

Transcript of ARRB Interview with L. Fletcher Prouty
Interview conducted September 24, 1996
ARRB Staff present: Wray, Barger, Zimmerman, Gunn

Barger: Tape's rolling.

Wray: Okay. My name's Tim Wray; I'm a member of the staff of the assassination Records Review Board. And I'm-- let me introduce for you the other people that are in the room here. We have Mr. Jeremy Gunn, who is the General Counsel for the Review Board; Mr. Chris Barger, who's a member of our staff; and Ms. Joan Zimmerman, who's also a member of our staff. And before we begin, I'd like to ask you, Mr. Prouty, one more time, if we have your permission to tape our conversation?

Prouty: Yes, you have. And I would like to record also that I did not ask to come here; I was asked to come. In other words, I'm not one of your regular applicants. *(All laugh.)* You called me to come here, and I'm pleased to be here; I have no problem with it--

Wray: --We understand--

Prouty: --I just want it on the record.

Wray: We understand; you're here at our request. What I'd like to do is, I'd like to begin by just asking you so that you can state for the record to please give your full name and your date of birth.

Prouty: I seldom use my first name, but it's Leroy; so I go by L. Fletcher Prouty. My date of birth is January 24, 1917.

Wray: Now, you're a retired Air Force officer--

Prouty: --Air Force, yes.

Wray: And what was your rank upon retirement?

Prouty: Colonel.

Wray: When did you retire?

Prouty: In 1964.

Wray: And that was how many years of active service?

Prouty: Twenty-three.

Wray: Twenty-three years. I think the thing to do before we get into some other substantive questions is to ask you to give us a brief summary of your military career, 'cause [sic] I think that will be relevant, to give some context.

Prouty: Well, it was an unusual few years. I actually came on duty as a cavalryman, and [I am] one of the few people that have actually ridden Army horses more than 600 miles on consecutive days. I got to know the horse, and I got to know the saddle very well. [We] came back from that trip and found out that our orders had been changed to the 4th Armored Division out of Watertown, New York. I served with Armor until after Pearl Harbor. And then because I had a civilian pilot license, I got a letter from the Air Force saying 'we need all the pilots we can get,'-- this was 1942. So I went to flying school through '42, and received my wings in the Air Force in November 1942.

And was almost immediately shipped to Africa, where I served for the next two years. I served as the chief pilot in Cairo for the Air Transport Command's base there. And it was a very, very busy place. We flew easterly into India; west into Casablanca; north into Russia, Turkey, Italy... areas like that; and south to mid-Africa.

So it was a busy area. I went almost-- again-- directly from there by way of four engine training, to the Pacific, and I flew in the Pacific during '45. I was on Okinawa when the war ended, and actually was in Japan the day before the surrender.

We brought some Marines in for MacArthur's elite guard. In the aftermath of the end of the war, [I was] flying back and forth across the Pacific, mostly bringing POW's and injured people back. And on one of those flights-- I was in Guam, as I remember-- they gave me a telegram that said, 'report to Yale University for ROTC instruction.' Which turned out to be a very fortunate assignment after the war, because Yale is a wonderful school, has a magnificent library, and they wanted me to teach the Evolution of Warfare as a one year course. And, I don't know how many of you are historians, but there's no better way to learn history than to try and teach it.

After being there for three years, when the Air Force came into being, separate from the Army, and I was an Air Force officer, the Air Force needed to develop its own ROTC curriculum. And I was asked almost immediately, sometime in '49, to write a book on the subject of aeronautics. [Which] again, turned out to be a wonderful experience, because my orders included [sic], 'go to any-- go to Lockheed, go to Boeing, go to Bell... go to all the companies to talk to the men building the airplanes

and all that. It was wonderful. I learned more about airplanes than I ever had before. [I] followed that by writing a book on guided missiles and rockets. And because of my environment then, I was at Mitchell Field, where the Air Defense Command was started, on paper. I was sent to Colorado Springs with the first cadre to open up the Air Defense Command. That was in... Christmas week of '50. It was the first time I ever got orders to travel on Christmas Day. We opened up the Air Defense Command, and early in '52, with the Korean War on, I was ordered to Korea. But when I got to Tokyo, there was a man at the bottom of the stairs with a clipboard, and he said, "you're Col. Prouty?", and I said, "Yes, sir?" He said, "Well, the man that was managing this airport got a heart attack last week [sic]; we need somebody to manage the airport. We see from your experience in Cairo that you've been doing similar work; stay here, you're gonna run the airport." Well, at that time, because of the Korean War and other things, the Tokyo International Airport-- under the occupation; see, the Japanese couldn't run it-- was the third busiest airport in the world, and I kind of got experience in a hurry. And it was very interesting, because we flew from there regularly all the way into, like, Saudi Arabia, into Honolulu and San Francisco, the northern... into Alaska-- we knew the area very well. And when the occupation ended, they just transferred me to being the Squadron Commander for the MATS unit there, which made the same flights. And from there, I was selected to go to the Armed Forces Staff College, the school that's run by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in Norfolk, Virginia.

Gunn: Excuse me, I'm sorry to interrupt. When were you in Tokyo? What were the years?

Prouty: I was in Tokyo from '52, '53, and '54. Yes, I should state the years. I arrived in Norfolk early in '55; went through that class, which is six months long, and I thought I was going back to the Air Defense Command. In fact, my original, sort of early orders indicated that. But they changed that and sent me to the Pentagon. And I arrived in the Pentagon in either July or August of '55. As an interesting point there, since you're in this business, I gather; there had been a national security directive, number 54-12, issued in '54 under President Eisenhower, which for the first time in our government, stated officially what covert operations was. And in doing so, they said that CIA would be in charge of covert operations, but that the Defense Department would support them, with guns, or airplanes, or whatever. And it's a very important document from that point of view. So when I arrived the Air Force Headquarters, I was asked to go in and see the Chief of Staff, who was at that time, General Tommy White. He told me what had happened ahead of that-- of course, I had heard about it

at the Staff College-- and said, "you're gonna set up an office and run this thing. It's a global program, and since you've been in the air transport service, you're familiar with supporting things all around the world, so you're going to run the program." They very nicely set up a suite of offices for me, assigned people to the office, and we started supporting what they called, specifically, 'the military support of the clandestine operations of CIA.' And that tied CIA to the military; they could not run operations unless the military was supporting it, which meant that we knew what was going on. And this worked out very well. Because the first assignment I had from that was, Allen Dulles and General White agreed to send me around the world to meet all [of] Allen Dulles' station chiefs. And that was an interesting trip-- I think I went to 42 stations. That was... by that time, we were in 1956. And from '56 until my retirement in '64, I stayed in that work. I was in the Pentagon for nine years; and all of the nine years in the same work-- providing military support for clandestine activity of CIA. But I was shifted from Air Force after five years-- and I have my orders here, by the way, in case a matter of record of me is important to you, and I think it should be-- (*hands papers to Wray, who passes them to Barger*) and shifted from there to the Office of the Secretary of Defense. And the reason for that was-- and that was in March of '60-- there's an office under the Secretary of Defense called the Assistant for Special Operations. And at that time, it was a retired Marine four-star general named Erskine. He had been Assistant Secretary of Defense longer than any other man has ever served [in] that job; quite a long time. But they were redefining it as a result of that NSC directive. So I went into that office as the senior air officer, and there were Army and Navy officers there, with Erskine as the senior; and our boss at the time was General Mc-- Mr. McElroy. I stayed there until after Kennedy's election, and in the spring of '61, if you'll recall, the military established the Defense Intelligence Agency-- DIA. With DIA up there in the top of Defense, there was no need for Special Operations being in the same place-- in fact, it was not desired. We never mixed special operations and intelligence; we kept them separate. So General Earle Wheeler in the Joint Staff and Mr. McNamara decided that my office, Special Operations, should go under the Joint Staff. And I have the orders here (*hands them to Barger*), to be sure you have the date. In May of '61, I was assigned to the Joint Staff, and became Chief of Special Operations down there, and had Army and Navy people working with me. The Joint Staff set up an office called SACSA, which was the Special Assistant for Counter-insurgency and Special Activities; "special activities" being what I was doing. I stayed in that office from '62 to '63, and retired from there in '64. So that's my duty from just before Pearl Harbor, early in '41, until '64. Any questions about that? And I have the papers here. These are all copies, so you're welcome to them.

Wray: I think what we'll do is, we'll take a look at those a little bit later on, rather than wrestle through them now.

Prouty: Sure. The one you might want to get familiar with, because I think it's right down your line of work, is the full definition of special operations, as it was in those days-- this is 1959-- it might interest you to see the changes in it. I have that; I brought that with me.

Wray: Thank you.

Gunn: Why don't I take them over here?

(Pause as Prouty hands the papers to Gunn)

Wray: One other question before we proceed: I'd just like to ask you whether you feel that you're under any restriction as far as security classification or other instructions that would prevent you from answering any questions we might ask.

Prouty: I appreciate that question. Yes, I am. I *never* name a man who was operational. Never. My book is full of names, but they're like Howard Hunt or Ed Lansdale; those are public figures. They're created as public figures, just like when you go to the movies. But I never mention the real guys. Never.

Wray: Okay.

Prouty: That's not by compulsion, it's just practice. We never-- they don't mention me, and I don't mention them. It's how we get along.

Gunn: Let me just say in regard to that: everyone here has SCI clearance, and at some point, if you believe that the name of a particular person who would still be classified would be important for us to know the story, what we can do is provide for you the security clearances or arrange to get waivers or whatever.

Prouty: Thank you.

Gunn: Because we want that to proceed along the right way. I'd prefer this tape recording not to have classified information in it--

Prouty: --Sure.

Gunn: --but we have all the clearances, and we can provide whatever documentation you need, or take whatever steps would be necessary to--

Prouty: That's fine. Obviously, if it's a requirement, that's all right. But on my own, I don't. So you won't hear me bringing up the names unless you suggest it.

Gunn: If you think that-- I mean, please, think, yourself, about whether there would be names that would be important. I'm not asking that you come up with them now; but in the course of this, then that would be helpful.

Prouty: Well, it's... for instance, when went into Indonesia-- because I know this gentleman has died-- the man in charge of the program in Indonesia was Frank Wisner. And Frank Wisner certainly would have been Director of Central Intelligence if it hadn't been for that campaign, but... he was right behind Dulles, he was the number two man, a very important person. I would never have mentioned it until after (*unintelligible*). But that's the kind of person I don't write about except in different capacities, when he was a public figure, like in World War II when he was with O.S.S..

Wray: So, just to recapitulate, aside from naming actual names of persons who were involved in some operation... otherwise, however, you don't feel yourself to be under any restraint about telling us about activities or anything like that?

Prouty: Well, no, not in this day and age. It's all been pretty released [sic], since it's so far back. Sometimes it's necessary to introduce what you might call a different view of the subject, into an area that hasn't been discussed, even though it's the same subject. Take the Bay of Pigs-- my God, how many stories are there about that? So, sometimes you have to correct the story to be sure you know which one you're talking about.

Wray: What I'd like to do now is, I'd like to turn to the events surrounding President Kennedy's assassination, and ask some questions about your personal experiences during that time period. Just to set this in the context of what you said a few minutes ago, I understand that in, let's say November 1963, you were working in the Special Operations Office of the Joint Staff.

Prouty: That's correct.

Wray: When you say, 'in the Joint Staff', would you mean J-3, or what is today J-3?

Prouty: No, no. This was an independent office.

Wray: An independent office?

Prouty: Independent by function. My boss's boss was the Chairman. And that was Krulak, if that name is important to you. General Krulak.

Wray: In fact, let me ask you about your supervisors. The person to whom you directly reported was...

Prouty: General Krulak... and that's *Victor* Krulak, not Charles.

Wray: Right. Then he reported--

Prouty: --to the Chairman. Lemnitzer or Taylor. There would have been two of them in our period.

Wray: Do you recall any co-workers who worked in that office with you at that time?

Prouty: Well, the Army had a man there... oh, heavens, I knew it perfectly... I'll tell you... but he was a perfectly public figure, his name is in the phone book and that sort of thing. And the Navy did... [the] Navy man was Jake Bowell; Captain Bowell, B-O-W-E-L-L. And the Army man, I haven't even thought of him for so long. But they're public records, just like my name.

Wray: About how many people were in this office? Was it large? Small?

Prouty: No, not a large office. We had... the Army...the gentleman from the Army went directly to Mr. Califano in the Army, who was the Army's representative in this kind of work. And he had-- the man that did the active work for him was a fellow by the name of Alexander Haig. He was a major at that time, but he went up so fast we couldn't keep track of him. But that's the Army's set up, in my time. In the Navy, it was this... Captain Bowell, and he had people that he would go directly to in the Navy, so that our own staff was minimal. In fact, I can't remember-- we had secretaries, but we had no other assistants there. The next assistant down was in the services.

