpoint, command relations were 22

rather difficult. The advisers or experts in the airlift 23

business worked for a Navy Operations Officer who was a flyer, 24

but the only other aviators in the command channel were at Nha 25

Trang which was a considerable distance away when the operations 26

were being set up for any combat operations. We would be given 27

\* (TS) Interview of LTC Kenneth W. McNiven, USAF, p. 1. 28

\*\* Ibid., p. 2. 29

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coordinates and a support task for combat missions and our 1  
 Air Staff team would plot the intelligence and come up with our 2  
 estimate as to what would be required. Concurrently, we would 3  
 send the data that we had or the requirement to Nha Trang over 4  
 a select secure teletype facility. They would plan their 5  
 operation and send us a flight plan. We would check out the 6  
 parameters and if there were any disagreements as to what the 7  
 requirements were or the intelligence we had versus the 8  
 intelligence they had posted, we would negotiate and set up 9  
 the operation in that manner. However, if there were require- 10  
 ments for decisions in the command channel as to whether or 11  
 not a mission would be run, our recommendations were not always 12  
 readily received and we had very little immediate backing 13  
 because the rank, you might say, or impetus was at Nha Trang. 14  
 Many missions were laid on on very short notice and caused us 15  
 a great deal of anxiety in attempting to get the support from 16  
 7th AF. On many occasions 7th AF FRAGs for the next day's 17  
 combat operation were already cut. They would have to divert 18  
 air assets from laid on strikes, i.e., airborne reconnaissance 19  
 to support MACSOG. Our relations, in many cases, were strained 20  
 with the 7th AF Ops people. Of course, they were constantly 21  
 badgering us for better advance planning. Although we dealt 22  
 mainly with the Tactical Air control Center with cleared 23  
 personnel, we would invariably show up to them with a pre- 24  
 planned mission and a specific set of requirements as far as 25  
 helicopters were concerned, armed gun ships, or fighter CAP, 26  
 and consequently many of these missions were very difficult 27  
 to run as far as the 7th AF people were concerned. We had very 28  
 little preplanning. By the time a mission would be levied on 29  
 the Air Ops Section in MACSOG, we had a specific requirement 30  
 to put it in at a certain time. It would be, for example, 31

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tomorrow and we would hear about it today. Colonel Singlaub 1  
 would make a decision to insert a team tomorrow. Frequently 2  
 7th AF FRAGs were already cut for the next day's combat 3  
 operations. This made it extremely difficult in dealing with 4  
 7th AF because of the lack of advanced information.\* 5

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My overall impression of the operation of MACSOG air 7  
 operations was that there was a very strained chain of command 8  
 as far as air operations were concerned. The decision-makers 9  
 were located in MACSOG in Saigon but the launches of the actual 10  
 missions were conducted either from Nha Trang or from other 11  
 bases. Missions were run perhaps that could have been pre- 12  
 planned better. . . .\*\* 13

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I would like to comment though that the cooperation we 15  
 received from 7th AF was outstanding. They recut FRAGs and 16  
 provided us as much support as they could. Because of the 17  
 varied operations that we were conducting and the requirement 18  
 for rapid communications, we staffed a request in 1967 to 19  
 establish a modern command post to handle air operations.\*\*\* 20

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\* Ibid., pp. 2-3.  
 \*\* Ibid., p. 5.  
 \*\*\* Ibid., p. 6.

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COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

COLONEL BENTON M. AUSTIN, USA

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. . . . We found so much rice that it was difficult to  
 destroy it. We tried to burn it and this only put a crust on  
 the top of it. We tried to rip the sacks open and scatter it  
 but we found the enemy would come along later on and scrape  
 it up again. We asked for authority, incidentally, to  
 contaminate the rice and this was another restraint that was  
 placed on us.



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\* (PS) Interview of Colonel Benton M. Austin, USA, p. 4.

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COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

LT. COLONEL HAROLD J. ROSE, USA

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..... In the beginning when the B-52s were being  
 launched from Guam, it took 24 to 48 hours to get a mission  
 flown. I felt this was too long. This did change when the  
 aircraft moved to a different base. One Viet Cong was captured  
 and interrogated after one ARC LIGHT and he stated that they  
 only had eight hours notice and they had to really hustle to  
 get out of there before the ARC LIGHT struck. In further  
 interrogation, he stated that they usually got a 12 to 24-hour  
 notice.\*

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..... The way we worked the air strikes . . . was as  
 follows: We had FACs stationed at Khe Sanh, Kontum, and Phu  
 Bai and I always had one of my US NCOs riding in the back seat  
 with the FAC. On take-off when we had a team committed, the  
 NCO in the back seat would make contact with the team and we  
 had certain signals worked out, panels, etc., where we could  
 identify our team on the ground. When the team leader spotted  
 a target, he would back off away from it, mark his position and  
 give an azimuth and distance to the target. We usually had  
 overhead cover, a couple of A-1Es or a couple of jet fighters,  
 for immediate strikes and we called those in. They would be  
 directed by the FAC who got his information from the guy on the  
 ground. If the FAC couldn't see the target and the guy on the

\* (PS) Interview of LTC Harold J. Rose, USA, p. 2.

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ground knew exactly where it was, then he would move the  
next strike over, sort of like adjusting artillery. I feel that  
these were very successful missions. On Route 922 west of  
Ashau I recall that many trucks and two large bull dozers were  
knocked out. On other missions, we nailed vehicles, big  
ammunition dumps, and other types of enemy equipment. On large  
targets, we usually used air strikes, and they were very  
effective. We know because we assessed bomb damage -- our  
teams did this.\*

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. . . you could never walk overland . . . . In two or  
three days, the teams on the ground could only cover a mile or  
so, and by that time they were all beat up and couldn't operate;  
then they'd have to be pulled out.\*\*

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\* Ibid., p. 3.  
\*\* Ibid., pp. 5-6.

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COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

COLONEL EUGENE A. WAHL, USAF

. . . . .  
 . . . . In the air operations area, probably the biggest  
 problem that we had from the standpoint of support was the fact  
 that we did not or SOG did not own their own aircraft. In  
 other words, they weren't assigned. Although we had the  
 responsibility for scheduling the aircraft Chief, SOG did not,  
 in fact, have any aircraft assigned. For example, the C-130s  
 were assigned to the 314th and CCK; they were under the  
 operational control of 7th Air Force and they were fraggged by  
 MACSOG. C-123s were assigned to I don't know who yet we  
 fraggged them and although we used them, they weren't ours. They  
 could have been pulled any time even though they weren't when I  
 was there. The possibility did exist. . . . \*

. . . . .  
 Overriding priorities could have diverted the resources  
 or assets from SOG and, as far as I was concerned, it's not  
 the logical or the best way to operate. In this type of an  
 operation, I felt that the operational control, in addition to  
 the assignment . . . should be under MACSOG.\*\*

. . . . I don't really think we're using it (the US  
 technological capability) to the maximum extent . . . we  
 should have a VSTOL type aircraft that could put a complete  
 team in, take off at a launch base, run 100 or 200 miles on

\* (US) Interview of Col Eugene A. Wahl, USAF, p. 4.  
 \*\* Ibid., p. 5.

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the deck, land vertical, drop the team off, pinpoint navigation, 1  
return covertly . . . You should have everything you are looking 2  
for in a covert operation - your communications, for instance . . . 3  
dealing with the teams and dealing with your missions in communica- 4  
tions is the one big area that is lacking . . . communications 5  
is difficult from the standpoint that you are dependent upon 6  
certain times of day, certain times of the month to get the 7  
maximum communication. Maybe we should think in terms of . . . 8  
any time of the month and get 100 percent reliability on 9  
communications and we wouldn't have to worry about restricting 10  
our operations to certain times of the moon or to certain 11  
times of the day to the atmospheric conditions. The 12  
communications really, regardless of what type of operations, 13  
is the biggest stumbling block. I think our technology is 14  
such that we should be able to overcome this difficulty.\* 15

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\* Ibid., pp. 6-7.

