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

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The primary point of coordination for operations into Laos was with the ' DAFT The procedures established were relatively simple. Each month, my Operation-35 (or the PRAIRIE FIRE Operation) would develop its plan for operations into Laos for the next month. This plan would be developed about 15 days before the end of the current month.

DAFT

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

* Ibid., p. 8.

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

DATA

We would, at these meetings, coordinate also any plans for the use of Lao territory either by overflight or by refueling stops for the infiltration or exfiltration of TIMBERWORK teams. These meetings were conducted monthly and were scheduled a month in advance and proved to be very effective in eliminating conflicts and in establishing a good professional working relationship between DATA and SOG on the other.

DATA

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

DATA

* Ibid., p. 20.

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

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

DATA

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

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* Ibid., p. 21

a regional matter, i.e., a matter which transcended the borders of several countries.

DATA

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

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

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

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

* Ibid., pp. 36-37.

. . . . . .

. . . I am . . . convinced that the overall impact of the covert operations was very beneficial to the United States. The possession of this capability creates in the minds of the enemy a strategic threat that he must at all times contend with.*

We do have some measure of its effectiveness by noting and analyzing the comments made by the North Vietnamese in the early days of the Paris meetings in which they wanted to make sure that the covert operations were stopped as well as overt operations. The enemy has, on several occasions, complained bitterly to the International Red Cross that their citizens are being subjected to acts of piracy off the coast of NVN. This, of course, refers to the maritime operations in which

DATA

Having talked to these personnel who were captured in NVN, interrogated in SVN and returned to NVN, some of whom were recaptured several times, believe that our covert operations have troubled the enemy.**

The enemy's detailed interrogation of a returnee is such that the former considers it very, very important to keep these personnel from being captured. He considers it a threat to his security when they return because they have been indoctrinated and treated in a way that might have caused them to lose faith in the regime. . . One of the things that we did, in a subtle way, to the prisoners was to not only cure them of all diseases while they were being held (e.g., skin

* Ibid., pp. 40-41.
** Ibid., p. 41

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

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

* Ibid., p. 41.

are being created on paper only. We [redacted] to the

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This causes them to alert the militia and to spend a great deal of time and energy screening the area looking for the team. They interrogate villagers and reinterrogate them and all those who have been suspected of supporting anti-communist activities in the past are brought in for interrogation. This merely assists in spreading distrust in the minds of the North Vietnamese officials and likewise it harasses the people and causes them to think less kindly toward the regime. The results of this type of activity, again, I say are very difficult to measure but are very real. How they cause the enemy to alter his policies is something that we perhaps may never know.*

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

* Ibid., p. 42.

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

I think it is important that we do not attempt to measure

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

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

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

* Ibid., p. 43.

COMMENTS ON MACSGO'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

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

COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

Name

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

Data

In the last 8-10 months, sufficient intelligence has become available, primarily as a result of in response to SOG generated SICRs, to begin gray operations.

Data on

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When completed and if kept current, these will be invaluable to all future operations into NVN controlled areas.*

* ...orandum for the Re Data "Lessons Learned in SOG (U)," 20 November 1968, p. 4.

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

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SOG's agent operations have been inept and unproductive. I am referring to what is now known as the TIMBERWORK program.

DATA

Only recently have the inadequacies of that approach been recognized; the event which dramatized its failure was the revelation that DATA had been doubled for years.*

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During my tour of duty with SOG, I gained knowledge of extensive duplication of effort in agent operations targetted against North Vietnam with the basic purpose of intelligence collection.

DATA

499th USAF Squadron was attempting operations. The 500th MI Group, Army, assigned to USARPAC under opcon CINCPAC was attempting operations DATA

There was a degree of coordination and

* Ibid., pp. 5-6.

a willingness for cooperation within all these efforts.