Wray: Could you give us, in a little bit more detail than you've described it so far, a sense of what your duties were? What sorts of things--

Prouty: --Well, precisely as stated. Support the clandestine activities of the CIA. Now, it worked both ways. CIA would call us, and say-- like, one day, General Cabell called me and said, "I want some helicopters in Saigon." Well, I knew that the Geneva Treaty of '54 prohibited the movement of new military equipment-- new meaning equipment that hadn't been there at the time of the '54 agreement-- into Vietnam. So I had to tell him "I can't do it." But, I went immediately up to [the] Secretary of Defense, and I said, "Unless we get an order from NSC, I can't put the helicopters there." A couple of weeks later, the Secretary of Defense called me up-- [at] this time, it was Mr. Gates-- and he said, "You can move the helicopters." So, geez, I moved quite a few. Eventually, thousands of them. But that was the beginning of helicopters in Vietnam. Well, we worked that way, see. And that's sort of a larger example than most, but that's the way the activities went. And once my office approved it, if they were-- in this case, they were Marine helicopters; I'd go to the Navy man and he'd see to it that the Marines heard about it; the Marines would see to it that the helicopter people heard about it. And we had them 'sheep-dip' the people through the 'sheep-dip' process, and then we put the helicopters in Vietnam.

Wray: When you say, 'sheep-dip', you mean...?

Prouty: Change their records.

Wray: Change their records?

Prouty: Yeah. What we'd do is, every man is presumed to have his personal record; mortgage on a house, payment on cars, things like that he has to keep going all the time, no matter where the hell he is. Then he has his Navy records. Then we created his CIA records. And the three have to keep up with each other. If people in his branch of service are promoted in his time period, then we'd get him a promotion; he stays up with the Navy. We had two personnel offices; one in the Navy, and one in our office. I mean, one in the Agency. And by that means, we could just about cover anything that came up to these people that we brought in. And we always saw to it that it never worked as a penalty to anybody; and furthermore, we never accepted anyone who was not a volunteer. That was the first thing we asked them. The next thing was the clearance process, and the next step was into the CIA's personnel office. And when all that was done, he'd serve in the job as long as the CIA needed him. There were no special tours for it; it's just to get whatever they needed done. Some people stayed a long time.

Wray: Okay.

Barger: Do you-- I'm sorry to interrupt-- there's an author who's written several articles on this topic, and probably gone through that process, and I'm wondering if you're familiar with a man named-- an Army captain-- Brad Ayers?

Prouty: What's his last name?

Barger: A-Y-E-R-S.

Prouty: Never heard of him.

Barger: Never? Okay.

Prouty: What year are his-- what period was he writing about?

Barger: '63 to '64.

Prouty: Really? Hmm. Well, I still never heard--

Gunn: --He refers to going into... he was... I forget which branch--

Barger: --He was Army. He was Army.

Gunn: He was Army, and describes one day where he went to CIA, I guess it was? Or was it Defense Department; where he had his polygraph exam.

Barger: The CIA did the polygraph, but [the] Defense Department allegedly set it up for him.

Prouty: Well, there were elaborate procedures with these things...I have ... but , all we cared about was that the system didn't hurt the man on the assignment. Some men aren't good at this kind of assignment, some are; and some were in a career field, a specialty career field that the Agency wanted, but it would interrupt their Army career field, you know. If they weren't volunteers, we wouldn't take them. That was the main thing. And if they couldn't get clearance, of course, they wouldn't go. Then after that, it was up to the Agency to accept them. So it wasn't something [where] you could just say, 'You've got a new assignment; go!' It didn't work like that.

Wray: All right. Your duties while you were assigned to this office, did they occasionally, or periodically, or whatever, include giving briefings, for example, to the Chairman, or

the other members of the Joint Chiefs, or the DCI?

Prouty: That was almost my principle duty. I don't mean that I did it every single day, but, for instance, when a new NSAM would come up, in the Kennedy period... or whatever they used to call it earlier... it would usually be brought to me by the senior administrative officer, like General (*name undecipherable*), and he would say, "On Tuesday, you will brief the Chiefs on this subject." So, as I was more up to date, therefore, than anybody else, I had access to Mr. Dulles, I could bring it up to date; then I went and briefed the Chairman.

Wray: During this period of time, was one of your associates General Lansdale?

Prouty: He sat in the same office-- well, I mean, in the same group of offices; we were never in the same office-- but I had known Lansdale back... 1952, in my Pacific duties, [I] flew him quite often, and the people that worked with him. [I] met him in Manila... I knew who Lansdale was, sure. He was a neighbor of mine in Alexandria until he died. So we worked-- he was a CIA man under Air Force cover; so he was working for a while under the Director of Plans in the Air Force, and then from Director of Plans in Air Force, he went down and did the same [in] General Erskine's office, or OSO in Defense. I was in OSO, we were both there. And because his cover was as a general for Air Force and I was a colonel, it appeared to people [that] I was working for him. That was good; that's what it was supposed to be. But I was working for Erskine.

Wray: When you say that he was a CIA man under Air Force cover, [you mean] he was not really a career Air Force person?

Prouty: Oh, no. He was [an] intelligence man.

Wray: And so his wearing the uniform or assuming the rank of an Air Force... I think, major general-- that was purely cover for his CIA activities?

Prouty: Well, to go back to sheep-dipping... that actually went through a process... General-- we almost ought to turn the machine off here-- General LeMay called me... (*to Barger, who has moved to turn the tape recorder off*) No, that's all right, don't worry about it. (*Resuming*) General LeMay called me up at my office one morning, and he had a paper in his hand, and he said, "I've got a bunch of names here of colonels that are being promoted to brigadier general, there's one on the list that I don't know anything about the son of a gun. Do you know him?" He said, "People tell me you know

him.” It was Lansdale. I said, “Yeah. I wrote the thing that Dulles signed that said, ‘get him promoted’ and since the Agency was gonna pay for the promotion... so, LeMay signed it, and Lansdale became a brigadier general. A little bit later, they went through the same process, and he became a major general. I mean, hell, I know who he was. LeMay knew after I told him, but he didn’t know up till then.

Gunn: Really? About what year would that have been?

Prouty: Oh, goodness... it was when I was working for General Erskine, so it would be in that period of-- what’d I say-- ‘61, ‘62? Right in that area there. And then, I just never knew when he made major general; then all of a sudden one day, he told me. He had an office upstairs, and I was down in JCS. And he told me the promotion had come through, and he was a major general, [the] same way. As long as Dulles would sign it-- Dulles could have what he wanted.

Wray: Let’s turn now, I think, to your experiences around the time of the assassination. You’ve written about these in your book and other places. Perhaps just the thing to do at this point is ask you to tell us, once more, the story of your own experiences at that period of time.

Prouty: Well... November ‘63, for me, was an unusual month. I had worked at least as far back as 1959-- and it might be earlier than that-- for the organization that works underneath the White House on Antarctic projects. And since the diplomacy of Antarctica is a little bit tight, with the Soviets there and other countries there, we handled that almost the same as we did CIA work. And one time, something happened down there with an important project that the Antarctic office was running, a purely scientific project. And the man asked me if I could give him some help with it, and we got out of the fix and got things straightened-- somebody was trying to steal scientific equipment, worth millions of dollars. And being in Antarctica, with nobody to protect it, they caught up to the idea that it was happening, but they didn’t know how it was happening, and wanted our help. We found out. And I got a very nice letter of commendation for it and that sort of thing. But it was a duty I had to work with Antarctica; of course, not regularly, but when things came up, when requested. August or September... I got a call from the office again-- well, I bumped into Lansdale, and he said, “Call; they’re gonna send you down to Antarctica.” And [I said], “How’d you find that out?”, and he said, “I got a call from so-and-so.” So I called the man, and he said, “yes, we need a project officer-- escort officer--” for a group of technicians from several companies who built a small nuclear plant, same as submarine power, a small

thing. And they were going to run Antarctica off that plant, [to] prove that it can be done. And so [there were] about 50 people going down there, and "...we need a military escort, and we'd like to have you go." So, on the 10th of November in '63, I got on a C-130 here at Andrews Field, with this party of about... plus or minus 50-- I have all their names, they're all businessmen; Caterpillar Tractor, Martin-Marietta, people like that doing this thing. And we flew down to New Zealand, which is the Navy base for the Antarctic project that they run; and then from there we flew to McMurdo. While we were there, the little-- small little thing, [it] would have fit on this table-- was down in a hole, 180 feet below ground; and we went down and took a look at it and everything, saw everything else. There was a control room up above, and they said, "We're going to turn the thing on." And some guy pulls a handle, and all the lights in the base went off and the heat stopped, and everything else. And then he pulled another handle, and everything started; and for ten years, that little thing down there ran that whole base. It had a drawing equivalent of a town of 25,000 people. Everything went... I never knew whether they did it thinking there was going to be an energy crisis or something, but all of a sudden, they didn't need any more petroleum in Antarctica. It was really sort of a miracle. But a very interesting thing. Well, we left there and came back to New Zealand on the way back home, and we were in New Zealand on, I think, the 21st, 22nd and 23rd, and then maybe the 24th of November. Among the party that I was the escort officer for was a Congressman. And he and I were getting ready to go down and meet each other for breakfast. And I had already gotten to the table, had a cup of coffee, and was waiting for him to come down; and the PA system in the hotel said, "Ladies and gentlemen, the BBC have announced that President Kennedy has been shot... [then an] interval... dead, in Dallas." Just like that, that's all we heard. Sheez! I put my cup down, and on the stairs, coming down into the dining room, was the Congressman. He came up to the table, and he said, "Did you hear what I just heard?" I said, "Of course." The PA system came back on again, and said, "We're very sorry, that's all the news we have; we just picked it up from BBC, but we'll see what we can do." Well, you know, of course, what we wanted to do was learn more-- what's going on? And the people outside this nice hotel-- it was like a lanai out there, a big patio-- had a flagpole, with a British flag on it. People just got up from breakfast, without any words being spoken or anything, and they went outside and stood around that flagpole, for lack of... and a few people knew that the man with me was a congressman. And the manager of the hotel came over and stood beside him, and he said, "We're going to lower the flag for your president." And as I understand it, that was the first time the British flag was ever lowered for anybody except an Englishman. [It was an] interesting little thing, that happened all by itself; a couple of hundred people standing there. Of course, November down there, it's springtime.

We didn't have any news. That was all the news we had. So, during the morning, we wondered what was going on... finally, we got to a radio and got some news, but it was still all broken. And [we] went out on the street of Christchurch, New Zealand, and I got a newspaper. *(Pulls out newspaper)* And this is how I learned about it. And since I had some experience in the business, within about fifteen minutes, I knew how it happened. Because there's some things in this picture, and what's in the paper... and you don't have to go any further. Too bad the picture's a little bit blurred here in this thing... The windows are open; obviously open, in the School Book Depository Building, the famous building. And I turned to the congressman, and I said, "You know, there must be something wrong in Dallas. The Secret Service never allows that. Our military protection people never allow that. I wonder what happened." Then down here, it says, 'three bursts'-- now, this is the first stuff coming out; this is initial news; this is the first issue out. It says, "A burst of gunfire cut down the president." Not a shot or two, but a burst of gun-- and then down here, "Three bursts of gunfire, apparently from automatic weapons, were heard. Secret Service men immediately unslung their automatic weapons and their pistols." Now, from what you know about that event, what we read in the papers-- have you heard that before? But that's the... I went to the Library of Congress when I got home. I still had the paper with me. I opened up as many different newspapers as I could get from the same date, and they all had that three bursts of gunfire, and they all had the Secret Service men with their automatic weapons-- two things which the literature have never gotten to [sic] subsequent to the very first printings. Down here--

Wray: --Excuse me; does that credit a wire service or a source for that story?

Prouty: Oh, of course. Yeah. This is published under NZPA, and AAAP. The AAAP is American Associated Press, but the New Zealand is something-- Press Association, I think; New Zealand Press Association. But they're published. And in places where they borrowed from others, they put the other, like...this is NZ... here's Reuters... Well, it was all... it was all made up, because they didn't have any information. They didn't have a correspondent out there. That's what was interesting about it. It's all stuff coming in from outside. After we read it a bit, I got interested in this, because it said, "the arrested man lived in Russia." Now to have that accompany the same news that said three bursts of automatic weaponfire, and the other things, convinced the congressman and myself that, 'geez, they've got this guy, and they've known-- they've already queried him and know who it is.' But they hadn't. We didn't learn till-- it was the next day when they finally arranged [sic] Oswald for the crime, and even at that time, reporters hadn't gotten to him to find out all this background.

Where the hell did it come from? Well, of course, I didn't know that till after I got home. Because I believed it. I thought... you know, I thought they had the guy. But with that kind of stuff in the paper, and then having the sources that I had in the Pentagon, and going to the Library of Congress, the answer to the whole thing is right there. And this is a copy of the paper. I'll leave it with you if you if you want it. Because, here's the next page... see, Oliver Stone made it for the movie. But, it's got the stories in it; if you want it just for the hell of it, you're welcome to it.

Wray: Let me ask you this: this is a copy of the newspaper?

Prouty: It's a precise copy of my original. Except, of course, you can see, there are other pages in there... if you go back to.... see, what they do in the... in different parts of the film, they would be using different newspapers that day. Like, here's something interesting, the Dallas Morning News is in there.

Wray: So, actually-- I guess my question is, this is not the... this item I'm holding in my hand is not the thing that you held in New Zealand-- this is a reproduction?

Prouty: A copy of it.

Wray: A reproduction.

Prouty: But done movie-style; on the next page, it's what is it?-- the New Orleans something-or-other--

Barger: The States-Item.

Prouty: And so on. But that's the way the movies do it. But the subject matter is just-- it's a print of the subject matter.

Wray: Right. So what we're really looking at here is a reproduction that actually has on subsequent pages... are actually the pages-- reproductions of pages from other newspapers, dealing with information or news about the assassination?

Prouty: See, what they did, when they heard how I got my news by going to the Library of Congress, they did the same thing. They went and got the front page of all the papers that were in the library, and then put them all together so you could see them at one time instead of having to sit in the library and pull them all down, and that was the objective of it. They printed hundreds of them.

