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MACSOG DOCUMENTATION STUDY (U)

ANNEX U

TO

APPENDIX B

COMMENTS BY THESE INTERVIEWEES

ON COUNTERPART RELATIONSHIPS -

THE STRATEGIC TECHNICAL DIRECTORATE

Declassified by SECRET 3/15/94

(In Chronological Order)

Name	Association with MACSOG	Tab
Col. Clyde R. Russell, USA	Chief, MACSOG Jan. 1964 - June 1965	A
Col. John J. Windsor, USMC	Chief, MACSOG Operations June 1965 - June 1966	B
Lt. Col. Vincent W. Lang, USA	Chief, Plans & Senior Advisor Camp Long Thanh December 1965 - November 1966	C
Col. John K. Singlaub, USA	Chief, MACSOG May 1966 - August 1968	D
Col. Dennis P. Casey, USMC	Chief, Operations Branch, MACSOG June 1966 - May 1967	E
Lt. Col. Jonathan D. Carney, USA	Deputy Director, Operations-35 (SHINING BRASS/PRAIRIE FIRE, DANIEL BOONE/SALEM HOUSE, IGLOO WHITE August 1966 - July 1967	F
Major George W. Gaspard, USA	Operations Officer (STRATA Operations) Operations-34, MACSOG December 1967 - September 1968	G
Lt. Col. Jefferson Seay, III, USA	Liaison Officer, MACSOG to the Strategic Technical Directorate Jan 1968 - Sep 1968	H
Col Stephen E. Cavanaugh, USA	Chief, MACSOG Aug 1968 - to date: Jul 1969	I

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MORI DocID. 570366

COMMENTS ON COUNTERPART RELATIONSHIPS - THE STD

BY

COLONEL CLYDE R. RUSSELL, USA

. . . . . .

Ho was a fairly weak man, militarily, in my opinion. He was not a disciplinarian. An ex-banker, he was politically acceptable and went through every coup. This is quite something and I felt sorry for the guy when we'd get his government moving in our direction and a month later he had to do it again and start from scratch and then again get his government to move in our direction. We went through this some four or five times while I was over there. He was able to maneuver and do this successfully. Due to his weakness in character, and that may not be the right description of the man, I found that I could get him to do anything that the United States desired they do. Had he been strong willed, I'm sure he would not have backed down on Vang Pao and he would not have done the operations as we saw them. There were times when he asked us to slow down with the maritime people because they had minor little gripes, we were working them too hard, etc. By telling him no, we had to go, go, go, he would go. There were times when he wanted to disband the airborne effort because he felt that we couldn't put those people in the north but, again, because he was weak and we could put the pressure on him, he would agree and we'd go back with an intensified training program with the airborne crews and get them back in shape. I'm quite convinced that you don't want the strongest man in the country to represent you at parallel headquarters level. You want strong lieutenants and captain trainees and definitely strong operators, but this man does not have to be the strongest man in the country.*

* (TS) Interview by Colonel Clyde R. Russell, USA, pp. 6-7.

MORI DocID: 570366

COMMENTS ON COUNTERPART RELATIONSHIPS - THE STD

BY

COLONEL JOHN J. WINDSOR, USMC

. . . . . .

. . . Our relationship overall could not have been better as far as I can see in all the time I was there. My principal counterpart relationship was with Colonel Ho, the South Vietnamese counterpart of Colonel Blackburn. Colonel Ho was a member of the STS in Saigon. Under MAROPS in Danang, it was Major Bhin. Both of them were very cooperative. We had actually no problems at all. There is one example I can give of that As you know, we lost quite a few agents (Vietnamese people) in the North and it had been our policy to continue to pay them as though they were not dead. After being there six or eight months, we had quite a large number of relatives of these folks whom we were paying. Colonel Blackburn and I discussed it. His desire was that these relatives should be paid the death allowance and that the agents' monthly pay to their relatives back in Saigon should be discontinued. Of course, this was sort of a touchy subject and I went to Colonel Ho and explained it to him. First, I asked him how many agents were in this category. We knew the answer before we asked the question. Ho sent out and got advice from his staff. When I told him what we wanted to do, they cooperated to the fullest. We reduced the number of dead gradually by declaring so many of them dead each month until we had written them all off (paid them) and removed them from the monthly payrolls. We did this to reduce any possible criticism as to where this money might be going. Colonel Ho's first reaction was that we didn't want the Vietnamese agents and their relatives to know that we had lost so many. That was the reason he hadn't done it himself.

