10 July 1970 DRAFT Copy 26

MACSOG DOCUMENTATION STUDY (U)
ANNEX N

to

APPENDIX B

COMMENTS BY THESE INTERVIEWEES

ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

(In Chronological Order)

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

GROUP 1

Name	Association with MACSOG	Tab
LTC Vincent W. Lang, USA	Chief, Plans and Senior Advisor, Camp Long Thanh Dec 1965 - Nov 1966	I
Col Robert C. MacLane, USA	Chief, Airborne Operations Section, MACSOG May 1966 - May 1967	J
Col John K. Singlaub, USA	Chief, MACSOG May 1966 - Aug 1968	K
Col Dennis P. Casey, USMC	Chief, Operations Branch, MACSOG Jun 1966 - May 1967	L
LTC Jonathon D. Carney, USA	Deputy Director, Operations-35 (SHINING BRASS/PRAIRIE FIRE, DANIEL BOONE/SALEM HOUSE, IGLOO WHITE) Aug 1966 - Jul 1967	M
Capt Bruce B. Dunning, USN	Special Operations Division, OSACSA, Staff Officer & Division Chief Aug 1966 - Nov 1969	N
LTC Kenneth W. McNiven, USAF	Assistant Air Operations Officer, MACSOG Sep 1966 - Sep 1967	O
Col Benton M. Austin, USA	Chief, Operations-35 (SHINING BRASS) Chief, MACSOG Operations Sep 1966 - Sep 1967	P
LTC Harold J. Rose, USA	Commander, C&C Detachment North, MACSOG Sep 1966 - Sep 1968	Q
Col Eugene A. Wahl, USAF	Chief, MACSOG Air Operations Section Dec 1966 - May 1967 Deputy Operations Officer Jun 1967 - Dec 1967	R
Col Robert C. Kendrick, USA	Chief, Special Operations Branch, Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations (J-3) Hq PACOM Dec 1966 - to date: Jul 1969	S
Col Robert C. Kingston, USA	Chief, MACSOG Operations-34 Mar 1967 - Aug 1969	T
Col Harold K. Aaron, USA	Commander, 1st SFG Jun 1967 - May 1968 Commander, 5th SFG Jun 1968 - May 1969	U

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

COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

Data

. . . . Once . . . DATA was approved and the military took over, everyone wanted immediate results. The biggest mistake in DATA was the assumption that we would take over assets in being. Data

The Maritime Operation consisted of about six divers. None was ever capable of conducting a successful operation and, in fact, did not conduct a successful operation. The physical setup in Danang was not conducive to good maritime operations and the boats were all SWIFT-type boats which were limited in their capability as to range and carrying capacity, so our maritime operation assets consisted of very little -- Data

Later on I did everything I could to get rid of him.* He was entirely ineffective.

DATA

AirOps were being conducted by Data who, when they transferred over, refused to work for the military. As a result, we never had a successful operation by the Data It was several months later that we were able to train our own and run successful air operations Data

* Ibid., pp. 1-2.

** Ibid., p. 2.

. . . . . .

. . . I . . . stress the importance of weather reporting in this type of operation. We had to know the winds aloft to get the leaflets in on-target. We needed accurate wind information for paratrooper operations. We had to know the tide condition, the wave condition, and the beach conditions. We had to have weather information from below the surface of the water up to 20,000 or 30,000 feet in order to run this operation. I must say, that once we got the satellite weather program over there, we had as fine a weather facility as has ever been my pleasure to work with and it was required, it was used, and was a real asset to the operations. We certainly should make preparations for accurate weather reporting for any operation of this type in the future.*

One of my big disappointments was that we could not start a DELETED in North Vietnam. I feel that had we been able to do that, get it started in 1964, we would be in a much better position at the bargaining table today, and we could have had a counter organization for the NLF. . . . Looking back, had we started in 1964, I am quite confident we could have quite a guerrilla effort going in NVN today and it would have put us in a real good position from a bargaining standpoint. I can't understand why, as a nation, we take such a dim view of guerrilla warfare that we run and yet it's one of the best operations that the communists have been running against us.**

DELETED

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

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

* Ibid., pp. 5-6.