Barger: If I can interrupt for just a moment, do you recall approximately what time it was that you purchased or got the paper in New Zealand? What time it hit the streets?

Prouty: We heard about the shooting at 6:30 in the morning. I'm quite sure we didn't have the paper before noon. But if it wasn't before noon, it was very close to noontime. And, if you move back eighteen hours, you can figure what it was, US time. But... it... in my opinion, it was just before we had lunch. We were on the street, and we heard the guy yelling, you know, obviously; [he was] walking in the middle of the street with the papers. And we got it. So it was somewhere in that area. You know, at that time, we didn't think anything complicated. We figured, "Geez, there's the story-- what more will there be?" See, so, we took the paper for what it was. The funny thing is-- well, it isn't in here-- really strange coincidence, is... the day before, we'd been to the horse track, and all the horse race finishes were here. Well, I didn't think anything of that, either; but, I got home, and found out that one of my neighbors had bought the horse that won the big race that day and the day before. And I kept the paper as much to show my neighbor about this beautiful horse he had bought, which became the biggest money winning... not a trotter-- what's the name?-- pacer, in this country, ever. So, I had two reasons for bringing the paper home, and one of them seemed to me to be as important as the other: my neighbor and his new horse. But it's not in there of course, it wasn't the part that was copied.

Wray: You mentioned that one of the people who accompanied you on this trip, and the person you were going to share breakfast with was a congressman--

Prouty: Right.

Wray: --Do you recall who that was?

Prouty: Yes, I certainly do. The man is very ill, or he has died; so, I don't think... well anyway, he's a congressman on record. His name is Pete... *(unable to immediately remember)*... oh, damn it all... from southeastern Ohio...Abele. A-B-E-L-E.

Wray: When did you return to Washington?

Prouty: I think we got back on the 28th. We left, went to Hawaii; we stayed in Hawaii for an extra day, and then came directly home. So I think we went home on the 28th.

Wray: Do you recall any experiences after you returned to Washington that you consider

relevant to the assassination? By that I mean: when you got back in your office, people were talking about the assassination in such a way, I guess, that would arouse your suspicions, or would seem to have contributed information that was not public knowledge, or something like that?

Prouty: Well... first of all, I was very busy, because I had gone to Antarctica on business. And some of the people that had gone-- I was meeting with them, and that kind of thing. Otherwise, to be very frank with you, I thought it was over. I mean, I can just look at the pictures and know that something-- you know, that it was a big time conspiracy; [one] that was big enough to control the news, and control other things. There was nothing I could do about it; being a military officer, I went back to my job. I was not what grew later to be [called] an assassination "buff." I have never even picked up the Warren Commission Report. I wouldn't know it if I saw it. That kind of thing-- that's not my business. So, then when I got home, I bought newspapers, and read some of the other stories. The early ones agreed with this stuff. Others began to have stories. I must have lost interest in-- I just figured, 'it's just a story.' I knew damn well that-- oh, by the way... Lee Harvey Oswald was among the people taken from the Armed Forces, working for [the] CIA in the program that I headed. I didn't head the Marine program, but, I mean, he was down in that program. And he was out at Atsugi, Japan; he had worked for us in the Indonesia campaign. And I just figured that a guy who has been in this program has certainly been screened enough to... so people know him. And I just let it go at-- of course, I never met... We never met people personally. We didn't want them to know who we were, and vice versa. But I found that out from the records later. Of course, my boss being a Marine general, [it was] easy to find out.

Wray: Let me ask you a little bit more about that. When you say that Lee Harvey Oswald was in this program, what specific program are you talking about?

Prouty: He was... support of the military operations of the CIA; clandestine operations. And he was assigned to Atsugi, as I understand, with the U-2 program. There were several programs there; one that had to do with radar, and one was... U-2 reception program. Whatever the duties were for the people there; you know, Atsugi was the Far East base for [the] CIA. I've been to Atsugi, I don't know if you know-- [it's a] huge underground base-- it's an air base from the air, but it's a big underground base. I was on Atsugi [sic] on September 1, 1945, the day before the surrender. That's the airport we landed on.

Wray: When you say, "Lee Harvey Oswald was in the program," ... I'm trying to inquire, and sort of carefully ascertain...do you know that because you learned that afterwards-- that someone called your attention to the fact that, 'hey, look, here's this guy Oswald that was in our program.'... Or, if you can recollect this, do you recall having been aware of Oswald's name before the assassination?

Prouty: No, no. We almost never saw names. Even when Gary Powers went down, the Air Force pilot... I had to find out later that he was an Air Force pilot and not a civilian pilot. But we had the records. I never saw the Oswald records. I never looked for the Oswald records. In fact, I had retired after that.

Wray: So, when you say that "Oswald was in this program," what's the basis for your saying that?

Prouty: (Pause) It's just general knowledge. It's come up lots of times. And since I recognize the program whenever see it... he fit the pattern so perfectly, I would never doubt the stories that I saw. I don't know whether it was the New York Times, [or] something like that, I don't know.

Wray: But you're saying, if I'm understanding you correctly, that your understanding that Oswald was involved in this program comes from sources outside your duty position-- [the] New York Times, or other things that you've read, as opposed to official papers that you saw?

Prouty: Well-- and the way I can read those sources. For instance, when it was stated that he was close to the U-2 program, I knew what the U-2 program in Atsugi was; even if the writer of the story didn't know, I did. Or if he was connected to the Indonesia campaign, [it's] the same thing. I'm the guy that sent the guys to Indonesia. But I didn't do it by name and serial number. We needed so many men to go, and he was among the men that went. Well, he went-- I knew what the program meant. It was a clandestine program-- he didn't go for a vacation.

Wray: The... Oswald's involvement in the Indonesia campaign-- again, that comes from your interpretation of stories that you've heard?"

Prouty: Things that I've read, yeah. Things from various sources or people I've talked to.

Wray: To your knowledge-- let me just follow up one more thing-- to your knowledge, while you were working on this military liaison with the CIA, did either the military or the

CIA in that era have something that, for lack of a better title, I will call a fake defector program; in which they groomed people to apparently defect to the Soviet Union or some other Soviet Bloc country, for the purpose of misleading them or planting false information or something like that?

Prouty: That's a good question. Because you see, that's what I meant when I said, 'there were [sic] absolutely no connection between clandestine service work and intelligence work.' That program you're talking about is intelligence work. And we kept it strictly that way; and that's why Mr. Dulles sent me around the world with one of his men to meet his chief of stations-- so that they would all know, and I would know, that we never put the things together. It's a very important thing to understand. And I think many, many writers on this subject don't understand that, and they get people mixed up-- like Howard Hunt, for one. A terrible (*unintelligible*)... that man was... he was supposed to be known to be [a] public figure. Like when they talk about him and the Bay of Pigs; they threw him out, it was (*unintelligible*)... he didn't have anything to do with the Bay of Pigs. He had to do with the political officers of the Bay of Pigs-- you know, men who might be the new president of Cuba, something like that. He was in that part of it. Well, that's true with a lot of these people that are in that kind of work. They're supposed to become identified, because that lets you think the Agency's doing it's job, and in intelligence, that's what they're supposed to be doing. But we never put the two together. Even the offices in the Pentagon-- I think one of the most seldom visited offices in my nine years in the Pentagon was the Director of Intelligence of the Air Force. And I knew him personally. But [I] never would go in to see him. We had no business together at all. That's a good answer to your question, because we just didn't put the programs together.

Wray: (To *Barger*) Chris, you were going to ask something?

Barger: Yes. Well, you had-- going back to your statement that Oswald had been taken by the CIA to work in Indonesia and Atsugi-- since we are trying to find as many records that pertain to the whole story of Oswald and the assassination, I'm wondering if there are any specific names of programs that we can request of the Department of Defense, or from the CIA, where we might find rosters of people that took part in this kind of stuff; if you can recall any names of things that we can ask for.

Prouty: Well, I have no knowledge of what has happened to what I would call these old 'sheep-dip' files. I mean, when I retired, I remember that my office had seventeen four-drawer file cabinets; I don't know where they are. I also remember that I had a lot of cards and notes and everything else in a big box that I had accumulated during those years.

I personally-- with another officer as a witness-- took them down to the melter. I don't know if you know the Pentagon, [but] they melt all the Top Secret stuff; throw it in that big pool, [and] burn it up with acid. I got a piece of paper signed, [and] everything was gone. So, I don't know what... I mean, that wasn't my business... it was my business to get rid of my own records, but I don't know what happened to the other records. And it would be very hard... we write what are called-- this is something very important. In the Pentagon, my suite of offices was on this side of the hall (*indicating his left*), and over here (*indicating his right*) was an office called Cover and Deception. Almost every time I had a program, they had a program. When we'd go to lunch together, we'd find out we were doing the same program. But they'd do the cover and deception, which is a pack of lies, and I'd do the real... You see, if you don't do that, you expose your important programs from time to time. If you're going to rob a bank, it's nice for somebody to swear [that] they were with you in Las Vegas in a game room; you weren't in Norfolk robbing a bank.

Barger: Right.

Prouty: Well, that the way we had... and because everything is done that way, obviously, there's a breakdown. Everybody's human. And sometimes the cover and deception people are thought of as being the people that were really in the business; and that's good. They cover up the real business, see? But, that gets in the newspaper, or wherever else the other guy wanted to put it. I've seen that very frequently. So it's very hard to weave your way through, and I doubt, I really doubt [that] there's any records of that stuff left. Because I know the burn dates were quick on those.

Wray: When you talk about this Cover and Deception office, that was also in the Pentagon? Or that was a separate CIA--

Prouty: --Across the hall from me. Yeah, a Pentagon office.

Wray: Do you recall any of the people who worked in that office?

Prouty: No, we didn't work that close. We were close physically, but we kept our work apart too, because... about the only time I can remember for sure was the day the U-2 went down. They were so excited about it. And I never figured out why, but it was something that they were... anyway, we purposely-- just like intelligence; that was the way we worked. If we got them mixed up, it'd be terrible. But, I think you need to think of that, because 'C and D' is a profession. A lot of people are put up to draw people's attention to them instead of to the real project; you know, that you're in

Las Vegas instead of robbing a bank.

Barger: Sure.

Prouty: And some of the men in that business have been in that business before I was. A long time; they were really pros.

Wray: Let me ask you a couple of other questions about the assassination. I didn't read this in your book; I've sort of heard this indirectly from other researchers, that you are quoted-- or alleged by other researchers-- that you have... they cite you as having said that Lansdale was in Dealey Plaza.

Prouty: Yeah, the picture... it's in Garrison's book.

Wray: This is the photograph... which photograph are you referring to?--

Prouty: Tramps picture, chronologically, number one. You know; have you seen-- you've seen the series. The first one, he's going by the garage-- the iron door of the garage there, at the corner of the building, and...

END SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE

Prouty: ...right after the shooting, with police in front, and policemen in back; and they don't have handcuffs on. He says [sic], "I don't understand that." We were looking at the pictures, and I said, "Geez-- the police uniforms aren't the same thing." We were just critiquing the photographs. And these were big press photographs, 8x10's, clear... [it was] the first time I had seen them. And I didn't tell Dick, because I wasn't sure...but the guy walking past the tramps-- the tramps are going this way, (*indicating a direction to his right*), with the police and everything else-- and walking past them, by himself, is one man. And he's not looking at them... he's just walking right along. And I thought, "That's strange. One of the greatest events in the world, and the guy isn't even looking at the police." And then I looked at him more carefully, and [it was a] man I'd known for years. It was Lansdale. So, I got a copy of that set from Sprague. And I took that photo, without the others, and I sent it to a few selected people. And I got answers back-- like, one of them, it was most interesting-- said in the first sentence, 'What the he-- and I didn't say who was in it; I just said, 'Look at this tramps thing. Have you ever seen the police take these guys in [with] no handcuffs on, and different uniforms. Doesn't that indicate some kind of

role-playing, instead of the real situation? Something's wrong down there in Dallas." His first sentence was, "By God, what's Lansdale doing there?" Just like that. He saw like I... we knew the guy very well... you sit in the same goddamn office with a guy, you know him.

Wray: Do you recall who that person was that made that comment?

Prouty: No. That's a personal matter. A personal letter.

Barger: Did you have the opportunity ever-- you had mentioned that Lansdale had been a neighbor of yours until his death-- did you ever have the opportunity, or decide to take the opportunity, to discuss this with Lansdale, or ask him about it at all?

Prouty: No, I figured it's his business. Because my idea-- now this is *nothing* more than personal-- he was very good at the 'C and D' role. He was very good at the scenario role. So I figured, if he's there, he's on duty. And if he's on duty, [then] he's doing a scenario. Well, the scenario were the tramps. [sic] See? I mean, any other guy... the tramps were never picked up by anybody. I mean, what a silly thing to run in the middle of the show. But that's what they were doing. You see, it's to distract... And Howard Hunt has had to admit he was there... it's the same kind of-- and I'm quite sure others were there. Well, that's a paid business. But: who put them in the business on that day at that place? Now, that's beyond any... I just don't know. But there's no question about the guy.

Wray: Do you know of anyone we could talk to, to confirm this independently?

Prouty: Well, people that knew him.

Wray: But you're talking there about looking at the photograph again.

Prouty: Yeah.