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

Another aspect of my observations of agent operations targetted against North Vietnam is that nobody was having any success that merited the efforts expended. There are many valid reasons for lack of success and that is not the main issue. My main conclusion was that we, the United States, were wasting assets by attempting to solve the collection problem by a prolifera-

I emphasize that this belief is pertinent to operations against denied areas such as NVN. The Services should continue to operate within combat areas on low level agent missions such as those in support of JPRC or other tactical operations.*

* Ibid., p. 7.

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As to the major problems that we experienced in the SHINING BRASS type operation, which includes DANIEL BOONE and IGLOO WHITE considerations, . . . . in the first place the American commanders in the field did not know what we were doing or why we were doing it or what the results were or why they should commit their resources to support us. By resources I refer here primarily to helicopters. The situation was extremely difficult in regard to gun ship support which was the only timely support that the troops on the ground could receive when they got in trouble.*

The Air Force responded with what they could with certain exceptions. However, the time response was on the order of three or four-fold as compared to what we could expect from gun ships operating from our bases on the border. . . There was a continuing conflict of interests in helicopter support. One of the mistakes we made, and I participated in making the mistake, was ramming through somehow early in the game an adequate American helicopter unit dedicated to the SHINING BRASS work. We had the 219th Vietnamese H-34 Squadron which did outstanding service; they had no gun ships and they were plagued with maintenance problems which may or may not have been their own fault. There were never adequate dedicated helicopters, gunships to support the program. US Air Force allegedly committed a squadron of HUEYs based at Nha Trang to the support of the program but the support we received from them was minimal; the promises they made in regard to providing gun ship support in terms of numbers of gun ships just never came through. There was more slack in that arming program than anything I've ever experienced.**

* Interview of

** Ibid., pp. 2-3

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

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

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

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

COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

NAME

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

* (TS) Interview of NAME pp. 3-4.

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With respect to intelligence, there is no question that SOG was able to provide a good deal of information that would not otherwise have been available. This is particularly true of information collected in the DATA program where DATA A rather large volume of information was collected from these DATA most of which was low level. Much of it was hard to evaluate. The information really fell into two categories: one was hard type information, i.e., information on coastal defense batteries, coastal defenses communications, etc. This type of information could be evaluated rather well because we were getting similar information from other sources, for instance, photo reconnaissance. The other category of information, produced in large volume by the DATA program, was of the soft type, i.e., information on the attitudes of the North Vietnamese population, on low level economic factors (legal prices, black market prices, availability of goods, etc.), on the morale of the population of the coastal population, on various resistance cells or dissident cells that appeared in certain areas, particularly in the Catholic-controlled areas. This soft information was terribly hard to evaluate because we were not able to monitor the interrogations themselves. We had to take the reports of interrogations given to us by South Vietnamese STD interrogators. We had the feeling back here in Washington for a long time that perhaps these STD interrogators were giving us what they thought we wanted to hear. We felt that some of the information was much too optimistic. Its reference to dissatisfaction with the cadre, the war effort, too, in a good many cases, people blaming

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

It is my feeling, with respect to this DATA intelligence, that we have overlooked a big potenital there and that the soft type of intelligence was never properly exploited back here in Washington. On one occasion, we tried to get both DATA to show some interest in taking the mass of raw information we had available here and have it thoroughly researched by a competent team of behavioral scientists to try and get a picture of what was actually going on among the population of North Vietnam. Both agencies indicated no interest. The only real interest we ever got in looking at this type of information was from the Air Force. This was sometime in 1967 when a team from AFCIN came down to talk to us. We showed them what we had and they evidenced a considerable interest. I thought for a while that this would result in somebody taking all of this information and exploiting it properly but it died on the vine. Interestingly enough, the motivation for the Air Force interest apparently was ~~DATA~~ personal interest in trying to find out what was really happening to the population of North Vietnam. Of course, his motive was rather self-defensive in that it was based on the increasingly strident criticism of the bombing, the type of criticism that implied we were killing all of the civilians in North Vietnam, etc.

* Ibid., pp. 5-6.

