

SON TAY RAID PANEL DISCUSSION
USSOCOM COMMANDERS CONFERENCE
MACDILL AIR FORCE BASE, FLORIDA
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Participants:

Lieutenant General LeRoy J. Manor, USAF (ret)
Brigadier General Donald D. Blackburn, USA (ret)
Colonel Elliott P. Sydnor, USA (ret)
Colonel John V. Allison, USAF (ret)
Colonel Richard A. Dutton, USAF (ret)

Introduction by General James J. Lindsay

Moderator: Colonel Wayne E. Long, SOJ3-S

GENERAL LINDSAY: For a long time, a commander's most important responsibility, very seriously I believe, if not the most important, one of a commander's most important responsibilities is the professional development of subordinates. In keeping with that belief--which I sincerely believe--I told the Chief when we set up this Command that one of the things we would really have to work on was to make sure we have a first-class Officer Professional Development Program for _____.

And we worked on that. As all of you know who attended many of the sessions we have had in the past, for the most part, it has had some real success. Now we have had a couple that probably could have been done a little better. But, I will tell you I think today we have probably put together--John Partin, where are you, John--has put together probably the best I think that I have seen yet. I know most of these guys. Most of you know General Manor, General Blackburn, some of you may know Colonel Allison and

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Colonel Dutton. I personally know the gentleman sitting over here very lonely, Colonel Bud Sydnor. I have thought many times--and I don't mean to embarrass you with this, Bud--but I thought many times that if the revitalization of SOF had occurred about 15 years ago, Bud Sydnor would be sitting up here doing the job I am doing right now because he is just a magnificent soldier. So I am really looking forward to the things he and the rest of the folks--General Blackburn, General Manor--have got to tell us about the time of the Son Tay Raid. It is unique. It involved all the Services. It involved--or in other words, it was totally _____. But, equally important, as many of you have already discovered as we put this Command together, ~~they worked with a unified command.~~ This is especially important to me because we are still trying to sort out some of the turf issues that come with conducting surgery--direct actions, I call it--in the areas that belong to a unified commander. I think we have made a lot of progress, but hopefully we can learn a few things from these gentlemen today with what they have done in the past. Now I am going to turn it over to our moderator.

COLONEL LONG: I am Colonel Wayne Long out of J3-S. I will introduce our first four speakers who played key roles in the planning and conduct of the Raid. Then we will take a short break and I will introduce our fifth speaker who will talk to us about the Raid from a POW perspective, since he

was a POW in Son Tay, itself. Our first speaker will be ~~General Blackburn~~, who has had as much or more special operations experience as any American today. ~~During World War II, he conducted successful guerrilla operations against the Japanese in the Philippines. In 1950, he taught at the United States Military Academy; was assigned to Allied Northern Forces, Europe; served as Senior Advisor to the Vietnamese Commanding General, 5th Military Region, Mekong Delta; and assumed command of the 77th Special Forces Group. In the last assignment, General Blackburn established the White Star training program for the Laotian Army. In the early 1960s, he was instrumental in establishing the Limited Warfare Laboratory. From 1964 to 1965, he was Director of Special Operations for the DCSOPS of the Army, commanded MACV SOG from 1965 to May 1966. During the Son Tay Raid, General Blackburn served as a special assistant for counterinsurgency and special actions--which many of you know as SACSA--and he retired in June of 1971.~~

Our second speaker will be Lieutenant General LeRoy J. Manor. Following graduation from Aviation Cadet Training in 1943, General Manor flew 72 combat missions in Europe. From 1947 to 1953, he served as instructor pilot at the various CONUS air bases and was then assigned to 6th Allied Tactical Air Force in Turkey. After graduation from Armed Forces Staff College and various command assignments, General Manor was assigned to the Deputy Chief of Staff, Plans and Operations, at Headquarters, United States Air Force. In 1968 he assumed

command of the 37th Tactical Fighter Wing in the Republic of Vietnam, where he flew 275 combat missions. In February 1970, he became Commander of the United States Air Force Special Operations Force and was selected as Commander of the Joint Contingency Task Group. He served as 13th Air Force Commander and then Chief of Staff, United States Pacific Command.

Our third speaker will be Colonel John B. Allison. In 1951 Colonel Allison was graduated from pilot training and one year later, he completed helicopter pilot training. In the 1950s and 1960s, he was assigned to various air rescue units in the United States and overseas. These included tours in Morocco, Germany, and here at MacDill Air Force Base. In 1967 Colonel Allison graduated from the HH-53 program at Eglin Air Force Base, and that same year he was assigned to fly HH-53s at Udorn Royal Thai Air Force Base. He returned to the United States in 1968. He was assigned to the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Training Center, Eglin Air Force Base. He was then selected as one of the HH-53 pilots for the Son Tay Raid. Colonel Allison retired from military service as Director of Safety at Headquarters, Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service, Scott Air Force in 1978.

Our fourth speaker from the operational perspective will be Colonel Elliott P. (Bud) Sydnor, Jr. From 1945 to 1948, Colonel Sydnor served as a torpedoman aboard the USS RATON. In 1952 he was graduated from Western Kentucky University as a distinguished military graduate. During the 1950s Colonel Sydnor served in the 11th Airborne Division, the 2d Infantry Division, the 25th

Infantry Division, and as the first exchange officer with the British 22d Special Air Service. He served as Battalion Commander of the 1st Battalion of the 327th Airborne Infantry Regiment of the 101st Airborne Division from 1967 to 1968. After graduating from the United States Army War College in 1970, Colonel Sydnor returned to the Infantry School as a faculty member. While at Benning, he was selected to be the Ground Force Commander for the Son Tay Raid. Until his retirement in 1981, he served as Commander of the 1st Special Forces Group on the Army Staff and as Director of the Ranger Department, and finally, as Director of Plans and Training at the Infantry School, itself.

Please join me in welcoming our first four speakers.

General Blackburn, it is all yours, sir.

GENERAL BLACKBURN: Thank you very much. It is a pleasure to be here. Thank you, General Lindsay, for having us down. To cover this raid, I am sure that some of the things we may leave out, so that in the question and answer period I hope you get your darts sharp. Our skin is thick so we don't mind you having at us. A couple of remarks before I get into the text. One of the things I have felt very strongly about since the days that I was SACSA up to the present time, and that is the position that I held on the Joint Staff. I have felt over the years that the position on the Joint Staff for Special Operations should equal the job that that J3 has down there. It should be on equal basis. Now I was not on that basis as the SACSA. But, when the SACSA was set up during the Kennedy years, it was given the authority to run special operations and was given the authority to go into the Chairman anytime he felt it necessary to discuss these operations.

When I became SACSA in 1969, some of those prerogatives had been diminished. As General Wheeler, who was then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said, "Anytime you have problems in this area that you want to discuss, you can come directly to me." That was one whale of a big help when we started running these operations.

Now, many of you read the raid--there is a second version of the raid that has come out--by and large, that raid is very accurate. Ben Schemmer, who was the author, had to do certain things for security reasons. Therefore, there are a few things

fictional items in that book. What I am going to talk about this afternoon--I kept a log day-by-day of every action that we took. I kept that log and so my remarks where they conflict with the book, they do coincide with this log that I have. The Son Tay operation was initiated on the 25th of May, 1970, with a briefing to me by the then Deputy DCSOPS for Plans and Policy, Air Force, General Jim Allen--Brigadier General Jim Allen and a briefing team out of an intelligence unit that was stationed at Fort Belvoir. The operation terminated when the Joint Combined Task Force closed into Udorn, Thailand, Air Force Base at 0428 on the 21st of November 1970.

But not--that did not terminate the residual political flak and volcanic fall-out that fell on our heads after we did not get the prisoners. Now, I agree wholeheartedly that the criticism that has been leveled that it takes six months to do this was absolutely uncalled for. It did not have to happen. But I will give you some of the reasons as we went along why it did happen.

In short, the strategy was this, that the operation was to provide for a raid into North Vietnam by Army Special Forces personnel, assaulting the Son Tay POW camp supported by Air Force HH-53 helicopters with air cover and support, and assisted by Navy air diversion. The Joint Contingency Task Force that General Manor will talk about more, was to launch from air bases in Thailand, refueled by the Air Force tankers over the Plaines des Jars in Laos, and then descend into the Son Tay area where

the camp was located, which was about 20 miles north of Hanoi. From touchdown to takeoff from that Son Tay camp would take 30 minutes. We used C-130s, as General Manor will talk, for navigation tied into the helicopters. Now the essential ingredients of this operation was to take full advantage of lethargy, shock action, and surprise; it was to avoid radar detection and alerting the northeast radar warning net--it was on the island of Hainan, Hainan Island; and was the establishment of operational windows based on weather projections and the moon phase; and perfect intelligence. I will touch on that a bit later on.

Now let me digress a little bit and touch on certain policy and political considerations that had an impact on the operation. I knew from the start that we were going to be singing to a reluctant choir. My inhibitions stemmed from my days as Chief SOG in Vietnam. I then wanted to demonstrate, while Chief SOG, that the U.S. could operate effectively in North Vietnam--as effectively as the Vietnamese could in Da Nang, Nha Trang, and other cities in South Vietnam. But there was no way. Repeated messages were sent from SOG to Washington asking for prerogative to demonstrate this capability. But, President Johnson, at the time, was not interested in seizing North Vietnamese territory and he would not go along with it. There was an off-and-on policy at the time about bombing in the north, and they did not want to rock the boat by these ground operations. Later on, Nixon, after the Cambodian incursion, and receiving the criticism he did for that, he was not about to touch moving into

North Vietnam. Negotiations were going on in Paris at the time for some sort of peace settlement. The U.S. Congress and the U.S. public were in a very unhappy mood over what was happening in Vietnam at the time. It was with a thorough understanding and appreciation of this obstacle course that we took on and pursued an initiative to go after the prisoners in North Vietnam--in Son Tay.

On the 25th of May 1970, when General Allen, with a team from Fort Belvoir, or this intelligence unit at Fort Belvoir, came down to see me, he pointed out that they had definitely pointed out 25 American POWs--I mean 5, excuse me, 5 American POWs that were woodcutters on Mount Ba Vi. This mountain was about 12 miles from Son Tay. And that they wanted--the Air Force would like to run a SAR mission to rescue those airmen--or prisoners. We discussed it at great length. The Air Force also had information at the time that these people were coming out of Son Tay or another prisoner of war camp--POW camp--Ap Lo. These two POW camps were away from inhabited areas and were toward the Laotian border. After discussion and talking at great lengths about this, it was my feeling, "Why go after the 5 when we could go after and liberate those two camps? Let's go after Ap Lo and let's go after Son Tay." There was a reluctant agreement, again, because it was felt the planning would take too much time. But it was finally--everybody said, "yes, let's do it if we can get the approval."

So, that afternoon right after the meeting broke up, I went in to see General Wheeler and laid the proposition before him. I told him about the briefing and that I was on the feasibility for this operation, because this was not in that much depth; and two, to set up a joint task force as rapidly as possible to carry this operation out. Wheeler gave his general approving of this thing but he said he felt that we should take this thing up with the JCS soonest. After leaving Wheeler, because we had now to prepare a briefing for the JCS, I went to see General Bennett, who was DIA at the time, and told him of the requirement we had to prepare the intelligence for such a briefing to the JCS. He said at that time the DIA would handle all the intelligence, do all the coordination that was necessary. So he took over the responsibility from the Air Force--he did the coordination with them, but he ran the show. Several days later, on the 5th of June, we briefed the JCS. On 8 June, we briefed the SECDEF. The JCS wanted more detail before they would make a determination of whether we should go on with this thing or before they would agree to a joint task force to be set up to plan this operation. This was agreed at the time that we would give such a briefing within the month. I set up a joint planning group over in Arlington Hall Station that was under the auspices of DIA, drew people from the Army, Navy, Air Force, and CIA; and for the next month we began designing a plan for this operation. Now keep in mind this. Time--time was not of the essence. We just didn't have to get it out tomorrow. More important were the concerns

being expressed of not putting more people into that prisoner of war camp up there. Secondly, on the failure to do this, what was going to happen to the prisoners that were in the camp. And there was just a myriad of questions being asked that made you sit back and realize why powers that be wanted to take more time to have all of this spelled out in great detail.

Now, on the 31st of July--this is the date the JCS had given us to come up with more detailed study--we gave a briefing now to the JCS. And they gave the go-ahead for the training and the organization of a joint task force. At that time, the target window for the operation which was weather-dependent, was the 21st to the 24th of September. Now, mind you, the task force had not been set up. This was the 31st of July. And the weather being what it is-- many of you in Vietnam know those typhoons at that time of year are very prevalent, so the air--the weather people said this would be the window, 21-24 September. On August the 8th, we notified certain unified and specified commands that a Joint Contingency Task Force was established for Operation Ivory Coast. Then Brigadier General LeRoy Manor was the Task Force Commander--designated the Task Force Commander. A fellow many of you remember, Colonel "Bull" Simons was designated the Ground Force Commander. And the training was to be conducted at Hurlburt. And the SACSA would be responsible for the planning and coordinating staff and was to be established in the Pentagon, and they would run interference for this task force that was down at Hurlburt.