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COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

COLONEL ROBERT C. KENDRICK, USA

.....

I think that, in future programs of this kind, the teams should be sent in as small groups and then team size increased once these groups are able to live and survive in the countryside. I don't think we have a great problem in getting them into the country. The big problem is that they are able to survive and live once they get in. Our experience has shown that the stringent and efficient control the North Vietnamese exercise over the population have caused such a fear in the people that they are quick to detect and report our agent teams once they make an overt act. We are operating against an intelligent, efficient enemy and not against a bunch of monkeys just out of the trees. These people know what they are doing. They are very thorough and, as a result, our results have been less than satisfactory, except for the benefits of having the North Vietnamese commit a lot of men and materiel to locate these teams. The mission they were actually sent to perform, to gain usable intelligence on targets so that we could use our massive air power, was for all practical purposes, a failure. I think that when the teams are put in, they should be in small numbers; once a team is able to survive, then reinforce it as required. There must be some means to exfiltrate either the team or members of the team periodically to be sure of what is going on in their area.\*

\* ~~(TS)~~ Interview of Colonel Robert C. Kendrick, USA, p. 3.

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..... 1

Because of our lack of success in TIMBERWORK and to try 2

to have an effective program in North Vietnam, the STRATA 3

Program was developed. The STRATA teams, when they first went 4

in, were small (six to seven personnel). We were able to get 5

them in. They were to watch the roads; the teams were not very 6

aggressive. By the time the bombing halt occurred and we had 7

to stop committing STRATA teams, they were getting better. I 8

think that our basic mistake, when we first committed the 9

teams, was not having adequate means of communication. These 10

teams needed a real-time capability to call in tactical air. 11

This was needed because once these teams got into trouble or 12

found a good target, they could hit it with immediate tactical 13

air. By the time the program was stopped, we were getting 14

this capability. It was a mistake to stop this program so soon. 15

I think the program would have improved a lot faster had we 16

been allowed to put a couple of US personnel with each team to 17

provide leadership and radio communications. The teams would 18

have been a lot more aggressive.\* 19

Until US operations break down the communist controls on 20

the populace, we are going to have a real hard time establishing 21

guerrilla warfare as we know it in any communist-controlled 22

country. We would have had an almost impossible job of forming 23

guerrilla bands and of conducting guerrilla operations in North 24

Vietnam otherwise.\*\* 25

. . . Because of the efficiency of the communist controls 26

in North Vietnam, every village, hamlet and province -- the 27

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\* Ibid. 29

\*\* Ibid., p. 6. 30

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way the population and resources are controlled, it is next  
to impossible to introduce a group of strangers, regardless  
of how they are documented, into these areas and expect them  
to survive. If the controls are broken down so that it looks  
like that it is time for the opportunists to change sides for  
either survival or other reasons or to get on the band wagon  
in case someone else is going to take over, then you may be  
successful. Regardless of how well the team is trained, how  
they are documented or the numbers, unless they are able to  
get in there and operate, they are just not going to be  
successful. Our past operations bear this out. If we don't  
have a contact in the area, teams are going to have a rough  
time operating. When you pick teams to go, you hope to get  
people who are from that area. It is better to have someone  
that actually lives in that area. This is sometimes  
impossible to do. You may have to take men, if available,  
who lived there before. As a last resort, you may have to  
send men in there practically blind, trained as best you can.  
Through proper documentation, you try to introduce them in  
there as men formerly from that area and with some plausible  
excuse for being there now. . . .\*

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.....  
Any agent team that is to be introduced into a strange  
area should consist of not more than two to five people so  
that they will be able to secure themselves. In case they are  
captured, it cuts down on the number of people lost. Small  
forces should consist of just enough people to provide for

\* Ibid., p. 6.

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security for 24 hours a day and give them a chance to hide and  
get set up. A large group will have a security problem and  
instead of losing from two to five, you are going to lose them  
all. I think that you should send a small group in to make an  
area assessment and to get organized before reinforcing the  
team. If you don't, you just send them to their death.\*

As to operations, once the teams get in if they can't  
mix with the people and be a part of them, the teams won't  
have much chance of accomplishing their mission. If a team  
is deployed and expected to stay a long time, unless the  
population controls are really broken down or the area is  
really isolated, I think it is going to be almost impossible  
for a team to survive. Once the team makes an overt act,  
survey forces will be brought in. These forces will block off  
the area and screen it from A to Z. They won't stop until  
they check out every ounce of intelligence or every indication  
that somebody is in there. Our past experiences bear this out.\*

. . . . When the North Vietnamese send agent teams or  
infiltrate small groups of the North Vietnamese Army into  
South Vietnam, they have somebody to meet them, to take care  
of them, to feed them, and to guide them. I am talking about  
the Viet Cong. If we had a similar organization in North  
Vietnam or similar friendly support there, we could do exactly  
the same thing. Until you have this, your guerrilla and  
intelligence collection operation are at the best going to be  
marginal. . . .\*

. . . . Larger size (battalion) exploitation forces  
should be authorized for use in Laos. These would be much

\* Ibid., p. 7.

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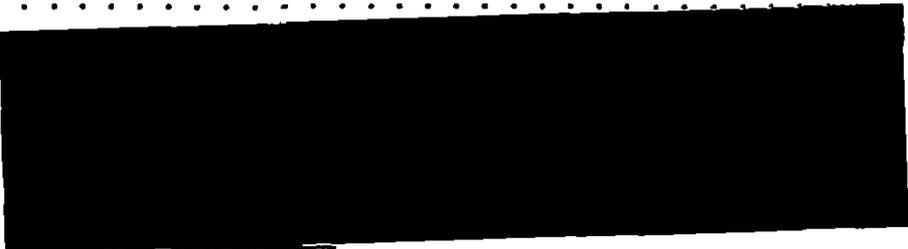
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more effective than at present. If we were able to put in  
larger forces along Routes 9, 922, 165, 110, we would certainly  
be able to impede and to a great degree stop vehicles hauling  
men and materiel into South Vietnam. Battalion-sized forces  
would have more staying power. We are restricted now to three  
platoons on one operation at any one time. We have had some  
pretty successful operations of stopping the North Vietnamese  
on Route 110. If we were able to do this with larger size  
forces, we would be able to stay in there longer. Now when  
we put forces in Laos, after they've been there a few days,  
with the numbers of troops that the North Vietnamese Army has  
in the PRAIRIE FIRE zone of operations, they are able to run us  
out even though we have our massive air hitting them.\*

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There should be some way for us to get authority on  
occasion to conduct operations outside the PRAIRIE FIRE zone  
west, down Route 9, 122, 165, 110 and south, down Route 592 and  
96. This is not being covered by Lao forces and they have  
their reasons as to why they don't want us in there. But I do  
feel that our capabilities, our US leadership -- talking to US  
pilots in US airplanes -- give PRAIRIE FIRE teams a better  
capability than the Lao teams. . . .\*\*



\* Ibid., p. 8.  
\*\* Ibid., p. 9.

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\* Ibid., p. 10.