MORI DocID. 570366

He nevertheless agreed to our proposal. As to MAROPS, we had a few minor disciplinary cases where one of the Vietnamese boat captains ran a boat on the rocks, and then showed poor judgment. By trying to get it off, he ran another boat on the rocks. We suggested that this captain be punished by being relieved of command. There was no question about it at all; the Vietnamese relieved him. In things of that nature, they were very cooperative. I don't think that I have any complaints at all. The same thing pertains to the training at our base camp at Long Thanh near Saigon and the agent school up North. What we suggested, they were very cooperative and always readily went along with us.*

. . . . . .

. . . I heard a lot of criticism of Colonel Ho and Major Bhin and other Vietnamese; however, they had a different outlook on life. They frequently pointed out, "You folks are here for one year and then you're gone to the U.S.A., but we have been fighting this war for 15 years and we don't know how much longer we are going to be fighting it after you leave here following your one year tour." They just have a different outlook and I don't feel that they are incompetent necessarily or incapable of performing their duties. What I am saying is that they are not as actively ambitious and energetic as Americans, but I felt that, in general, they were capable.**

* (TS) Interview by Colonel John J. Windsor, USMC, pp. 6-7.
** Ibid., p. 8.

MORI DocID: 570366

TOP SECRET

COMMENTS ON COUNTERPART RELATIONSHIPS - THE STD

BY

LT. COLONEL VINCENT W. LANG, USA

. . . . . .

In the establishment of a similar training camp in the future, minimize host country participation as much as possible. By that I mean from a control viewpoint. If you are going to use indigenous teams, fine, but keep the host country's people out of the entire program just as far as you can. Get away from built up areas. Long Thanh was entirely too close to Long Binh. There were too many US forces in that area, and it was too easy to get to from Saigon. It just wasn't isolated enough. If you couldn't absolutely do without a great deal of host country participation in the command and control element, then at least establish some sort of a joint command and control system with a US man as the head. This counterpart system, in my opinion, is totally inadequate.*

* (T8) Interview by Lt. Colonel Vincent W. Lang, USA, p. 3.

MORI DocID: 570366

TOP SECRET

COMMENTS ON COUNTERPART RELATIONSHIPS - THE STD

BY

COLONEL JOHN K. SINGLAUB, USA

. . . . . .

. . . It was my impression that the American and Vietnamese were attempting to do the same thing but that their success was limited by their physical separation and their inability to closely tie together all of the details associated with any specific mission. The efforts to develop this greater integration of US and Vietnamese efforts was the establishment of the colocated facility for the SOG and the STD case officers. For this purpose, we eventually acquired a compound and established this colocated facility under the cover of the AG Joint Translation Center. This was strictly a cover to explain why both US and Vietnamese personnel were entering this secure compound.*

. . . . . .

. . . a few words about the personnel who worked in the STS (later STD) counterpart organization to SOG. One of the greatest assets that these senior people had was their apolitical nature. Colonel Ho and most of his senior personnel had managed to retain an aloofness from any single political party or any single group of military officers so that they survived the various coups that took place in South Vietnam. There are those who have concluded that these personnel were of such low caliber that they could not have become a threat to any military grouping trying to rule South Vietnam; undoubtedly, this applies in some cases. I believe, however, that the

* (TS) Interview by Colonel John K. Singlaub, USA, p. 4.

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Tab D to
Annex U to
Appendix B

TOP SECRET

TOP SECRET

majority of them were patriotic in the best meaning of that word, as the standards of US or western civilization means patriotic. They believed in their country and were trying to do a job to bring pressure against the enemy. They were basically ani-communist and although it is possible that they were penetrated by a communist agent or communist sympathizer (in fact, I think it is quite probable that they were), the bulk of their efforts were well directed. Their great limitation was the fact that they did not have much experience in this field before they were assigned to the organization. When

[redacted] (b)(1) (b)(3)

[redacted] But, as the quality of the US personnel dropped with the assignment of military personnel, it was no longer possible to provide the needed detailed training and advice to the Vietnamese.*

. . . The official relationship should have been that of an advisor to his advisee. In actual practice, we functioned as the commanders of two joint military organizations and coordinated our activities to make sure that we were accomplishing our mutual mission with the greatest efficiency. This may seem to be a small distinction to make but the fact is that I seldom interfered in his internal disciplinary problems. I seldom seriously questioned expenditures. On operational matters, however, we did have conferences which in all cases

* Ibid., p. 27.