Now, before that briefing on the 31st of July when it looked as though everyone was going to go along with us, I had gone down to Bragg and talked to Bull Simons, and I had talked to Roy Manor to see where the training--or were they available for running this operation and where this training should be conducted and so forth. Because General Daugherty, the DCSOPS of the Air Force, and General Dick Stilwell, DCSOPS of the Army, agreed where the training would be conducted, if it was Eglin it was going to be Air Force, if it was Bragg it was going to be the Army. So I was denied the use of this lovely building down at Fort Bragg which was designed for JUWTF training, because they had the logistics in there and some administrative units and they just couldn't spare this and they were going to put us out at Camp Mackall, so it looked like Eglin would be the best place. So, according to findings and as a result of this trip, the JCS and everybody concerned agreed that General Manor would be the Task Force Commander--not selling you short, there, at all.

Now this coordinating staff, or this staff that we had set up in the Pentagon under the SACSA--there were about 38 members of that staff right down the hall from the SACSA--was made up of SACSA personnel, Air Force, Navy, Army--from the DCSOPS of the Army--CIA, NSA. This arrangement worked very, very well, indeed. Manor and the Joint Task Force did the detail planning, ran the rehearsals and what-have-you down at Hurlburt. The SACSA group ran interference for them in Washington, and coordinated things that took place within the Washington area.

For example, intelligence. Now this was fundamental, and the operational intelligence (I'll get into why they were not there in a minute but right now let me stick with this), ~~operational intelligence, I think, was flawless.~~ If anybody can pick out any flaws in that--in getting us in there and getting us out--I would like to know what it was. Now this had to come from the highest level. When Admiral [Noel] Gayler of the Navy, who was running NSA at the time, was briefed on this operation and Mr. [Richard M.] Helms of the CIA and of course, General [Donald V.] Bennett of the DIA, they bought this 100 percent. And they designated top people out of their headquarters that would be in that planning group that I had set up in the Pentagon. I had about the number 3 guy out of NSA.

How effective were these guys, for example? Well, one day we got from Manor, "Hey, do you realize that to fly from the Plaines des Jar down into Son Tay, there are two radars? If we fly between those two radars, we are going to make that northeast warning system go hot. What do we do?" I got a fellow named [Milt] Zaslov from NSA. I said, "Zaslov, we have got a problem. How do we handle this thing." He said, "You know, the only person who really knows the detail about this is the guy sitting on Monkey Mountain." I said, "Get him." And this guy was in the office in less than a week and they were able to solve the problem. There is a 5-minute gap in the way these things are rotated and we used that 5-minute gap and they flew through it undetected. But that is what I am talking about in responsiveness. Anytime that you tasked--or these people were tasked, they would come up with the answer. Now we

provided many of the answers from our headquarters and information to Roy, but his people, in running the exercises and the rehearsals, they were running into problems that needed answers from the intelligence side. And they would funnel them to us. It wasn't good enough. . .

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from that level to the _____ or to the Air Force or someone--you had to get to the top to get this kind of reaction. I am firmly convinced that that's the way we had to do it.

Secondly, counterintelligence. As this thing was continuing to run and continuing to expand, it was my great concern was that of leaks. I certainly did not want to land up there and have a welcoming party. So we set up the Washington level and extended on down to his level, a very elaborate counterintelligence system that certainly did prove its value. And since this is sort of classified, yes, everybody--there was an access list kept on everybody that knew anything about this. And maybe this was a lot of work that was unnecessary, but every one of those people's phones were tapped for the duration. We had a fellow named--we called him Max Newman--that was the counterintelligence guy that did the job. But to indicate how a few things that the Washington level planning and coordination group staff had to deal with, I'll give it to you. We identified that there was a Russian satellite that flew over Eglin on schedule. We identified that

there was a Russian trawler sitting right outside Hurlburt. This meant that we had to be very careful in these exercises--the pilots flying the planes and all the rehearsals in what we were doing. Also, it meant that the mockup of that Son Tay prison compound had to be torn down and reassembled so that that satellite couldn't pick it up. This was revealed from the Washington level intelligence. We had the authority to task the SR-71s that were stationed--based at Kadena--Far East, and the Buffalo Hunter drones that SAC had control of--right directly from that SAC to staff, assign them the missions, and dictate what they did. And they were dedicated to us for this purpose. Found out that a certain agency was fiddling around in North Vietnam. And one of the things I certainly did not want to do was to stir up the henyard with a snake. As I say, we were depending on lethargy, surprise, shock action. But again, we picked up--strange means--that this agency was having their little operations in North Vietnam. I don't think this would have been picked up from Eglin. And we could stop it by picking up the phone to Mr. Helms and saying, "Let's knock it off." He did.

Now, one of the things I pressed for but didn't get was a psychological analysis of what the impact of this operation--from a psychological point of view. Because I knew that we were going to have to brief Mr. Kissinger and the President, and the questions--this is denied, but I have a Congressional Record, after the fact, that raised every issue, nearly, that we had on our list to be explored. Did you consider what would happen to

the other prisoners if you got some? What would happen if you killed a batch of these North Vietnamese? What is the reaction going to be on the other people? What reaction is it going to have in Paris at the negotiations? We had two full pages of these questions to be asked and I didn't feel at the time that there was anyone within the Defense Department alone that could come up with adequate answers, but we did have a list of people who we could pull together who have done this. But we didn't do it. Congress asked us about it after the fact, and I wish we had.

Public Relations plan. As you know, after this thing failed to get the prisoners of war out, we had a real heyday with the press. Again, it wasn't felt by some people that this plan was necessary. One of the big items we controlled from Washington was the fact that we were using the Navy that was on Yankee Station, North Vietnamese waters--that there were two aircraft carriers up there that we knew were going to be deployed, or redeployed, and replaced by two others. When we learned about this, I said we just can't have a johnny-come-lately move onto that Yankee Station and fly those missions--that diversion mission up there--we needed to have the pilots who have had the experience in the area. So Admiral Don Engen (then Captain) was the point of contact in the Navy. We got with Engen and said, "Hey, when the AMERICA and the ORISKANY move off that station off there and the two new carriers move in a fly the planes off the old carriers onto the new and the new planes onto the old and

park them at Subic Bay until after the operation is over. No questions asked. He could do this. Admiral [John S., Jr.] McCain, who had a son as a POW in Hanoi, came to Washington during this planning. Admiral [Thomas H.] Moorer, now, had taken over from General Wheeler as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and I said to Moorer, "We've got to tell McCain about this." When I briefed him that morning, the old man almost had tears. He said, "Don, how about coming back this afternoon. Let me discuss this further with you." And his aide later came up and said, "You know about the son?" When I walked into the briefing that afternoon and told him, he said, "You have got a 100 percent support from me." He said, "Go." He said, "Who can I let know on this?" I said, "Right now, no one." He said, "Fine." And he didn't. For the entire operation. And he supported us beautifully--anything we wanted.

After the task force was set up in August, Roy Manor, Bull Simons, and I went to Hawaii and briefed McCain on the final details, went over and briefed Abrams (MACV), and they gave us complete support--everything we wanted to do. I hadn't gotten back from Vietnam when we got wind that again, a certain group wanted to use helicopters to support Vang Pao(sp) in an operation in Laos. This was picked up in Washington. Dial of the phone, and Abrams--wanted Abrams to support this--a dial of the phone knocked it off right away. No problems or hassle on that. The White House all of a sudden decided just before this operation, wouldn't it be juicy to start another bombing mission in the

north as a diversion, or whatever. Now, we hadn't been bombing in the north in I don't know how many weeks or months. I felt all this would do would stir things up again and build up some of that antagonism against those prisoners and others that people were concerned about. Just let a dead dog lie. We were able to convince the White House this was the route to go--keep it quiet. Our greatest fear came true. Air people, in the Washington area, came and said, "Hey, there is this typhoon coming." This was just a couple of days before the operation was to take place. They stayed on top of this thing and through the accurate dope that was coming out of Washington funneled into the theater, Roy Manor was able to make the decision and react at the proper time. Washington had to be the ones that designed the evacuation plans. And we did just that. If we got these people out, where were they going to go? This I didn't feel was a job to encumber Manor with down at Eglin. Washington--we could set up special logistics channels to take care of specific requirements that Manor needed--items of equipment were nonstandard items. We were able to do this. All he had to do was put in the order for them and he would get them. But we were providing the interference for whatever they needed down there. Now that is just a few of the things that I feel for any operation of this kind where you are having to use these resources at other than the field level, you have got to have a strong hand to do it in Washington. General Vogt was the Director--he was the G3 when this thing--when we started this. He moved up to the Director of the Joint Staff. When the new G3 came

in--J3--I said, "Well, I have to go down and brief General Zais. I'd like your permission." He said, "No way." Now, you talk about being between a rock and a hard place--that is where I found myself. And so, literally for many weeks, Mel Zais knew nothing about it though he was the J3. When he did hear about it, he didn't need this mike! Blackburn needed a new uniform, almost. But anyway, I am to this day convinced that if you are going to get this kind of response, you are going to have to have this kind of support at the Washington level.

Now, there's many other things we can talk about during the question and answer period that I haven't brought up as lessons learned, but I have taken some of Roy's time--too much of it. And, Roy, I'll turn it over to you.

GENERAL MANOR: General Lindsay, ladies and gentlemen. I would like to echo what Don Blackburn said about thanking you for inviting us to come down here and sharing some of our thoughts with you on this experience and perhaps be able in some way be able to relate it to modern day operations. I might say, also, that this isn't the first time I have followed Don Blackburn. As a matter of fact, after this episode took place, in the early 1971, I followed him in the job of SACSA on the Joint Staff. From what Don said on my appointment to this job as Commander of the Joint Task Force, I am glad that General Daugherty(sp) prevailed. Otherwise, I might not have become involved to the extent that I did. But it was on the weekend of August 8, 1970, that I received a phone call--it was on a Saturday--to report to the Pentagon on the Monday--the 8th of August. Ties in with the date that Don Blackburn used--the 8th of August. The Joint Task Group was formed. I had no idea what the call was for except that I was asked to stop at Fort Bragg or Pope Field and pick up an Army Colonel by the name of Simons. I had not met Bull Simons prior to that. So I stopped at Pope Field. Colonel Bull Simons was there, got on the aircraft, and he also had received a call to come to Washington. He was to report to the Army Deputy, and I was to report to the Air Force Deputy and we wondered if, perhaps, there was any connection. Well, we soon found out that there was. Jim Allen was the person I talked to--I think it was Clark Baldwin that Bull Simons talked with. And then they brought us to Don Blackburn, and eventually we got

to Admiral Moorer. And Admiral Moorer's instructions were very simple. I remember them very clearly. He said, "We want you to determine whether or not it would be feasible to go in and do this job that General Blackburn has briefed you on. And if it is feasible, come back and tell us how you would do it. He says, "In the meantime, you have the authority to form a task force and train that task force and any resource that you need to do this is available to you." As a follow-up to that, General Ryan, who was Chief of Staff of the Air Force at the time, provided me with a letter that was addressed to the major commanders of the Air Force advising them that anything I should ask for for a classified project I was working on, they should provide it without requiring an explanation of what it was. And, of course, this became very helpful. And I had the occasion to use it a couple of times.

But my boss at that time in my regular job as commander of the Special Operations Force was General Momeyer at TAC, so on my way back I stopped and briefed him on what it was. I had the authority to give him the full pitch. By the same token, I then went to MAC which was then commanded by General Catton and I gave him a full briefing of it. Those two commands really had the resources that we needed. Special Operations Force belonged to TAC. That was my parent organization. The helicopters that we needed, the rescue helicopters, belonged to MAC. So it was necessary that we get those two people--those two commanders--in with us so that we could have free use of the resources. I would

like now to turn to a few slides that I have here and perhaps I can breeze through this more quickly than if I didn't use them. General Blackburn pointed out where the objective area was. This was about 22 miles from the center of Hanoi, north-northwest, or west-northwest, rather, of the center of the city. Of course, as he pointed out, we were going to operate out of Thailand.

As soon as we had this assignment, we sat down and determined exactly what this force--oops, wrong slide--well, have to use this one. We had continuous intelligence studies. And Don Blackburn stressed the importance of intelligence. We can't over-stress it. It is very, very important. And I think it is important that we take maximum advantage of the members of the intelligence community. For example, the Service intelligence areas--the DIA, the CIA, the NSA, and any other intelligence source that is available. And we didn't go to these people only with GEI, we went to them with a request that this group provide us with any information that they think would be valuable to us in what we were planning to do. And that is exactly what happened. Of course, again, we had the Washington agency with General Blackburn who was able to keep in touch with these people--with the representatives that had been selected by the top level of these intelligence agencies. I lost a slide here, somewhere. So, let me talk to it. So, we decided that the force would be an all-volunteer force.