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

Para

I don't think we'd have had a problem recruiting people had we been talking about a guerrilla operation up there where they could have gone up and recruited people and started tearing up the countryside. It's hazy where the restriction came that they could not recruit and we could not

Para

We could never get concurrence for this in-country. Para not concur in this effort, the ambassador was not strongly for it even though the military wanted to push it. While I was there, the paper never got out of country requesting that we start Para effort up there. I do know at one time in one of the briefings that we were told to tell the team that they would not make contact with the populace in the north and at that time it became strictly a psychological operation as well as an intelligence collection operation. You don't collect much intelligence when you're hiding in the hills trying to protect your life. Really, they were running around the woods dropping a few hand-printed leaflets and it was a totally unacceptable operation. We should

* Ibid., pp. 7.

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

When we took over, we found we had a number of so-called agents who were not qualified for anything. They had been on the payroll for a good number of years and they liked the pay, but when we got ready to commit them, they were not eager to go. We did commit most of these people without very high expectations at the time they were launched. We didn't expect them to come up on the air in some instances; we knew they would surrender immediately upon landing, and they did. This is one of the reasons for our lack of success in the first of the airborne operations. Later on, when we got confidence in the teams and, again, I feel this is due to more adequate training and more rugged training to where they were properly trained and properly motivated, then we had less trouble in infiltrating the teams and getting them to want to go. The original assets we had in this effort were not capable of going anywhere and we had to get rid of them; at the same time, we couldn't turn them loose in South Vietnam because they'd been briefed and rebriefed on operations in North Vietnam. Our solution was to put them in the north; many of them were captured.**

I do feel that once you commit teams that you must do everything you can to support them if you're going to have the effort succeed. You can't abandon people because invariably the word gets out and the rest of the teams will know. So, once you make up your mind you're going to quit supporting the people you have in an area, you better cancel the entire operation because its chances of success are real limited.

DATU

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

In the one instance where we had the airplane badly shot up, we were convinced that that team Dale after the shooting, they did come back on the air and said that they had heard the shooting in the distance. It was a mountain or two away. We were never able to really determine whether they were compromised or not. It's one of the real problems of this type of operation to know whether they are or not. living in a highly populated area sent out long, long messages and has been doing this for years -- you worry about his being compromised, whether he is or not; yet, some of the information he sends out is fantastic. The Dale after the first air strikes were raw do-it-again type affairs and you wondered if a man would truly send something like this out, encouraging you to make more air strikes, Dale You can't follow this line of reasoning, and yet the man was extremely enthusiastic when we launched the first air strikes in the north.*

*Ibid., pp. 8.

COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

NAME

There were . . . some questions that were just simply unanswered. We did at times seek answers to these questions, but we did not stir up a great deal of interest in providing us the answers. One of the unanswered questions really was

Para

We made a long, gallant attempt to obtain some answers to this type of policy question and drew almost a complete blank; there did not seem to be anyone really interested in it as a significant question of policy pertaining

Para

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

Para

on the commercial market abroad and no one would have bought it. The plane was clearly identified as a US aircraft. [redacted] For example, there were parts on the aircraft that had serial numbers stamped on them that said the aircraft went through the [redacted] before -- this type of thing. There was some attempt to rectify this. The attempt, however, was far from universal. There were still parts on the aircraft operated by [redacted] were clearly identifiable [redacted] and if they wanted to make a case out of it, they could have certainly proved the airplane was still under [redacted] in view of the unsanitized equipment that was on the aircraft*

. . . . . .

I think there were some problems also with the initial concept concerning the way in which the operation was set up. It was set up using [redacted] with the idea in mind that they would not be attributable to the United States ... there was inconsistency in the sense that while the crews [redacted] everything else connected with the operation was directly attributable to US operations.

[redacted]

. . . . . .