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

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

* Ibid., pp. 6-7.

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

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

* Ibid., pp. 7-8.

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

It gradually began to dawn on us that maybe we were barking up the wrong tree. .f

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DATT

At the same time, we had PTFs going up there purportedly owned and operated by the [illegible] and sinking junks all over the place. It gradually got through our thick skulls that this did not make too much sense, that we were not physically capable, with our resources, of interdicting shipping on a large scale -- a large enough sclae to really make a dent. At the same time, by trying to carry out an interdiction mission, we were cutting our own throats insofar as trying to establish a rapport with the coastal population was concerned. This came about largely because the maritime people and the psychological people just didn't talk to each other enough and actually I give most of the credit for straightening this out to [illegible] who went out in early 1967 as chief of the PsyOps Group. We began to realize

* Ibid., pp. 9-10.

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

. . . . . .

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

* Ibid., p. 10.

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

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

* Ibid., p. 26.

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

-- The impacts of the FOOTBOY agent teams and maritime operations were complemented by the impact of psychological operations.

Para

Although we don't have too much readout on it, there were some rather good intelligence reports indicating that DATA credibility remained high for a long, long time. It is probably still high. There were indications that the North Vietnamese were never quite sure who was sponsoring

Para For some time, there were indications that the North Vietnamese, in fact, thought it was a Soviet sponsored

DATA There was one report that even attributed the management DATA to two North Vietnamese military officers who had defected to the Soviet Union. This type of thing obviously has a rather strong effect on the sense of security of the North Vietnamese leadership.**

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

* Ibid., pp. 26-27.
** Ibid., p. 27.

on the thinking of people in North Vietnam. It is true that DATA seemed to be reaching principally the upper strata of the North Vietnamese population. It is not true that only the upper strata has access DATA Virtually every cooperative and every village has DATA available. It appeared to us that many of the poorer people were simply not adapted DATA DATA They didn't DATA frequently to DATA . They didn't give the DATA too much credibility. They weren't interested DATA We had cases, for instance, where it was reported that cooperative managers or cadres in the villages were DATA on their DATA In many cases, however, we found that the villagers, fishermen particularly, simply didn't bother to go in DATA even though they had the opportunity. DATA seemed to hold a greater attraction for them. Most of our DATA DATA came either from cadre who had rallied or from military personnel who DATA surreptitiously on their DATA It was among these strata that we seemed to have the most impact with DATA

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

* Ibid., pp. 27-28.

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

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

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

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

* Ibid., p. 28.

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

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

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

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

* Ibid., pp. 28-30.
** Ibid., p. 30.

only from reconnaissance operations such as SALEM HOUSE but from MT , other and the whole intelligence spectrum. SALEM HOUSE provides a means for MT

Because of the limited mobility of the teams and the limited area they can cover, the information derived is primarily of a tactical reconnaissance nature. Too often in Washington, there is a tendency to look for some very significant strategic intelligence for SALEM HOUSE, and too often there is a failure to recognize that the majority of the intelligence information obtained through SALEM HOUSE is never reported back to Washington. It is perishable tactical information which is disseminated through intelligence channels in South Vietnam to our field commanders there and doesn't ever go any further nor need it go any further. The result is people in Washington tend to look at the program and say, "well, we never see anything significant coming out of it; therefore, it is no good." When you look at it from the standpoint of operational commanders along the DATA border, you get quite a different evaluation. My feeling is that SALEM HOUSE has been well worth the cost. True, there have been some political risks involved. These risks have been increased in a few instances by actions on the part of SALEM HOUSE teams which might have been better controlled but these cases have been relatively few. Overall, the type of MT MT we are getting from SALEM HOUSE fills a void in the intelligence spectrum which cannot be filled in any other way. This being the case, I think the program is not only well worth the cost but probably a good deal more than the cost.*