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I want to mention our efforts to establish an intelligence 2  
net in Laos. MACSOG wanted to establish an intelligence net 3  
using friendly natives throughout the Laos panhandle. This was 4  
approved but because of the efficient controls of the communist 5  
forces in that area, we were unable to recruit or establish an 6  
intelligence net. To my knowledge, we don't have a single 7  
individual providing us intelligence from that area on a 8  
routine or continuing basis. You are going to find that this 9  
situation to a degree will exist in any place the communists 10  
have their controls until something is done to knock out or 11  
change the control they have over the population. The same 12  
holds for recruiting guerrilla forces. MACSOG tried to get 13  
approval to establish a guerrilla force in the PRAIRIE FIRE 14  
area of about 3,000. We were never able to get approval for 15  
the project. I personally feel that it would have met the 16  
same fate that the intelligence net met. I often wondered why 17  
they didn't try to recruit and use the many Bru who had been 18  
run out of the area in Laos, just west of the DMZ. They could 19  
have used Lang Vay as their base. This never was done; there 20  
were probably reasons why it wasn't.\* 21

In the PRAIRIE FIRE zone, had we been able to establish 22  
a guerrilla force, regardless of how many or how small or in 23  
how many places, under the current controls, the communists 24  
have in that area, once a village or settlement made an overt 25  
act against the North Vietnamese, I think every person there 26  
would have either been killed or would have had to depart the 27  
area. I think this information would have spread very quickly 28  
and any friendly forces we had in Laos either would have quit 29  
or would have been ineffective.\*\* 30

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\* Ibid., p. 11.  
\*\* Ibid., pp. 11-12.

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..... I think that the STRATA teams which are based and 2

live at Danang should be used in the PRAIRIE FIRE zone west of 3

the DMZ so that they would be better prepared to go North, which 4

they are being maintained for, in case they are required. They 5

are now used in both the SALEM HOUSE and the PRAIRIE FIRE zones. 6

In case they are never able to go back into North Vietnam and 7

are required to go into other parts of Laos and Cambodia, 8

current operations will give them background and experience.\* 9

..... 10

..... I think that once we determine that we are going 11

to run a covert program, whether it is in Cambodia, in Laos or 12

in North Vietnam, it should be run as a covert program. Until 13

the policy is determined that we will not run the program, 14

MACSOG should be given the go-ahead and allowed to run their 15

program. All of the different people who feel that they are 16

controlling or running the operations should be kept completely 17

out and MACSOG allowed to run the program as a covert one and 18

to operate freely as long as they stay within approved guide- 19

lines. Until we do that, the programs are going to always be 20

cumbersome, frustrating and to a certain degree, ineffective. 21

There are too many people trying to control, run and influence 22

the MACSOG operations now being conducted in Laos and Cambodia, 23

and even more so when we were running operations in North 24

Vietnam. I'm particularly making reference to raids along the 25

North Vietnamese coast by action teams transported there by 26

PT boats. It was almost impossible at times to get approval at 27

CINCPAC because some people just didn't see the need for these 28

operations. This just wasted a good asset that could have been 29

used often and effectively. It is better to try and fail than 30

not to try at all.\*\* 31

\* Ibid., p. 12.  
 \*\* Ibid., p. 15.

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~~Ibid., p. 12.~~

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COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

COLONEL ROBERT C. KINGSTON, USA

..... 4

Several safe houses were obtained and used by OP-34 5  
during my stay. I think the majority of them were procured 6  
indirectly. Proper security in the procurement was lacking 7  
both on the part of the STS and US SOG support personnel. It 8  
is my belief that no American should ever go near or in a safe 9  
house, particularly until after it has been established. Then, 10  
if he must go, it should be, I believe, only the US case 11  
officer and all sorts of anti-detection measures should be 12  
followed. Safe houses were procured that Americans went down 13  
and surveyed. They took footage to make sure we weren't over- 14  
paying on the local markets and bought them just as if they 15  
were buying another US billet or installation. As it turned 16  
out, several of the safe houses that I had and that were in 17  
operation for me were owned by STS officers. We had no idea 18  
how long they had owned them or whether they themselves were 19  
not blown as Vietnamese intelligence officers.\* 20

..... 21

..... The safe houses that OP-34 had were to house the 22  
teams after the initial team training had been conducted and 23  
prior to infiltration. It, in theory, was to be an area in 24  
which the team could be securely held away from the camp 25  
personnel and away from the training personnel that had given 26  
them their team and individual instruction. If the team did 27  
not have one of its members selected to become a radio 28  
operator, the radio operator joined the team in the safe house. 29  
This is in theory. In practice, some of the teams stayed in 30  
the safe houses so long that they obviously became compromised 31  
in them.\*\*

\* (TS) Interview of Col Robert C. Kingston, USA, pp. 1-2.

\*\* Ibid., p. 4.

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In the actual running of the safe houses, we had safe housekeepers who had no authoritative control over the teams. The STS case officer or assistant STS case officer did not live with the team in the safe house so that they could control the actions of the team on a 24-hour basis and thus prevent them from leaving the house almost at will when instruction was not going on or the case officer was not present. This lack of control of the teams' movements in and out of the house was an obvious disadvantage to our operation. The length of time in which some of the teams remained, due to operational necessity, in the safe houses obviously contributed to the compromise and disclosure of the safe houses.\*

It is my opinion that a safe house should hold the team for a minimum time and certainly not for three to six months. A safe house should certainly be used only once and for the housing of one team. If, after the exfiltration of that team a safe house is required, then I see nothing to prevent the team returning to that safe house if the organization still has it on the payroll. There were, in my opinion, sufficient houses in the Saigon area that we could have, had we had the proper support personnel that understood the purchase and use of safe houses (both American and STS), done better on our safe houses. They are not permanent possessions nor should they become so. Several safe house owners were probably known as STS case officers and automatically any team being inserted in these houses I felt were blown. Needless to say, corrective action, when this was known to me, to Colonel Singlaub, or to Colonel Austin, was taken.\*

\* Ibid., p. 5.

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Upon my initial investigation of the SOG packing sheds 2

or packing areas in the same general location as the 5th Special 3

Forces Group in Nha Trang, I found that all my teams in North 4

Vietnam had bins with the name of the team over the bin and 5

that some of the personnel in the bin area or in the supply 6

area were indigenous. This immediately blew the number of 7

teams that we had and possibly the number of personnel in each 8

team. I had this stopped immediately and was amazed that the 9

US personnel in charge of the packing would complain or insist 10

that they had a right to know the number of teams and number of 11

personnel in the teams they were preparing supply bundles for. 12

I bring this up because I think a packing or shipping list 13

could have been given to the 5th Special Forces Group and they 14

could have prepared the bundles. They had no reason to know 15

where the bundles were going or whom they were for. I think 16

this is the area of duplication that we could eliminate. . . .\*

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\* Ibid., p. 3.

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COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

COLONEL HAROLD K. AARON, USA

.....

. . . . In debriefing some of my people in Okinawa after they returned (I personally debriefed them), they gave me the impression that in early 1968 many of the operations were poorly planned and launched. Also, that there was a poor degree of organization and support for their operations. One example was the large number of teams that were on the ground in Laos; if emergency extractions were required of the majority of the teams, there was inadequate helicopter support for the extractions. Another thing that they complained about (I know that this was also a problem for the SOG people) was the restriction of about 20 kilometers imposed on the depth of penetration into Laos. After operating in these areas for about two years, the enemy had developed a highly sophisticated alert and warning system. He had all of the LZs pretty well reconnoitered and had the guards posted so that when people got on the ground it was a short period of time before there was a reaction force moving out to intercept them and engage them. The SOG people attempted without success to try to deepen the area of penetration but did not achieve a great deal of success either from the US Ambassador in Laos or from Washington. Had SOG been able to make deeper penetrations, this would have tended to dilute the security and warning system and perhaps more insertions could have been made and people could have stayed on the ground longer than they did.\*

\* (TS) Interview of Colonel Harold K. Aaron, USA pp. 6-7.