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

With regard to our resupply operations, one of the first problems that we ran into was the teams' locations, i.e., the locations where the teams were dropped or existed in place when we took over the operation. At that time, we assumed the responsibility for resupplying the existing teams and for taking the teams that had been DATA and emplacing them. Most of the drop zones had already been selected. They were simply waiting for suitable weather or for completing the last few moments of training for emplacement. Pete

the location where the teams would be emplaced. A good part of our initial operations then were essentially already cast in concrete. There was really no opportunity for a dramatic shift in the operations. The teams were already in-place and required resupply. A good part of the air operations was concerned exclusively with resupply in the sense that the air operations were so meager that all they were able to do, and they were not able to do this very well, was to attempt to keep up with the resupply problem as opposed to being able

* Ibid., pp. 7-8.

COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

NAME

. . . . . .

. . . one of the main problems was the fact that DATA never did write Data which tasked the components to support the operation. As a result, we were operating from Data which did not provide any clear statement of responsibilities, functions, and missions of the components Data operation. This problem was reflected in the obtaining of personnel, approval of the tables of distribution, budgeting, providing equipment and basic support to aircraft and this type of thing. For example, once the Data had been provided by bailing them to the Data we also provided the necessary maintenance personnel; however, there was no clear understanding as to just whom the maintenance personnel were assigned to, how they were to be controlled, the status of Data these types of things were completely omitted from any real guidance. Thus, the maintenance personnel working on the aircraft had no clear source of spare parts. I feel that had Data tasking the various components and forming a very definite organization for control of the resources necessary for Data would have gotten much better support and, in the long run, would have gotten it faster.*

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

Data pp. 1-2.

as to flying hours required, sortie requirements, this type of thing, upon which the air component that was to provide the aircraft could make any rational determination as to whether this was the real requirement or not. Also, there was no clear statement that the Data in fact, responsible for providing them. In the exchange of message traffic between MACV, CINCPAC and Washington the transfer of six C-123s was approved. There was considerable confusion in SOG as to exactly how they wanted the aircraft configured and what type of equipment they wanted aboard in the way of ECM gear, flight recorders, etc. Saigon had also stated that they wanted the aircraft to be sanitized without any clear definition as to what they meant by sanitizing the airplane. To [redacted]

DATA

[redacted] This, as can be recognized, is an expensive and time consuming process since the airplane has to be completely disassembled and then reassembled. When this was explained to Saigon it was understood then that they did not require this degree of sanitizing.

[redacted]

DATA

Once the decision was made [redacted] Date to provide the [redacted] Data [redacted] responded quite rapidly. Special training schools were established to provide for the operation and maintenance of Data equipment and the personnel were then transferred to Saigon as rapidly as possible without Date

* Ibid., pp. 2-3.

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

[redacted] With regard to deniability by the United States, the C-123 was probably better than the C-130. With regard to the crews for the C-123s, training was provided for by the Air Force following approval of the use of C-123s; here again, the lack of a clear statement of responsibility and mission unnecessarily complicated obtaining approval for the necessary flight training and entry into the United States of the [redacted] crews, the necessary budgeting, and other related problems. To clarify the use of the term "mission" here, I am talking about [redacted] and responsibility to support [redacted] activity. Although the flight crews were trained, this lack of assignment of specific responsibility caused unnecessary delay and an exchange of telegram messages between Saigon, Hawaii, and the States to provide for the coordination required.*

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

* Ibid, pp. 3-4.

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

Another problem area which might be discussed is the haste for the SOG to take over the DATA operations and to become operational. I feel that had the SOG taken a little more time to organize before initiating operations they could have been accomplished much smoother and with greater understanding of what SOG was really trying to do. Also, had some attempt been made to establish the organization before assuming responsibility, the required trained and experienced people could have been assigned to SOG prior to its assumption of responsibilities. To this end, none of the original Air Force personnel, at least, assigned to SOG (PCS to SOG) had any previous background in unconventional warfare operations. [redacted] DATA [redacted] and in coordinating these operations with the Army. In the haste to become operational, the original Air Force personnel were taken from resources available to the DATA I say this not to cast aspersions on the personnel selected because, in

* Ibid., pp. 4.

my mind, they did do an outstanding job of providing support for the air operations conducted by SOG, but they did this without a background of training and experience.*

PATA

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

PATA

However, it must be recognized that implicit in the development of this resistance movement is the moral responsibility to provide for the requisite safety, evacuation, etc., of indigerous personnel in the movement, etc., in case of need. . . .***

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

. . . . . .

