CBS REPORTS:

"VIETNAM"

RUSS COOLEY

Q: I'd like to first of all, to get a sense of how you -- how you thought about your -- your job when you first arrived at -- at MacVee intelligence, and you knew that you were going to be participating in -- in a key position in estimating enemy strength levels. Did it -- was it something for you which was a ticket-punching operation or did you have a high sense of mission and importance attached to it?

COOLEY: Well, I have to say that the latter was my feeling. I would never characterise myself as ever having been or subsequent to that tour been a ticket-puncher. I did not fall into that category, and most of my contemporaries would -- would bear that out. I went into the job, as most of us would, being very overwhelmed in an environment that I'd really had of training, not received great quantities I had not gone through months of preparation as to--

Q: Describe just the -- the office that was going to become your professional home for the next year. What did it look I
Q:
like, and who was in it? What was its task?

COOLEY:
O.K. I was part of organisation called "Order of Battle Studies." I was chief of the enemy strength team. We formulated the figures of enemy strength by categories. That means those categories of VietCong, North Vietnamese, the guerrillas, the basic categories of enemy that we were facing. We did this input from all of the other elements within the centre that I worked. The centre was known as the Combined Intelligence Center, Vietnam; or colloquially known CIC-Vee, our term for it. It was an adjunct to the big MacVee headquarters, and specifically under the MacVee J-2 (?) organisation.

Q:
If you -- put yourself back, as if you were in some -- if you were writing home, just in terms of -- just quickly, of what it looked like and how were people hardworking, did they take their work very seriously?

COOLEY:
I can say that unequivocally. The entire tour I felt very -- very strong that the entire group of contemporaries, officers or enlisted men that I worked for were extremely loyal, very, very dedicated. We, as most everybody in else over there, put very, very long hours; and in many cases around the clock hours for several days. I
COOLEY:
really cannot say I ever recall a case of somebody coming over there and not-- not pulling his load or his share whatsoever.

Q:
pull
All right. Let me see if I can pull a context together for you. When you arrived at (PHONE RINGING)

(CUT)

Q:
O.K. Let's -- if I may: when you go to Vietnam, which is in October of 1967, what has already happened in terms of your business, which is estimating enemy strength? Is it -- there's been a huge battle between CIA and military intelligence over how big the enemy is; CIA has lost, and the enemy strength has been put down pretty low compared to what the-- some people think it should be. And -- were walking into a moment where the war is about to be declared on the road to victory. That's right when you come into MacVee intelligence. What are your analysts seeing, the people that are working under you when you arrive there?

COOLEY:
We -- For the most part, we arrived pretty close to the same time; that was somewhat of a disadvantage because we were starting from pretty much of a same base, plus or minus two months amongst most of us, the key players in it. It soon became very apparent that the -- there was a
direct conflict as to what we were producing in strength figures, and what was accepted by the J-2 MacVee.

Q: By that you mean your commanding officers in the intelligence establishment.

COOLEY: Yes. From our division or our section within CIC-Vee, what we were producing, before it was published, went forward to the J-2 MacVee, in to their structure, their intelligence analysts to inject into it their -- their best feel of the situation, their estimates, their analysts(sic), and either that came back to us in -- with some change of estimate figures, or it was accepted and we published it.

Q: But in other words, some of your strength estimates, when they went up for approval to be passed on, were being kicked back down...

COOLEY: Very definitely.

Q: And lowered.

COOLEY: Very definitely. Probably the largest controversy that I entered in to, and my opening bid into this was the -- then-individual who was in charge of the order of battle section.
COOLEY: 
within CIC-Vee, who shortly after my arrival had a very head-on confrontation with the then-director of intelligence production at MacVee.

Q: (OVERLAPPING) 
Let's--
O.K. Let me take you -- Let's go through that step by step. When/one of the areas of greatest controversy always was -- or -- correction: One of the areas of most critical importance, always, in the war, was the estimates of the enemy coming down from the North; the North Vietnamese regulars coming the Ho Chi Minh trail into the South. Who were-- Your infiltration analysts were -- There was an infiltration analyst at MacVee who worked under you named Michael Hankins(?)