Wray: Do you know anyone who was an associate of Lansdale around that time... I guess what I'm talking-- what I'm asking here is someone who could confirm that he was away from his office, or might have been aware of his activities, who might be able to describe them to us?

Prouty: Well, you must have... you have Oliver Stone's book that came out right after the movie--

Wray/Barger: Yes.

Prouty: --called, "The Book of the Film"? It's in there. All the details. Lansdale was in Ft. Worth in the same hotel that Kennedy was in a week later; he was there a week before Kennedy was there. That's on the record... See, he had retired his role as [an] Air Force officer in October of '63. But he was still working-- when I was a banker in Arlington, I'd see him going in and out the CIA building across the street... later in the sixties. So he must have stayed on duty with the CIA. And I used to see him at social... we never talked business, but... our wives knew each other... but we didn't talk business.

Wray: Are you aware of any documents that might exist that would somehow describe Lansdale's role in this? Or speculate of such documents? Where we might find them, or...

Prouty: You would never find them. They would not... whenever you get into that kind of thing-- like, when I would be told... I'd be called in to see General Cabell, and General Cabell and I would go and see Mr. Dulles, and Mr. Dulles would tell me what he wanted done, and I'd go back. End. No notes, nothing. We didn't do it with that kind of work. No documents all over the place. In fact, I worry about it... I'll be frank with you fellows, because this is a business you're in. I worry about the validity of documents you find, because I don't think they ever existed, frankly. I mean, I did too much of this stuff myself... I had secretaries that I trained carefully on exactly what to do with the documents as soon as I got done with them. They never even saw the files.

Barger: Would there even be records like travel orders, or anything like that, or would those have been melted routinely?

Prouty: Well, they seemed to... this material that Stone put together-- which I was surprised to see, because I didn't know he was that interested in it-- there must have been records, he picked them... of course, he was on a-- supposedly, anyway-- a personal vacation. He was going out to see his son, or something like that. Or a friend in Arizona, and he never got there. But he got as far as Texas, that kind of stuff. I mean, you've seen it; you've read the book, I'm sure. Well... I was surprised when I saw that, except [that] I'd seen him in the picture, so I figured that he must have stayed in some hotel.

Wray: Let me ask you now about something else in the wake of the assassination. In your book, you talk about an incident in which you contacted an individual in US Army

Intelligence in San Antonio after the assassination; and the next questions sort of deal with--

Prouty: Read that again, please-- I think I missed a sentence that's important. Just start from the beginning--

Wray: Okay; in your book, you talk about how you contacted a person that you knew in US Army Intelligence in San Antonio--

Prouty: It didn't work that way. He contacted me.

Wray: He contacted you? Okay. Maybe I should rephrase it and say that you had contact with--

Prouty: Yeah. Well... he called me, which is relatively routine. The only thing was, by the time he called me, I had retired. But that's all right. He called me. Because I didn't know he had this on his mind, so I wouldn't have... would not have called him.

Wray: Do you recall when this conversation took place?

Prouty: '64, '65. Something like that.

Wray: And do you recall who this person was?

Prouty: He was the number two man, as I understand it, to Col. Reich, who was the commander of a military unit down there in Houston; and that should be a matter of record. That's how he introduced himself to me.

Wray: Did you know this person before that conversation?

Prouty: No. No-- again, it's one of those things where we never dealt by voice... I had dealt with the unit, by different orders, but...no.

Wray: Col. Reich was the commander of the 316th Intelligence Corps Detachment in San Antonio, which was assigned to the 112th Intelligence Corps Group. I have here a roster of individuals who were assigned to the 316th--

Prouty: Good. I've never seen it, that I know of.

Wray: This roster, I should say, is a roster based on the information we've been able to find from the Archives as our best understanding of the people that were assigned there in

November of 1963. There are other rosters of individuals who arrived after that time.

Prouty: (Long pause) Now, since these things were generally kept to a relatively small group... I think I was speaking to his (Reich's) deputy, and I don't see him here. See, we didn't-- like, I didn't even know Reich was involved; when we dealt with this crowd, because of the level I worked at, I dealt with the 112th, which was the senior organization. And I think the man I is talking to was clearly the deputy to this person, and... I mean... that's just the only way I can tell you... I don't know, like the other people...

Wray: Okay...But you don't recognize the name on the list of the 316th?

Prouty: I only recognize Reich's [name] because I know since then Reich was the commander there.

Gunn: Excuse me just for a second. When you say, "this person", were you pointing to Reich's name?

Prouty: Pardon?

Gunn: When you said that the man was the deputy to "this person", were you pointing at Reich's name?

Prouty: Yeah, the deputy to Reich. Yeah, that's right. That's how he identified himself, otherwise I wouldn't have talked to him.

Wray: Let me... I also have a roster of personnel who were assigned to the 112th's headquarters in San Antonio.

Prouty: Oh, good.

Wray: Now, actually, I have two lists. Just as background, so that we're clear on what these lists are: the group headquarters was a Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, and so there is a roster of people who were assigned to the group headquarters; one of its subordinate units, which was Region One, which was responsible for the area around San Antonio, also had an office there. So arguably, they should also be included in the San Antonio group. And then, really a third element I guess, would be the 316th, which also was in San Antonio. So--

Prouty: How about the Fort Myer crowd, who were over the top of all of them?

Wray: You mean, like, Arlington Hall?

Prouty: No, not that...well, I don't know how they ran that shop, but... you're getting close. But all of these guys worked for an office that was at Fort Myer. At least in my day.

Wray: Yes. The... let's stick with the rosters first.

Prouty: Yeah, okay. Go ahead.

Wray: This is the roster-- this is the 112th's Group Headquarters. Now this is actually dated, I think, from December 1963.

Prouty: Yup. December 1963. *(Long pause)* See, we never dealt by name with the organization. In fact, the few times that we had anything to do with this kind of a crowd would be when they'd call us, because they didn't want things to cross. And usually, it would be a call from Fort Myer. Like, I don't remember ever having a call from Col. Reich, although I knew who Reich was, since he was the--

(LOUD BEEPING ALARM SOUNDS)

Male voice: May I have your attention please? May I have your attention please? We will be testing the fire alarm system. Please disregard any alarms you may hear. I repeat: we will be testing the fire alarm system. Please disregard any alarms you may hear. An announcement will be made at the conclusion of this test. Thank you.

Prouty: Those are... no way I would have known him. Because we didn't ever had meetings with the people that we put into these things. You can't run that kind of business face to face. You can't... at least, I don't think fifteen people knew my name in the job I was in.

(LOUD, PIERCING ALARM SOUNDS)

Prouty: Wow.

Barger: I don't believe they're doing this.

Prouty: Boy, that's pretty good on the hearing aid, isn't it?

Female Voice: May I have your attention, please? May I have your attention, please?

Male Voice: There's been a fire emergency reported in the building. Please leave the building by the nearest exit or exit stairway. Do NOT use the elevators.

Barger: Should we take a pause?

(LOUD, PIERCING ALARM SOUNDS)

Gunn: We have these drills, I would guess, about how often... once a week?

Barger: Once a week.

Gunn: We are the most drilled agency in the government.

Wray: Well!

Prouty: Geez, those things squeal! Whoa!

Wray: I think you can turn your hearing aid back up now. *(Resuming)* Let me go back and see if-- sort out where we are with this individual. Let me ask directly: do you recall who the person was? Do you recall the person's name?

Prouty: No. I'd have to... I was quite surprised, because it was when I had retired and left; and the chance of me having contact with people I'd never even worked with was rare. What he was doing-- somehow, he put it together himself, I guess-- was telling me, sort of like [an] introduction; he said that Col. Reich was very upset that he found out that nobody had been assigned to Dallas. And thinking, you know, that among the different units that might have been assigned to Dallas, he would have been one of them, just-- you know-- one of three or four, maybe. That's a regular business. I had no way of knowing, since I wasn't on duty in those days, that this had come up. And it just confirmed other things; that, geez-- if he wasn't in Dallas, [then] how the heck did that happen? Because it's just as automatic as going to lunch. These units are created for presidential protection. They're trained for presidential protection.

Wray: Back on the person... you don't recall the person's name. You don't recognize their name on the list. Did I understand [you] correctly to say that you did not personally know this person? It was not an acquaintance of yours before the call?

Prouty: I didn't know anybody in the outfit. The only way we would know is, getting calls where they might ask some question; like, they were asked to send ten men to [Ft.] Holabird, you know, to the school. Okay, we'd see that they got orders for that. But that was secretarial, mostly. We didn't meet the people. *(Pause)* Like the U-2 pilots. I never knew a U-2 pilot by name, and we had loads of them.

Wray: Something I'm not clear on, though, is-- now, after you've retired-- I don't understand why this individual would seek you out to contact you at that time.

(LOUD BEEPING ALARM SOUNDS)

Prouty: Oh... from his position, he knew that our office was called from time to time.

Male Voice: May I have your attention, please? Fire alarm testing has been completed. Please regard all alarms as actual alarms from this point on. I repeat: fire alarm testing is now completed. Please regard all alarms you may hear from this point on as actual alarms. Thank you.

Wray: Let me back up and ask my question again, because I think we'd like to hear clearly what your answer is. I was inquiring about how it was-- why this individual sought you out to contact you.

Prouty: It was a surprise to me; except that he could identify himself as being, as I recall, the deputy of the unit. Well, the units usually went to these assignments, as I understand it, by rote. You know; if it was on your beat, you went. Like a baseball schedule--if the Orioles are going to play in Los Angeles, they're supposed to be there. But if some other team went there that day, something happened. Well, that's what he was saying. He said that they didn't know they were supposed to be in Dallas, because nobody had called them. It wasn't on their list. Well, after the deal was over, they wondered why they weren't. And that was the question: why weren't they? Well, it wasn't my business to know either, and furthermore, I wasn't here at that time. I was out of the country. So I couldn't have participated in it even-- anyway. As a matter of fact, I that's the first thing I told him-- I said, "Hell, I wasn't even here." I was interested in the fact that he called, because it was the first time it had ever occurred to me that the rote... the advance orders hadn't taken effect. And I wondered what happened to the system. That's all we ever knew about it was... the schedule. The President's going to make a trip, so somebody's going to this city, and someone's going to be in that city. And I don't know how familiar you are with a job like that... [there's] a lot of advance... like, when I went to Mexico City with the Secret Service when Eisenhower was going down there back in the 50's-- geez, we

were in Mexico City, I think, at least three weeks before the President went down there, doing all kinds of preparatory work. You know, who'd take the windows of this building, who'd close those, who'd be on the roof of this building, where will the sniper be... I mean, that's business. And it's a lot of work. It's not casual. It isn't just, 'run out there for one day and back again.' Well, since I knew that's the way they worked [sic], I figured, "where the hell were they?" Well, that begins to ask some pretty big questions. But that was just my own wondering, "why weren't they there?" When I see the windows open-- why the hell weren't the windows closed? And if they weren't closed, something **very serious is wrong**. Not just casually-- this is 100 years of Secret Service work. This is a profession. And since I had gone with them myself on a trip to Mexico City when the time was such that Eisenhower's people were a little concerned about Mexico City... we really did that town over. Well, it's a profession-- they have a book on what to do. One thing you do is you keep the windows closed. If a window opens, there's a sniper on that window immediately. That's why they have lots of military scattered in civilian clothes around there-- to be sure that nothing happens. And they can keep it from happening. But why the hell weren't they there in Dallas?... That was my point. The fact that this guy called me is almost an irrelevant issue. I think he felt the way I did; he was trying to find out why his unit wasn't there.

Wray: In your book, you also-- I'm just going to ask you to say this again, what you say in the book-- [you] say that this individual said that Col. Reich had contacted the Secret Service, or had been contacted by them, or words to that effect; and was upset that--

Prouty: Well, he explained it... being Reich's deputy, he said, "I remember he was upset after it was over, because somebody should have been there." His unit, or another unit. I don't blame the guy for being concerned, because of what happened-- and he was in the business. But I didn't know him. We didn't know... I had never heard the name 'Reich' before. But we weren't the ones who set up the schedules. The schedules were set up through the Secret Service, as I understand it. But the training at Holabird was very specific, as I understand; very professional.

Barger: I'm sorry-- this question may have been asked while I was out of the room; and if it has been, I apologize. But you mentioned, when you were discussing the open window issue and your work in Mexico City, that there was a book on how to do this. Do you recall if that was a book originated by the Secret Service, or by the military? Where that might have been, so we can try and--

Prouty: Now, that's a good question, because... I had never been on one of these before. And when I

went down, there was quite a requirement for hardware; you know, stuff that the military could provide. So I went down to get what they needed, and talk with them about what we could provide, and how quickly I could get it there, get the airplanes to bring it down there, and that sort of thing. And the guy every once in a while referred [to] their manual-- you know, "we do this, we do that." And we'd get to a corner, and he said, "if we can't take the corner at a certain speed, we won't do it." That kind of thing. Laying out the route is a real profession, and I hadn't realized that before. It was interesting to actually work with them. But that was earlier in my career, and I needed to learn the business. It was in Eisenhower's time, so it was contiguous with my Air Force duties in the 50's. And they referred to such things as the fact that the Secret Service was... "a hundred years, we have these things that we've learned to do." He was a pro. He was the head of the unit. And I wasn't down there when Eisenhower went down there; I'd come back. And I sent a lot of supplies down for them. But that's just the business. It had nothing to do with Dallas. Well, it would have peripherally, because I understand it would happen everywhere; that they would use the same old rules year after year.

Barger: Right.