Although the current C-130s which have been equipped for [redacted] are an improvement over the earlier C-123s, [redacted] into an enemy country in all types of circumstances, particularly night, bad weather, and mountainous terrain. Improvement is needed in terrain avoidance radar and navigation aids to make this possible.*

* Ibid., pp. 8.

COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

Name

. . . . . .

The cumbersome approval system that was established in the maritime program made it difficult for SOG to take advantage of current operational intelligence.

DATA

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

In addition to being the action officer on DATA Staff for the MAROPS, I was also the mine warfare officer for the 34A program. Admiral Felt devoted a great deal of effort in providing a few elite Vietnamese with

DATA

(as Adm Felt used the term). In conjunction with MACV, we devised a unique plan of sheep dipping American carrier-based aircraft and naval pilots so that they could conduct mining operations in Haiphong and two or three of the smaller ports. The Vietnamese would DATA To train the Vietnamese in this mining operation DATA the

DATA

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

. . . . . .

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

. . . . . The full capability of our UW forces was never used . . . Many excellent proposals were recommended by SOG and supported by DATA submarine underwater SEAL operations in Haiphong and other areas in NVN. During my tour in DATA I can remember no US submarine operations up north.**

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

I witnessed a great deal of friction between SOG and J-2 during the latter part of my tour. . . the J-2 at MACV, was very reluctant to accept intelligence data from SOG sources. As an example, we spent a great deal of time in J-5 assisting SOG in convincing General Westmoreland that their sanctuaries in Cambodia did exist and that the proof was readily available by photographs from some of our ground cross-border operations. . . .*

On completion of my tour in MACV Special Plans, it was my opinion and also the opinion of other officers that were with me in J-5, that the 34A operations became unrealistic once the United States started overt air operations in NVN.

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* Ibid., pp. 5.

COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

Name

. . . The original agreement DATA said that a resistance movement could not be organized without approval of higher authority. SOG needed DATA to really establish and maintain the team operations on a solid basis. What was needed were bases inside Laos contiguous to the NVN border from which the teams could be inserted, reinforced, resupplied and withdrawn as necessary by helicopters or by land means. The concern was that a resistance movement might get out of control and on cessation of hostilities leave the people out on a limb -- the Bolovens operation is a case in point. To be really successful, a more viable national front organization and more flexibility in operational techniques were needed. My idea was to establish cells in the north and develop a system to extract people from the north for external training and reinsertion as well as inserting people from SVN who were Northerners. Indigenous assets from areas contiguous to NVN would have also been useful in such an operation if permission to recruit them could have been obtained. The modus operandi that prevailed amounted to a "one way street" for the team personnel with no hope of return.*

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

pp. 1.

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

. . . . . .

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

. . . . . .

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

COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

Pat

. . . . . .

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

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

With respect to the air operations, I noted that they were categorized as being covert in support of covert ground operations, namely the agent teams in NVN. Looking into this,

DATA

Also, there was a cover story for the aircraft to account for its presence. Neither of these was very plausible. They were rather weak, in my opinion.

DATA

If they went down in North Vietnam, the story that they were to tell was that they had equipment malfunctioning which resulted in a navigational error, or they ran into opposition or bad weather which forced them to land or they were shot down, crashed, etc. This was the cover story. There was some attempt made to back this up with documentation for the crews.