Don Black--or rather, Bull Simons and Doctor Cataldo--Doctor Cataldo was a member of the planning group in Washington. He

was--maybe some of you know him--he was a Ranger--a Green Beret. So he had the right background for what we were doing. But he and Simons went to Fort Bragg and asked for volunteers. We wanted a hundred men. Over five hundred showed up. And the two of them interviewed every one of those individuals, and selected a hundred of them. Now we were, of course, doing this at the right time in that we had these kinds of resources available to us. Today, we don't have the people who have had recent combat experience such as we did back then. Every one of these people had been to Vietnam. Some of them had had two or three tours in Vietnam.

A hundred men were selected and were transported to Field 3 [Duke Field at Eglin Field] to start the training. All they were told at this time was that we were working on a humanitarian mission that would require considerable TDY and there would be considerable risk involved. The air crews were selected by somewhat different fashion than that. The crews were selected under known capability, and Colonel Allison will talk more about this in a little while. We brought them in and briefed them. We gave them the same information. And we ended up with an all-volunteer force. We arranged right at the very beginning that each crew, or the ground forces and the air forces, would work very closely together. They were briefed together, debriefed together, and got to know one another very well. I think that was good.

Can we back up one slide? Okay, we will go ahead. General Blackburn mentioned surprise. I like to look at this as

strategic surprise and tactical surprise. Strategic surprise in that the mission not be compromised. If it is compromised in any way when you are planning this type of an operation, as far as I am concerned, you have to drop it. You cannot go on with it. General Blackburn mentioned the monitoring of telephones. We had an element of the Air Force Security Service come to Eglin and monitor every one of our telephones. They didn't know what we were working on, but each evening I would get a briefing from the chief of that team and he would tell me what he heard that day. And he was trying to put together what it was that we were working on. Whenever he got any inkling that we were working on some kind of a raid, then we would tighten up our procedure. And we had Big B.A., Major B.A., and the Blue Max--for Max Newman--working together. One Air Force, one Army, working together on the tightening of the security requirements of the exercise. Big B.A. just retired about two weeks ago as head of the Air Force OSI.

We needed flexibility to respond to emergencies. Here we get into what I call "what if." What if this happens, how will we cope with it? We had our forces on three different helicopters. Actually we used more helicopters, but we had our forces on three. We had three elements of the force. I said, "What if we lose one to enemy action, to mechanical failure, or whatever? Can we still do the mission?" So in the training sessions, we would pull one out and go ahead with two of the elements--not always the same one. And we determined that with two of the

elements we could do it. Now the risk goes up some, but we could accomplish the job with two of the elements. Well, what if we lose two--and we only have one left? Can we do it? So we tried that. Well, we came to the conclusion, no, you cannot do it with just one. If we had the misfortune of losing two-thirds of our force, then we are going to have to abort the mission. But at least we knew that.

Equipment and techniques. We didn't have time to develop new equipments, but we did make some modifications as we will see a little later. We determined we had to use what was available. I think the point I have made here is that it is real important that a command such as this have a good R and D effort so that you have all your special equipment already on the shelf. If something like this comes up, all you have to do is reach out and get it.

We have shown before us that the enemy ground effort would be present and would be creditable. Now weather--mentioned earlier--very important. Although in that part of the world, October and November are the best months to do this type of operation. This is when you have the best weather. We had a weather man on our staff with lots of experience in that area. His name was Keith Grimes. And Grimes was also a liaison officer. He actually lived with the Army people out at Field 3 at Duke Field. They gave considerable thought to light conditions and we determined that a quarter moon would be exactly what we would want and we would want that moon about 35 degrees above

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the horizon in the east. Well, Grimes went to his almanacs and determined exactly when that would be, and that would be between the 21st and the 25th of October or as an alternate date, the same time period in November. So this is how we came up with this envelope for 21-25 October or November.

The route that we planned was to leave Takhli with the C-130s. We had two C-130s. These were COMBAT TALON 130s. And I trust they were the same COMBAT TALONS--probably the same tail numbers that were used in the Iran raid, and perhaps we have the same two tail numbers here. At that time we had four COMBAT TALONS in the United States that belonged to my command, SOF. There were four in Europe and four in the Pacific. We used one of those from TAC out of Pope Field, and we used one out of PACAF. For the crews, we had one crew from Europe and one from SOF. We didn't want to interfere any more than we had to on the other normal operations, so we didn't want to take too many people from the same area.

We had five HH-53s and one HH-3. Again, we had redundancy. We knew that there were about 75 or 80 POWs at Son Tay. We had the names of most of them. We also knew from some computations made by the planners that there was a capacity for 100 POWs at Son Tay. We had enough airlift to bring out 200. Redundancy. Now there have been some operations that we have conducted where we haven't had the redundancy that we needed. Why the two C-130s? They were primarily to lead the helicopters in to the objective area. We only needed one, really, but we wanted the

100 percent redundancy assurance that if something happened to that one, the second one could slip in and take over the job. Well this was the route flown by the C-130s. Up here was the refueling area--and the reason for the These are the TALON 130s. And this is where the TALON 130s picked up the helicopters to go on in. Up to this time the helicopters were with the HC-130s for refueling. But one of them came over here and picked up--joined up with the A-1s. The A-1s came out of Nakhon Phanom. Up here--and flying in to the mission. Colonel Allison will talk more about that route a little bit later. Likewise, he will talk a little about this, but I need to say something here, too. We didn't have any FLIR [forward looking infrared radar] on the 130--the COMBAT TALONS--in those days. We borrowed some of this equipment. It was mounted in pods. We borrowed it from the Agency, took the aircraft out to Ontario, California, and had these pods put on the 130s. Still, a FLIR will only look forward about two miles, maybe three miles at best. But it is very important on low-level navigation flights such as we were going to do here that the people confirm that we are precisely over the point we want to be.

The B _____ is napalm, and that was used as an anchor point _____ . I wanted to get down here to the Rockeye(?) bombs. The only cluster-type bomb that we had for the A-1s (we used the A-1s for top cover--for an umbrella over the objective area) was the the CBU-28. The CBU-28 has to be dropped from a high angle. High angle means you have to get more altitude. So we needed

something that could be dropped at low altitude. We wanted a cluster-type bomb because the A-1 was going to be used to prevent any reinforcement from coming to the objective area. The Navy had just developed the Rockeye bombs so we made arrangements to buy them from the Navy. We actually went to the arsenal where they are made--I think it was Indiana or Ohio--and bought some. It was arranged, of course, ahead of time with the Navy hierarchy in Washington. We brought them to Eglin

- - - END OF TAPE 2 - - -

. . . A-1 qualified for carrying the Rockeye bomb. We then arranged to have the Rockeye bomb moved to the Nakhon Phanom so they could be loaded on the A-1 prior to takeoff for the mission. There was an operation called COMBAT MARTIN that had just been completed at Eglin for installation of the VHF jammer on the F-105. Well, we wanted to be able to jam the frequencies that would be used by the MIGs, and they used VHF. We didn't need VHF for our particular operation so we were free to jam that. We tested the VHF jammer at Eglin and it seemed to work well. We had some shipped to Nakhon Phanom. We modified some A-1s--the A-1s that were going to be used at Nakhon Phanom with the jammer, and they were available to us, of course, on the mission.

Most of this is going to be covered by Colonel Sydnor. I want to get down to the last two points. One is communications equipment compatibility. Now I think probably everyone in this

room realizes that we have always had a problem with communications equipment compatibility among the Services. And this is particularly significant, of course, between the Army and the Air Force. Well, we did have that problem, here, in that we did not have all of the radios we would like to have had. We probably still don't have all those radios today. We were able, however, to make some modifications and have enough overlap of frequencies so that we could talk easily and clearly from the aircraft to the elements on the ground and vice versa.

Medical. Doctor Cataldo made a very concentrated, extensive study of POW conditions. He studied the information that was available from POWs on POW conditions in World War II, the end of the Korean War, he had some information that was gathered from Da Nang POWs in North Vietnam that had already been released. Remember, we got three released early on. And he came up with a POW profile. And in this profile, he determined that they would be in poor physical condition, suffering from lack of nutrition, susceptible to cold temperatures, not be able to assimilate the mixed-type food that we had in our emergency rations. And we may be forced down on the way out with a load of POWs who are in this condition. He went to some laboratory. Some medical laboratory up in New England and secured some bland-type food that could be prepared with just a mixture of water. Now this was in case we were forced down on the way back. He secured a large number of tennis-type shoes of varying sizes and had those all on the helicopters. Because he realized that the POWs would probably be

coming out barefooted or perhaps, at best, some shower clogs. Remember, it is the middle of the night that we're planning to go up there to take them by the hand and bring them out. Now he got some ponchos, and had a blanket lining sewn in the ponchos so they would have something warm if we were forced down. This is in lieu of a blanket.

While all of this was going on, the training was going well. We prepared the site. We dismantled portions of it so that it would break up the contours so that the satellite wouldn't pick up the site we were working on. Bull Simons and I were going back and forth to Washington quite frequently to confer with _____, to confer with Blackburn and his people.

Well, on the 8th of September, we briefed--in the tank--the Chief of Staff on our concept. Number one, we said it is feasible. We have determined that it is feasible and here is the way we are going to do it, and we laid out the concept for doing it. It was approved, and as I remember, there were no changes at all in this concept. Admiral Moorer said we could approve it here, but of course, it has to go to a higher level for approval. You will have to brief the Secretary of Defense. Secretary of Defense then was Mr. Melvin Laird. We weren't able to schedule a briefing before him until the 24th of September. And at the same time, we briefed the Director of CIA. Apparently he had been briefed before, but he was sitting in there with Melvin Laird that day. They were rather noncommittal, although Secretary Laird said that he agreed with the concept and he agreed that it was feasible and

we would have to wait for higher authority. We knew, of course, that it would have to go to the White House. But it wasn't until the 8th of October that we had an opportunity to brief the White House. Then we briefed Doctor Kissinger and General Al Haig. Al Haig, then, was the military assistant to Kissinger. The briefing was well received, there. No changes made in concept. They didn't have any problems with how we planned to do this, and they had confidence that we could do it. But Doctor Kissinger said, "How soon must you have a decision in order to make your 21 October date?" 21 October by this time was our primary date for lift-off. And we said we have got to have it by tomorrow night. He said that won't be possible. The President was out of town, or maybe he was out of the country. At least, it wasn't possible. He said, "Continue your training and maybe you can go on the alternate day of 21 November. Well, we were a little bit concerned--at least, I was--with the possibility of a compromise. It gave us all that much more time where you really have to keep a thing tight so no information leaks out. We did take good advantage of the time. We did train. We did rehearse more. We made lot of refinements--many refinements.

On the 1st of November we were authorized by Admiral Moorer to do our in-theater coordination and remember, at this point, no one beyond PACOM, beyond Admiral McCain, himself, knew anything about it. Now, I don't think we would do it quite that way, today, but then we have a better organization today. We have your Command, today, that is--that should have been in being back then, really.

Now, Bull Simons and I proceeded to Saigon and I'll say just a word about the briefing at Saigon. I had never met General [Creighton] Abrams [Commander, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam] before, and I had heard he was a pretty rough customer but real smart. He and General [Lucius] Clay [Commanding General, 7th Air Force] were there. As the briefing was going on, I would glance once in a while at General Abrams and I could not get any indication of how he was responding to this. You can imagine--here was a group from Washington coming up to do something in his theater. I thought he might throw us out. So, when the briefing was all over, I said, "Sir, this is how we plan to do this job. Do you have any questions?" He said, "Yes. I have a few. When you are out here doing this thing--who are you working for?" I says, "Sir, I will be working for Admiral Moorer." He said, "You mean, I don't have anything to do with this?" I said, "That's right." He said, "Well, I only have one comment. Any resource that I have under my control is available to you." From that point on I had a great deal of admiration for General Abrams. Then he turned to Clay--and of course, we needed a lot of help from Clay who was Commander of the 7th Air Force, and he said, "Lou, I assume that applies to you, too." "Yes, sir."

We then went out to the ORISKANY, briefed Admiral Fred Bardshar. Now, he had made some changes--he had kept his flagship--at least, it was there at that time. Bull Simons and I landed on his aircraft carrier, they picked us up and brought

us out there. We told him what we were up to and told him we needed some help. We need a fake raid against the coast of North Vietnam during the time that we are going to be doing the operation on the ground. And he became very enthused about it and he said, "I'll give you exactly what you want." He said, "I'll go one step further. If you want, I'll help you in the objective area." "No, we don't need the help there. Where we need it is right there to draw off the defenses of North Vietnam, to make them think there is an attack coming from over the Gulf of Tonkin so they won't even see us." Because the mission planning that we have done--the route planning that we have done has indicated to us, even after we had to read our studies as General Blackburn mentioned, that there was a possibility that they could pick us up 12 minutes before we got to the objective area. So we were planning to live with that. But as it turned out, they never saw us coming at all. They didn't see that force coming across to the objective area.