* Ibid., pp. 30-31

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One practical side issue pertaining to intelligence is that, in order to get it, we need to establish a reward program and to advertise the program rather widely. With a reward program being advertised, you are bound to get a good many false alarms. You are bound to get people who are fabricating information in an attempt to get a reward. Every one of these reports has to be checked out thoroughly. This means that, by establishing a reward program, you are creating problems for yourself in diffusing your intelligence effort. I think this is a necessary evil and something you just have to put up with in that business. Another problem is the timeliness of intelligence. Intelligence reports should be checked out very carefully before you run an operation. Most of the reports come from low-level and rather ill-informed sources. This means that some kind of confirmation or verification is necessary. [redacted] DATA [redacted]

I think, overall, that JPRC is a necessary function. I think that their work is important. I think the people out there have been doing just about everything they possibly could do improve the recovery rate. It is a terribly tough and discouraging business. I think we would have been criminally negligent if we hadn't established something like the JPRC. The people who established this certainly were doing something that was very necessary. It is just one of the hard facts of war that we haven't had a higher success rate.*

* Ibid., p 31.

I might add a personal observation on the related matter or [redacted] DATA [redacted] in general. It is my personal opinion that we have retrogressed since World War II in the [redacted] business.

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

* Ibid., p. 32.

. . . . . .

. . . on the development or improvement of equipment for SOG-type operations. . . on boats that you have to develop and to judge equipment based on the nature of your operations. Particularly in operations that were being run in the North I think the Norwegian NASTY-class PTFs were good boats, probably about as good as you could find anywhere. There were some maintenance problems but the major problem from the maintenance standpoint was that the electronics were so sophisticated we had to set up a repair facility at Subic. This, of course, added some undesirable features from the security compartmentation standpoint. I will say, based on some experience on boats for covert actions, that there is always a propensity for inexperienced personnel to assume that all you have to do is go out and get yourself an indigenous craft and maybe dress your personnel like indigenous ones and you can get away with anything. This simply isn't so. I noticed this in Korea where we had to use semi-indigenous craft (not indigenous to the local area but similar to indigenous craft) manned by some old fishermen. We were repeatedly told by our headquarters in Seoul that these boats, since they were so like indigenous craft, would never be recognized as outsiders. . . this simply wasn't true. . . .*

This idea of using indigenous craft is pretty hairy. To really do it right and to get away with it is an awfully tough job. For one thing in most parts of the world, particularly around Vietnam, any boat that isn't well known is going to be

* Ibid., pp. 50-51.

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

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

* Ibid., p. 51.

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

. . . . . .

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

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

COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

[redacted]

. . . . . .

. . . . We had difficulties, communications wise, from our facility in Saigon in handling air operations originating from bases away from the Saigon complex. Because of security requirements and the lack of hotline facilities, in many cases our hands were tied in coordinating the Air Ops or the last minute changes with the units that were involved. As a result of our communications problems, we staffed a recommendation to have an Air Operations Command Post which would have hotline communications direct to air facilities and the base camps where forces would launch from. . . .*

. . . . . .

. . . . It took the C-130s an inordinate amount of time to get combat ready in the theater. The C-130s were delayed in starting their operations due to equipment requirements. There was also an in-country training problem caused by the move from CCK in Formosa to Nha Trang.**

. . . . . .

From an Air Force standpoint, command relations were rather difficult. The advisers or experts in the airlift business worked for a Navy Operations Officer who was a flyer, but the only other aviators in the command channel were at Nha Trang which was a considerable distance away when the operations were being set up for any combat operations. We would be given

* Interview c NAME [redacted] . 1.