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My people were particularly concerned when they were going through specific target areas that there were very little data maintained in a running target file by which they could study the area and study it well and know some of the problems that had been encountered before. The intelligence was quite poor or was improperly collated. Consequently, the teams were sometimes improperly prepared for their missions. In some cases, members of the teams told me that they had an hour's notice to load the helicopters and begin the insertion. They felt that there was more of a concern for increasing the number of insertions, increasing the quantity, rather than trying to develop greater qualitative performance and efficiency. They felt that there was undue pressure from Saigon to get more teams out and on the ground.\*

I felt while I was there that as the 5th Group commander, and being responsible [REDACTED] I had more than enough to handle. It was seriously reaching the limits of span and control. Some people advocated to me that we should take over and absorb the cross-border operations. I was against this because I didn't think that we were capable of doing it without diminishing effort in other areas.\*

There is one other appendage to the SOG operation that I would like to comment on and I feel very strongly about it. It is the JPRC. I became involved with the JPRC when I was with SACSA and I was convinced during my whole tour in SACSA that we in the JCS were not doing as much as we possibly could for the people that were prisoners of the Viet Cong or the NVA.

\* Ibid., p. 7.

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We became involved in the 5th Group in some prisoner recovery operations in-country. As we went through these evercises -- starting to prepare the operation, plan it and mount it -- it became apparent to me that we did not have in being a quick reaction capability to respond to intelligence of US PW camps. I feel that you must have a highly trained, highly selective, force that is immediately available for launch operations within 24-48 hours before those prisoners are moved. Independent-ly of the SOG staff, I proposed to Chief, SOG that I provide the personnel, both US and indigenous, and the logistical support for a two-company reaction force for prisoner recovery operations in-country. I had the funds and the necessary assets to do the job. The operational control of the force would be directly under Chief, SOG. At the same time, I found out that the JPRC Staff under MACSOG had come up with the same conclusion and the same approach. I made my views known to Chief, SOG as well as to the J-5 of MACV that I was willing to do this, and would be willing to pursue it aggressively, and get it launched as soon as possible. Chief, SOG told me that he did not think it was feasible and the J-5 said that they would study it if I would submit a formal proposal to MACV. I told them that it was so damned obvious to me, and that if they couldn't see the benefits from such an exercise and such an organization that I wasn't going to submit a formal proposal. I do feel that such an organization is still needed. If you want to launch a prisoner recovery mission now, the JPRC people have to go to the field force commander and have him allocate assets, both personnel and helicopters, plan the operation, and then run it. In many cases, they were coming to one of my companies of the Group, particularly in III Corps, and we were starting to set up the operation to recover the prisoners. The time we launched

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the operation was anywhere from seven to twelve days and usually we found out that we had a "dry hole." I am still convinced even to this day that, in terms of prisoner recovery operations in Vietnam, we are not geared properly for rapid response and rapid reaction to recover our personnel.\*

.....

Another thing in which we have been lacking is the codification of doctrine and techniques that have emerged from the SOG operations for the past four or five years. Helicopter operations have become increasingly sophisticated; operations orders have become more detailed. We have done little to codify these and to take advantage of these data either in the intelligence field and the operational field, and to use them as the basis of training. When SF people come over there, they have very little idea as to what these operations are like and it takes them about three to four months to get their feet on the ground and to learn from on-the-job training before they become effective.\*\*

I think also that there was an initial tendency in Saigon, and perhaps rightfully so because of political sensitivities, to centralize much of the direction and control in Saigon. I think as time has gone on more and more latitude has been given to the C&C Detachment commander in terms of when he will launch the operations and when he will extract, etc. While I was with the 1st Group, I felt that cross border operations were over-controlled and over-centralized in Saigon and that many of the people in Saigon with SOG had little appreciation for the

\* Ibid., pp. 8-9.  
\*\* Ibid., p. 13.

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problems of the launch commanders and the problems that they were encountering in the field. For example, a team would get on the ground and get in trouble and would request emergency extraction. (Sure, some of the teams that went in there cried "wolf" early and got out before the enemy pressure was built up.) Cases of premature extraction caused an adverse reaction in Saigon and the man before he could be extracted had to be approved for extraction by SOG. I believe that the launch commander or the C&C Detachment commander should have the authority and if the extraction was premature, and found to be so, then he would take appropriate action against the reconnaissance team leader when he returned from the area. In essence, what I am saying is that you have to give the man the responsibility and insure that he does it. To a certain extent, decentralization was not provided when it should have been.\*

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\* Ibid., pp. 13-14.

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COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

COLONEL GEORGE A. MALONEY, USA

. . . the military problems associated with setting up a cross-border program, while great, are minuscule in comparison to the tremendous problem of obtaining the political authority to initiate and carry on programs.\*

Looking first at military problems, you need to create an organization that is responsive to a relatively small number of people who, on a continuing basis, will take on very high risk missions in enemy areas behind enemy lines. To be successful on a continuing basis requires a highly responsive helicopter system. It requires a continuously responsive communications net; i.e., any time a team feels as though there is a need to communicate, it can do it with the assurance that its broadcast will be monitored by a relay station, airborne if necessary. There must be a 24-hour a day communication link.\*

The third requirement of this system is a retrieval procedure which will permit the introduction of sufficient force to gain temporary local superiority to permit a team to be pulled out or extracted from a hot spot very quickly, i.e., before the enemy has a chance to react and to build up a significant strength in the area of a trapped team. Certainly, one of the clear lessons to us in this extraction business is that the longer we permit the team to remain in a trapped position, the more difficult it is to eventually get them out.

\* ~~(TS)~~ Interview of Col George R. Maloney, USA, p. 2.

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When a team is discovered, if you don't get them out in the ensuing 30 to 40 minutes, then your chances of getting them out at all go down greatly because in that intervening time, the enemy has a chance to move weapons and forces into the area. They are able to throw up a huge volume of fire which will prohibit the helicopters from coming in and making a successful extraction.\*

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Another problem associated with the cross-border program is the fact that you want to keep the presence of US personnel on your reconnaissance team to the irreducible minimum. This means that you must train indigenous type troops to an acceptable skill level. This means teaching them how to read maps, how to use compasses, how to navigate at night, how to use all the type weapons that will be in the environment -- both ours and the enemy's, how to call in artillery, how to adjust tactical air, how to communicate with the FACs and the gun ships, how to use first aid, how to talk enough English so that they can communicate in the event that the two Americans on the team are incapacitated. We've had any number of examples which have tended to strengthen our belief that the results obtained vary directly with the degree of proficiency that is obtained by your indigenous team members.\*\*

... senior military commanders in the field in Vietnam are the primary users of this tactical intelligence on enemy activity in Cambodia. I say that because often times you will hear from other agencies comments to the effect that they are

\* Ibid.  
\*\* Ibid., pp. 1-2.

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not getting any significant intelligence from the DANIEL BOONE 1  
 program. This takes up to the age-old problem of how far you 2  
 want to disseminate intelligence without tipping the fact that 3  
 such a program does exist. Frequently you will find agencies 4  
 back here in Washington, particularly State Department, who 5  
 question what we are getting out of DANIEL BOONE because they 6  
 are making their judgments primarily on what of value they get 7  
 out of the program. Of course, since the program is primarily 8  
 tactical in nature, it does not deliver to the Washington arena 9  
 intelligence which is primarily strategic in nature and would 10  
 have interest to those people back here.\* 11

I think one of the keys that should be used in evaluating 12  
 the program is the fact that there is no other acceptable 13  
 alternative means of getting this type of information other 14  
 than by ground reconnaissance patrols. Whatever the deficiencies 15  
 of this program are and whatever the alleged shortcomings are, 16  
 unless there is a viable alternative which is an improvement, 17  
 then clearly we better stick with what we have.\*\* 18

\* Ibid., pp. 5-6. 19  
 \*\* Ibid., p. 6. 20

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COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

STAFF SERGEANT RUSSELL D. ALLEN, USA

.....