DATA

DATA

They were ostensibly Vietnamese and were documented for this purpose so that if they went downtown, they would have the normal Vietnamese identification of any citizen. The fact that they

DATA

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

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

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

If, in fact, we would have had to conduct a true covert air operation up North by virtue of the fact that there was no other US presence there, then we would have had to develop much better covert assets, in terms of crew documentation, cover for the presence of both the crew and the aircraft and, of course, sanitization of the aircraft. There are several ways this could have been done. The aircraft could have been sanitized; however, this would have required setting up a completely separate supply system for aircraft parts from other than US military sources. Also, we would have had to develop a cover arrangement to account for ownership of the aircraft. This could have been done by one of two ways. The initial directions, by the way, to MACSOG in the joint State-Defense message that authorized its establishment as a military operation PATTY was that the operation not only be deniable by the United States but, if possible, be deniable by the South Vietnamese Government as well. Any cover entity that we created for ownership of the aircraft and the crews would have automatically excluded anything associated with South Vietnam as well as the United States, at least the US Government. I doubt seriously if this type of a cover would

* Ibid., pp. 3-4.

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

. . . . . .

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

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

in that they were foreign manufactured; at least, the NASTYs were. However, the basic beginning was ruined by putting all US equipment, such as radar and communications that were clearly of US military manufacture, on board the boat. In addition, the equipment was manufactured under US military contracts. No attempt was made at the time the boats were configured to put commercial equipment aboard, for example. The crews on the boats were Vietnamese. There were two or three of the boat crews that had come from North Vietnam and that could have been categorized, DATA of course, I think you also could have brought in the other boat crews, even though they were from South Vietnam, because they could have been

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It was just too obvious by virtue of the operations themselves, e.g., the close coordination that was effected between the PLOWMAN operations and the overt US naval presense up there. Several times, when our boats were in trouble, US Navy aircraft off the carriers in the Yankee area came to their assistance gave away our operations. Damaged boats returning home were being picked up and escorted by a US destroyer. This close association between the overt US naval forces and the PLOWMAN forces would just about blow any cover that the latter were really and truly non-US oriented or non-US sponsored. I don't think you can honestly state that the boat operations were truly covert either.*

* Ibid., pp. 5-6.

One other thing that was absolutely necessary, in my opinion, to conduct

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a resistance movement. None of these teams was ever able to survive up there, and all the best indications are that none of them really did survive and remain under our sole control. Most of them we believed were doubled against us. These setbacks can be directly related to the absence of a resistance movement. As a matter of fact, some of the original directives that we had when I got there said that the teams were not even allowed to make contact with the local natives. Later, this was changed slightly; there could be some limited contact made. Everything that the teams used, even food, had to be supplied to them. Although we had the capability to do this and did it, this was not the proper way. If we could have truly given the teams the mission of organizing a resistance movement, it would have done two things for them. First, it would have given them strong motivation, which they lacked, to successfully evade capture, and it would have put them in contact with the local population, which in turn would have allowed them to develop the capability for at least being completely independent of subsistence. They should have been able to live off the land. This way, we would have had a much more viable asset than we ever achieved.*

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

* Ibid., pp. 6-7.

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

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

* Ibid., p. 7.

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

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

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

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

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

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

* Ibid., p. 15.

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

DATA

* Ibid., pp. 15-16.

I don't think it got that big really. I don't have the exact figures but I don't think the total US military ever exceeded 150 to 200 people. I may be wrong on these figures but this is not too many, particularly when they are not involved in the actual operations themselves. The majority of these are in a training, administering, supervisory and planning role. I don't see why we couldn't have done this as a continuing joint effort. The reason for this, and I think we should keep this in mind in the future, is that the expertise that the agency acquires in peacetime in conducting covert operations is lacking in the military. It's not completely lacking because the military has people detailed to duty with the agency and in this way we do acquire some experience in running covert operations. . . .*

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. . . at the time we were conducting covert operations I think we had the best that were available at that time as far as assets were concerned. We were developing the capability to introduce a much more advanced covert air capability into North Vietnam when it was overtaken by events. In other

* Ibid., pp. 16-17.