Wray: Let me back up still, to the conversation with the person in San Antonio-- from San Antonio. Did you ever have contact with this person again after the conversation that you talked about?

Prouty: Not... maybe [by] telephone... I don't know. My impression was that he was looking for someone that might have some idea of why the schedules hadn't gone out that day. Because they hadn't gone out to any of the units-- see, no units showed up in Dallas. That was his question. And I told him that I wasn't in the business, that I was out of the country, and I didn't know. But I talked with him quite a while, because I wanted to know why he was so concerned; you know, what really had happened. And I realized at that point that nobody had been ordered to go to Dallas. Nobody. Not just his unit, but the other units. And that's a real-- that's more than an oversight. That can't happen by itself.

Wray: I've seen various places where you've written that you kept notes from that conversation.

Prouty: Yeah. Just telephone--

Wray: Do you still have those, or--?

Prouty: Oh, I think they're long gone. You know, every time the phone rings, I take notes. Just like here, I take notes. (*Indicating notes he has been taking in front of him*) But I don't know whether I'd have that stuff or not.

Wray: Now, you may have mentioned this, but I just wanted to make it clear. Did you, at any point in your career, do you recall ever having met Col. Reich?

Prouty: Oh, no. I'd didn't even know his name. I learned that, mostly, by things [that] came up afterwards. Because all he [the man who called Prouty] said was [that] he was the deputy, and that kind of stuff. It was not our business to be in their business. First of all, our business was [with] the Agency. But since this was a requirement... similar... we would see...like I... they could get everything they needed to be there. When it was a special requirement, my system could see that they got things that were required that they might not have themselves. And since we were in JCS... a lot of times, each office supports the other office as a function of JCS.

Wray: Let me ask you-- you mentioned about the military protection units [sic]. I'd just like to inquire more about your knowledge of that. In general, what units were those? What kind of units were they?

Prouty: Well, the only one I ever knew about by being there was, I went to Fort Myer one time-- since it was so close to the Pentagon-- to meet with the fellows about some part of their work. And that was when I was first getting into that job, and I did a lot of that sort of stuff; find out, you know, if there was some unit that I had a contact with, they wanted me to know who I was working with. I don't think any specifics came up, but that's when I realized that we had this role of presidential protection, and that it was very formalized at the school, and that it was a regular function of the Army. That's... I went to Fort Myer. I didn't know where the other units were. I mean, he mentioned Holabird as a school... It was just a function of my learning the job that I had in the Pentagon.

Wray: To your knowledge, were these military... the protection units-- were they all Army, or did other services have similar--

Prouty: I couldn't tell you that. I've often wondered about it. Because I don't see any reason why it would be just all Army. But I don't know, frankly.

Wray: But you mentioned that, to your knowledge, Fort Holabird is the site of--

Prouty: That's what they told me.

Wray: --of where they did it... the school for this. Do you know whether the school-- or the training that was conducted there-- was that a school for individuals, or was it a school that, like, a unit would go to, to conduct training?

Prouty: I think individuals. I can't imagine a unit going there.

Gunn: Could I ask a couple questions on the organizational thing? *(To Wray)* Unless you have more.

Wray: No, go ahead.

Gunn: A minute ago, you said-- if I have got this correctly-- "we had this role of presidential protection." I'm just trying to understand who the "we" is-- whether that is the Pentagon, Army, or liaison; your special office, or--

Prouty: I couldn't define it beyond 'military.' Because you see, the only contact I would have had would be at the headquarters of the Air Force or at the headquarters of the JCS. It wasn't really the job that I had, except that I had access to special weapons and special equipment-- and I don't mean nuclear when I use that term; I mean, you know, stuff that we would provide for the CIA for certain things they were going to do-- and from time to time, I'd get a request for something. Or, maybe... no more...our airplanes [were] used for [an] airlift. I never knew the program in detail. If I had any contact whatsoever through any other meeting that I'd been in, I'd tell them to call Fort Myer, where I knew the boss was, and let it go at that. It wasn't my business. In fact, my business was so separated from most ordinary things that I had enough to do where I was, and I didn't expand it very much.

Gunn: For the office at Fort Myer: was that some-- is that headquarters for Army or some other form of intelligence, or is that something like liaison with the Secret Service? I'm not understanding what the office oversees.

Prouty: My feeling is, and it never occurred to me to ask them in detail-- because I didn't have any reason to-- is that it was an Army function, and that it was done in conjunction with [the] Secret Service. I assume [the] Secret Service would have been considered the senior party when the two work together; but that's purely by function. Quite frankly, other than knowing that Presidential protection existed, that's about all I was required to know. Because if they called for something, they'd want me to know who the hell they were. And that was very, very rare. The only time I was ever

personally involved-- and I think that was just for familiarization early in my assignment in this work-- was when I went to Mexico City [in 1955]. And that was pretty complete. I was quite amazed, personally, because I didn't realize they'd go down weeks ahead of time, set up things ahead of time, worked the route through with the Mexicans... [it was a] very involved, a very detailed thing. That was my first and last course with them-- Mexico City.

Gunn: Is it your understanding now that the office you that referred to in Fort Myer was not military-- or, Army-- Intelligence headquarters for all of the armies in the US, but it was some kind of specialized office that might use the intelligence course?

Prouty: I'm positive it had nothing to do with intelligence. The thought never even occurred to me. It was a function of... that's a good question. I can't remember that. These units existed at Fort Myers [sic] for some job the Army would have, and among them is [the] assistance of the Secret Service; and they called the course 'Presidential Protection.' That's about all I remember, because we've talked about all these other things. And I'm sure it had nothing to do with intelligence, because I never had anything to do with it. I would almost never be in the office of anybody in intelligence, by directive.

Wray: When you talk about this office at Fort Myer, I just want to make this clear-- do I understand correctly that you are not talking about the ceremonial units that are there? For protection in ceremonies?

Prouty: Oh, absolutely. *(Laughs)* That might have been a connection-- I've never thought of it before. Because that's presidential work, isn't it? I've never thought of it before. No, this was a meeting, really, on another subject, in which this came up. [It was] sort of like, 'Hey, here's a function we have.' And since I had been to so many different offices throughout the services-- because I was new at the way this stuff was applied-- I heard a lot of people talk like that. But I probably never went back to them again, because my basic work was in the Agency. But we used the system sometimes to augment other things. I never thought of that... like Arlington Cemetery work and other things... it could very well be why they were doing it. It never occurred to me.

Wray: You said that-- in your book at one point-- that you had worked with these units in the past. I'm just tying that to what you said now. [Do] you mean-- when you'd worked with them in the past-- this is like, your contact with the people at Fort Myer, as

opposed to actually working with them in an operational sense?

Prouty: No, what I meant was the trip to Mexico City.

Wray: Oh, the trip to Mexico City.

Prouty: That was the only one I ever went on. And I wanted to go-- and they wanted me to go-- to see what the system was. So I actually got the airplane and flew the airplane to Mexico City for them.

Wray: On the trip to Mexico City, you made it clear that you worked with Secret Service people on the advance there. Were military protection people-- like, from these military protection units-- were they along on that trip as well?

Prouty: You know, that-- again-- is a good point. The only person I knew on it was a Secret Service man. No, I didn't know this... he never talked about the military at all, that I can recall. Of course, that was... my God, that was... a good long time ago... the object he... what they had when they said take [me] down was, he said, they wanted me to know what they do. Period. And I went down there.

Gunn: Could I try and finish with the Fort Myer business? From what I had understood-- and perhaps I had misunderstood before that-- was that the 316th and 112th had some kind of [a] reporting relationship with this unit in Fort Myer. Is that right?

Prouty: Well... all subordinate units have a main unit in front of them, in charge of them. And I never knew whether there were two subordinate units or ten. It was none of my business. All I had to know was the senior one; because coming from the JCS, or from headquarters Air Force, that's the only one I would deal with. And when I would deal with it, I'd go to Fort Myer. Period.

Gunn: So when someone called you, then, from the 316th, it was your understanding-- at least at that time-- that that person normally would have reported to Fort Myer, but they were going and calling you because they how they--

Prouty: (Crossly) Such a thing never crossed my mind. The man that called me was an individual. I didn't even know if he was on duty, and I had never seen him. There were certain things I wouldn't tell him. But what he told me was what had gone on in his command when they found out that the schedule had been interrupted. So I listened to him talk. I had no reason for talking with the guy.

Gunn: Our ultimate concern is to try to identify records, wherever they are in the government, that would relate to these issues. And one of the things that we would be interested in is this unit in Fort Myer. As far as I know right now, this unit has not come to the surface of what we have identified before. To the extent [that] there is such an entity, we would like to find out the name of it, or somebody who can give us the name of it, so we can try [to find] it either through the Army or through Fort Myer, or some other way... Do you have any suggestions for us of other people we could talk to, or--

Prouty: No, and this has been much overplayed. I had to go to Fort Myer for certain functions. And when I mean that, it was...sometimes-- usually it was, I mean, I had to phone them, and they had to come see me. I had other things to do. It would be on a very specific point. I never asked for a briefing or something like that. We're overdoing it a thousand times. I think I went there once, because they wanted to show me where they were. And I remember the buildings... there were [sic] a temple building over there. But I don't think I could find it today. And it was not on this subject; it was just that they had these jobs, and... [it was] good to know it. But it was not my beat. It wasn't CIA. But I couldn't say no a lot of times, because I couldn't turn around and say 'Look, I'm not going to talk to you, I'm only going to talk to CIA.' That's just as bad. See, I had to be careful. So I got involved in things sometimes, when it was... I'd listen to them and then walk away. And it was such a long time ago, I can't tell you... I'm sure that whatever records I might have had went down into that melting pot. *(Pause)* I think the man that called me was purely an individual-- who said he was, [but] I have no record of it... and he just was upset that he found out later that an alternative unit-- if not theirs-- had not been sent to...you know, there was no military coterie in Dallas. But we all were. We were wondering why the hell the Secret Service wasn't in Dallas. See, I had written about that. I said, "I can't believe [that] the Secret Service wasn't in Dallas." Anybody should have known that. Look at the picture-- why the hell were the windows open? See, that's the story right there. When you see that, everything else comes from that. It is peripheral to that. But there's the important point right there; and not just that picture. I've got hundreds of them. I had access to [Dick] Sprague's [photos]. Sprague's, are all now, by the way, up in Springfield, at a college in Massachusetts. All 25,000 pictures are up there.

Wray: Let me ask you about the Secret Service in Dallas. In your book, you are critical of your performance there.

Prouty: In Dallas?

Wray: Yes.

Prouty: No. I wasn't even there when they--

Wray: No, no, no. I said, you were critical of their performance in Dallas. What the Secret Service did there.

Prouty: Oh. I thought you said... No, I was just critical that they weren't there.

Wray: How many Secret Service agents would you-- based on your experience in Mexico City or other things that you would know-- how many Secret Service agents would you have expected to be providing coverage in Dallas?

Prouty: (Testily) See, we're overdoing this. I went to Mexico City once, so I'd know the business. I have no idea how they run their business. And the difference between Dallas and Mexico City-- I don't think you would have comparable units. No way. First of all, I don't know whether they take hundreds of guys when in a foreign country like that, or whether they let the local country do it [provide security personnel]. So I shouldn't be giving you anything that misleads you. Because I only went to Mexico City with the senior man of that group, and stayed there a few days with him. But I went there for logistics purposes, not to learn all about the system. And I can't extrapolate that into a nationwide system, because I had never had any Secret Service [training]... But what appalled me is the fact that the Secret Service was not in Dallas. That's the point that's important.

Wray: When you say "the Secret Service was not in Dallas"... Do I understand you-- that you are speaking a little bit figuratively there? That they may have been there, but they weren't doing their job thoroughly? Or do you mean literally, that they were not there?

Prouty: (Pause) Well.... it's so basic to their business that the windows be down-- just for one thing-- and in order to do that they have to be there. It doesn't leave much question. You don't have to go any further. Because the gun, theoretically, was pointed out of a window. And the window was not covered by anybody. [If] you go outside the building here, and stand and look at a building that's six stories high, you can see every single window. One person can. If a window's open, you just get on your little radio [to] the guy on the roof, he puts a sniper's gun on it [the open window]; the

guy in the other building goes over and says, "Shut the window." And some secretary says, "Oh, I didn't know about it.", and closes the window. I mean, it's not mysterious. But the fact that it wasn't done-- there's the problem. Why? Why wasn't it done? And I have no experience in that. All I know is, they weren't there.

Wray: I understand. *(To Zimmerman)* Did you want to ask a question?

Zimmerman: Well, I was going to ask you-- when you spoke to this deputy to Colonel Reich... Did he mention to you that Army units had been present in Houston, San Antonio, and the other cities on the Texas trip, and not Dallas? Or they just were not present on the Dallas trip?

Prouty: Well, the assumption was, from the person-- and since I've seen the list of names, and he's not on there, I'm beginning to wonder seriously whether he was really in that crowd; because you must have every name that there is in the outfit. But that's neither here nor there. But the assumption on his part-- not mine, because I didn't know it; I didn't make the call-- was that none of the units-- and I don't know where the others were stationed... they had one I think in, where were we talking about? Houston? Yeah, Houston. Maybe they got [sic] two or three others in Texas, but I don't know that-- that there wasn't an alternative unit in Dallas. That was his point. He was saying the same thing from the Army's point of view that I am about the Secret Service-- why wasn't somebody there? The President's going through town-- they should have had somebody there. That was the way he was talking about it.