On the 10th of November, we moved the 130s, the COMBAT TALON 130s from Eglin. Oh, I must mention. I forgot to mention earlier that we had a Huey in the picture, also. And the Huey was moved by one of those 130s and taken to Takhli. Now, why the Huey? Well, at one point we didn't think we could land inside the prison compound with the HH-3. We didn't think there would be space. But we determined later on that there was. But in the meantime, we trained with an Army Huey that had two Army crews-- again, redundancy--we had redundancy in the crews. And

we took that helicopter with us to Thailand and we took the crew members so that option would be kept open. Now the disadvantage of the Huey was that we would have to land in Laos at a LIMA site to refuel it on the way in. Another disadvantage was that it didn't have the footage and reliability that these other helicopters had--couldn't _____ . So when we decided that we could use the HH-3, of course, we felt that was a great deal better because of those features on the HH-3. The C-121, the airborne control and warning aircraft, were at McClellan. They didn't train with us. All we wanted from them was to provide the service for us that night. So we moved some from McClellan to Da Nang. Between the 11th and 14th of November, we moved the force in 121s--141s, rather--from Eglin to Takhli. Now, how did we get these? Well, today you have a better arrangement for doing this sort of thing. But at that time, you didn't have that. And I couldn't afford to go through the normal channels to request airlift because it would take too long and it would probably compromise the whole operation. I went to see General [Jack J.] Catton and I said, "I need four C-141s at Eglin to move the force." He said, "You just tell me when you want them there and they will be there." Incidentally, that was when I first met the present CINCMAC who was then an aide to General Catton. This worked out well. The crews were told the flight plan for a trip to Norton Air Force Base in California. We told all of our people that we were moving out there. That we were going out there for additional training--

this time for desert training. That we had gotten all the training benefit that we could from training at Eglin. After we became airborne, the route was changed and we went up to McChord up near Seattle, refueled, went up to Alaska, and ended up at Takhli, Thailand. On the 17th of November, we closed the entire force at Takhli.

Before leaving Washington, before leaving to go out there, I talked with Admiral Moorer again. He told me I had the authority to make whatever decision had to be made out there and any changes to the operation. Of course, I still didn't have the final go-ahead, the final green light on this. But Don Blackburn assured me that it would be coming when I arrived out there.

We had two in-theater actions. One was to move the aircraft from wherever they were to the bases where we would be _____ . The helicopters from Udorn. The C-130s, of course, were with us at Takhli. We had to modify the A-1s at Nakhon Phanom with the QRC-128. We had to brief additional crews. We wanted some Wild Weasel aircraft. Wild Weasel, as some of you know, is for missile suppression. We wanted flight cover for the missile suppression. The Air Force at _____, we had to brief all those crews. We had to arrange, of course, for the tankers to refuel the helicopters, the tankers to refuel the 105s and F-4s--different kind of tankers. COMBAT APPLE was an intelligence gathering mission of SAC using EC-135s. We wanted to have at least one of those in the area--SAC put up two. And then, of course, the Navy.

We had to make arrangements for the Command Post. The Command Post we had established at Monkey Mountain because there were extensive communications already there and they were excellent communications. If you have read Ben Schemmer's book, "The Raid," where he says the communications broke down from the Command Post to the objective area, I am here to tell you that that did not happen. Now there were times when I wish it had been a little bit better, but it worked quite adequately. And I had tremendous support, communications-wise, at that Command Post.

Now as an alternate to that, we had an airborne command post. And the airborne command post on a C-135 was monitoring all the communications that might have broken down from Da Nang-- from Monkey Mountain--and they would have been able to take over as a command post for the operation. So we had command and control.

These are some of the problems we had. Typhoon over the Philippines at this time. There was a front moving south out of China. The two were due to converge on Hanoi on the night we were supposed to go on the 21st of November. We had excellent support from these agencies. We did a weather reconnaissance that afternoon. I was concerned with support for the Tonkin Gulf because of that typhoon--if it hit the Gulf, because of the sea state. It would have prevented the aircraft from taking off and we were really depending on that diversionary mission, deception mission that was being flown by the Navy.

It became apparent that there might be a break in the weather just before--the day before the typhoon hit there which was

supposed to the the 21st. Based on that, the decision was made to advance it one day. That required a hell of a lot of coordination because we had to inform all the support elements what was planned for the night of the 21st was going to take place on the night of the 20th. Then, of course, I sent word back to Washington that we had decided to go 24 hours sooner.

This was the primary force. The helicopters, the 5 A-1s, the 105s, 10 F-4s from TAC, a total of 28 aircraft. In the immediate area we had 148 people--92 Air Force, 56 Army. I said we trained 56 Army--we only took 56. Rather, ~~we trained 100 and only took 56 on the operation.~~ Colonel Sydnor will address that. Support aircraft--the KC-135 to refuel the fighters, a C-130 to refuel the helicopters, _____ F-4s _____ a CAP for the aircraft operating over the Tonkin Gulf--a total of ~~29 aircraft.~~

They Navy launched the biggest effort that night that they had ever launched from their carriers at night up to that point. I don't know if they exceeded the number later, but it was 59 sorties with various types of aircraft. And this is what they did. They got into the area at this point--and I'll go over this very quickly--but the green group, high-altitude F-4s, came up here to really excite the defenses of North Vietnam to maximize the cross-dow(?) between the sentry--the cross-dow between the Chinese radars and the North Vietnamese radars. I can tell you that that worked very well. One other thing I haven't mentioned is that I had a service provided by one of the

intelligence agencies that enabled me to know what they were saying--~~what the controllers were saying~~. I was getting almost a real-time, and I could tell all the confusion this was causing to the air defense system up there in North Vietnam. The blue group, or A-7s, and they flew a route on--and, of course, they were dropping flares along here. They didn't drop any bombs, just flares. The A-6 at that time was one of the most feared aircraft by the North Vietnamese because they had a capability for accurate bombing and low-level approach in bad weather at night. And some of these came in at this point at medium altitude, _____ for the coast, and then exited the area. This was a very valuable support to the operation.

This is a picture of the model that was constructed for us by intelligence agencies in Washington. This is north, to your right. The distance (this is the _____ that you're looking at, obviously)--the distance between the south wall and the north wall is 185 feet, and from the east wall to the west wall is 85 feet. This gives you an idea of the tight space right in here where that helicopter had to land _____ . Of course, some damage was done to that HH-3 going in there, but we hadn't planned to bring it out, anyway. We had an explosive device on there with a timed fuse that was activated and the helicopter was destroyed.

This shows the relative location of Son Tay camp--an actual photo--with the city of Son Tay. This has some significance if you read the Schemmer book, and will be covered by speakers to

come. This is the route that was flown coming in here with the C-130. The helicopters--at this point, the C-130 went to 3,000 feet and all the helicopters except 5 and 6 stayed low. 5 and 6 stayed high. They were _____ flare capabilities, not carrying any troops. The flares from the C-130s worked well. The helicopters turned back, turned around to the left and landed on one of these islands. The C-130 continued on around, dropping fireproof simulators and napalm, and went out of the area. This will be covered in more detail by Colonel Allison.

- - - - BREAK - - - -

COLONEL ALLISON: Good afternoon. I have been asked to discuss the selection, qualification, training, and participation of the flight crews that conducted the Son Tay Prisoner of War Camp rescue attempt.

To help understand some of the terminology and what was going on--General Manor has covered a lot of it--but I would like to put a couple of slides up here to show what I'm discussing. This is the helicopter formation. The COMBAT TALON HC-130 with 6 helicopters in tow. Can I have those viewgraphs at the same time?

These are the chores they were expected to perform during this thing. First one is Cherry 1--the COMBAT TALON C-130--to lead the helicopters to the objective, illuminate the area with flares, drop the firefight simulators and napalm marker beacons to anchor the A-1s. Cherry 2, another COMBAT TALON, led the A-1s to the objective, dropped firefight simulators, and a second napalm marker for use by the reserve A-1s. Provided DF steers--direction finding steers--to the exiting aircraft. Banana, the HH-3, carried the USA assault group. This was 14 persons led by Captain Dick Meadows. Apple 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. Apple 1 carried the Army support group--22 persons led by Colonel Bull Simons. Apple 2 carried the command group--20 persons led by Lieutenant Colonel Elliott Sydnor. Apple 3 was the HH-53 gunship and reserve H-53. 4 and 5 were reserve H-53s that ended up rescuing the two F-105 pilots. Peach 1 to 5, the A-1s, formed a strike force--two of which went into the immediate objective area, three remained over the mountains until needed. Lime 1 and 2 were two

HC-130s who refueled the helicopters inbound and the H-53s outbound. They also refueled Apple 4 and 5 until they rescued the ~~two F-105~~ pilots.

This adds up to 13 aircraft and 118 persons on the ground or in the immediate vicinity of Son Tay Prison. In addition, Firebird 1 through 5 were the 5 F-105s for SAM suppression; and 10 F-4s were for MIGCAP.

In the selection of air crews, the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Training Center at Eglin, which possessed the only stateside heavy-lift, air-refuelable helicopters, supplied the preponderant number of helicopter crew members and all the H-3/53 training resources. Additional crew members were returned from Southeast Asia from the 40th Air Rescue Squadron and 703rd Special Operations Squadron to complete the 5 H-53 crews. The 3 H-3 crew members were from the Training Center. All of the training of these crew members were instructor or flight examiner-qualified. Similarly, the 1st Special Operations Wing at Hurlburt supplied pilots from their instructor cadre. Co-pilots were supplied from the 56th Special Operations Squadron at NKP, in Southeast Asia.

All of the foregoing crew members volunteered, and after being interviewed by General Manor or Lieutenant Colonel Warner Britton, were selected to participate on the mission. Colonel Britton was the Air Force representative who participated in the feasibility study and was pilot of Apple 1 on the mission.

The C-130 COMBAT TALON crews, due to their integrated crew status, were selected by crew. One from the 7th Special Operations Squadron in Germany, one from Det 2, Special Operations Wing at Pope Air Force Base. Due to the addition of Forward Looking Infrared, an additional navigator was added to each crew.

The UH-1H crews from the 6th Special Forces Group and 82d Airborne, were selected by the Army commander.

The location of training was at Eglin. All helicopter and A-1 training was conducted in the vicinity of Eglin using both land and water ranges. The COMBAT TALON aircraft, in addition to training at Eglin, flew missions over the mountains of North Georgia and Tennessee to simulate the actual mission and confirm their ability to do the terrain avoidance--terrain following mission with the helicopters in tow.

Training of the air component, including the Army UH-1H operations, can best be approached in terms of special equipment development, tactics and techniques, formation, and specialized aircrew training.

In the area of special equipment, in an effort to enhance the probability of success or to counter a specific threat, some special equipments were either designed or adapted to the particular needs of the mission. I'll cover some of the more significant.

Two types of night-vision devices were tested. They were the lightweight starlight scope and electronic binoculars or goggles. While the goggles are in use today, these early models were

unusable due to cockpit lighting. If you turned the cockpit lighting down to prevent interference with the goggles, nobody in the airplane could read the instruments. In addition, even the very dim formation lights used by the helicopters and C-130s were too bright. The devices were valuable, however, as we waited in the holding area after off-loading the troops to check the surrounding terrain and watch the little bit of activity there was on the ground.

A Forward Looking Infrared System, as I mentioned, was installed on both COMBAT TALON C-130s. Early in the training phase, it was determined it would require the full-time attention of an additional navigator, which was added. The FLIR proved to be highly beneficial in identifying checkpoints en route and pinpointing the objective.

C-130 ordnance delivery required that special procedures be developed for dropping illumination flares, fireproof simulators, and napalm fire bombs. Flares and fireproof simulators were launched through paratroop doors and log flares over the ramp. The BLU-27/B firebombs which were modified to function as visual markers required special rigging and palletizing. Checklists and procedures had to be developed and personnel trained.

Tactics and techniques were in a constant state of revision and modification until the full dress rehearsal in early October. All missions were jointly briefed and debriefed with every element that participated represented. The building-block concept was constantly stressed and emphasized and practiced. We would

practice each segment separately and single ship, if feasible. Ballast was carried to match planned flight gross weight. Formations were flown at density altitude expected to be encountered. Initially, . . .

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~~each flight crew flew the different positions to ensure that all were capable of filling in any position as required for whatever reason.~~ Both the H-1 and H-3 crews were qualified to perform the assault mission. Both COMBAT TALON C-130s were capable of performing, or to lead either formation. The reserve H-53s were ready to replace any of the first three H-53's if the need arose and the situation permitted. Some of the tactics that were changed or confirmed during the training were:

The original tactics anticipated were to have been two formations, each led by a C-130 and consisting of helicopters and A-1s. The variance in slow-speed capability dictated a change which resulted in our final configuration. A formation of one C-130 with six helicopters proceeding at 105 knots and another C-130 with 5 A-1s at 145 knots.

They confirmed the low altitude profile to avoid radar detection was feasible.

One of the major changes in tactics from that which was originally conceived was replacing a UH-1 with the H-3. Original intelligence information militated the use of the H-1 even though

it would require staging from a forward operating location, but there would be fewer troops, and in the event of a mission abort in the later stages, the H-1s return to friendly territory would be in question. Late intelligence confirmed the feasibility of using the H-3 for the compound landing. Increased troop carrying capacity, twin-engine reliability, greater firepower, and in-flight refueling capability making a last-minute abort possible dictated the use of the H-3. However, the H-1 crews continued to train and deployed with the task force, as General Manor has already mentioned.