words, the requirement for a covert air operation over North Vietnam ceased. There was no more requirement for it. We would certainly not commit this costly asset to fulfill a requirement that didn't require a covert capability. As concerns DATA capability, I just have to say that the very nature of a covert operation, if you are going to keep in mind the US Government plausibly deniability aspect, is that any equipment you are going to introduce into that country or which is liable to come into the hands of the enemy, such as an aircraft if it crashes or is shot down, you have to be very careful of. It has to be sanitized to begin with. Most of the time, we would have to use US manufactured equipment. We've either got to do one of two things with it. If we use the most advanced technology, then it is readily recognizable by the fact that we are this far advanced in technology. There are only about two countries in the world having this capability -- the United States and Russia. If the operation is to be covert, we have to keep in mind that whoever is the sponsor of this covert operation, the guy who is going to be accused of running it, has to have access to the equipment, a logical access to it. DATA

DATA We may in any one specific covert operation come up with a specific requirement for something and then we will go all out to get it. We spend all kinds of money, if that's what is needed to get the job done. There are some good examples of this, where we have put out $2 million for one little damned box to do a specific job. The box was sanitized at the time it was being developed so it would be non-attributable. This is the way it is done. There is no way, in my opinion, to set up an R&D program for covert operations, per se, like you do in the various Services for normal

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

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

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

COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

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. . . I would like to point out that during my tour we never lost a C-123 airplane and only occasionally would we get battle damage from small arms fire. Most of this battle damage was on airlift missions rather than on the OPLAN-34A missions. Because of the defense build-up in NVN, other methods of resupply of the already infiltrated teams had to be established. Working with 7th AF we set up the missions whereby teams were resupplied using F-4 aircraft. These F-4 missions were very successful. Our operation included both USAF and VNAF H-34 and A-2 crews. It also included the air assets of 7th AF and US Marines which were blended together, in my opinion, to accomplish a very successful mission in SHINING BRASS, OPLAN 34A and Psy Ops operations.*

In my opinion, the principal problem area in the OPLAN 34A operation was weather insofar as resupply is concerned, which also applied to infiltration operations. Since the only vehicle that we had for operations during my tour for infiltration was the C-123, our infiltration efforts were severely hampered getting into NVN. This was because of the defense in NVN which would not permit overflight of the C-123 to the areas of concern. We would use American helicopters to infiltrate the teams into the northern Laos area which subsequently moved over into NVN. There were AF CH-3s that were flown out of Nakhon Phanom. Again, 7th AF gave us support in every instance which, in my opinion, couldn't have been improved. Although we lost no American helicopters in this OPLAN-34A mission, we did lose one A-1 that was supporting a helicopter operation in northern Laos.**

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* _____ pp. 2-3.

** Ibid., p. 3.

COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

[redacted] NAME

. . . . A number of agent teams were already in place in North Vietnam when I first came to SOG in DATA and subsequently we infiltrated one or two teams and conducted resupply operations to those that were already in place. These teams that we infiltrated were actually reinforcements of existing teams with groups of individuals who had been trained as a team at Camp Long Thanh. There had been little real intelligence and practically no concrete evidence of successful operations on the part of the agent teams that were in place. In reviewing the records of communications that had been sent to the teams, one would immediately see that there was no clear-cut control over the teams. Instructions would be sent to the teams; however, there was no positive way of finding out whether or not they were actually doing what they had been told. In conducting the reinforcements of the in-place teams, it was noted on several occasions that the radio operators would be the individuals who were reported as missing immediately after the reinforcement parachute drop, or who had been injured and killed on the drop. We conducted a study of this particular indication and, though it was inconclusive, there was a possibility that this was an indication that the teams were under enemy control. In trying to follow up on this particular lead, we asked DATA to check on the radio operators' DATA the recording of the individuals' characteristic DATA and we found that somehow or other the records has been confused and we could no longer identify the individual with a particular tape.*

[redacted] DATA

The result of the study on the communications led us to pay much closer detail to the communications we received from the teams as to the safety signals that were recorded within the message. In fact, it was discovered that all of the operations officers were not intimately acquainted with the long-term agent signal plans - the methods that were used by the agent teams in communicating with us. This was soon corrected and each operations officer would check each message that was received for the safety signal, the give away danger signal and the various other indications that the team was under duress.*

On one occasion we did receive a duress signal from one agent team; however, subsequent messages received from the team did not substantiate this at that particular time. It is my understanding that following the end of my tour, a detailed study was conducted DASR and the conclusion was reached that all of the in-place agent teams were controlled by the North Vietnamese authorities. . . .**

We had a special delivery technique that was involved.