Zimmerman: The other point you made when you pointed at this newspaper story was that the Secret Service is referred to as using automatic weapons?

Prouty: They were doing what?

Zimmerman: Using automatic weapons?

Prouty: Oh, that's in the paper. Yeah.

Gunn: *(Correcting)* They pulled out automatic weapons.

Zimmerman: That they pulled out automatic weapons; you said that this triggered your thought about--

Prouty: Yeah, because nothing has ever supported that, except that one little three line sentence in the newspaper. I've never seen it in a study of the thing; I've never seen it in reference to the Warren Commission; or anything else that I've ever seen on the whole subject. I've never heard of the Secret Service [pulling out automatic weapons]...And the pictures-- the thing that got me is that-- the pictures of that famous, what, Altgens photo? Where the Secret Service car is right behind the President's car, and the men are standing in the car? Not one of them had a weapon out. Not one. You know, it's that kind of thing.

Zimmerman: So this story made you suspicious? You know, when, there's a reference to automatic weapons--

Prouty: No, I believed it. It was the only news I had. And I thought they did. [But] then when I looked at the pictures, and heard otherwise, that they didn't; that they weren't even there, other than standing on the car-- then I got suspicious. But the fact that it was printed worldwide, not-- I just happened to buy that paper. I could have been in Tokyo or could have been in some other place. But I bought that paper, and that's what I believed. The congressman believed. We thought that was the story. Then later, when I got back home, and I got into the JCS, and I heard other people talking like that among-- you know, people with the same experience I had-- I went over to the Library of Congress. I spent a whole day over there with newspapers, and they all had that little line in it. Now where the hell did that line come from? And what was the significance of that line in the papers around the world? And that's what got me concerned about it. No other facts. In fact, that's the only time I've ever seen it printed, is in those papers of the first day [sic]. That's a good question. Because it *is* basic.

Zimmerman: Well, about weapons... you mentioned that you would sometimes get calls from "them"; and I was wondering if you meant, the Secret Service asking you to arrange for, say, a military transport plane for transporting the president's limousine, or something like that? [But] you would have a direct contact?

Prouty: When I flew to Mexico, the plane was full of boxes. You know, loaded. I have no idea what was in them. They asked me to get a plane; I flew the plane; [a] Secret Service senior man came up, and he sat in the co-pilot's seat with me, and we flew to Mexico, and we had a good trip. I have no idea what was in the boxes. Now later, we got supplemental requests, which I assume were just more boxes, or that sort of thing; but that's a standard Air Force thing. That had nothing to do with my clandestine work. That's [a] standard Air Force job, is to fly government supplies.

Zimmerman: But, you did receive a direct call from someone at the Secret Service? Or, this was-- you were called by somebody else on behalf of the Secret Service?

Prouty: To go to... when I went to Mexico?

Zimmerman: Yeah.

Prouty: Oh, yes. That was from... well, first of all, in my work, he would have had to have [had] a different introduction to me. He wouldn't have known that I even existed. My office-- for instance, outside my door, it had a phony sign on the door. You couldn't just walk down the Pentagon hall and know which office I was in; that kind of stuff. So somebody on the Joint Staff must have told somebody in the Secret Service to get in contact with me. And the usual way is [was], that my own people would tell me that, "the guy wants to come over and meet with you; he'll be over at 2:00. I don't make the contact, and I don't think he would. He couldn't find me. We ran that office... in fact, that's why I couldn't get out of it. I thought I was going to leave it in three years; I stayed nine years. And they told me frankly, they said, [it was] because they didn't want to break anyone else into it. They don't [sic] want more people connected with that kind of work, which makes a certain amount of sense. But that's why I retired. I wanted to get the hell out of it. That was long enough.

Zimmerman: Did you ever supply the Secret Service with weapons? Did they ever request weapons?

Prouty: I wouldn't know what was in the boxes. I couldn't tell you what I think they carried. One of them, one time, told me about disguising a weapon with some flowers; but that was, I don't know, just talk of the trade. I couldn't prove it.

Wray: Let me ask you a question about the JFK film. And my question here-- let me just provide a little context for this. I understand that Oliver Stone has said publicly, and I think you have acknowledged, that you contributed advice and background to the film; and in fact, the character played by Donald Sutherland, this "X" character, is at least loosely based on you. That character, of course, recounts the story of the trip to Antarctica. One thing I wanted to ask about that, is that in the film, that character says something to the effect of, "One of my routine duties, had I been in Washington, would have been to arrange additional security in Texas." And the conclusion that the film seems to draw is that this trip to Antarctica was sort of purposely done to get this person out of Washington, and so ease the way for conspirators to take their shot

at the President. Does that--

Prouty: Well... see, what I didn't realize... I had had a serious heart operation just the same week I met Oliver Stone. When he called me, I didn't know who he was. I don't know movies; [I] rarely go. And here, I get this call [saying] Oliver Stone is going to be in Washington, and wanted to have breakfast with me in Washington. And I asked my wife, "Who the hell's Oliver Stone?" Well, my daughter was there, and she damn near killed me. She said, "You don't know who he is?", you know, "where's he..." Well, that's how I met Oliver Stone. In the discussion with him, I found out that he had a stack of letters that I had written to Jim Garrison when Garrison had sent me the manuscript to his book that he was working on. And one of the things I told Jim was, that you can't write about the Kennedy assassination and only write about New Orleans and Dallas. You've got to write about Washington. And so Jim says [sic], "Like what?" So I wrote him some letters about that. Well, I didn't realize that he'd given those letters, as well as his manuscript, to Stone... way back, some time in the Eighties; and that Stone knew what was in my personal letters. It didn't bother me, but I didn't know it. So some of this stuff was out of personal letters I had written to Garrison about how he should get his book up to date with the subject... because his manuscript only dealt with New Orleans and Dallas. And I said, "Geez, you can't do that." And Garrison was real nice about it with me, and did put a lot of that in his book. When the book came out, it had a lot of [the] Washington scene in it. Well, I had no way of knowing that Stone had seen them; I didn't know he even knew Garrison. But I had written some articles in 1985 and 1986, that are that book-- but they were a little bit different. And he had gotten those articles from the magazine that that appeared in [sic]; and I didn't know that either, until the editor of the magazine told me that. And that was long before the movie-- he just told me that this guy had... Well, since I had not personally participated in any of that, I really didn't know that all that had gone on. And I didn't even know that I was-- I had the whole script to the movie and read it, and I didn't know I was Man X. And he never told me. I was in my bed; I couldn't get up... but I was reading the script; it was kind of interesting to read it. Finally, [there was] something toward the end of the book, where Sutherland and... (*pauses*)

Wray: Kevin Costner.

Prouty: ...Costner got together talking. I recognized something I had either said to somebody or written to somebody. I thought, "Where the hell did that come from?" So later on, when I was writing about-- what I was doing, as an advisor, was just suggesting changes or additions to the manuscript. I told Stone, I said, "You know, I'm quite

surprised; how the hell did that get in there in the manuscript?" This was about a month or two later, and I was meeting him then when I was up and around. And he laughed; he said, "You're Man X." Well then, when he made the speech at the Press Club, he pointed that out specifically. I didn't know. I didn't know I was Man X. I had no idea. See, I had never worked with the film studio, so I wasn't in the set...crew...guys. I went there one day, and I had to have a nurse with me that day. [I] flew to the West Coast, and I met Costner, and Sutherland, and all the rest of the crowd, one time, and then I had to come back home again. So a lot of that I don't know anything about; it got into the script, it got into the other stuff. Afterwards, I heard from Stone rather frequently. He's very much in [to] the subject. And he did want to know things that pertain to this subject and things like it. But it isn't the usual way of working with a film, because I wasn't in Dallas with them, I wasn't in New Orleans with them, I wasn't in Los Angeles with them; when he came to Washington, *one day* in met them out there on the Mall. And that was my whole connection with the film. Except, my book... immediately, a publisher saw the chance at publishing it; so he just took the nineteen articles that were written month by month. He said, "Hey, re-edit the darn thing," he said, "we'll make a book out of them." And that's how the book happened. So anything you read there is by way of the original manuscript. And I can't tell you how some of that stuff got in there. Because they had their own-- see, Garrison had his own ideas about how it happened, as you know. And Garrison wrote a book; I don't know whether you've got his, too. But Garrison's book should, in some cases, almost be verbatim with this. Because he was using my material, and I was using-- neither one of us thinking they were ever going to be books. I didn't plan to have a book. Well... he didn't plan to have a book with the Washington material in it, see? It's a funny way to make a movie, but that's how it worked out.

Gunn: If I can go back and maybe, after that explanation, to restate Tim's question to you: there's a suggestion in the movie that the person who is Mr. X has responsibilities for presidential protection. Would it be fair to say that you, in the Pentagon at that time, did not have responsibilities for Presidential protection?

Prouty: No, it wasn't... how ever that originated in the first place.... We used to get calls in the office, as I've told you, on many, many different things. You know, we didn't want to highlight the few things we were really on. And if one would come in that was anywhere near what we were doing, it might be referred to me, whether it had really to do with my work or not. And this role of-- just like going to Mexico City; I had nothing to do with working with the Secret Service, but they said, "Look, you'd better go, and get the experience once." It was a good idea. Well, so I did. Well...

you extrapolate from things like that. When somebody knows I'd been to Mexico City, they say, "Well, you might have been the guy we had [doing security] for Dallas that day," thinking it was one of the duties I had. It isn't. I'd only been [to Mexico] once, and that was back in Eisenhower's...

END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO

Prouty: ...you know, they were the same guys I used to work with before. And that came up afterwards. I don't really know the origin of it. Because... I could just take a whole bunch of things that different writers-- geez, Tom Wicker of the New York Times just ripped things up; he said that such and such a paper never existed, when I'd told people that I'm the person that wrote it along with my boss. And here's a New York Times reporter saying it didn't exist. So people would believe the New York Times reporter; I had nothing to do with what he was writing. In fact, I had told him, I said, "I had nothing to do with it." Well, it's too bad, but that's the way things are handled when you are getting into that area of work. And I'm so used to it, because my work was so different... The movie was hit so hard. My God, I never... I wasn't even aware of how the movie business goes, and I didn't know people would start jumping into it before it had even been in the theater. That's news to me... it wasn't my job, my background. So I don't know who originated some of these things. Because they were out to kill old Stone, and they were going to do it any way they could do it.

Wray: But I guess my question now about the Antarctica trip [is]; do you feel that you were somehow sent to Antarctica for some sinister purpose to get you out of the--

Prouty: Oh, no. I'd been working with them since 1959. It was so routine for them to call me, that I didn't give it a thought. And when they said 'we've got this team of people going down in a military airplane;' it's the military custom to put an escort officer in board. And so my boss said, "You're escort officer for this flight to Antarctica." [I thought] Fine. And that's all it was. It was just like that. And then when I found out it was this nuclear plant, I thought, "Gee, this is interesting." I got all the books I could and everything, so I would know what the hell was going on. But I had nothing... I never figured Kennedy was going to be killed, or anything else. And even afterwards, when I heard people extrapolating in that sense, thinking that it wasn't my job; they didn't know that I'd already been working with Antarctica people since 1959. I've never heard one of them say that. Yet that's a record. I mean, apparently, they haven't taken out the records from the Antarctica offices, because that's a record there; signed by the man who sent me this very nice commendation letter, among other

things.

Wray: Let me... during this period of time, let's say, early 1960's, when you were working in that office; do you still have, like, your officer fitness reports, or something that would have like, a job description? Let me ask you this: first of all, would your Air Force efficiency reports... would they candidly say what your job was, or would you have a cover job on there?

Prouty: No... However, I think the job description is there in that thing with OSO. It was the same all the way through. It was always stationed... and ... let me have the book just a second, please.

Barger: Here you are. *(Hands him the book)*

Prouty: See? This, I think, came off the official description. *(Reading)* "Retired Col. Prouty served in the Chief of Special Operations at the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the Kennedy years. He was directly in charge of the global system designed to provide military support for the clandestine activities of the CIA. Prouty is the author of The Secret Team: The CIA And Its Allies and lives in Alexandria, Virginia." That's right off the orders I had. And I think what I gave you, if you study...*(throws book back to Barger, harder than he expected)* *(To Barger)* Excuse me, I'm sorry. I didn't know it would slide so far.

Barger: That's okay.

Prouty: *(Resuming)* ... you'll see the same [thing] exactly. Because we had to stay with that wording. We couldn't ever let it expand. That was the same job...that was the same thing given in the Air Force in '55; it was the same thing I had when I got out in '64.

Wray: Okay. I think we're coming to the end of the things that we wanted to ask you--

Prouty: That's very interesting; because I don't blame you for wanting to be as close to the facts as possible. So, don't worry about it.

Wray: Let me give you an opportunity here at the end: is there anything that we've neglected to ask you about that you think is important for you to tell us?

Prouty: I'm not really an assassination student. There's so much of this stuff I don't even know about;

like [the] Warren Commission Report, and a lot of the stuff these people-- experts-- have, like the Mafia, and the Cuban role, and all that stuff... I'm just astounded that somebody doesn't just address the fact that the assassination was clearly laid on as a plan; same as we do when we assassinate somebody. I've participated in some of that. [It's] pretty carefully planned; you don't just go send some kid down there with a pop gun. And the scenario is right there in that paper. Right there. That's all you need to know, is [sic] when things that should have been done *aren't* done... when you're playing on a baseball team, and you're supposed to cover second base, and you don't-- something's wrong with that team. That's what you've got to be looking out for. And I don't know why nobody ever does that.