MORI DocID: 570366

had to result in a complete meeting of the minds on what type of operation we were going to conduct, where we would conduct it, and how we would do the recruiting. These operational matters formed the primary subject of our many conferences. On the hour-to-hour, day-to-day activities, before the establishment of the colocated facility, which I have mentioned previously, the individual case officers on the American side would travel in an unmarked vehicle (preferably a civilian vehicle) to the STD compound for meetings with the Vietnamese case officer. I maintained a major or lieutenant colonel as my personal liaison officer to Colonel Ho's office and this officer maintained an office immediately adjacent to the office of Colonel Ho. This provided me with a continuous report on what was going on within STD that Colonel Ho might not have ordinarily thought significant enough to inform me about. My liaison officer would report this in an informal way -- what was going on, what their current thinking was, what the current problems were, and quite often would bring requests for assistance, requests for meetings for planning future activities and, in many cases, he would actually represent me at some of these meetings or would carry my point of view to Colonel Ho rather than having me make the trip over there. You can appreciate that very little could be done by telephone; not that we didn't have good telephone communications, but the nature of the activities we were involved in required that we keep telephone conversations to the minimum.*

I made it a point to invite Colonel Ho to accompany me in my aircraft whenever I made visits up country, unless they were for a pure US disciplinary-type problem or something that was purely a US matter rather than an operational matter. Colonel Ho

* Ibid., pp. 27-28.

MORI DocID. 570366

would go with me and we would visit sometimes those activities that he did not have direct supervision over, i.e., the SHINING BRASS or PRAIRIE FIRE operations operations that were really under the supervision of Colonel Ho Tieu.*

Toward the end of my tour (for about the last year of it), I suddenly realized that a lot of activities were going on and I was pretty well informed on the activities that STD was involved in because of my liaison officer but found that Colonel Ho was not as well informed on these activities; so, I instituted a practice of having the briefing that I present each Monday morning to General Westmoreland or General Abrams delivered again to Colonel Ho in his office. This was done to give Colonel Ho an idea of the detail in which we discussed our activities to General Westmoreland. I would have the briefing officer fill in Colonel Ho on the types of questions that General Westmoreland would ask and this gave Colonel Ho a much better appreciation of the magnitude of our operations than he had had before. Also, it gave him a psychological boost for making him feel that he was completely informed on the operation and that there was no effort on our part to conceal anything from him. I noted an increase in his frankness in discussions subsequent to this briefing schedule and I think it was a worthwhile expenditure of the briefing officer's efforts. As a matter of fact, the briefer was the liaison officer. One of the additional duties that I gave the liaison officer was of the additional duties that I gave the liaison officer was to prepare this briefing. I did this to make sure that he, as the liaison officer, was fully informed on what was going on. This made him more effective as my liaison to Colonel Ho and

* Ibid., p. 28.

TOP SECRET

then it worked out quite well when I made the decision to have that same briefing presented to Colonel Ho because the officer involved was known to Colonel Ho and it was a useful activity.*

Part of our relationship was complicated by the fact that I had the feeling on several occasions that the STD organization had been penetrated in some way. The evidence for this was the way in which information concerning one of the doubled teams came to light. I forget the specific circumstances now, but in analyzing why the enemy announced the fact that a team had been captured some four years previously, I concluded that it was because the enemy at that point knew that we knew that the operation was doubled. The only way that could have come about was by coincidence, which I felt unlikely, or having someone in Colonel Ho's organization who had transmitted to the enemy the fact that we knew that this particular team was doubled.**

We discovered this particular team, the fact that it was doubled, as the result of the interrogation of a prisoner captured in South Vietnam who previously had been a guard in North Vietnam in a facility to which this team was taken after they had been apprehended by the security forces. In the debriefing of this prisoner in the routine way in one of the prison camps, this fact came out that we had seen X number of individuals whose names he happened to remember, and the names were close enough to the actual names of one of our teams that we were able to be certain that the team was doubled and knew the circumstances and the exact time when it had been captured.**