. . . . . During my time working with this operation, I worked with a total of 10 STRATA teams. Initially, we started out with four teams and used those up until the bombing halt. Then we had a buildup to 10 teams which we used on numerous operations. The first four teams had up to 15 men but we decided that was too many people for a reconnaissance type mission and we trimmed them down to from 6 to 10. The teams consisted of a team leader, normally two assistant team leaders, radio operators, usually two (one main and one backup), and two scouts who took care of the navigation. The missions of the teams normally consisted of a roadwatch along a certain stretch of road to determine the amount of vehicular and foot traffic on that road, the direction of movement, the times that there was traffic on the roads and times that this traffic would start in the morning and time that they would stop at night. Also, during their movement to their point of roadwatch, they would conduct a minor terrain analysis and then coming from a roadwatch site to their exfiltration LZ, they would do the same to give us an idea of the type of vegetation, what the terrain was like, if it was very hilly, how high the hills were, etc. Normally, we would insert the teams by a CH-3 helicopter. The infiltrations and the exfiltrations were conducted during the day-time. I remember only one parachute infiltration which was conducted at night. Due to problems encountered on this mission, it was decided to use the daylight helicopter type infiltrations. During my tour, I was involved in 19 infiltrations, mostly with the

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four initial teams. There were somewhere around 30 operations in all conducted during the time that I was there.\* 1  
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As concerns the effectiveness of the teams and the results, I felt that the teams usually were fairly effective in that, if nothing else, we could show the North Vietnamese that we could put teams into their territory whenever we liked and come in and take them out. Usually the teams did a good job but we did have some problems getting them to complete the mission that they were assigned. However, the information that they picked up en route to their point of roadwatch such as the location of watch towers or control points was fairly good. I stated that we were proving to the North Vietnamese that we could put teams into their territory and take them out. We found out through OP 33 that the North Vietnamese knew this. OP 33 would get newspapers from North Vietnam or monitor their radio stations and get articles where the North Vietnamese stated that they had captured an agent or caught up with a team and killed all the members of the team. These teams were usually referred to as US ranger teams. This gave us an idea that they knew that the teams were there.\*\* 3  
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..... On the communications procedures, the STRATA teams would send messages by CW and by voice from their operational area to our site at Danang. There the messages received would be sent on to Saigon where necessary decisions were made. These were sent to Danang and we'd take action there. For instance, if they requested a resupply of ammunition 22  
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\* (PS) Interview of Staff Sergeant Russell D. Allen, USA, p. 4.  
\*\* Ibid., pp. 4-5. 28  
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or supply of demolitions, etc., we would ready this resupply 1  
 in Danang and take it to Nakhon Phanom. It would be delivered 2  
 to the team from there. The teams also had communications 3  
 with the search aircraft or the forward air controller by the 4  
 use of a PRC 25 which was used strictly for this purpose. For 5  
 the long-range communications from the operational area to 6  
 Danang, the team used a PRC 74 which has both CW and voice 7  
 capability. However, it cannot net with the search, aircraft. 8  
 The teams also carried small rescue radios, RS 2s. They 9  
 sometimes had the HT 1 for inter-team communications if the 10  
 team was expected to split up at any time during the mission.\* 11

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When we sent a STRATA team on a mission, we would move them 13  
 from Danang to Nakhon Phanom by C-130 or C-123 aircraft. From 14  
 there we would move them on in by CH-3. The only problems we'd 15  
 have by staging in Nakhon Phanom was that we could not keep our 16  
 teams in Nakhon Phanom overnight. We had to be very careful 17  
 when we had them there, moving them from the airport to our 18  
 secure area. We had to move them in a closed van and be very 19  
 careful that none of the Thai nationals saw the team members. 20  
 We would move them from the secure area to the aircraft by the 21  
 same vehicle. If we had an important mission or something that 22  
 couldn't wait and we needed to keep a team in Nakhon Phanom over- 23  
 night, we could declare more or less an emergency and get 24  
 permission through the embassy to keep the team there overnight 25  
 but usually this would only be for one night. Most times, 26  
 however, if we had bad weather or problems with our helicopters 27  
 or anything like this where the mission was a no-go, we would 28  
 carry the team back to Danang. We would check the weather the 29  
 next day early and, if possible, we would try the insertion 30  
 one day late.\*\* 31

\* Ibid., p. 5.  
 \*\* Ibid., p. 6.

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\* Ibid., p. 5.

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Most of our insertions were done during daylight hours. 2

When we did this, we would infiltrate or insert into very 3

mountainous areas which usually had very heavy underbrush, 4

thick jungle, etc., and very little population in the area. 5

The teams would move from the infiltration LZ to their objective 6

on foot. This distance would be up to 10 kilometers, depending 7

on where we could find a good LZ without getting the team so 8

close to their objective that the operation might be spotted 9

and a team given away before they even got on the ground. To 10

my knowledge, all the insertions that we had were good 11

insertions and were undetected.\* 12

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. . . . STRATA missions were designed to be covert 14

operations. We tried as much as possible to use indigenous 15

equipment; however, some equipment we couldn't get through 16

foreign channels. We had to use American made radios.\* 17

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. . . . Their cover story was that they were recruited 19

and trained in South Vietnam by Caucasians or Westerners and 20

put into North Vietnam to search for and attempt to rescue 21

downed American pilots.\* 22

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. . . . STRATA teams were trained for prisoner snatches 24

and were given this as a secondary mission. We encouraged 25

teams to take prisoners. If this were done before they reached 26

the objective we would exfiltrate them at that time. During 27

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\* Ibid., p. 7. 29

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my time there, we ran one mission that was strictly a prisoner  
snatch. On this mission, the team members carried British  
Sten guns with silencers. Usually, on the missions, we would  
have one team member carrying the Sten gun for the purpose of  
the prisoner snatch. . . .\*

.....

. . . . When I first arrived at Long Thanh and started  
working with the teams, they were carrying way too much equip-  
ment. I have never seen a man carrying as much as his own  
weight but I have seen one weighing 124 pounds soaking wet  
carrying as much as 80 pounds or a little better. This greatly  
impaired their ability to move. It was too much equipment for  
reconnaissance teams. It would wear them out. They would get  
tired early in the day due to the heat and everything in that  
country. We tried trimming their equipment down and taking  
away items of equipment that they didn't necessarily need to  
carry. I've seen times when they issued telescopes with tripods  
for long-distance observing which, as many times as I saw the  
teams operate, they never did any long-distance observing.  
Usually when they came back, they didn't have the telescope or  
the tripod. They lost it on the infiltration or the  
exfiltration or while being chased by the enemy. We decided to  
take away this piece of equipment. The homing beacons we took  
away when we stopped the parachute type infiltrations. Also,  
we took away the national panasonic radios that each member  
of the team carried for homing in on the beacon. The team  
panasonic radio was retained.\*\*

\* Ibid., p. 7.  
\*\* Ibid., p. 8.

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... the STRATA missions could be improved if we could

... have Americans work directly with the teams and accompany

the teams on their missions, either as leaders or advisors.

During training and training operations the teams always have

an American there. The American usually has more experience.

He has been working at this for several years and he's a good

man, he knows how to work the equipment, he knows how to think

and how to react in an emergency situation. When the teams go

in the north on a mission, all of a sudden they find themselves

without the American. I think this causes some confusion at

first . . . I think if the Americans were used along with

the teams we'd definitely improve the results we get back from

the missions. We could get more information and better

information . . . Possibly for now we could use Americans and

later on, after Americans had gone with a team three or four

times, then we could put a team in on a mission without the

Americans. They would be more familiar with the feeling of

being someplace on their own and it wouldn't affect them the

same as after training with Americans all the time, just

dropping them off by themselves.\*

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\* Ibid., pp. 8-9.