** Ibid., p. 2.



Tab O to
Annex N to
Appendix B

coordinates and a support task for combat missions and our Air Staff team would plot the intelligence and come up with our estimate as to what would be required. Concurrently, we would send the data that we had or the requirement to Nha Trang over a select [redacted] Data [redacted] acility. They would plan their operation and send us a flight plan. We would check out the parameters and if there were any disagreements as to what the requirements were or the intelligence we had versus the intelligence they had posted, we would negotiate and set up the operation in that manner. However, if there were requirements for decisions in the command channel as to whether or not a mission would be run, our recommendations were not always readily received and we had very little immediate backing because the rank, you might say, or impetus was at Nha Trang. Many missions were laid on on very short notice and caused us a great deal of anxiety in attempting to get the support from 7th AF. On many occasions 7th AF FRAGs for the next day's combat operation were already cut. They would have to divert air assets from laid on strikes, i.e., airborne reconnaissance to support MACSOG. Our relations, in many cases, were strained with the 7th AF Ops people. Of course, they were constantly badgering us for better advance planning. Although we dealt mainly with the Tactical Air control Center with cleared personnel, we would invariably show up to them with a preplanned mission and a specific set of requirements as far as helicopters were concerned, armed gun ships, or fighter CAP, and consequently many of these missions were very difficult to run as far as the 7th AF people were concerned. We had very little preplanning. By the time a mission would be levied on the Air Ops Section in MACSOG, we had a specific requirement to put it in at a certain time. It would be, for example,

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

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

. . . . . .

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

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

COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

Wann

. . . . . .

. . . . We found so much rice that it was difficult to destroy it. We tried to burn it and this only put a crust on the top of it. We tried to rip the sacks open and scatter it but we found the enemy would come along later on and scrape it up again. We asked for authority, incidentally, to contaminate the rice and this was another restraint that was placed on us. The material that we wanted to use was material recommended by Dalv _ epresentative in headquarters and it would be non-toxic but it would make the rice taste so bad that it couldn't be used. Concern over the accusations of chemical or biological warfare resulted in this being denied, I believe, at the Washington level. . . .*

* Interview of _____, p. 4.

COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

[redacted] Wane

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

. . . . . .

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

[redacted] Interview o NAME p. 2.

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

. . . . . .

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

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

COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

NAME

. . . . . .

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

. . . . . .

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

. . . . . .

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

* Interview of NAME

** Ibid., p. 5.

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

* Ibid., pp. 6-7.

COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

NAME [redacted]

. . . . . .

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

. . . . . .

Because of our lack of success in TIMBERWORK and to try to have an effective program in North Vietnam, the STRATA Program was developed. The STRATA teams, when they first went in, were small (six to seven personnel). We were able to get them in. They were to watch the roads; the teams were not very aggressive. By the time the bombing halt occurred and we had to stop committing STRATA teams, they were getting better. I think that our basic mistake, when we first committed the teams, was not having adequate means of communication. These teams needed a real-time capability to call in tactical air. This was needed because once these teams got into trouble or found a good target, they could hit it with immediate tactical air. By the time the program was stopped, we were getting this capability. It was a mistake to stop this program so soon. I think the program would have improved a lot faster had we been allowed to put a couple of US personnel with each team to provide leadership and radio communications. The teams would have been a lot more aggressive.*

Until US operations break down the communist controls on the populace, we are going to have a real hard time establishing guerrilla warfare as we know it in any communist-controlled country. We would have had an almost impossible job of forming guerrilla bands and of conducting guerrilla operations in North Vietnam otherwise.**

. . . Because of the efficiency of the communist controls in North Vietnam, every village, hamlet and province -- the

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* Ibid.
** Ibid., p. 6.

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

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

* Ibid., p. 6.

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

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

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

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

* Ibid., p. 7.

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

. . . . . .