Wray: When you referred to that paper, you're referring to--

Prouty: Just those bold facts.

Wray: --the newspaper, the Christchurch Star article?

Prouty: Since that's an example of it. That's just the paper I had in my hands. I didn't see the Washington Post that day, or the New York Times. I went to the library later and saw fifty of them. But there's enough right there to solve what happened.

Wray: I guess another question would be: Beyond the things that we've already talked about, are you aware of, or could you provide suggestions of where we might look for other documents that might shed light on this?

Prouty: The word is documents. See, that's what-- you can't find my documents either, because I know where they went. Well, anybody else who had documents like-- and there were very few documents. Most of what we did, we did two people sitting in a room [sic]; sometimes we knew each other, sometimes not. You don't document that kind of work. And I think [that] few people know it more seriously than I, because I stayed in it so damn long. But I have actually been called-- and I don't mean to bring this up, but it's pretty necessary, I guess, at this point-- I've actually been called at night by Allen Dulles; and [he] said, "Come over, I want to see you." I'd go over there, and he'd have a car waiting, [and] we'd go to John Foster Dulles' home; and there'd be the Secretary of Defense there, and we'd sit in the room and talk. No writing. No phone calls. No nothing. And then I'd go home. The next day, I'd do what they asked me to do, and we'd get something done. You're not going to find documents. Because when I got back, my memo for the record, you know, [I didn't write that] I had seen Dulles yesterday. You don't do that. In fact, you almost do it

the opposite. You'd be surprised to find that one of the ways that he [Allen Dulles] worked, very effectively, was... he'd be at lunch with Joe Alsop, and a bunch of top line reporters, so that they would know what was going on-- his way. And I'd be at lunch with General Cabell on the same subject, working on the business of the deal. Now that's how he ran his office. He was a lawyer; he was smart. He knew the value of keeping things on the right track. And that's something [that] people don't seem to understand. If they did, a lot of this would be easier.

Barger: I have nothing more at this point.

Wray: Any other questions from others?

Gunn: I'd like to go back to something that you talked about earlier on, and that was Oswald being in-- I'm not exactly sure how you said it; I recall it being something like, 'in "our" program' there-- now, when you say that, you are saying something that is far different than what the official version is-- as offered by the US government-- which was that Oswald was in the Marine Corps, did not do a very good job there, and had no further connection with American intelligence or American activities. Our job here-- and we have not seen any US government records that would suggest that Oswald in fact did have a connection with intelligence, other than records that have been released that people--

Prouty: But be very careful. "Intelligence"-- see, that's the word that kills it. And they'll answer you honestly that he had nothing to do with intelligence. Same as they would with me. They'll say, "That man never had anything to do with intelligence." True.

Gunn: Well, there are two-- I wanted to ask two questions. One is about whatever involvement Oswald had, that you understand, while he was in the Marine Corps or any other activities. Second, I wanted to go to the different distinction that you had made between intelligence and clandestine activities or covert operations. To the extent that Oswald was 'sheep-dipped' or had any other kind of connection with any kind of clandestine activities or covert operations, do you have any suggestions for us about how we could find further information or further records about that? I mean, in a sense, that particular statement of yours is an explosive statement. That's very important. If that's true, we would like to be able to get records that show that, or be able to gather information that would show that. That's very important to us. So, any leads that you could give us would be very useful.

Prouty: Well... Atsugi, in Japan, is not a Marine base. Okay? Atsugi is an air base where, in my

day-- and I presume it still is-- where the CIA had its Far East headquarters. Now, to put a Marine there, there must have been a military-type reason, which gets into my type of program. That's just like the law of gravity; you don't have to have a record of that. He's there, and Marines don't go there as a general rule. Just like Marines don't, when they're sent to be attaché in a certain ambassador's office, that's not a regular Marine job, except the fact that Marines have inherited the jobs of being attachés. Well now, he's there... if you doubt that he was at Atsugi, then the military has to have some explanation for that gap in his Marine service. Well, I don't think there is one.

Gunn: Let me try this-- I mean, I assume he was at Atsugi, as were other corpsmen. I mean, he wasn't the only Marine there. His unit was there. Does this mean, by what you are saying, that everyone in his unit was... had some kind of secret activity for the US government?

Prouty: Oh, no. That's not necessary, any more than [saying that] everybody in the JCS has a job like mine. See, no, no. No. You have to figure that if there wasn't some other Marine there, they couldn't have put him there. You can't put one Marine in the base.

Gunn: Okay; but that doesn't say why Oswald had a special relationship; that simply because he was at Atsugi, and was in the Marines doesn't mean anything--

Prouty: Well, then you have to go further. He was trained, as I understand it, in radar. Okay? Now, how many Marines would have done that unless there was a special function? Well, the CIA was operating U-2's there. It's been made clear to me through the newspapers-- not personal knowledge-- that he [Oswald] had something to do with the U-2 program. That's the only way I've heard it, but of course, since I know Atsugi well, and know the U-2 program, I have no problem with that. And I think that's the only way that's going to be taken care of, because it [sic] would never have issued orders that stated those things. You see, that's the reason for what we call the Cover and Deception program, or the 'sheep-dip' program. We would never say what his real duties were. However, if he's a Marine, and he's at Atsugi, and if he's got radar experience, and if he's had U-2 experience, you pretty well define a guy within the limits of this crazy system that tries to hide him every step he goes anyway. And then, they don't put that on paper. My God, we didn't have paper for... I didn't have any legitimate papers written about me, [and] what I was doing every week in the Pentagon. I just had that one line about supporting the Agency. What kind of support? *(Sarcastically)* Well, we brought them some fresh apples when they were ripe. And there's [a] very clear description that you never cross the line into

intelligence. That's one thing that could not be, under NSC 54-12, that could never be done. And things like that, once they're applied, become very finite [sic]. They're not loosely woven. Now, the only way that I can believe that Oswald was there was that he wasn't, among other things, he wasn't anywhere else. But he was in the Marine Corps during that period. And... *(pause)* Furthermore... you see, what I do is: I've taught my hand not to type the letters O-S-W-A-L-D. He has nothing to do with the killing of President Kennedy. So I never even *type* the word unless I hide my eyes. I mean, I've made speeches after speeches and written articles after articles [sic] about that. I mean, my God, let's talk about the Kennedy assassination; Oswald's not it. He's a cover story for it. Well, that's all right.

Gunn: To the extent [that] that's the case, then our interest is 'Oswald's the cover story.' I mean, he certainly is the accused assassin, and to the extent that he had nothing to do with it--

Prouty: Yeah, but accusation without a trial is very illegal. Why--

Gunn: Sure; and that's what we're trying to do, is to figure out the facts. And to the extent [that] this is a cover-up, is to try and understand the cover story. The concern that I would have is, Oswald is trained as a radar operator, as were other people in his unit. Other people in his unit were radar operators at Atsugi. And either they are all... say, have a connection with the CIA, or only some of them do. If there is any particular reason for thinking that Oswald is one, that has do with or does work for the CIA, we would like to be able to find records that would show that. And I guess, just, the question-- and to some extent, this is a repeat-- do you have any suggestions for us, other than the circumstance that Oswald was at Atsugi, that would show that he had a relationship with the CIA while he was at Atsugi?

Prouty: Well... what does that lead to? Are you trying to say, then, that CIA had something to do with [the] killing of the President?

Gunn: No, no, no. Just--

Prouty: (Testily) Well then, what difference does it make?

Gunn: No, right now it's just a very simple question: Can you think of any leads that would show that Oswald had a connection with the CIA while he was at Atsugi? Because I've looked at CIA records, and they don't say anything like that. Now, they may not be the right records,--

Prouty: That could be perfectly all right. And then that removes the CIA and Oswald from the subject, see? I agree with that. I'd like to be able to prove that. But you see, the way they were assigned, you don't get that kind of valid record, unless they created one. Because they wouldn't have one that said he wasn't there. Who writes that kind of orders? See, this is what I'm getting at. For instance, why hasn't the state of Texas had a trial about the killing of Kennedy? It's a murder. When I was with the railroad, if a man died on the train while we were going, the first thing the conductor has to do was check his watch and see what state we're in. Because if it's in the state of Wyoming, that's where the murder-- the death has to be taken care of in the Wyoming courts. Why hasn't the state of Texas ever tried the murder of Kennedy? And until that's done, all this stuff is irrelevant. Because, what power kept that from happening? And as an excuse, what power created, out of the Chief Justice of the United States, the head of a committee to investigate something that they didn't even know what they were talking about [sic]? There's the question. What power has never solved the things that are clearly on that page, let alone the other thousand that anybody could develop to show that other things were happening, see? I mean, why weren't the prisoners in handcuffs... the tramps? Because they weren't the gunmen. Well, why were the police marching them across that square that day? What power did that? Now, that's not written on paper.

Gunn: What we need to do is look at-- is to isolate certain kinds of events, and find the people who can help us substantiate records related to this. So one of our questions, with your particular role in the Pentagon during the late 50's and early 60's, would be work with clandestine operations of the CIA. And anything that you could point us to that would show Os-- I mean, if we could learn that there was some kind of connection between Oswald and the CIA, or some kind of record of that, from the time that you were at the Pentagon, that would be very useful for us in terms of explaining the story about the assassination. Our interest is not just which bullet hit President Kennedy, but what kinds of records has the government kept about people who have been associated with the murder. And certainly, Oswald is connected to the murder, in that he is the government's leading candidate as being the accused. If there is another relationship between the government and Oswald that is different from what the records show now, then we would like to find those records. And if you have any leads at all that you could give to us of how we could find records that would show a relationship between Oswald and clandestine operations, that would be very useful.

Prouty: You see, you've defined the problem. Because, because something never existed, there are no records. You see what I mean? And there aren't going to be, because they

never existed. That's a cover story. And I admit that these people that were across the hall from me in C+D worked as hard as our office did, creating cover stories. Now, not for the Oswald affair, but I mean... that's the business. I mean, my God, look what we went through to try to cover the Bay of Pigs program. It flopped pretty badly, but there were people trying to say why we were assembling airplanes in Guatemala and that kind of thing, for some other purpose. That's a routine deal to create the cover story. Well, Oswald, Atsugi, CIA's the cover story, unless for some reason... I have never even given it a thought that the CIA was involved in the death of Kennedy. Nothing ever reflects it. And all that story is irrelevant to go into... and see, you're [a] victim of the cover story if you do that. And I don't mean you personally, I mean, we were involved in that kind of thinking. But let's go to who is it [that] told the newspapers that there was a burst of... that there were three bursts of automatic weaponfire in Dallas. Where did that come from? Who planted that? Or was that the truth? And I think it was probably the truth. I think that one, because it was put so high in the headlines. It was one of these things where a reporter immediately called in, and said, "We heard three bursts of gunfire," and that's probably the truth. But then when they start going down... unfortunately, in this paper, since it doesn't have the inner pages-- I don't have the inner pages of that Christchurch paper. But there's a picture of Oswald there in a business suit, with a tie on... nobody was able to get that picture that day. Where the hell did that picture-- in fact, Sprague told me he'd never even saw that picture. One of the most famous experts on the pictures of this whole thing, Dick Sprague, never saw that picture until I showed him the Christchurch paper. And even after that, they couldn't find it anywhere. [But] it went around the world in the papers. Where'd it come from? Who planted that? Well, it's the cover story; that's not the crime. There's a real serious problem--

Gunn: If I were the defense attorney for Oswald, and I wanted to argue that he had nothing to do with it, I would be very interested in finding out facts about the cover story. And I think that partly what I, at least, understand you to have suggested is that Oswald was not as he has been portrayed by the government; that there is another story about Oswald. That is one of the things that we are interested in. I don't want to beat a dead horse; we don't need to pursue it further at this time. But if you can think of, now or later, of some other way that we could get such records, that would be of some interest. Let me give you a specific example. You mentioned that in the process of sheep-dipping, what you're doing is keeping three parallel sets of records: one that shows the general financial things; one that shows the career in the military; and the third will be either the CIA record or some other set of records. If there's a way that we can get into that third set of records; that is, the CIA, or what I'm calling the CIA--

Prouty: Oh, they wouldn't tell you anything. They'd tell you he was paid on the 31st, that he was housed here... No, they were more careful than that. There are not going to be any records.

Gunn: But somebody knows about that sheep-dip record, or CIA record. I mean, conceivably, when a new file is opened, there is a numbering system, and all you need to do is go to the numbers. There's also something called the Inter-Agency Source Register, that would go among the CIA and the FBI; to the extent that somebody is an informant for the US government, they should appear on the Inter-Agency Source Register. Anyway, we don't need to pursue it further at this point, but if you are able to think of anything that would help us pursue--

Prouty: Have you ever had access to the files kept by Michael Mitchell?

Gunn: Not that I know of.

Prouty: He was the military personnel officer for the CIA for years. Have you had any access to the records kept by Larry Houston?

Gunn: Yes, some.

Wray: Michael Mitchell, if I can back up-- was he a military officer?

Prouty: No. He was a civilian.

Wray: He was CIA? All right.

Prouty: But he was the military... for all military personnel that were sent to the Agency, either for temporary duty-- which most of them were-- or sort of a permanent duty, he kept the records, and kept them in a very unusual way; but a very effective way.

Gunn: And he was at CIA, not in the Pentagon?

Prouty: CIA headquarters. And don't drop his name where it isn't official. In other words, be very careful with that name.