COOLEY: 
Yes.

Q: (OVERLAPPING) 
Do - do you remember him?

COOLEY: 
Yes.

Q: 
Did you have a high regard for him?

COOLEY: 
Very definitely. We all did. He worked very very hard in techniques of pattern analysis, and put together his estimates or-- or his figures of infiltration. But what's
COOLEY: -- what's important to understand here, the operation that I -- or that the CIC-Vee per se, that operation, was a bilateral operation; bilateral in terms that we were dealing with sources of intelligence that came from the free world military forces, whether it had been forces from New Zealand, or Koreans, or the Vietnamese themselves, or US elements. And I mention that specifically as opposed to unilateral intelligence sources, which were those collection systems or those sources of information information that US had tight control under. And this-- these were very wide-ranging, and they ranged from the technical intelligence collection through the interrogation prisoner of war centres and the like (WPRD). So we were working with information at our level that was bilateral. The exception to that is that Hankins, as all of us, were qualified, we did have the clearances to go up into the MacVee headquarters and have access to this unilateral all-source information, as it was typically referred to.

Q:

So you had-- you had working under you an infiltration high analyst named Michael Hankins. Now-- you had regard for.

COOLEY:

Very definitely.

Q:
Q:
Now at that very time, General Westmoreland, Ambassador estimates Colmer (?), and the official were all coming out at less than 7-thousand North Vietnamese coming down south each month. What did you think the real figure was?------ (INDISTINCT) let me put it differently. At that particular time when you arrived, the official estimates held that infiltration was only about 7-thousand a month, or less. What did your infiltration analysts believe was the case?

COOLEY:
As best as I can recall on that, we were-- we were probably double that.

Q:
All right. Did you -- What happened when your analysts took their reports in to the higher authorities to get them passed-- passed on to the joint chiefs and to Washington?

COOLEY:
They all went up through J-2 MacVee, the director of intelligence was production. He was the granddaddy of all of our operations; we were subordinate to that-- that hierarchy of-- of the intelligence structure. It had always either approved and forwarded on from there, or rejected, sent back to be modified, re-written or otherwise.

Q:
You know, Russell, I feel --I have -- apologise. I am just getting so technical that it's-- it's confusing. (CUT)
Q:

What I'd -- what I'd love to have you comment on-- or just -- I just want to drop a cue here because what we're dealing with is this infiltration story which was a colossal problem when you arrived at MacVee, and some of the things that -- that Bernie Katazy, who was a lieutenant then, in charge of helping with these infiltration estimates and -- and running the computer, he said that -- that they were finding enormous numbers of North Vietnamese coming down the Ho Chi Minh trail in the Fall of 1967, in the months leading up to Tet. But that those figures weren't getting through. Did you find that to be the case?

COOLEY:

We experienced considerable frustration in trying to get this through to the point that there were a number of serious confrontations between senior officers between our headquarters and the higher headquarters, to include one individual actually being relieved from his position because of fighting to support our position.

Q:

Wait a second; you're saying that one officer, trying to introduce these higher estimates of infiltration, was relieved of his command because of his action?

COOLEY: (OVERLAPPING)

That's right. -- That's correct. That had upon us, could a very resounding impact as you well imagine, being
COOLEY:
somewhat frustrated, trying to do the -- the best job possible, working very long hours, and Mike Hankins, Bernie Katazy specifically--

Q:
These are infiltration analysts...

COOLEY:
Yes. The analysts that worked under me in the organisation--my organisation at the time -- had their technique of coming up with these figures, we felt was very, very well supported. They spent hours and hours studying the different patterns of how infiltration took place. That infiltration groups or packets that came down would have number designations. We would receive intelligence reports that would give us this information, but there would be gaps in-between, and it's obvious, or we felt, from an intelligence analytical point of view, that if packet 16-A-1 came down and we could prove that through supporting documents, and later you had packet 16-A-9, chances are that there were the packets four through eight had in fact come down the trail.