It was only a short time after this information had been brought to our attention that the enemy, for what appeared to be no apparent reason, announced that this team had been

* Ibid., pp. 28-29.
** Ibid., p. 29

MORI DocID: 570366

captured on such a date, such a place; they neglected to make any reference to the year, the fact that it had been captured four years earlier was not announced or discussed in the big ballyhoo-type announcement made by the North Vietnamese security forces. They made propaganda out of this at that time. These circumstances suggested to me that the enemy had a source of information inside Colonel Ho's organization. I believe that when I presented this evidence to him, he concluded that that was possible, that there was a leak someplace.*

I mentioned the details of this one security case to indicate that we had some serious problems in dealing with Colonel Ho, but all I could do was to bring it to his attention and request that he make additional detailed checks and try to figure out within his organization where the leak might be taking place.**

In the conduct of our operation over the several years, we had no clear-cut evidence that any of the teams had been compromised before they were committed. I say no clear-cut evidence because we searched for this and could not find it, although there were many instances in which we had a very deep suspicion that the enemy knew of the arrival of a team before the team got into the area. Security appeared to be too good to be true. Again, I say we could not prove this. Colonel Ho was reluctant to admit it on this type of evidence, but in my mind this could explain the lack of success on several of our operations, especially in the early days.**

I should point out in discussing this problem of my relationship with Colonel Ho, the STD Commander, that Colonel Ho is a very cool individual in terms of his personality. Many of the

* Ibid., p. 29.
** Ibid., p. 30.

MORI DocID 570366

officers that have attempted to deal with him have described him simply as a cold fish. I must admit that this is basically true and perhaps is one of the reasons why he has survived for so long. He is so non-controversial, with no positive position on any subject, that he has survived through the years the many coups which have eliminated other parts of the military establishment.*

While I found Colonel Ho to be rather cool in terms of personality, I found that he was just shy and that after many months we seemed to develop a personal friendliness. I was taken into his home on many occasions and got to know his wife and children. I made an effort to bring him and his wife small gifts from the States which he knew were from me and not from the government and were, therefore, more appreciated. I think it is important for anyone who is in this type of organization to develop this kind of personal relationship in-order for the mutual respect be developed. Respect forms the basis of solid decision-making in the future, because you know that it is based on the best information available rather than on half-truths or some ulterior motive on the part of one party. This has no place in a SOG organization, where you must bring to bear the best brain-power available and it must be in an atmosphere of complete integrity and honesty.*

Now I will say a word about where the STD fits into the command structure of the Vietnamese side. The STD originally was a service, it was called the Strategic Technical Service, and it later was changed to Strategic Technical Directorate. It was a Directorate of the Joint General Staff. Colonel Ho reported directly to General Cao Van Vien who was the chairman

* Ibid., p. 30.

MORI DocID: 570366

of the Joint General Staff. He occasionally would get decisions from the Chief of Staff of the Joint General Staff, but he made periodic reports to Cao Van Vien in the same way I made weekly reports to General Westmoreland. Quite often, on sensitive matters, I would deal with General Cao Van Vien directly. Sometimes I would deal with General Ho and, on many occasions when the matter related to border crossings, with Colonel Ho Tieu. I had a very warm personal working relationship with General Vien and had the impression that he trusted me and this was a major factor in getting things done in the Vietnamese environment. General Vien definitely knew the close personal relationship between General Westmoreland and myself, and this worked to the advantage of SOG.*

* Ibid., p. 31.

MORI DocID. 570366

COMMENTS ON COUNTERPART RELATIONSHIPS - THE STD

BY

COLONEL DENNIS P. CASEY, USMC

. . . . . .

. . . As regards to relationships with our counterpart, in my dealings with Colonel Ho, who was head of the STS, the relationship was very pleasant and cordial. However, anything that we were trying to sell to Colonel Ho with regards to the participation of the VNAF pilots or other Vietnamese personnel was difficult. You could talk to him and he was very pleasant but results were never forthcoming. That is, results the way you wanted them to turn out. Nothing ever happened.*

. . . . . .