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We were quite chagrined to find out at one time that we were sending in beacons that were on a different frequency than the beacon the team had set up on the drop zone, so we had to again establish a standard operating procedure that would insure the team was instructed to either MT

the drop zone.***

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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. . . . The weather also caused us to come up with a system whereby we were ready to run a mission to any one of the agent teams on any particular day. The determining factor would be the weather report on that particular day. The day being the 24-hour period in which the drop would take place; whether it was in the evening or the early morning of the following day. The early morning briefing which would be held about 7:30 would have a very detailed briefing on the weather and normally we would use all the aircraft available if we had more than one or two targets. If the weather permitted getting to two or three teams and we had two or three aircraft, we would hit each of the teams. We had had some very sad experience if, in fact, the reports we received from the teams were true and correct. We had not been able to resupply some teams for period of eight or nine months, even one year. They would run out of food and we actually had reports of agent members dying of starvation. Having realized the dire straits that some of the teams had been put in through lack of resupply, it was our policy that anytime we could get to the team, with a reasonable period of time, say spreading apart the resupplies two or three days, we would resupply them as often as possible so they would have the opportunity to cache the supplies and have some flexibility regardless of the weather.*

The teams would take with them a basic medical kit and most often the medicine would be described as Tablet A, Tablet B, Tablet C - to be used for such and such a symptom. We managed to get the teams through most of their sicknesses though we did have several that died of illness, possibly pneumonia or TB contracted after they had been infiltrated. We had one

* Ibid., pp. 8-9.

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

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

* Ibid., p. 9.

The captured film very clearly showed the US markings on the paracnute weobing and "Made in USA" showed on several other items.*

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

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

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

DIA

We would have a pick-up of traffic incoming from the Embassy twice a day, normally about 0800 hours and then at 1500 or 1600 hours. We rotated this around among the various operations officers and I would say the captains and myself were at STS daily spending anywhere from one to two hours there.***

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

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

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

* Ibid., p. 18.

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

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

* Ibid., pp. 19-20

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

The STRATA teams are entirely Vietnamese or Cambodian. They are not as aggressive as US led teams and they won't seek contact where at times I feel that some of the other reconnaissance teams do seek contact. This is why the STRATA teams, in some cases, have been successful in staying on the ground for longer periods. Some of the reconnaissance teams now go in on a linear reconnaissance, a roadwatch, a river watch; some go in with the objective of taking a prisoner, sometimes interdicting a road. These various missions may be assigned

DATA

f a US led team is used and they see one or two enemy, the team will go ahead and try and get the prisoners or try and set up an ambush to either kill or capture them. I don't feel that the Vietnamese-led teams would be as prone to do this. They are more content to leave things quiet and go ahead and observe.**

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

COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

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

COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

Name

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

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

(EWOT) type missions originally, but the agreement with them had to be that later on we would infiltrate more of their members, hoping to reestablish themselves in their old home areas in North Vietnam and eventually set up autonomous areas.

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DATA it's the Angry ANTRC-109, US Army calls it; it was a very heavy radio and to pack it, it takes several people to carry it in. The small Vietnamese had a hard time lugging the radio with all their equipment. It was a CW radio; there was no voice with it and the power source was a hand-cranked generator. This is a noisy radio. You crank the generator and it tends to compromise the radioman when he is using the radio. Up in North Vietnam, we had no electrical source for the radios to plug in to. We did try to work with a smaller radio. We used several versions of it on a test basis over there. We were trying to get a radio with voice as well as CW. The reason we wanted voice was so we could talk to the aircraft as they flew overhead. To my knowledge,