The major enemy threat to a successful landing in the compound were two guard towers, one at each end of the compound. Use of an H-53 with its three 7.62 miniguns was conceived as a way to take these guard towers out.

Formation training for all the participants was a challenge. All the crews had experience with formation flying to a degree, but only the H-3, H-53, and the HC-130 crews had the basic experience that was going to be needed. And I emphasize that was basic experience. Air refueling is done straight and level. This flight was not. The C-130/A-1 formation did not have any major problems since their airspeeds were more compatible, but the loaded A-1 had a maximum airspeed of 145 knots so that was a little below the speed the 130 people would rather have flown. The 53s did not have any major difficulty. Although both Apple 1 and 2 were loaded to maximum gross, they had enough reserve to easily stay with the formation.

The major problem encountered was the combining the UH-1 or H-3 with the C-130. The C-130s were flying at their absolute minimum airspeed and the helicopters, at near maximum gross weight, at their maximum airspeed. In order for the formation to join, the C-130 would fly under the helicopter, slowing to 105 knots. The helicopter would then descend, gaining airspeed into the drafting position on the left wing. And there he stayed. Should turbulence, maneuvering, or weather cause the helicopter to lose the formation, the C-130 would have to circle 360 degrees for another join-up coming in underneath the helicopter. Fortunately, no rejoin was required during the mission.

Specialized aircrew training, I've mentioned before. That was the munitions loading, the gunnery for the H-53 people, and formation training for the UH-1s.

Joint training. Again, almost simultaneously with the flight training. Familiarization training with the H-3 and 53 was conducted with the Army forces. Procedures were developed to ensure the fastest possible on and off load sequence. As each component became proficient in their respective tasks, more and more of the flying training was joint training.

Frequently a mission would be flown in the afternoon, and after a debrief and discussions of problems with corrective actions, the mission would be repeated after dark. During the proper phase of the moon, some missions were flown as late as 2:30 in the morning to achieve as realistic lighting as possible.

That completes our preparation phase of this. Now to discuss the occurrences as we went in on the mission. Some of problems occurred in launching and proceeding to the IP, but all were corrected, and the force was within one and one-half minutes of the scheduled time when it arrived over the IP. As the assault force passed the IP at 500 feet above ground level, Cherry 1 accelerated and climbed to 1500 feet AGL. A heading of 72 degrees was called to the helicopter flight. The C-130 then launched parachute fliers over the objective and gave the call sign, "Alpha," which I think was picked up at Monkey Mountain-- and all over the world, evidently. The helicopter flight slowed to 80 knots until Apple 3, the gunship, moved ahead of the flight. Banana, followed by Apple 1 and 2, took up a trail formation. The formation drifted slightly right and down to the objective. Apple 3 recognized the error, turned slightly left, and followed by Banana, executed his firing run as planned. Banana landed in the compound. Apple 1 sighted the schoolhouse, but under the lighting conditions and similarity to the Son Tay Camp, concentrated on its landing and off-load. Apple 2, being a little bit further behind and being able to see a little bit more, recognized the error, circled right and informed Colonel Sydnor, Wildroot, who was on Apple 2, and an approach and landing to the Son Tay Camp was completed. Apple 1, upon lift-off from the schoolhouse, recognized at that time that he was in the wrong area, but waited for confirmation from the ground forces that they were ready for pickup before he returned to pick them

up. The pickup was made and the forces moved to the proper position.

This covers the Air Force portion up to getting the people into the prison camp. Now Colonel Sydnor will tell you what the Army was up to during all this time.

COLONEL SYDNOR: Gentlemen, I was asked, when they were putting this panel together, if I would cover several things. Partly, it would be my part and responsibilities to General Manor and to Colonel Simons with regard to the planning. But I got there too late. When I was recruited--as a volunteer--by Colonel Simons, they were just about to wrap that up and my introduction to it was to walk into an area in the Pentagon where the JCS had given them a couple of rooms, and be given the ground plan and told there was a model in the adjacent room (which you may have heard about, General Manor mentioned), and told to critique that plan. What once was widely known as a failure and now is widely known as a classic, was partially apparent to me at that time. I had never seen such a simple plan and so clearly written that even I could understand it. Didn't even have to ask any questions. All of the elements that were there in front of me were just like they were punched out of the manual. And it stayed that way almost without change all the way through the training period.

They say that the biologists and physiologists and that sort of thing say that if you want to do well genetically, you want to take real care in selecting your parents. If you want to do well in the Service, you do well to select carefully your commanders and leaders. Of course, you know, that's not possible, but you always hope that you'll get some good ones. And I always did, and I think that's why I had a successful career. All I ever wanted from them was for them to be smart and know

what they wanted. And there wasn't any question about that in the case of Colonel Simons. It was later that I learned that General Blackburn was part of this, too. He fit right in there. Captain Meadows, I would trust with my very life. But then, again, that's all in the eye of the beholder. My wife said to me when I told her I was fixing to go to Washington, said to me, "You're not getting mixed up with Simons and Meadows, again, are you?"

Well, that afternoon after I read the plan, Colonel Simons told me that we had a room in Crystal City. It was that night that he told me that although he was the Deputy Task Force Commander under General Manor, that he was not going to be in the air commanding this task force on site, but he was going to be on the ground. I could work that out. It did solve part of the pack mule problem because I had more radios than I could handle. There wasn't any more room on the packsaddle, and all of a sudden, all I had to do was get another radio operator--I had three--split them down the middle, and Colonel Simons would take half of them. Now that's not real good communications procedure in Division and all that, but that's what happens between people that trust each other. I trusted him explicitly and apparently, he did me, also. So, there we were. The Deputy Task Force Commander, the leader in the area, was on the ground. He had a duplicate set of my command net and we tried to stay separate from each other so that one round wouldn't get us both. He told me also that evening that I would be responsible to him

because we were going to Eglin and he would be in and out because there were a great number of things that still had to be done by he and General Manor. So he expected me to run his staff, to get the camp mockup erected, to make sure that the special equipment that had already been identified, and the equipment was coming in on time, to shake the people down that had volunteered and that he had selected from these volunteers. And that we would progress through this, through the basic plan, and we would hold off on the alternate plans until we had had a complete profile. And so that is kind of what we did. I played staff in the morning and in the afternoon after we had shaken ourselves out for about ten days, working, getting on and off aircraft which we were not familiar with and that sort of thing, then we started actually going out to the plan and doing our walk-throughs. This was very enlightening.

As was mentioned earlier, when we did finally swing into this we had kind of what you'd call a showboat. We had three matinees and three night shows. As a result of this, we had a total of about 160 to 170 full rehearsals. Now when I say approximately, because when we got into--and I'll show you a slide in a minute--we got into training with live fire, we didn't have that masonry wall to separate the fires of the assault force inside, so we could only put one-third of the force on the ground at a time. So actually, to do the whole force. We also knew with some concern that General Blackburn would be showing up and he would check us out and decide for himself whether or not he thought we

could cut the mustard. So we were working at that all the way. When he finally did come, I'll show you some of the things we did for him to convince him that we were, in fact, doing what he expected of us. Part of this on his part was to take hold of the harness of the machinegunner or the leader or whomever he chose and run through these things with us just as if he were the other half of that man.

Okay, so finally, then, my job upon being inserted, and my responsibility to the task force was to control the raiding forces on the ground and the close air support, and to control the extraction. Colonel Simons had picked volunteers which could go either way. Now there were a few persons who were cooks and a few persons that were picked that were guards and armorers and supply clerks which did not fit into this category. However, we played it all the way as if anyone on this force-- even so, we never told anyone outside the planning staff except myself was privy to the words, POW, the location, Son Tay, or anything beyond our cover story which said we were forming and training a joint contingency task force in case its needed.

As we trained the force, we increased it. I said we made some minor changes. We increased it from the 51 original personnel to 56 personnel. This was augmented then by the helicopter that was going to be control-crashed into the compound in order to get a larger helicopter in there that could carry the optimum 14 men which the assault leader felt he needed to achieve everything as soon as possible on insertion. As we went

along with the showboat, we had each night after that, as we chose, we had certain missions following that. And we had our support people bring out ammunition and that sort of thing for night zeroing. We had a night sight--had a night point sight--which I give a lot of credit to for the blows we dealt the enemy with accurately-aimed fire. We zeroed at 40 feet and we did this over and over. We found out why the Services--or the Army, especially--had not bought this sight. Because it was not soldier-proof. It was rather fragile and after a few nights' firing, it would jar off of the zero and you would have to do this again. So we got in a lot of good night training that way. We also shook everybody down that had special weapons other than M-16s or carb 15s. The machinegunners had their own training. The people who carried the LAWS were required to fire these LAWS. I suppose that the one staff person that did us the most good at Eglin--and I do not know whether he ever knew what he was supposed to do, but somebody sure put a fire under the safety officer. When we were given a dry range to train on, we were going to want to fire everything from LAWS to 20mm from the A-1Es. And I said that is never going to happen unless he shows up here one day and says, "Snyder,"--nobody ever gets my name right--says, "Snyder, you're going to have to write this yourself." But he did. And I don't know who he was, General Manor, but you all got to him. So it was, that as long as we didn't leave any duds out there, we could train it the way it was. So each night as we were training, for instance, on the M-79

grenade launcher, if we had a dud, that stopped the training for that night. As best we could, we would pinpoint where it should have been located and the next day, that was our first order of business was to find it.

Okay, we also--and within the second part of the ~~story~~ story--needed to find people who could run acetylene--operate acetylene torches. Someone--a portable acetylene torch--someone who knew enough about ~~photography~~ photography that we could train him to use infrared flash and film so that we could take some pictures. So we put out a list with many ~~red herrings~~ red herrings on it like ~~HARD~~ school qualifications, like ~~mountain climbing~~ mountain climbing, like ~~cold weather train-~~ing and all that, and mixed in with this, bulldozer operating and acetylene torches and that sort of thing. Of course, we were playing a game, it seemed, and luckily we had these long number of 24-hour days so that we could get to these things. Of course, this is the fun part, because these guys are going to get to shoot.

We had, to tell you how long ago it was, we had four night vision devices which were gotten from the night vision laboratory at Alexandria, Virginia. That's all there were. We're not talking about starlight scope. We're talking about the beginning of the night vision devices that you have. So we trained on one of them, knowing it was so sensitive that if it was ever exposed to light we would lose them all. And that was for our observation post. We did this successfully and we were able to use all four of them that night.

As we started our unit training, we had all the "what-ifs" that General Manor was talking about. What if this happens, what if that happens. But we concentrated for the first period all the way through the remainder of September, not knowing about the dates that were given you by General Blackburn, and the difficulties of getting things cleared. We were homing in on getting the basic one down and being able to deploy the middle of October. And so it was, we simply said, we'll take that up when we get into alternate plans. Then we were able to do this.

Well, the day we read--but we never gave anybody anything in writing--the day we read the alternate plans to the group leaders--the assault group, the security and support--it looked like a three-man stampede. They all took off, got in individual vehicles there out at Duke Field and raced for Field 3 where we had the camp set up. It was from that day forward that we had tremendous cooperation between them. And you will see, since we went into one of the alternate plans, that was extremely valuable training. I was appreciative of the fact that we didn't go in October so that we had an additional number of days so that we could get this thing down. And it turns out, we got it right.

I was asked, also, to touch on joint training which I'll do briefly. After the Air Force shook itself down and we shook ours down, we began to see more and more of them, then. And this is when we started marrying up our people. We started

doing our timing for the insertions. We started putting marks on the ground. We started flying in there. Our admin people spent an awful lot of time rebuilding the camp. It was made out of target cloth and 2 x 4s stuck into the sand. So you can just imagine three helicopters coming in three times in the afternoon and three times at night, what that looked like. I don't know what a person that did get hold of a photo by this satellite would have thought if he had seen this combination 2 x 4s and target cloth, but to me, from a little higher altitude it looked like a poor attempt at the Chicago stockyard--you know, kind of brown and white. But the design was there. The trace of the river was there. The trace of the road was there. One section of the bridge was there which we later blew to see where the debris was going to go.

We had a good time working out the gunship part. That was one of the major changes, to take a gunship or one of the reserve HH-53s, put a minigun on either side of it and with full tracer, maximum rate of fire 4000 rounds a minute, they were literally going to cut off those towers as they flew over. There was some concern, I understood--this is a second-hand story--that PJs said they could do it. They said, you know, from muzzle to target is probably 85 feet. We can do that. Those people that were flying the machine, knowing it was an unstable platform and so forth, were less sure. So we went out and tried it. We built the wall out of some cardboard--E-type silhouettes, as a matter of fact--and part of the tower. And

the first day they made the pass and just shot them up bad. No holes in the wall. We were afraid of ricochets and killing the persons that we had come to give a ride home. The next time we did it was at night. And after the initial burst, we couldn't see the target anymore, so we couldn't do anything to fire. So somewhere in the Air Force inventory there are ~~twelve barrels with flashlights welded to them~~. So that was how that was solved. So we were able to use the gunship which reduced the vulnerability of the assault force and perhaps, the other helicopters as they were landing, the initial insertion, and did not--we felt that we were not losing too much surprise by shocking them with this initial burst and taking out those people who could deliver the aimed fire the quickest.