. . . I have no positive evidence to prove that the STS had been penetrated. However, in my opinion, STS had been penetrated. I base this on the fact that in all of our airborne operations none were ever successful as far as getting the people back. Many of the teams were lost almost immediately upon being inserted. Things of this nature kind of lead you to believe that the North Vietnamese knew where the team was being landed and when they were coming.*

* (T8) Interview by Colonel Dennis P. Casey, USMC, p. 2.

MORI DocID: 570366

COMMENTS ON COUNTERPART RELATIONSHIPS - THE STD

BY

LT. COLONEL JONATHON D. CARNEY, USA

. . . . . .

On the Vietnamese side, there was continuity and this may have also been one of our problems. The people in SOG, myself included, were always fearful that we had been penetrated by the Viet Cong or by North Vietnam and that someone in the South Vietnamese STD was the real reason for the continuing string of failures in our attempted operations in North Vietnam. I know that some Vietnamese officers, enlisted men, and clericals were involved in the program [redacted] They were uniquely positioned and the situation was unique in that, if there had been a penetration, it was complete in the sense that every operation and every aspect of every operation was single thread running through that group of Vietnamese nationals. . . .*

(b)(1)
(b)(3)

* (TS) Interview by LTC Jonathon D. Carney, USA, p. 10.

MORI DocID. 570366

COMMENTS ON COUNTERPART RELATIONSHIPS - THE STD

BY

MAJOR GEORGE W. GASPARD, USA

. . . . . .

As the recruiting problem was somewhat resolved when we brought the ethnic Cambodians into the program, we did have a counterpart relationship problem, not so much at my level but at the SOG command level. It was the same old problem that the Strategic Technical Directorate, our counterpart organization, did not want to take responsibility for ID cards for these personnel. It was a very simple problem, but it's one that remained and manifested itself throughout the whole STRATA program. These people were with us but were not entitled to a legal identification.*

* (TS) Interview by Major George W. Gaspard, USA, p. 4.

MORI DocID. 570366

COMMENTS ON COUNTERPART RELATIONSHIPS - THE STD

BY

LT. COLONEL JEFFERSON SEAY, III, USA

. . . . As the Liaison Officer, I represented Chief, SOG, at the headquarters of the Strategic Technical Directorate (STD) which was the counterpart organization of SOG. I dealt primarily with Colonel Ho who was Colonel Singlaub's counterpart at that time. On a daily basis, I attended the SOG staff meeting at 0800 each morning. At approximately 0900, I departed SOG and traveled to the STD in Cholon. Upon arrival, I would check in with the administrative assistant of Colonel Ho to see if Colonel Ho had any information for me to relay to Colonel Singlaub or I would take information from Chief, SOG, and go in and have an interview or an audience with Colonel Ho. In addition to these duties, I assisted all of the Vietnamese staff of the STD in such things as processing the TOE on the US side, obtaining equipment for them, taking care of routine personnel actions and acting as a liaison between each of the SOG staff members and their Vietnamese counterparts.*

. . . . . .

. . . . SOG and STD were located approximately 10 miles apart, STD being in the metropolitan area of Saigon-Cholon. It took me approximately 15 minutes to drive in a no-traffic condition and close to an hour in a peak-traffic condition. A good portion of my time was wasted traveling to and from STD. I routinely made one trip each morning and one trip each afternoon which left very little time to actually accomplish my job. . . . in my opinion, it would have been much better if the two organizations had been colocated. I believe this for several reasons. I performed liaison duties as part of my job for not only Chief, SOG but for such people as SOG Logistics, the

* (TS) Interview by Colonel Jefferson Seay, III, USA, p. 1.

MORI DocID: 570366

personnel Office, the Finance Office, etc. This liaison consisted of either taking information verbally back and forth or carrying documents. The amount of liaison or coordination made by the US staff officers with their Vietnamese counterparts largely depended on the personality of the US and the Vietnamese officer. Because of location, there was a tendency on the US side not to make many coordination trips to STD to discuss mutual problems. This was not true throughout. Some US staff officers made it a point to visit their counterparts on a routine basis. A good example of this: a Deputy Chief, SOG, Colonel Gleason, had a policy of either eating lunch or making a visit with Colonel Ho once a week. Colonel Singlaub probably averaged the same number of trips. In addition, Colonel Gleason informed his staff that he wanted more coordination and liaison with STD from each of the staff members. However, this was the type of thing that soon fell by the wayside. The net result was the Vietnamese had a feeling that they were left out or not included. This, in itself, is not particularly bad for the SOG mission; however, the more they felt included the better job they did and the more enthusiasm they exhibited in all of the SOG programs. In just about all cases, the participation and cooperation are required for programs to be effective.*

. . . . . .