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COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

LT. COLONEL JEFFERSON SEAY, III, USA

.....

..... At the time that I was assigned to SOG, the 219th was tasked to support the SOG operations. The squadron was authorized 25 H-34s and had assigned 23. However, they were only able to fly between five and eight choppers per day. Chief, SOG directed the Deputy Chief, SOG, at that time Colonel Gleason, to take that as a special project and see what he could do to bring up the operational capability of the 219th. At about this same time, a Vietnamese Air Force major was assigned to STD as the liaison officer, a Major Tien. Through the efforts of Colonel Gleason and Major Tien, they were able in about three or four months to bring the operational count up to 10-12 choppers a day, and occasionally 15. However, there were two major problems that Colonel Gleason encountered: spare parts and the availability of aircraft. It appeared that the spare parts earmarked for the 219th were being diverted to other VNAF squadrons and that new H-34s earmarked for the 219th were diverted upon arrival and sent to other squadrons. This latter problem, Colonel Gleason was unable to solve; however, the operational capability of the 219th did come up and other aircraft were assigned to fill the shortage. The spare parts problem wasn't solved, but it was improved to a great extent. The improvement of the 219th was attributed to Colonel Gleason and Major Tien and this was a good example of how much can be done when the US and the Vietnamese counterparts work together on a problem. During this period, Colonel Gleason and Major Tien made numerous trips to Nha Trang and Danang. They

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jointly met with the USAF advisors and VNAF commanders and, through their mutual efforts, they were able to accomplish quite a bit.\*

.....  
After the STRATA concept and program was approximately six months old, various US officials were becoming quite critical of the results obtained. This was true; they were not doing too good a job. However, in the type of operation that STRATA was, it takes considerable time just to get men who are experienced, trained and motivated to accomplish the mission. In one instance, a STRATA team went in and one of the soldiers inflicted himself with a wound so that the whole team could be extracted. After investigation, it was determined that an Army lieutenant who was the team leader was the instigator of the action and that the man had indeed shot his foot so that they could all be extracted. . . . it takes some time to weed out the weak ones and find out which individuals are going to be strong. In this particular case, one of the men who turned the rest of them in at the investigation was later made a team leader. . . . To insert people in hostile territory in very, very rugged terrain under very hazardous conditions, takes time to develop good individuals whom you can depend on to go in and do a good mission. So, I think that the impatience on the US side is not always warranted. To add to this, the THUNDER CLOUD operation was finally cancelled due to lack of results. I feel that had THUNDER CLOUD continued for some months that some very good results would have come of this concept which was using NVA ralliers as three-man agent teams in South Vietnam for combat

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\* (PS) Interview of Colonel Jefferson Seay, III, USA, pp. 4-5.

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operations and intelligence gathering. However, the results 1  
 were not coming forth as soon as the US counterparts felt they 2  
 should, so the program was abandoned. Part of this, I believe, 3  
 stems from the fact that an officer has one year to do in 4  
 Vietnam and he must produce results; therefore, if he doesn't 5  
 show results in the program, it's no good. Many of these 6  
 programs take months and maybe even years to develop the expertise 7  
 required to accomplish the mission.\* 8

Let me elaborate on the THUNDER CLOUD program. After 9  
 Tet, 1968 SOG was tasked more and more for in-country operations 10  
 of reconnaissance teams and platoons and even up to company-size 11  
 because there were very few cross-border operations being 12  
 conducted. In-country operations were a necessity at the time; 13  
 however, valuable assets, i.e., unconventional warfare, cross- 14  
 border, were being utilized in-country rather than in the area 15  
 for which they were originally intended. During this period, 16  
 the THUNDER CLOUD concept was evaluated and it was determined 17  
 that they were not doing a proper job. Each team consisted 18  
 of two to three NVA ralliers who had volunteered to go back in 19  
 NVA or in VC-held territory of South Vietnam posing as NVA 20  
 soldiers for the purpose of collecting intelligence, conducting 21  
 combat operations and capturing prisoners. In some cases, 22  
 these teams were highly successful. They were able to walk 23  
 up to another NVA soldier, convince the other NVA soldier that 24  
 they were one of his comrades in arms and capture him. However, 25  
 in some cases, in the extraction, a prisoner was killed or had 26  
 to be killed because of other NVA units moving in the area. 27  
 I believe that if this program had been allowed to run for six 28  
 more months, it would have produced very, very outstanding 29  
 results simply from the fact that the team could move right 30  
 into NVA territory without being contested.\*\* 31

\* Ibid., pp. 7-8.

\*\* Ibid., p. 8.

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COMMENTS ON MACSCG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

COLONEL ROBERT L. GLEASON, USAF

.....

In the FOOTBOY Program, of course, they [high level political decisions and restrictions] had a direct influence. The first vitiating factor occurred when restrictions, publicly announced, were placed on conventional forces. First, the restriction on bombing during certain periods or restriction on bombing above certain latitudes. We had similar if not identical restrictions placed on our FOOTBOY operation. This, of course, would directly associate the relationship of these two operations in anyone's mind. This would detract from FOOTBOY effectiveness. I hasten to add that we're not so naive as to think that the government of Hanoi was not aware of the origin and genesis of all the FOOTBOY operations. However, they were not the ones we were chiefly concerned with in our PsyOps programs. We know from interviews out of the detainee program that Hanoi would always hold to the fact that these were US run programs out of SVN. But there always seemed to be some doubt in the minds of the villagers whether or not Hanoi really knew. Then, after we started restricting our operations in conformity with other publicly announced restrictions, Hanoi could and we understand did come out with "I told you so" comments to substantiate what they had previously contended.\*

There was another very important vitiating factor in my mind and this perhaps had the most tragic results. That was

\* (TS) Interview of Col Robert L. Gleason, USAF, p. 3.

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termination of the support of the long-range in-place agent 1  
 teams. There has always been a widely held conviction in 2  
 both CAS and some US military circles that all of these teams 3  
 in NVN are compromised and have been compromised for some 4  
 time. The rationale then continues with the contention that 5  
 there is no problem in stopping the resupply of those teams. 6  
 This may or may not be the case. I think we've got to at least 7  
 keep in the back of our minds the possibility that some of 8  
 these teams are not compromised. What is most important, however, 9  
 is that several of these teams are not compromised in the eyes 10  
 of the Vietnamese Army who are personal friends of these 11  
 people. They were induced to go into NVN with the guarantee 12  
 that they would be supported by the United States. They are 13  
 not up there and the support has been withdrawn because of the 14  
 bombing and overflight restrictions. They feel betrayed. They 15  
 will not accept the fact that the teams are compromised. They 16  
 ask for proof that they are compromised and, of course, you 17  
 cannot give proof. They also point out emotionally that this 18  
 type of thing gets around SEAsia to include Thailand, Laos and 19  
 Cambodia. In the future if the US tries to initiate programs of 20  
 this type, these things will not be forgotten: the fact that 21  
 the US trained their personnel, recruited their personnel, 22  
 promised to support them, took them in, supported them for a 23  
 while and then for non-tactical reasons, i.e., political 24  
 restrictions, withdrew support for these teams. They pointed 25  
 out that restrictions on overflights, in many cases, were in 26  
 effect when these teams went in because, in many cases, they 27  
 were infiltrated long before we started bombing the North. Why 28  
 should they not be supplied and provided with necessities of 29  
 life now that overflight restrictions are imposed. They feel 30  
 strongly that these teams should continue to be supplied in 31  
 spite of overflight restrictions.\* 32