DATA

over there was wave propagation. We didn't have very long times when we could get radio contact with these teams. Many

* Ibid., pp. 4-5.

times we lost contact with teams for months on end because the team may have come up but DATA couldn't pick them up because of static in the air. Generally, what I would recommend for an agent team is Dart radio that one man could operate. It should have a CW as well as voice capability.*

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When a team was initially infiltrated, they're excited, they have to gather all this heavy equipment and cache it along the line from the landing zone to their safe area. We always tried to put the teams in with enough equipment (supplies, equipment and food) to last them about three months, because resupply up there was rather hard due to the weather and drop zones being compromised. If the team jumped in or was put in by helicopter, it was a long time before they could get ready to talk on the radio. All the teams were afraid; they knew that was the most vulnerable time after they are infiltrated and they had to get away from their drop zone or landing zone. Yet, the powers-that-be always wanted to know in 24 hours or less if the team had reported and how things were going. To me, it is easy to see, lugging all the equipment, caching it, getting out of the initial infiltration area, that they could not work MT to themselves. Later on, when they were in position, the teams reported. They did try to come up on schedule but DATA did not acknowledge. This, I believe, was because of atmospheric conditions. Later on, the arduous living up there sometimes wouldn't permit the team to go out and crank up the radios

* Ibid., pp. 3-4.

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

* Ibid., p. 4.

COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

Name --

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. . . I initiated . . . an evaluation of the FOOTBOY operations to determine those which appeared to have the highest probability of success. This was done with a view toward expanding or improving such operations and eliminating those that were less successful or, in fact, were frustrated by the enemy. Here, I refer specifically to the TIMBERWORK teams which we considered early in the operation to have been doubled by the enemy. While we concluded that the bulk of the teams had been doubled, we decided to use them for some deception operations rather than to eliminate the teams completely. The PLOWMAN operations were expanded. In this area, we introduced a completely new concept of systematically

Data

the purpose of collecting both operational and positive intelligence. Previously, this intelligence had been used internally only, but by this realignment we were able to produce intelligence reports on North Vietnam that turned out to be the only real source of human intelligence coming out of North Vietnam.*

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

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situation which developed when the bombing of North Vietnam started. Prior to that time, the agent teams were action teams, i.e., they had been recruited, and trained as leaders to conduct sabotage and demolition attacks against key targets in North Vietnam. They had been infiltrated into North Vietnam with that mission as their sole reason for being. When the bombing started in North Vietnam, it was no longer necessary to hand place demolitions to knock out bridges or railroads. So, the decision was made to realign the missions assigned to the agent teams. Unfortunately, a decision was made to leave the same individuals in North Vietnam and to convert them to roadwatch and intelligence collection teams. I think that decision was a basic error because the recruitment of the action agent is quite different from that of the intelligence agent. The training is completely different and the method of handling of individuals should be different. The new mission of intelligence collection and the establishment of intelligence collection nets was not feasible with the type of people who had already been infiltrated into North Vietnam.*

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

* Ibid., p. 7.

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

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

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

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

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

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

* Ibid., p. 9.

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

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

* Ibid., pp. 9-10.

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

Another example of a restriction being placed on our use of technology was the denial of an incapacitating weapon to my unit. I requested of every scientist and every member of the Research and Development community, who were cleared for my operations and who were to provide us with new technology, a weapon, comparable to that used for capturing wild animals, that would incapacitate a man without killing him. I never received this weapon, despite my best efforts to get it, because some individuals felt they could not give me a weapon having 90 percent or higher probability that the individual would not die from the shot. This was contrary to what I was interested in. I was interested in keeping him from dying and he was certainly going to die if I didn't have some way of incapacitating him.

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If we would have been able to hit him with an incapacitating agent, his probabilities of survival would have increased regardless of the type used. I again feel some idealism crept into this decision and prevented a covert operation, which is presumably deniable, from using the technological superiority that has made our country great. Again, we are tying our hands unnecessarily.*

* Ibid., pp. 10-11.

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

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

* Ibid., p. 8.