. . . . I'll comment on the fact that MACSOG ran all operations. By and large, this is a true statement and is primarily due to the fact that logistics support and the combat support such as aircraft, weapons, and training facilities were provided by the US side. This, in itself, I don't think would cause any hard feelings between the Vietnamese and the Americans. I think generally, and this was expressed to me by several Vietnamese staff officers on the STD staff, that their desire

* Ibid., pp. 1-2.

* Ibid., pp. 1-2.

MORI DocID. 570366

was to be included in the program. To give one concrete example one particular major, involved in the Borden project, told me that he was very, very discouraged, I asked him why and he said that he was not truly involved in the project and they only use him as a translater, that he was a major in the Armed Forces, that he listened to an American officer and our NCO talk and, that then he translated to the agent students. He said he would feel better if he was included as part of the team, in the training of an agent or agent team. In other words, the Vietnamese don't really demand control or operational control, but just want to be a part of the whole project and not be treated as an outsider or someone hired just to do the translation.*

. . . . . .

. . . . I was appointed as the weekly SOG briefer. COMUSMACV was given a 30-minute briefing on SOG activities for the week. This normally was given on either Sunday morning or Monday morning. The briefing contained all of the operational missions conducted by SOG that previous period and the plans for the following week. At this briefing, in addition to COMUSMACV and Deputy COMUSMACV, a J-2 representative, J-3, 7th Air Force, COC and Chief, SOG, attended. The overall security classification of the briefing was TOP SECRET LIMDIS. Upon completion of the briefing of COMUSMACV, I was directed by the Chief, SOG each week to brief Colonel Ho. I gave Colonel Ho exactly the same briefing that had been given to General Westmoreland and later General Abrams with the one exception of stripping out any in-house problems such as negotiations with Vientiane about launching from Nahon Phanom and matters such as this. However, all the rest of the briefing, the operational portion, was presented to Colonel Ho, in exactly the same manner as it was presented to COMUSMACV.**

* Ibid., p. 2.
** Ibid., pp. 6-7.

the same manner as it was presented to COMUSMACV.**

MORI DocID: 570366

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. . . . organizationally I do not feel that SOG and STD meshed. Out at the subordinate command level such as the Coastal Security Service, the Liaison Service, there was a good deal of cooperation in working together However, at the highest level (SOG and STD), the organizations themselves did not lend themselves to mesh and their physical separation further complicated this problem. For example, one SOG staff officer might have to deal with three STD staff officers to get one job done. I feel that both organizations should be more or less organized along the same lines. While I am talking about meshing, I would like to add that, in my own opinion, a more efficient operation could be obtained in a combined organization. Initially, I feel that it should be all US-controlled as it is now; however, by working side by side with the Vietnamese counterpart, more and more responsibility could be given this individual and this, in turn, would generate enthusiasm for the program and probably result in a more efficient operation.*

* Ibid., p. 7.

MORI DocID. 570366

TOP SECRET

COMMENTS ON COUNTERPART RELATIONSHIPS - THE STD

BY

COLONEL STEPHEN E. CAVANAUGH, USA

. . . . . .

. . . . I believe that, with some minor modifications, the current STD organization is proper and sound. I consider that STD is perhaps not getting the type of personnel support that it should get from a joint general staff, but that given the nature of the Vietnamese military organization, they are getting about what we could expect. I feel that if there were to be any improvement that the STD officer should be of general grade, thus giving him a greater access to the Joint General Staff and greater support from that staff. A Vietnamese colonel who currently heads up STD just does not pull enough weight to get the type of support he needs to participate in an operation of this kind. I find also that STD and the Vietnamese military are not trained or prepared for the unconventional warfare or covert, clandestine type operations being conducted by SOG and STD, and that there is a real requirement for establishment of a training facility to better prepare the Vietnamese for this type of operation.*

* (TS) Interview by Colonel Stephen E. Cavanaugh, USA, pp. 7-8.