Lessons learned by joint training. And I had to do like I have done many times. Nothing new. Same old lessons. Because we do it over and over again. Nobody every really does well joint that I've ever seen except two captains--one Special Forces and one Air Force--they don't fight over turf. You just give them a mission and they go do it. But when you've got turf, you get into all kinds of problems. I would say that you still have to have the necessary break-in unless you are assigned and you work together all the time, there still has to be a break-in period so that each one of them, like, you know, two guys talking to one another at a meeting. They have to establish themselves, so that takes a little bit of time. The difference is in the commo procedures, not the commo procedures as written, but the

way you do them. And you have to get used to each other. The value of living under one roof, for whatever reasons, is not done as often as it should be. And what you lose there, in my opinion, is the discussion of many minor subjects that, you know, after saying, well, I'm going to have to hold off this until two or three days when I get the pickup truck and go in and talk to him, and then you don't do that.

Our full-scale--by the time we got around to our full-scale rehearsal, we really had solved most of these problems of joint training and had relearned all the lessons that were necessary.

What I'd like to do is spend a couple of minutes here and show you first one of the items that I was talking about that General Blackburn was interested in when we first came down. What you see here was once an Air Force blank form, and it was first used early on by the ops sergeant and the ops officer and myself trying to decide what we were going to need to support our training for approximately the next ten days. So you see on there a typical day and rehearsal schedule--this happens to be live training--happens to be daylight and night because our normal training day after we got settled in this routine was from twelve to twelve. Didn't always work exactly that way. Here are the forces that were going to be trained. Because it was live fire, we could only put the assault on the ground and then come back with them and put the support on the ground and then the command and security force on the ground. So actually, that was on that day with live fire, we were only rehearsing each of those

one time. We needed all this support because we were using these things. If we needed demolition we had to have it prepositioned, and we had to have the bunkers for it, and if we were going to use these weapons, we are going to have to have the ammunition set aside. And this is the selection of aircraft that will have to be available. And you see over there that we were simulating flares during the day and using them at night. We became so used to training at night that although we had bland(?) flares for period of moon phase that were dark, we became so used to training on this mockup that we finally just simply knocked that off. That makes you remember your own training where if you are going to say, "I'm night trained," it's going to have to be within the last two or three weeks or you will begin to forget the parts.

What I would like to show you now is the plan as it was supposed to work. And I am going to skip a lot of the detail in the interest of time, but here is a three-dimensional sketch which was one of the items prepared by folks for the development of the plan and the briefings. And it shows it without much of the foliage like the trees, the enemy trees that the helicopter was going to have to stick its blades into and chew on in here, and the trees along here and along here. You're going to see some of those. At H-hour, as described, the C-130 and the gunship were approaching the compound with the other helicopters behind them, the gunship would fire up this tower, this tower, with its cutoff being as it passed over the wall. And then it would pick up and fire this building up, which is the largest

building outside, and we assumed that was where the concentration of troops would be. This being the second-largest building, here. Each of these arrows you are going to see--the lead arrow, only, is an element. And this would be Captain Meadows with a three-man element. He was going to finish off anything that might be in the tower and quickly check out the two latrines. One unit here to finish off that tower and check out these and one element here which was going to secure . . .

- - - - END OF TAPE 4 - - - -

. . . Something generally like, "We are Americans, we are here to rescue you, get down, do not move." And we kept repeating that as long as we practicably could. As they came in, before they settled in over the wall in this area, here, there was a machine-gunner firing on the tower--or the remains--and a rifleman standing in the door firing here, with another rifleman on the deck below that rifleman on the starboard door ready to fire at the gate tower over the gatehouse at this point when it came into view under these several bushy trees at this location. The difficulty here was landing here meant to clear the tail no matter how he crabbed in here, to clear the tail he was going to have to put the rotor blades into the tree and then quickly cut power and drop that last 8 to 9 feet into the ground pretty soundly. The crew chief that got his foot broken--the reason for that, we had fire extinguishers because dropping here we thought we might

spring a leak in the fuel tank and he would take these foam fire extinguishers and expend them under the bird to keep that from happening. That was our greatest fear that we would have a fire in there and that would be the end of the search. Their cutoff for firing on the towers was also when they crossed here because 30 seconds later, at H plus 1 minute, these helicopters approached nose-to-tail. This is Apple 1 and 2 with the support force--with all the green force that had the responsibility for this area here, this major building, and finally to blow the bridge. The red force was to come in here with the minigun on the starboard side. They would fire up a pumphouse that was here at this canal, and then he would settle in here and the pathfinders would clear the pumphouse and blow this down. A roadblock crew would go from here over to the road. The command group would hold up here in this ditch and this force would go here and clear these buildings. The way it would unfold here, at H plus 3, they should have completely secured the insides of the compound, beginning to search out and release inside. An access hole was to be blown here. While that was happening this force would clear this building and the other portion would clear this building, holding up here until this had taken place. Over here, the first attack would be this building, this building and this building, simultaneously by the largest--however, it was relatively small--it was about a 7-man element, here--and then they would continue here. This group here would release the machinegun team to--and that was one of the two changes made with ground plans--release a 2-man team as soon as

they reach the road to run as fast as they could to these cat-holes along this elevated area between these two lower areas to the bridge, and would prevent anyone from coming in and anyone from leaving the area until the bridge was linked up. These people would clear this building, put grenade fire on that one, and at about H plus 6, the clearing here would have been completed. The pathfinders set up the perimeter and the alternate extraction points. The bridge team would be passed after this had been cleared and a link-up made here along that line of arrows here. This team would clear this building, this building, and this building and set up a roadblock. The roadblock would be placed there at the culvert where the canal went under the road. At H plus 9 we should be in place to low the bridge. That would have given Blueboy, the assault leader, time to organize his first extraction load, but we would not bring the helicopter in until this explosion had taken place, an assessment made and a second explosion, if necessary, just to prevent that possibility of the helicopter being missiled by flying into that explosion. So, it was at that point that we were free to bring in the first helicopter. This would be done under the direct approval of the ground force commander by contacting him on the radio. We also had flare signals--colored flares and combinations--which would have done the same thing. Blueboy would announce over the command net that he had a certain number of items, which was our code word for POWs and a certain number of raiders ready to dispatch. This would be monitored by the

MAKO(?) who was waiting at the extraction point, and would also be monitored by the aircraft commander who was picking up and making his entry, here. And only after the MAKO had loaded on and counted and given that count to the ground force commander, monitored by the one who dispatched them, and monitored by the aircraft commander, would he be released by him and not released under any other conditions than release by the ground force commander. And that's the control. At H plus 20, the second group was to come in. We planned, basically, to use three. If there had been some additional POWs there that required, in other words, up to a hundred as earlier mentioned--or more, we would have been able to do this by using the two additional helicopters. At H plus 20, the last helicopter--whether that would be 3, 4, or 5--would be--the support force now in these positions here and Blueboy with radio operator and demolitions here, and the Command Group here. Before Blueboy left, he would have activated a pre-placed a delay charge to destroy that bird with an explosive device _____ . And so that would be the last element off the ground. We had alternate plans. Should we have arrived with all the helicopters--that is, all the ground forces intact, and there was an obstacle here that would have prevented the shoe-horning of the helicopter. The control-crashing of the helicopter at this location, they would go in here. This required adding on some equipment like a throwaway machinegun--one where a person could come out, set up the machinegun, fire on the tower until his ammunition was

expended, simply leave it in place, and then join people with charges and an aluminum ladder if they had to negotiate this wall. There was this door, there, so there was always a possibility that that would be used.

So you see by the color scheme, the support area of responsibility, the responsibility for the command and security and the responsibility for the assault group.

Other alternate plans--if we were over halfway and we lost not more than one aircraft containing an element of the elements of the ground force, we would continue and employ an alternate plan and it would be coded the same as the missing aircraft. In this case, the green support would also take the responsibility for this and pick up the additional equipment like the beanbag lighting and that sort of thing and set up _____. The alternate plan blue, the red force would have to negotiate the wall and would have to have with them these devices, boltcutters and that sort of thing for the releasing of the prisoners inside the compound. And alternate plan green, which was the one we did get into--if the green aircraft were not there, the red aircraft, after firing up this pumphouse with the starboard minigun, would not land in its normal position but would pull forward into here and fire up the major danger area outside with its port minigun. And this is the scheme I am going to describe to you in just a moment.

Here, in fact, is exactly what went on that night. This was--when we started writing the after action report, this came

out in the Pensacola News Journal--and that is what the whole United States (for anybody who was interested) was asking--what really went on. As General Manor has earlier indicated, we did go a day early and our approach--using this photomap--he also mentioned Keith Grimes. This photomap was once a little wider and three times as long, and it was one of the innovative ideas you can expect from people who are generally trying to help you. One day he asked me if it wouldn't be a good idea to have one of these photos gridded so that the ground force commander and the A-1 lead could talk to each other and be a little more precise about identifying targets or giving warnings. Like, he may see ten sets of headlights turn north south of us and ask if we are interested in them, should we do anything about it. And that was sort of an example. I put this up here secondarily, though, to show you without this hairpin turn, here, this camp, although not outlined exactly like it is outlined there, and its southern boundary and its relationship and distance to this dry canal with mud in the bottom--dried mud, and its azimuth, is somewhat similar to this area here and the distance to this road which appears to be somewhat similar to that. And it was when they were coming in--as Colonel Allison said, the gunship was going in here. He recognized it for what it was, and his error, and he went up here and he went over the compound and literally cut off one of those towers. Of course, there was nobody in that because there were no POWs in that camp. And he set the thatched roof of the other one on fire and he also fired up this

building through the roof and set it on fire although it did not begin to burn brightly--it did later. The aircraft of the assault force also did an S-turn and went in there and landed properly. Apple 1, with better concentration, and the others bore right on in here and put folks out right here and took off. Now, I learned some things today that I haven't known for these 18 years--and that was part of the transmissions that were taking place between one of the copilots and the pilot of Apple 1 as he was lifting off. All he needed was a mark and he was going to come back in and pick them up. The first people on the ground here to know that the place didn't track with what they expected was the machinegun team when they got out here and expected to find the road to the bridge. In our debriefs, some of the sergeants told me that they thought--their initial thought was that they perhaps were on the other end of the compound. They just couldn't deduce what was happening. Colonel Simons and his two radio operators then took their--they had strobelights and flashlights, and I don't remember which they used--went out and set up a landing point for Apple 1 and these people who were meeting people coming out of these buildings and firing on them pulled back out of there, the aircraft came in and they were extracted having been on the ground there probably three or four minutes. The aircraft, Apple 2, also did a maneuver and went in and landed not at its normal point, but drifted forward into here. I have always said--and if I recall correctly that Colonel Allison was the one, recognizing that we had the elements of

alternate plan green, had his gunner fire into this and was telling me at the same time that Apple Green was not present. I reached out about two feet and got hold of red wine who had the security force and before he even opened his net, I had told him that, as he got out from under the tailend of the helicopter, that plan green was in effect. That plan green did not get to Meadows for some time because as this--we didn't know how thick this tree was, all we could see were the outer leaves and we were wondering, you know, when that helicopter blade got in there, what it was going to meet, whether it was going to be heavy boughs and things that might even affect the helicopter, might even turn it over. There were some heavy limbs. And as the men came off, initially the air was full of twigs and leaves and that sort of thing and also some chunks of firewood, one of which caught Meadows' radio operator right between the soft cap and the top of his radio and knocked both of them off about one click. And we were having some difficulty with transmissions because of that. He--while this was going on and we had banded outside and the red force had begun to clear these building, all of a sudden--and I still don't know to this day exactly the timing, but somewhere around H plus 8 or 9 minutes, this helicopter came floating in here [I was right up here] and I don't know now either whether I was happy or what, but the thing I was thinking about was, "I hope he does proper." And he did. And all this goes back to the number of rehearsals we had that we had time for on our alternate plans. He and red wine, who was

here, just as they had many times, had a sort of passage of lines here, and they went back in. His people pulled back out of here. They had not gotten to these buildings. Pulled back out of here and they went in to clear these buildings then. Found a couple of guys playing possom in this one. In the meantime, we had received several transmissions from Blueboy saying, "negative items, search continues." And then his fourth transmission came at about H plus 12 saying, "search complete--negative items in the compound, search complete." And so it was at that time the ground force commander said we will withdraw. The rest is history. It is fairly well documented in Mr. Schemmer's book, and I will leave it there.

COL LONG: We will have a short break before we have our next speaker.