Gunn: Okay. That's the kind of lead that's useful for us, where we have something specific we can go--

Prouty: If you don't find his name on it, you haven't got the records. And from your point of-- from the point of view of what this office is established for, as I understand it, that's pretty important. If they don't volunteer anything like that, they being top officials, I wouldn't give credence to anything. I hate to bring that on the record, but since you're at that point... You're not exactly wasting time, but if it didn't go through Mike Mitchell's office, in my era-- and I think he stayed on the program almost as long as I did, or even longer-- it's that kind of thing. Because the man was only in that job to keep military records that appeared to be valid to cover the assignment of the jobs in the CIA. Just like my job was to do the same with airplanes, and guns, and submarines and all that. I couldn't tell the Navy why I had that submarine down in Indonesia. No way. So I had to create a story.

Gunn: That's a useful lead; and other leads like that is just exactly what we would like. Now you mentioned that--

Prouty: There's no records of them. See, you do that--that's why I would have to go to Allen Dulles' house and work with him at night. I'm not Allen Dulles' cocktail friend. But for business, I'd have to meet... we wouldn't talk on the phone. He wouldn't call me himself; somebody else would call me... these men are careful; they're professionals. That's where, of course, your role is very difficult, because we intended [that] there'd be no records.

Gunn: Sure. We understand that.

Wray: To your knowledge, is Michael Mitchell still alive?

Prouty: I have no idea. I knew him well professionally, but even then in the last years-- see, it wasn't the job in the JCS to do these assignments; it was a service assignment, so I was one office removed from that. But all those things apply directly to this business of-- I had fewer records in JCS than I had in Air Force by a factor of probably fifty. In the Air Force, I kept track of things, because we were buying U-2's for the CIA; we were buying helicopters for the CIA. So we had to have records of the damn things. Once I got in JCS, I hardly kept any records.

Gunn: Do you have any idea how old Michael Mitchell was, or any way that we could figure out--

Prouty: Well, like myself, he came out of the World War II experience... Colby died at 77; I'm 79;

you know, in that area. I just recognize him as a guy with the same experience, that's all.

Gunn: So, someone probably born between 1915 and 1920? Would that be approximately...

Prouty: Well, I don't think he was younger than I am. I'd say he'd [be] between 75 and 80 if he was living today. Because he came out of OSS-- the World War II experience, I believe. But I only knew him professionally. But he was good. And we had many, many meetings with Larry Houston when we were setting the program up about how we were going to do this. And there are other names like Mike's-- like Mike's boss, and so on, who I just can't mention, who were even better men. Really, it amazes me that, in my way of thinking of the CIA, the strongest man I knew in the CIA... I have never seen his name in a book or newspaper or anything. Never. [I've] Never seen him.

Barger: We could turn the tape off at this point, if you could go...

Prouty: No, I'm not going to say it. No, if it... if the system has kept him quiet all this time, I'm not going to change the record. It's too important.

Gunn: I know who Larry Houston was; what role did he play specifically, or why should we be looking for his records?

Prouty: Houston? He was the general counsel.

Gunn: No, I know that. But in terms of what you were involved with, what specific sorts of records should we be looking for from Larry Houston?

Prouty: Well, my God, the work we did between the Defense Department and the CIA is all a function of irregular activities, which I couldn't do without the general counsel of the Defense Department working with me, and including the comptroller. It all had to be paid for. We had very, very special payment systems. This thing is a program that you don't just whistle up some afternoon; it took, I think, eighteen months to work it up, and we did it with the top comptroller of the Defense Department, and the top general counsel of the Defense Department, and with the equivalents of the CIA. And we got approval from the White House from the National Security Council; which most people don't realize is only four people. They talk about Ollie North and all these other characters [in the] National Security Council, they're just staffers. In fact, they were in my program at one time, when they were kids. See, the true facts of the way

these things run are so different from the facts that are in the record. That's because the cover stories are created. As fast as they're needed, the cover stories are created. [It] has nothing to do with the death of Kennedy. Absolutely nothing. That's what the people that did - that was a coup d'etat. It wasn't a murder. And because it was done, there's been no trials; you can't have a trial; there's nothing ever going to be done about it. I don't see why people don't understand that. Of course, you're on an assigned role; I'm not saying that about you. But that's why two and two never makes four in this business.

Gunn: Now, the other thing I wanted to talk to you about is the differentiation between intelligence activities and covert action. You suggested that the defector program would have been an intelligence activity, not a covert action activity. And I understood you to link-- to suggest that maybe there was a defector program; or if there was a defector program, it'd be part of intelligence. I'd just like to go back and ask: do you know about any defector programs that operated in--

Prouty: No. That's why I say-- I never [had] anything to do with defectors, unless you mean foreign defectors. In that case, I'd send an airplane to pick the poor guy up, because we couldn't put him on TWA or something like that. And you know those programs-- BLACK FLIGHT and PAPER CLIP; I mean, that was all set up by the government. I had nothing to do with that, see, because that's a different section. We would... in fact, that's another thing that isn't ever done... You can't fly an airplane in and out of the United States without us knowing it. We've got a hell of a good air defense system. And so, I would have to call Colorado Springs, and say, "Tonight, I'm flying a plane in from Weisbaden, Germany that will land at Andrews Field, and it's not a commercial flight-- don't touch it; you know, leave it alone. And I had people out there trained, and they'd listen to me. They'd do it. And you read the headline in the Post yesterday, about planes coming in from the Caribbean with drugs; all that does is certify that the US government is permitting it. It's crazy to have things happening like that, but that's the facts of life. We know every-- I was with Air Defense Command [the] first year it opened; we were checking 47,000 airplanes a day *then*. No airplane gets through the sky. We had... the time Dick Helms asked me to bring this hit team into Cuba to shoot Castro... I flew a little airplane, a little single engine job, over the wave tops into Cuba-- well, I sent a pilot to do it. But I still had to call the Air Defense Command and say, "don't do anything about that." And they didn't. Otherwise, they'd have stopped it. And if they don't stop it, and it's a boat coming in, the Atlantic Sea Frontier does it-- the boys at Norfolk. They know all the boats coming in. So all this business about defectors coming and going and all that stuff is not realistic. The realistic jobs are done professionally. When you talking

[sic] about Oswald and the U-2 program... hell, the U-2 pilots were Air Force pilots. CIA doesn't have any pilots. So we had to-- in order to keep them in the CIA business, we had to sheep-dip them, so the Air Force would think they had a job; and then take the certain pilots from the units, pick out the guys that were sheep-dipped-- but we'd leave them in the units, so everybody else wouldn't know what they were doing. They'd look like regular pilots. It's very careful work [that's] done on this stuff. It's not just done...and it has to be done accurately, or the whole damn program comes down. Powers was flying for the CIA, but he was flying missions for the CIA. He was an Air Force pilot. They didn't have any airplanes.

Gunn: So, did you ever hear about any kinds of defector programs? I'm assuming from what you said that you haven't.

Prouty: No. Like I said, I had nothing to do with defector programs; unless, as I told you, some foreign defector-- are you talking about foreign defectors or US defectors?

Gunn: US defectors going to--

Prouty: I'd never hear about that. I'm talking about foreign defectors. I'd send an airplane to pick them up. But I never... had nothing to do with US... defectors: [as in] people that would be sent somewhere to do a job and come back--

Gunn: Yes.

Prouty: --Or do you mean a guy leaving the country?

Gunn: Sent somewhere on a mission, with a cover that they are a defector.

Prouty: That's intelligence. We didn't have nothing to do with it [sic].

Gunn: Okay. Now, what you said explicitly towards the end-- and what you said implicitly earlier, or I thought implicitly earlier-- was that there was a coup d'etat. When did you first come to suspect that there was a coup d'etat?

Prouty: When I see things happen that one person couldn't do.

Gunn: Is this as early as November 1963? Did you think that there was--

Prouty: Well, by definition, if it's two, it's a conspiracy, right? Two or more?

Gunn: That's right.

Prouty: Well, there's a conspiracy just in the few lines in that paper, and the picture. Just among other things.

Gunn: So, did you come to that conclusion in November of '63, or was that subsequently?

Prouty: Within fifteen minutes of reading that paper. I mean, it's just as clear on the front page of that paper as anything I've ever read.

Gunn: After coming to that conclusion, did you do anything about it, in terms of saying anything to anybody; saying, "I think there's a coup d'etat," to your commanding officer?

Prouty: I've stated it conversationally, because I have never accepted any of the stories I've ever heard. Some guy writes a book, Case Closed; I just feel sorry for the guy. I'd send him to the hospital... It's like arithmetic-- it either adds up or it doesn't. I mean, you can't tell me that two and three makes seven. There's just no way. I mean, it's not a... it's so strange to see things that absolutely cannot be true fostered for so long by so many people, that you have to believe there's something else behind it that has a hell of a lot more power than a young man named Oswald. It's just absolutely unbelievable.

Gunn: In 1963 or '64, did you send out any memoranda on this, or say something to anybody--

Prouty: It was not my business. I had nothing to do with it. The first time I ever wrote about the subject was after reading somebody's book, about thirty-- in '65 or '68; somewhere back in there. I was just so discouraged with the book... I don't know, some guy who wrote a book... Manchester or somebody; anyway...

Gunn: The Death of A President?

Prouty: I just felt sorry for him. So I wrote books and stuff myself. And then... you just can't explain something when day after day, the numbers don't add up. And it's just as clear as that, see? When people start talking to me about Oswald, pro or con, I just figure they went to the wrong ballpark. Because how else could it be true? J.

Edgar Hoover said to LBJ-- his neighbor for nineteen years in Washington; a personal friend-- on the first day he met him after LBJ had become President, and they had a chance to talk to each other in the White House... Johnson said, "How many bullets were fired?" Hoover said, "Three, and we've got them, and we've got the casings that they were fired from." The story's over right there. Because there were at least four bullets fired. And if you believe the papers, there were bursts of gunfire. It couldn't have been less than four bullets. Kennedy had a hole in the back of his coat, down here in the clavicle. He had a [his] head knocked off-- that's two. Connally got hit-- that's three. And the bystander got hit-- that's four. Reduce that back to three again, and your name's Arlen Specter. I mean, it's ridiculous. Totally ridiculous. And that's J. Edgar Hoover talking to the President of the United States. They both knew what... what the problem was. My wife's best friend was secretary to Lyndon Johnson for a while; [she] knew him quite well. He didn't say that because he believed it. He had nothing else he could say... This is a different case than most people think it is.

Wray: Well, we'd like to thank you for taking the time to come in today and talk to us. I think that your comments certainly been helpful, and also the documents that you provided. *(To Barger)* Did we make copies of these?

Barger: We will.

Gunn: He said we can have these.

Prouty: Oh, yes. I had copies made before I brought them in. They're my... well, they're my orders. But the other one there is representative of things... You asked about stuff I use. I don't know if any of you are aware of that. That is a translation of-- I don't know how they got the approval to do it-- of NSAM-55; the summary of the Bay of Pigs report. There's material in here that has a bearing on everything we've been talking about. That was super Top Secret in the day that it was written. It was written by the Cuban Study Group after the Bay of Pigs. The day after the Bay of Pigs thing, Kennedy created this unit-- a very important unit. Allen Dulles, Admiral Arleigh Burke, General Maxwell Taylor, and Bobby Kennedy; and those four guys sat in a room in the JCS section of the Pentagon from April 18th-- 19th, something like that-- until June. And you can't imagine... we used to-- we knew where they were-- and we used to call them "four scorpions in a bottle," [and we] wondered if any of them would come out alive, with Bobby in there. And every word of what went of in those rooms... with the witnesses they had, are-- *(opening the book in front of him)* Oh! Just happened to open the page; General Lansdale-- he was in there. The most

important one is back here-- General Walter Bedell Smith. But this is Top Secret stuff. I don't know how the publisher got it, but he got it years later. But what it does is show you how this sort of thing is worked, and how it operates, and what's actual and what isn't. And... the authority that Kennedy was applying over an in-being system [sic]. He was going to get the-- as he said in so many words-- get the CIA out of clandestine activity, and put it under the Joint Chiefs of Staff; in so many words. That was published under NSAM 55, 56 and 57. No one ever goes back to this. I don't know why. Because all he was saying is, "after I get re-elected, that's going to change."

Barger: Before you put that away, sir, could you tell me the publisher, so that I can try and--

Prouty: Pardon?

Barger: The publisher of the book? So that I can try and--

Prouty: Sure. It's... University Publications of America. And at the time of publication, I think they were right up here in Maryland somewhere... Frederick, Maryland. It doesn't give a street, but you certainly can find it. It was published in '81, that's not too far back. But this type of thinking is what got Kennedy in trouble; where he was saying, "I'm going to do this," and put it in Top Secret papers; and do it with Allen Dulles and Arleigh Burke and Maxwell Taylor in the room. See, that was a consensual verdict when they got done. And I don't know why more people don't realize that that kind of a document is worth a hundred times [more than] all the other stuff stacked up, because it's the true, accurate words of the President, with his closest advisors. And then when you add men like Walter Bedell Smith-- who had been the previous DCI, and had been ambassador to Moscow for years, and who had been Eisenhower's chief of staff for years; there was no more experienced man in the country-- sitting there, saying, "We've got to take it away from the CIA and put it in the military," that's what made people mad at him. And then Eisenhower makes his speech about the military industrial complex. There's your story.

Gunn: Well, thank you very much for coming in. We appreciate it.

Barger: Yes, thank you.