\* Ibid., p. 4.~~TOP SECRET~~

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In other areas, in the MAROPS area, the PsyOps program 1  
was halted because of political restraints. This program would 2  
suffer, I'm sure, if ever started again. It may be required to 3  
come up with some other front besides the SSPL. I do think that 4  
some MAROPS could continue with acceptable political risks. It 5  
probably wouldn't be quite as credible in the eyes of the 6  
Vietnamese fishermen, perhaps not credible at all. But I think 7  
it would serve a purpose in giving these fishermen of the 8  
villages, especially those that feel resentful toward the 9  
regime, some outlet for expressing their resentment. Also, 10  
it would allow us to keep a thumb on the pulse of the enemy 11  
civilian populace as to the effect of the peace talks and 12  
bombing halts. This could be done very easily by continuing 13  
interviews of fishermen by taking them off their boats, inter- 14  
viewing them for an hour or two, getting some of the general 15  
impressions, putting them back on their boats and letting 16  
them return to NVN. In other words, don't withdraw them into 17  
SVN for protracted periods for interviews. I think we have a 18  
lot of potential with a minimum of political risk. There will 19  
be some military risk because after a while I'm sure the North 20  
Vietnamese will get after our boats with aircraft and patrol 21  
boats. So, we would have to live with some type of military 22  
risk but I think the political risks would be minimal.\* 23  
I think the restriction on dropping leaflets into NVN 24  
is unreasonable and unrealistic. We still could get some 25  
good out of the black PsyOps leaflet program if the aircraft 26  
were allowed to drop the leaflets using the wind drift technique 27  
flying well off the coast of NVN when the winds are blowing 28  
towards the west or remain over Laos not violating NVN air space 29  
when the winds are in the opposite direction. Again, I am 30  
referring to a minimum risk program with some return.\*\* 31

\* Ibid., pp. 4-5.  
\*\* Ibid., p. 5.

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Appendix B  
Appendix C

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As to how long this type of operation should continue, 2

before evolving into a conventional operation, I will first 3

address PRAIRIE FIRE and DANIEL BOONE operations. I think when 4

the political decision is made to announce publicly that we are 5

conducting ground operations of any magnitude into Laos and 6

Cambodia and NVN, then the control of those forces could best 7

be conducted through the field force commanders whose areas are 8

contiguous to the area in Laos and Cambodia they are operating 9

in. I see no reason for SOG to continue operations after it 10

was common knowledge that reconnaissance teams or exploitation 11

teams have been authorized for operation in Laos and Cambodia. 12

Until that occurs, of course, SOG should run the operations. 13

I think they could do it. But you have to depend on the field 14

forces for helicopter support, facilities to operate, etc. As 15

to the FOOTBOY operations, they have been terminated, except 16

for the radio operations because of the bombing restrictions 17

. . . I think some of these operations could be resumed, in a 18

limited capacity. However, now it is time to look forward to 19

turning them over to complete Vietnamese control with perhaps 20

US advisory assistance of considerably less magnitude than at 21

present. I would think that CAS would probably not care to 22

take over these operations; they think it would compromise their 23

operations too much. I think one possibility would be to 24

continue them as a cover operation for CAS-initiated programs, 25

i.e., continue running them to the extent possible as covert 26

operations. While this is going on, CAS could very subtly and 27

quietly begin other operations that they are going to run 28

during peacetime and continue to run during peacetime. When 29

they are well established, using FOOTBOY as a smoke screen, then 30

FOOTBOY can be phased out. . . .\*

\* Ibid., p. 8.

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..... I think CIA is a lot more secretive than DOD and  
 can render final judgment on these psychological warfare  
 programs and have a better feel for repercussions. They are,  
 in many cases . . . a type program that you can't always explain  
 to the American public. I think it would be disastrous if some  
 of the more sensitive PsyOps programs became public and were  
 traced to the military. They are better off where they are,  
 in a non-DOD agency.\*

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\* Ibid., p. 11.

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COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

COLONEL STEPHEN E. CAVANAUGH, USA

..... 4

In discussing the subject of restraints and restrictions, 5  
 I might break these down into the restraints and restrictions 6  
 imposed on the various types of operations that we conduct. 7  
 Going back before the first of November 1968 and considering 8  
 our maritime operations against the coast of North Vietnam, 9  
 the restrictions imposed, insofar as they covered the distance 10  
 north of the 17th parallel that we could go, eventually 11  
 resulted in the enemy's being able to pretty well ascertain our 12  
 area of operation and, therefore, make boats more susceptible to 13  
 interception. I recognized that there were political factors 14  
 here . . . but, nevertheless these restrictions, considering 15  
 them purely from an operational side, did restrict our capability.\* 16

The restrictions imposed on us on 1 November which pre- 17  
 cluded the use of boats north of the 17th parallel resulted in 18  
 an appreciable reduction, if not a total reduction, in the 19  
 intelligence that we were gleaning from fishermen being picked 20  
 up and detained, and completely nullified . . . the credibility 21  
 of our psychological operations program - the SSPL which was 22  
 aimed at establishing a belief in the fishermen at least on 23  
 the coast that there existed a dissident political party within 24  
 North Vietnam against the current Hanoi Regime. The restrictions 25  
 which were imposed also at this time against our leaflet drops 26  
 similarly restricted or reduced the effectiveness of our black 27

\* (TS) Interview of Col Stephen E. Cavanaugh, USA, pp. 3-4. 28

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psychological operations program and those of us on the ground  
 felt that these operations could have or should have been  
 continued at least until such time as there was a specific  
 reason to curtail them.\*

In Laos and the SALEM HOUSE area, the restriction on  
 depth of penetration, of course, allowed the enemy to pretty  
 well put his observers and his antiaircraft weapons in such a  
 position so that they could intercept our aircraft and,  
 recognizing that we could not go deep to insert our teams and  
 overfly these areas, it restricted the operations to a large  
 extent. . . . in the SALEM HOUSE area, the restrictions  
 against tactical air and using exploitation forces allowed the  
 enemy to escape many times when a lucrative target could have  
 been struck.\*

The restrictions against using ethnic Cambodians in  
 operations in SALEM HOUSE are contrary to all generally accepted  
 agent-type or intelligence type operations where every effort  
 should be made to utilize personnel and equipment which would  
 allow our units or people to be undetected when penetrating  
 Cambodian airspace or on the ground. Since we could not use  
 Cambodians in our SALEM HOUSE teams, we ran into very obvious  
 restrictions of not being able to put people on the ground who  
 could blend in with and talk to Cambodians and, perhaps, other-  
 wise escape detection. It is recognized, of course, that there  
 were political reasons behind these restrictions; however, the  
 nature of operations were such that we were supposed to be able  
 to deny intelligence operations by using, initially, unmarked  
 aircraft, and personnel with sterile uniforms. Yet, we were  
 precluded from using the very individual that would allow us to  
 deny an operation, that is the native Cambodian.\*\*

\* Ibid., p. 4.

\*\* Ibid., pp. 4-5.