- - - BREAK - - -

Our last speaker did not thumb a ride out with the force on the night of the raid. He measures the success of the raid by another means, and I think we will find his speech quite interesting. He is Colonel Richard A. Dutton. After attending the Georgia Institute of Technology where he was named the Distinguished Military Graduate of 1951, Colonel Dutton was graduated from advanced pilot and fighter training and flew 59 combat missions in Korea. He was a combat crew fighter and instructor

at Nellis Air Force Base from 1953 until 1959. After tours in Germany as Flight Commander, 22d Tactical Fighter Squadron, Bitburg Air Force Base; and at Nellis Air Force Base he served as Flight Commander with the 469th Tactical Fighter Squadron at Korat Royal Thai Air Force Base, and then returned to Nellis in 1966. One year later, he was assigned to Takhli Royal Thai Air Force Base as Flight Commander. On 5 November 1967, his F-105 Wild Weasel aircraft was shot down and he was taken prisoner. He was held captive until March 1973, and this included a little tour in Son Tay. In 1976 until 1981 he was Commandant of the United States Air Force Special Operations School. Please join me in welcoming Colonel Dutton.

COLONEL DUTTON: One of the objectives of this entire objective-- my only comment is, "what a hell of a way to come home that would have been." Boy, I would have given anything--and not just because it would have shortened my tour. I would have extended over there if I could have come home that way. That would have been--well, I would still be out of my mind on that. Well, quick and dirty. Let me give you a short history of the conditions of treatment in North Vietnam. Remember, only North Vietnam. Starting on 5 August 1964, the number one POW in North Vietnam, Albert Alvarez, was shot down in the Bay of Tonkin incident. He was the number two POW in longevity. An Army special forces officer in the South--who was held in the South--was actually number one and spent the longest time. From that date until the 6th of July-- which was the night [1966]--which was the night of the Hanoi parade, which is what we called it when they shackled about a hundred POWs together by twos, herded them through the streets of Hanoi, incited the crowds to riot, finally ended up in the old soccer stadium, just barely alive, many of them, was the first period of time. The treatment during that time was not good, but it wasn't terrible. Torture was primarily restricted to the initial interrogation for getting what hard military information the Vietnamese wanted or hoped the individual had; and after that was only used selectively on approval of higher headquarters to get specific things from very particular people--like the senior Navy man, Admiral Stockdale; the senior Air Force man at that time; Time magazine celebrity, Kessler; and people like this--to

obtain either their specific information or their cooperation and this sort of thing. Starting on the night of 6 July 1966 until the night of 15 October 1969, in our camp--the time varied slightly a few days one way or the other depending on which camp you were in--treatment was, by God, terrible! Any Vietnamese--man, woman or child, boy or pet--had the right of doing anything they wanted anytime they wanted on whatever whim they wanted. And people died directly during this time, or as a result of treatment handed out during this time. This is over and above--or after, I should say--the initial interrogation period which was still, they did what they wanted to or needed to to get their information. On the 15th of October, for whatever reason--we're not a hundred percent sure--I could give you lots of possible reasons, treatment went from night to day. On the morning of the 15th of October in Son Tay, all three quiz rooms--as we called them--this is where they asked their pet questions was full; and on the night of the 15th of October, they were empty, never to be filled again except on single occasions for people that more or less earned what they got. And from that date until we came out in February--in March of 1973, the treatment was--by relative standards--pretty good and got better. Sort of like the stockmarket. Had its ups and downs, but got better all the time until about a year before we came back, they realized that we were, in fact, going to come back and they started fattening us up and started giving us all the starch that we would eat.

What are prisons like in North Vietnam? Most of you, when you think of prisons, you see something on television--I doubt very many people here have been in a real prison, but you think of what you see on TV with the bars open and you can see the people walking up on the other side or going by or whatever like that. No way. Every cell over there was sealed. No windows--doors barred. If there was a window, it would be ten or fifteen feet up in the air. In the case like at Son Tay, they even--what windows there were, they had bars in them but they had been bricked up so you couldn't see out. Doors were sealed. So, theoretically, no prisoner from any one room ever saw an American from any other room. The only people he was allowed to see were his roommates, if any. Every cell had a light that burned 24 hours a day, and every cell had at least one loudspeaker. If the cell was large enough, it would have 2, 3, or 4 so you couldn't get off in a corner and ignore it. They would all say the same thing at the same time. They weren't speaking different messages on different speakers. So that is the general feeling of what their philosophy of incarceration, if they had had the facilities, would have been every one of us in solitary confinement for the entire period that we were over there. But they didn't have the facilities. So as they got more and more of us they had to put more and more of us together. So the first 8 months that I spent there after my initial interrogation and solitary confinement, and when they had finished up with me, I spent in a 6 x 9 cell with 3 other people. So there were 4 of us in a 6 x 9. This was until we moved out to Son Tay.

Okay. Let me give you a quick and dirty history of Son Tay. Son Tay was filled by Americans in 3 increments, starting on the 24th of May 1968, 20 people moved into one section of the building. Our name for that--we named that building the Beer Hall, no, excuse me, the Opium Den. And they were mostly in ones and twos. Either solitary confinement or two rooms. It was a very dark, dingy place with very little windows or no windows at all. No ventilation. Even up high. They were mostly in the black except for that light that was on. Oh, yes, I forgot to mention that each cell has at least one peephole operated from the outside so that the guard or interrogators or whoever could come up and open it and watch you and look at you anytime they want.

The second contingent--which I was in--consisted of 17 people and went in on the 18th of July 1968. We occupied the other section of those two buildings that were butted together. The real long building and our building that we called the Beer Hall.

The third contingent of 13 people moved in on the 27th of November and filled up the camp then with 52 people. It stayed that way until the 10th of December 1969 when they took 10 people out--all the Catholics. It took us a long time to come up with what was the common figure--or why did they move those particular 10 people. It turned out that all 10 of those people were Catholics or had professed to be Catholic. One guy lied. He lied about everything to them--as many people did. And they told him he was a Catholic so they took him out with the Catholics and they put 14 Protestants in with the rest of us Protestants and we

had an all-Protestant camp. You figure that one. We never have been able to.

So now we are up to 55 people and it stayed that way until a little later when they got tired of the way things were going. They moved out the camp commander a little later, Render Crayton, they moved him back and we dropped a person. Then the man who came up to be camp commander was a Major Howie Dunn. He was worse as far as they considered. They moved him out. And later they moved in one person and we ended up with 52 people until they closed the camp on the night of 14 July 1970--four months and six days before the arrival of our would-be rescuers.

Why did we leave Son Tay? That question comes up time and time again. In the book, The Raid, Ben Schemmer makes a case for maybe we were going to be flooded out by the Operation Popeye--I believe was at least one name of it. They were seeding the weather clouds in Laos or wherever it was they were seeding them and we were going to be flooded out. No true. The other case you may have heard of was that we were running out of water. Hell, we were out of water every dry season and they would put us down in there digging out the bottoms of the well until we could get down to where we could get a bucket of water to wash in or cook in and so on. We moved--pure, plain, predetermined, standard administrative move to quarters that had been in the planning and building for us for a considerable period of time. It was just coincidence, if you will, and it was obvious to us that while we were the first ones to open Camp Faith, the Dong hoi

Military Barracks--our name, Camp Faith--that that camp was designed and a building to accommodate 342 people. Which is how many prisoners there were alive after initial interrogation up to and including the cessation of them bombing in the North in 1968--342 of us had stayed alive and were still in the system. And that was just a plain administrative move. No ulterior motives whatsoever and no problem--when I say no problem, there was always a problem with water, too much or too little--but that was not why we moved.

The consequences of the raid were nothing but good for us. Now do I mean to say that the Vietnamese intentionally treated us better? No. But they also did not intentionally treat us worse. And the main consequence of the raid was after they finally figured out that maybe what they were after was us, they took all of the POWs scattered in the various camps around Vietnam--North Vietnam--and moved them all back to Wa Lo, which was the old, French maximum-security prison in downtown Hanoi. Our name for it was the Hanoi Hilton. To us that was the Hilton. I know to people back here, any place we were was the Hilton, but this was the one we called the Hilton. And the only place they had to put that many people were in big, open-bay pens. They evacuated them very quickly. As a matter of fact, we passed some of the Vietnamese political prisoners they had. On their way out, they put us into these big, bay pens wherein before we had been in individual and small rooms. A large room being 4 or 5 people. Now the entire camp of Son Tay was in one open-bay pen, all together.

Now, I don't know if you people can understand the term of a social orgy or not, but there is such a thing and we had it! To be able to go up and shake the hand, or pat somebody on the back or see his face clearly, and so on, when you had just been looking through a peephole you drilled through a brick wall or through a window or a door for so many years trying to put a name with a face and this sort of thing. And it was literally a social orgy. No bad came to us. So it was nothing but good for us. Our morale was up. It took us about 6 days--maybe 5--I've forgotten--before we had a good picture of what the thing had actually been. We got from the political prisoners--the Vietnamese prisoners in adjacent cells to us--their loudspeakers had been telling them about this infamous, dastardly, commando attack 42 kilometers northwest of Hanoi [and guess where Son Tay was] and haranguing at them, and they passed all this information to us. Covert and clandestine communications in there. And so we knew what had gone on. The night of the raid, we . . .

- - - - END OF SIDE 5 - - - - -

. . . POW's wives, I think it was Phil Butler--it doesn't matter--wrote, or steamed the label off a peanut butter jar label, put the details of the raid--and when I say the details, I mean in great detail, almost the whole story. She used very fine print and put almost the whole book, The Raid, on the back of a peanut butter jar label, stuck that thing back on the jar and

sent it over. Vietnamese don't like peanut butter so they let it go through! And you can't read much on the back of one until you eat the peanut butter, and it was all there. So there are the consequences. I will leave any further discussions to question and answer which I will be glad to do.

COLONEL LONG: We have time for a few questions, and what I would like to do, gentlemen, is just to ask you to stay where you're seated and we'll open it for questions now. So I have one--if I may--10 years later, we seem to have forgotten some of the lessons, at least the operational lessons learned. Your mission had difficulty with intelligence. Ten years later, we had a little difficulty with operations with almost perfect intelligence. One of the factors in that perfect intelligence were eyes on the ground early. I think you know about. Was there ever any intent, General Blackburn--General Manor, to put eyes on the ground early to determine if the prisoners were, in fact, there?

GENERAL BLACKBURN: No, there was not because we felt at the time that this was initiated, that to try to put somebody in at that particular time it would take too much time--in other words--to get an agent in there. Also, we were having trouble with the U.S. Government. Now, I was running SOG and we were trying to put people in the North to operate on the ground. I could never do that. I never put an American up there. Whether he was from the boats or if we dropped them with Vietnamese. Every time we asked about putting Americans into North Vietnam to do anything, the answer was no. Well, so from the military side, we did not attempt to do it. I asked the Agency if they had anyone in there and they said no. So, we felt from what we were getting from intelligence and I'll go careful on this one--

we knew from the system, that they were in Ap Lo and Son Tay. The system that was working at the time. Based on that system that was working at the time, that was when we drew down on the drones--the 71s--to keep track of indications in those camps of what was transpiring. We saw things beginning to change. But here, again, we ran into a dilemma because if we start running that same pattern every day, too many times a day, again we would forecast what we were trying to do so we trying to change our _____ . So the answer to your question now, what happened, and I think this follows on, the night before Admiral Moorer was to meet with Mr. Laird, when the decision was made to go or no go, that afternoon, General Bennett of DIA came up--and I thought he was going to have apoplexy--to my exec, and said, "They're not there." My exec called me and before I could get into the next room, Bennett was running down the hall to Moorer. So I caught up with him as he went into the shop and he said, "They're not there." I said, wait a minute, let's take it easy now before we start hitting the old panic side. We went in to see Admiral Moorer and Bennett said, "It looks like they have gone." Well, I won't use the expletive that came out of Admiral Moorer's mouth, but it was pretty discouraging to him. I said, "How do you know? Who told you? What's the proof?" And he said, "My people." Well, we had a group of these people that knew the system that were working in the Pentagon, and I said, "How about calling down to that group and telling them to stay there." This was about five o'clock in the afternoon. I said,

"I would like to go down and talk to them and see how they came up with this conclusion." So I went down and met this group. It must have been about 15 analysts. They were all getting ready to go home, and I said, "No, sit still." I said, "Tell me how you have been following this over these last weeks and months." Well, I must admit it didn't sound very convincing to me that all of the prisoners had been moved. So this Navy captain that has the group, I said, "Now, tomorrow morning, at six o'clock, I want to meet you here in this office and I am going to ask you one question--are any of them there or have they all been moved?" I said, "With that answer, we are going to go up and see Admiral Moorer and Laird." So this was about five or six o'clock. Well, I got home and the phone was ringing. Ed Mayer, my deputy, was on the other end and he said, "Hey, those people have all gone home." So, I called up and got them all rounded back into the Pentagon. It was about twelve o'clock. I said, "Do you understand what we need for tomorrow morning?" So they started working again. Well, that following morning I went in at six o'clock and I said, "Okay, I don't want any discussion. I am going to ask you one question. I want one answer. Are they there or aren't they." Well, they started equivocating. They weren't certain. So we went up to SO(?) to go see the Admiral now and he was going to see Laird and they were going to make the decision today. So we did. Well, he equivocated. Moorer said, "My God, where do we go from here?"