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

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. . . . Pate is against these operations on the basis that if we put our teams in and start raising hell this will cause the enemy to sweep the area and police up their

Date

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

Data

[illegible] Supposedly, they have real-time capability to pass information on targets. Data is reluctant and is almost adamant against us using our teams outside of the PRAIRIE FIRE zone because it might cause reactions by the enemy. They say that when our teams operate outside of the zone or even at times operate inside the PRAIRIE FIRE zone, it causes their road-watch teams, their reaction teams, to have to leave the area because of sweeps that are made by the Pathet Laos/North Vietnamese Army forces in trying to locate and to eliminate our PRAIRIE FIRE teams. When we can get enough intelligence and can document large storage areas and troop concentrations, then we should make every effort and put pressure on to let us go in and eliminate the targets or to get them to do the job. We feel that our capability is better than the PAVN teams. Data is that their teams have an almost equal capability to our own and sometimes a better capability Data and are able to survive. Their roadwatch teams also have the mission of spotting people and vehicles, counting them and reporting them. They are accomplishing this mission. If we put our PRAIRIE FIRE teams out there, our teams will be able to raise hell periodically, but the rest of the time they won't have the capability to stay there.

feels that on Route 9, 922, 165 and 110 that we still have plenty of room within our zone to stop trucks and the people coming into South Vietnam within the boundary we have now. I am sure this is a controversy that will continue. Once we do know that there is a good target, we should do everything we can to hit it, regardless of where it is. If Data doesn't have the capability to destroy the target, I feel they should authorize us to do so.*

* Ibid., p. 10.

. . . . . .

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

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

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

. . . . . .

. . . . I think that the STRATA teams which are based and live at Danang should be used in the PRAIRIE FIRE zone west of the DMZ so that they would be better prepared to go North, which they are being maintained for, in case they are required. They are now used in both the SALEM HOUSE and the PRAIRIE FIRE zones. In case they are never able to go back into North Vietnam and are required to go into other parts of Laos and Cambodia, current operations will give them background and experience.*

. . . . . .

. . . I think that once we determine that we are going to run a [redacted] program, whether it is in Cambodia, in Laos or in North Vietnam, it should be run as a [redacted] program. Until the policy is determined that we will not run the program, MACSOG should be given the go-ahead and allowed to run their program. All of the different people who feel that they are controlling or running the operations should be kept completely out and MACSOG allowed to run the program as a covert one and to operate freely as long as they stay within approved guidelines. Until we do that, the programs are going to always be cumbersome, frustrating and to a certain degree, ineffective. There are too many people trying to control, run and influence the MACSOG operations now being conducted in Laos and Cambodia, and even more so when we were running operations in North Vietnam. I'm particularly making reference to raids along the North Vietnamese coast by action teams transported there by PT boats. It was almost impossible at times to get approval at CINCPAC because some people just didn't see the need for these operations. This just wasted a good asset that could have been used often and effectively. It is better to try and fail than not to try at all.**

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

COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

Name

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

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. . . . The Data OP-34 had were to the teams after the initial team training had been conducted and prior to infiltration. It, in theory, was to be an area in which the team could be securely held away from the camp personnel and away from the training personnel that had given them their team and individual instruction. If the team did not have one of its members selected to become a

Data

in them.**

* (TS) Interview o. p. 1-2.

** Ibid., p. 4.

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

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

* Ibid., p. 5.

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Upon my initial investigation of the SOG packing sheds or packing areas in the same general location as the 5th Special Forces Group in Nha Trang, I found that all my teams in North Vietnam had bins with the name of the team over the bin and that some of the personnel in the bin area or in the supply area were indigenous. This immediately blew the number of teams that we had and possibly the number of personnel in each team. I had this stopped immediately and was amazed that the US personnel in charge of the packing would complain or insist that they had a right to know the number of teams and number of personnel in the teams they were preparing supply bundles for. I bring this up because I think a packing or shipping list could have been given to the 5th Special Forces Group and they could have prepared the bundles. They had no reason to know where the bundles were going or whom they were for. I think this is the area of duplication that we could eliminate. . . .*

* Ibid., p. 3.

COMMENTS ON MACSOG'S OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

BY

[redacted] Name [redacted]

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

[redacted] Date [redacted] p. 6-7.

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

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

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

* Ibid., p. 7.

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

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

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

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

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

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

* Ibid., pp. 13-14.