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In the broadest sense, of course, our operations into Cambodia were generally easily detected insofar as determining the nationality of the intruder was concerned because the aircraft we were using were definitely of a US military manufacture and the Americans on the teams were easily distinguished from their teams' members. The cover story used if our teams were picked up was that the team had been on a reconnaissance in South Vietnam, had gotten lost, and had wandered into Cambodia. This cover story was, on the other hand, circumvented or contradicted by the requirement for sterile fatigues and, initially, at least, for unmarked aircraft. This latter restriction was imposed, I believe, by the SALEM HOUSE operations order which simply stated that the operations should be conducted in such a fashion that it was plausibly deniable. The attempt to pin down this aspect of the operation was exceptionally difficult. We found that sterilization of the aircraft, attempting to paint out numbers and insignia, was really not too logical and was certainly frowned on by commanders who provided us the aircraft. The Air Force aviation unit, the 20th Special Operations Squadron which was dedicated to SOG, was sterilized to the extent that their aircraft did not carry US markings and had no discernible identification with any nationality.\*

In Laos we faced a somewhat similar situation in that the VNAF H-34 helicopters dedicated to SOG were unmarked but were clearly discernible as a SOG type aircraft in that they were painted in the distinctive fashion with a light absorbing green and black paint and easily identified as a unit which was operating under other than normal circumstances. After they had been observed a number of times over Laos, it is rather

\* Ibid., p. 5.

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certain that they were identified as a cross-border type of aircraft and wherever they moved in South Vietnam to the various launch sites and launch bases it can be assured their presence there indicated that they were preparing to launch from that location across the border. The US aircraft the US Army used in Laos all carried US Army or US Air Force identification and were clearly identified as US Army or US Air Force aircraft. Personnel on the teams were dressed in sterile fatigues or in North Vietnamese uniforms but again this was to enable them to escape ready recognition on the ground but in no way did it explain their presence as a US patrol lost in Laos.\*

In North Vietnam the operations were conducted by all indigenous teams called STRATA teams, and the STRATA teams were dressed either in black pajamas or the NVA uniform -- no US personnel accompanied them. On the other hand, they were inserted into the area by US Air Force helicopters and extracted in exactly the same way. If they were able to infiltrate undetected, they could very well deny any connection with the US Forces if they were captured. If they were detected upon insert, they were clearly identified as being sponsored and operated by US units.\*\*

I think here it is important to underscore the fact that PRAIRIE FIRE and SALEM HOUSE operations, at least during my tenure, became more of an overt combat/intelligence type of exercise; in Laos, in many cases, these operations became a combat/raid type of exercise. Intelligence gathering became

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\*. Ibid., pp. 5-6.

\*\* Ibid., p. 6.

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a co-partner with the concept of exploitation. Therefore, we were inserting tears in a fashion which was more than covert. They were being inserted in daylight with US markings on the aircraft and it was obvious to personnel in South Vietnam as the aircraft left that it was a special type of operation and was rather easily detected.\*

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. . . prior to TET of 1968, when the enemy launched a major offensive against the major cities of Vietnam, SOG forces were principally deployed out-of-country. Following TET, and because of the need for more reconnaissance units in-country, COMUSMACV allowed the field force commanders to target MACSOG units against in-country targets. This resulted in about 90 percent of the MACSOG effort, insofar as the cross-border operations in SALEM HOUSE/PRAIRIE FIRE were concerned, being turned to reconnaissance in-country in support of the field forces. The field force commander would task the command and control detachment directly for this mission. The command and control detachment would notify Headquarters, SOG which, if there were no objections, would concur and the operation would be run.\*\*

This resulted in an appreciable degradation of the SOG recon capability in that the operation proved debilitating; many personnel were wounded or injured and, as a result, the capability of SOG to turn back across the border was to an extent limited following this in-country reconnaissance period. That perhaps is putting it a little strongly and I could not actually quantify this, but we did note that when we were

\* Ibid., p. 6.  
\*\* Ibid., p. 9.

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turned back across the border in about September or October  
 1960, that we had to do a great deal of re-equipping and  
 retraining and preparing ourselves for cross-border operations  
 because of the number of personnel who had been used up by  
 in-country operations. In September or October, when COMUSMACV  
 became concerned over the presence of North Vietnamese forces  
 in Cambodia and Laos, the effort was turned from in-country  
 operations to cross-border and Chief, SOG was again in full  
 operational control of these elements.

One major problem encountered in cross-border operations  
 in PRAIRIE FIRE and SALEM HOUSE concerned the utilization of  
 helicopters for the insert of a team. MACSOG uses dedicated  
 Vietnamese Air Force assets, H-34s, a dedicated US Air Force  
 Huey Squadron, and helicopters provided by the field forces for  
 our operations. The principal problem that I have found,  
 operationally speaking, is that the helicopter personnel, the  
 mission commander, and company commanders are prone to dictate  
 the number of aircraft used for insert purposes. A pattern has,  
 therefore, been established where if we are launching a  
 reconnaissance team there will be two troop carrying heli-  
 copters carrying the team (the team being split between the  
 two), a third Huey troop carrying helicopter being used as a  
 chase ship and at least two and normally four gun ships for  
 escort purposes. This aerial armada descending into either  
 Laos or Cambodia easily identifies or triggers a fact that an  
 operation of some magnitude is taking place and it is practically  
 impossible to insert a team without having the aircraft detected  
 either en route to the insert point or during the insert  
 itself.\*

\* Ibid., pp. 9-10.

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Attempts to insert these teams by utilizing one or two aircraft only, have been generally unsuccessful in that the mission commanders and pilots will refuse to fly the mission without adequate gunship support. This issue remains unresolved and at the present time SOG is required to properly defend all inserting troop carrying aircraft inserting teams into operations areas by using COBRA gunships or HUEY gunships. There is full recognition on the part of SOG personnel that reconnaissance team members themselves would be placed in jeopardy by riding into an operational area unprotected by gunships, yet at the same time most of the recon personnel would be willing to accept this risk if they could get into an area undetected, and this is relatively difficult to do with so many aircraft assigned to each mission.\*

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Similarly attempts to land under conditions of limited visibility or darkness with helicopters have been practically impossible insofar as SOG is concerned. The aircraft and/or the pilots (I am not sure which) have proven to be incapable either because of design limitation or of pilot training to land teams after dark in denied areas. Overcoming these limitations would appreciably reduce casualties and enhance immeasurably the chances of success of the reconnaissance mission. The lack of capability of operating at night with helicopters is to me one of the principal deficiencies that exist today in the field of employing helicopters for this type of reconnaissance or intelligence exercise.\*\*

In this area of aircraft support, also I should point out that a large number of the Army pilots are not instrument qualified in helicopters and, as a result, they are not capable

\* Ibid., p. 10.  
 \*\* Ibid., pp. 10-11.

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of flying under conditions of limited visibility. On the other  
 hand, we found that many Marine helicopter pilots had been so  
 trained and were much more effective in employing our teams  
 during periods of adverse weather when the Army helicopters or  
 VAVF helicopters could not be utilized. This, again, is a  
 matter of training and if there is not some capability to work  
 in poor weather, your reconnaissance operations all but cease.\*

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\* Ibid., p. 11.

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Notes: Cont -)

- 2 (2) Authorized for RT and Exploitation Units while on operations that make enemy contact. Operational mission pay will be paid for any part of a day across the border regardless of enemy contact. The maximum operational mission pay permitted for any day is 150\$VN.
- 3 (3) One Step increment may be added to the base pay of all personnel for each six months of satisfactory service to SOG until a maximum of 10 step increments have been added. A pay increase is thus affected on each six month anniversary of the original contract until 10 increments are made.
- 4 (4) Leaders that are proficient in English may be paid language differential of 1500\$VN provided a SCU interpreter is authorized within his unit and a SCU interpreter is not being paid for that position. In no case will the number of personnel drawing language differential, or interpreters pay exceed the number of interpreters authorized by the Team.
- 5 (5) TET Bonus will be based on the pay received by the individual the nearest pay period to TET, and will include:
  1. Employment over 1 year
    - (a) 1/2 of scheduled months salary
    - (b) 1/2 of scheduled family allowances
    - (c) 1/2 of language differential pay
  2. Employment under 1 year
    - (a) 1/4 of scheduled months salary
    - (b) 1/4 of scheduled months allowances
    - (c) 1/4 of language differential pay