Let me inject another thought in here which, maybe this is irresponsible, but I told him earlier that any endeavor to move or do anything in North Vietnam, I had run into nothing but a stone wall. The Russians were completing the hydroelectric system that would reestablish the electric grid that went from Hai Phong to Hanoi down to Vien. And that was to be activated this summer. Summer of 70. I felt that if we could demonstrate that we could go into North Vietnam and not lose anybody, that we could operate up there, that we had industry that provided the devices and equipment, that we had the capability of going in there and removing the capability--or the electric generators on that dam site. There was a very, very technical way to do it, but first we had to get the permission to go in there and do it. I had given the President--_____ the President--what I considered a 95% confidence factor that we could go in there and come out without losing a person, due to the intelligence of the number of Vietnamese troops, guards, and everything in the whole area. And so with this degree of confidence, with this dam site being completed and this electrical grid being put back, with the U.S. adamant against re-initiating the bombing, and if it was, the furor it would cause back here, I felt, here again, was a mission you could do with a little bit less fuel. So when we started discussing whether they were there or not there--these two things stuck in the back of my mind. I said to _____, give us more proof that some of them or all of them are gone. And he didn't have it at that

time. There may be some left there. Well, this, frankly, was all I needed for the amount of confidence factor I had in these people and LeRoy Manor didn't know this. So with this, Admiral Moorer went up to Secretary Laird and they discussed it up there. And the sum of the substance was that if we didn't do it now, we would never be able to pull this thing together later on. Let's go for it. It was a very, very s _____. That summer the focus went _____. Furthermore, some of the psychological impact that I was talking about earlier was again to let these guys out there know that somebody needed them. _____. So this was a very, very, very tough decision to make, I'll admit. And to be censured for it, I'll accept it. I approved it, I accept it. Because that is how it stood when Laird made the decision. This was taken to the White House, and when Nixon said, "Go," they were off. Do you have a question, sir?

QUESTION: Sir, it was briefed that the Commanders of MAC and TAC were brought in on the operation. I've seen it written that the commander of SAC did not know of the operation, therefore, the quality of the overhead coverage that you got was poor because they had an area requirement rather than a pinpoint requirement. Would that have aided in verification of the prison?

ANSWER: GENERAL BLACKBURN: Well, I would say that when we were battling it from our shop for _____ operational staff, our intelligence people from NSA on down, felt that we were

getting what we wanted. And the recon people that were in the Pentagon, they were satisfied with the results.

GENERAL MANOR: As a matter of fact, we were getting excellent SR-71 coverage. We were getting exactly what we asked for. Buffalo Hunter we could get anytime we wanted except that we were leery of using it too often because of giving away our intentions. The week they split the camp, we didn't use Buffalo Hunter. But, you see, some of our Buffalo Hunter missions did not produce the results because the drone was shot down before it could be recovered. So we didn't always reap the benefits from them. There was a mission flown the very day our operation took place. That night, I got a debriefing by telephone from Art Andradis(sp), who was at that time where the airplane landed, at _____ . And he called and gave me a briefing. At any rate, I had every confidence that everything was normal. The time that this occurred in the Pentagon, as General Blackburn referred to earlier, I had already received what we called a "Red Rocket" message. We had a green light to go to Takhli. And I wasn't aware of any of this going on. And I am glad that I wasn't. It would have been something else for me to have been concerned with. I am sure glad that it happened the way that it did. Because otherwise it wouldn't have gone so well. While I'm on my feet, I'd like to point out that this brings out, I think, a very important requirement that you people have--and that is human intelligence. You can't do

without it. You have got to have human intelligence. We didn't have it, and I don't think there was any way we could have gotten it in that short period of time that we had. But today, we ought to be planning to have provided to us that sort of intelligence. We have to have operatives in various parts of the world--people we can depend on. This has got to be reestablished. If it ever was. I figure it was at one time _____ . It went away. It ought to be brought back and I hope it is. We really need that.

GENERAL BLACKBURN: I would like to add something to what he is saying, again, on the intelligence picture. You see, in the 64, or, 70 timeframe, or earlier in the 68 timeframe, _____ teams had been dropped into the North. I put some of them in there. We didn't put an American in there, of course, just could not put them in there. Supposedly highly trained teams. It was a foolish venture that we were executing. We had taken this mission over from some other people. But you couldn't get anything really reliable back from them. And this is why, when in 65, MacNamara finally agreed to let us put Americans--two Americans or three Americans with 8 or 9 Vietnamese--put them in Cross Boar, we were demonstrating that this could work because the Ho Chi Minh Trail was pretty chopped up by the 1st Division and we could still work over there. The next move was to say, "Okay, if we could operate Cross Boar in Laos, how about operating out of Nakhom Phanom and put teams over in the

panhandle over in North Vietnam? Same instruction. For the Americans--no way. So then we attempted--asked--that these PT boats that we were shooting up as far as Hai Phong [crews, everybody, were Vietnamese] we wanted to put some SEALs and other people on those boats when they went north. Again, the point collecting intelligence, primarily. No way. So everywhere you would turn, you were blocked in this. And believe it or not, HUMINT is a very time-consuming problem to develop it properly. You can't just all of a sudden decide to develop an agent. It takes a lot of time, and I just didn't think we had the time. That's a long story.

QUESTION: Colonel Dutton, how long did it take before the POWs found out about the raid. How did they find out about it and what was the effect?

ANSWER: COLONEL DUTTON: The night of the raid, there was a hell of a ruckus. We knew there was something going on. Very unusual, and that was particularly from the crews from the previous Son Tay camp--where we were now at Camp Faith, the Dong Hoi Military Barracks--we said, "I wonder if . . ." But it was like I say, one of several "I wonder if's" and "But maybe its," you know. I would say 5 nights later or 4 nights later, they moved us back to Hanoi. They took us one night--maybe two, I've forgotten--before we established good contact, covert contact with the adjoining cells with the political Vietnamese prisoners

in there. They had been hearing on their loudspeakers about this dastardly commando attack 42 kilometers northwest. So that was when we knew about it for sure.

QUESTION: And then? Did you feel better?

ANSWER: COLONEL DUTTON: Great! From our standpoint--you see, I've already briefed this . . .

QUESTION: Any downside?

ANSWER: COLONEL DUTTON: No. Negative downside at all. The Vietnamese did not intentionally treat us better. They were forced into doing the things that were to our benefit, like they put us back into a big room where we could get together instead of being in ones and twos and threes. Now we were in one room with 52 people. All of Son Tay is now a squadron. This is, by the way, when the 4th Allied POW Wing was established was after they moved all 342 of us back into Wa Lo and put us in the various rooms in there and formed the wing, the wing commander, the wing staff, all the wing staff directives that had to be memorized, the squadrons, the squadron leaders, and that whole POW--both covert and overt organization. And it was nothing but beneficial. They never took it out on us. So it was all to our benefit, plus our morale was way up. Nothing but good.

COLONEL LONG: Any other questions?

QUESTION: Yes. You alluded to some friction and some turf issues, I think, General Blackburn--some early-on problems. I just want to ask a question, General Manor was selected as the task force commander and it is interesting that you had an aviation package that cut across the entire Air Force--what were the politics or the friction points in selection of which Service was going to provide the Task Force Commander, number 1; and number 2, General Manor, do you think that had we not had an Air Force Task Force Commander that the Service components would have provided the same level of enthusiasm for it?

ANSWER: GENERAL BLACKBURN: Well, this is a very oversimplified problem because when the point was raised who was going to command this [as a matter of fact, I raised it because I figured I would] the Chairman and the Directors said, "Just come off it, no way, Jose, you are going to play the politics." And so I said, "Well, we have got to settle on this and so General Daugherty, DCSOPS of the Air Force, and Stilwell was there, then he said, "Well, you have been down talking with Simons and the commanders down at Eglin and all this--if we run it at Bragg it is going to be Army, if we run it at the Air Force facility--." It wasn't a personality thing at the time, he was running special ops there and Simons had been in special ops. So, okay, if its not going to be Blackburn running

it, just flip the coin as to where we're going to have the training. And this is exactly how it happened. It was that simple. There no argument on it at all. Kind of a crazy way to get selected, but it was better than getting into a hassle.

ANSWER: GENERAL MANOR: The other part of your question was would the Air Force support had been the same if I had not been an Air Force commander. I hope so. I hope it would not have been different. My firm belief has always been that for an operation at that time--for almost any operation--really, the color of the uniform the person is wearing at the commander level really shouldn't matter because we are involved in joint operations. We know that we are going to--or at least, we should be thinking that way--that this kind of operation must use the inherent capabilities of whatever Service--of all the Services. And for that reason, I believe that an Air Force commander, an Army commander, Navy--although the Navy didn't play a big role in this one except for that diversionary raid which was very important, but I think that because of the way this operation was run, it could have been either Army or Air Force. It could have been either one. I would hope the Services would provide the kind of support that was needed regardless of who the commander is. The commander really should be a purple-suiter. I believe that a command such as this, for example, could be Air Force commanded or could be Army commanded. It is Army commanded. But I think we have to think that way--really joint. Sometimes I am a little

concerned that maybe the Services aren't behind all of this as much as they ought to be. I should have pointed out very early that we didn't have any turf problems--we didn't have any parochial problems when we were working on the Son Tay planning, training, or execution, to my knowledge. Are you aware of any?

GENERAL BLACKBURN: I would like to say this--and I'm not trying to get a free drink out of him tonight, but I think the decision to have LeRoy command that thing turned out to be a very wise decision because the delivery capability in here was extremely important, and as you can see from these charts, my God, we tackled the Air Force all over the world to get this capability together to move this team in there. And I honestly feel that it was a wise decision to put the Air Force in command of it at the time. I'll say again, another thing for your consideration, if at that time we had had Rangers, I would have preferred using Rangers on that direct action than I would have special forces. Not that the special forces couldn't do the job, but thinking down the line, now, which you people have to think about, on these direct actions, I honestly feel that this type of thing is more fitting to the Rangers than special forces. The results of it is proof of what I say, but I think the Rangers could have done it just as well.

QUESTION: What happened to Ap Lo? _____
it appeared to be like, because of the way that this _____

POW was _____ probably more of _____
than Iran. _____ hit Son Tay and Ap Lo
together, but Ap Lo just drops out of the picture.

ANSWER: _____: That is correct because we
did get intelligence that as far as we were concerned, it had
been abandoned.

_____ : We thought maybe they had
moved them over to Son Tay because it wasn't very far. We
dropped it very shortly after.

QUESTION: Was there anything that came out after that
indicated they still had prisoners at that camp?

ANSWER: _____: No.

QUESTION: Why didn't--Did you think of going pretty low
level after it? Of trying to sort of bury the whole operation
after the fact rather than having the publicity about it?

ANSWER: GENERAL BLACKBURN: Well, as I mentioned earlier,
this is one of the things that I felt--preventive actions we
should have taken and wanted to get the public relations press
releases all nailed down. "Oh, we'll take care of that." And I
just did not get this done. And furthermore, there was the
psychological impact _____..

Now you pick up a Congressional Record right after this happened and there is a full Congressional copy of the Congressional Record that sort of bears out that had we done this, we would have minimized the criticism that went on. But this is one of the things we were stumped on.

GENERAL MANOR: Let me comment on how this developed. On the same day that, well on it was on November 23d, Admiral Moorer called and said that he wanted Simons and I back in Washington as quickly as possible because there were a lot of questions being asked that they thought we had the answers to because we were on the scene. The reason that some of this had hit the press, the North Vietnamese announced after it had happened that we had bombed POW camps. Well, that wasn't true, we hadn't bombed POW camps, but it wasn't unusual for the North Vietnamese to tell something that wasn't true! So we got a ~~P-39~~ to take us to Saigon and we got on the first Pan American flight out of Saigon. _____ . We stopped and had a visit and breakfast with Admiral McCain on the way in, and he cancelled our airline tickets and put us on one of his transport aircraft and put us through to _____. We met early in the morning--again, it was a breakfast meeting--with Secretary Laird, Admiral Moorer, Don _____, Mr. Packard, a whole bunch _____. And while we discussed what happened and what should we do now--should we go public with this. _____ public _____. Well,

the problems that I could see was that if we didn't do that, we couldn't keep a wrap on all the people in the whole force. It was going to come out in bits and pieces and it was going to be inaccurate and it was probably going to be a much bigger problem than the present _____.

And that was where the decision was made--at that breakfast meeting. Then they called for a press conference that took place later that afternoon. We had a press conference and that was when, of course, we told the public what we did--that was unclassified. Then immediately after the press conference we went to the White House and briefed the President on what had happened. We had to face up to it. I think that was the best way to do it. If we had tried to cover that up I think we would have ended up with some other problem because it would have come out.

QUESTION: I was just going to comment that I was over there at that time and even though it came up negative, the thought that somebody would go after them was well worth the thought. If anybody had covered that up, well, it would have affected the rest of the combat forces.

ANSWER: GENERAL BLACKBURN: Well, if I had to do it again, I would do it the same way. I have no regrets for doing it and I don't think LeRoy has, either. It was a good shot. A good chance. Bad luck.

COLONEL LONG: Gentlemen, on behalf of our CINC, General Lindsay, and our component commanders and our staff, we really appreciate what you have done and the insights you have given us. Thank you very much.

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