Q:
Did you -- back then, if you were to have had a chance to talk to President Johnson, and he wanted very quickly to know what you were finding in the Fall of 1967, in regard to infiltration, what would you have told him?
Not specific numbers, but just in terms of the movements.
COOLEY:
Assuming I could do that with anonymity and not have been fired from my job for-- for telling and being honest with it, but we --

Q:
You mean that would have been a problem?

COOLEY:
Oh, very definitely. Very definitely. That was not -- we were not in a position to -- to present those types of figures without going through our higher headquarters. That was very, very clear to us. We had no channel of communication outside of our building unless somebody was to arbitrarily do it through another-- another agency or the like, which was -- was a very, very remote chance.

Q:
But what would you have told him?

COOLEY:
Well, I would have presented him with our estimates of infiltration, which were in fact higher than the numbers coming from our higher headquarters.

Q:
Substantially higher?

COOLEY:
Substantially higher. I would -- yes, in terms of upwards as twice-- twice as high as what had been reported.
Q:

Bernie Katazyx, one of the analysts working on this problem, told us that the figures were manipulated to a horrible degree. The estimates, he said, of the infiltrators coming down the Ho Chi Minh trail were alarming. He said that "Cooley, Russell was a good man. He couldn't believe this stuff." (PAUSE)

Now let me tell you what Bernie Katazy said, one of the analysts on infiltration. He said that he and Michael Hankins, the infiltration analysts, the key one, would take their reports to the tank, which is where the colonels would sit, and would have to review it. Sometimes as many as ten of them. He said he'd hand the report over to them, sometimes as many as 20, 25-thousand, sometimes more North Vietnamese being recorded coming down the Ho Chi Minh trail. He'd turn it in to them, and then it would come back with none of -- of these infiltrators there-- none of the increase numbers. Still, 5, 6-thousand recorded, but not the 25-thousand.

COOLEY:

Our higher headquarters had a section within it known as estimates. They had access to information as-- as we knew it, and would the bottom line is we had to put our trust into it that they had access to information that we did not; that the figures while they came back, and we went back and forth numbers of times, were the figures that they gave us to put back into our strength
calculations, and then send it - the end result back up again. And we would go through this a number of times each month until the number came out that someone said, "O.K., that looks good; we'll buy that."

Q:
Were you all participating in some way in the suppression of these increased infiltration estimates?

COOLEY:
No. Quite the contrary. We stood firm on our feelings with that, and -- we did not win that battle; not at all.

Q:
But you sensed the pressures.

COOLEY:
Oh, absolutely. Extreme frustration. I -- had Bernie and Mike many times sat down and tried to bring 'em back to -- to real world, settle down that where- we were dealing with a large bureaucratic organisation, that hopefully there was some rationale behind this that we did not have (INDITINCT).

Q: (OVERLAPPING)
This is -- this is you talking to the analysts, saying... COOLEY:
Absolutely.

Q:
...saying, "Maybe these people that were blocking the reports..."
Q: had cause." You hoped.

COOLEY: We-- we had hoped that. Yes. We--

Q: Did you believe they did?

COOLEY: There was one particular individual who was a keystone behind this, and he had a very, very rapid rise to fame in our higher headquarters, in estimating enemy strengths and enemy -- some of their tactics, positions and the like...

Q: His name?

COOLEY: His name was Danny Graham. His rise was very rapid; he was generally looked upon as being very -- very smart, very brilliant. He had called a number of things right. We-- basically had to put our trust -- into his-- his computations, his figures.

Q: He was the one who was blocking the infiltration estimates from going through; is that what you're saying?

COOLEY: Yes, I'd have to say that. He was the keystone in that operation. He was in charge of that area in our higher headquarters that had access to allegedly much more
COOLEY:

information on infiltration, with their own infiltration analysts, and he put that together and compared it against what we were submitting.

Q:

As I understand it, access to that more information usually meant that you would add numbers rather than subtract.

COOLEY:

One would come to that conclusion, just from the surface of it. There obviously could be circumstances of deception, and that's-- that is a very real issue in the intelligence business, where -- and the political arm of the North Vietnamese as well as the Vietcong was very, very strong in deception. They knew that we were fighting -- the US military forces -- a political battle to try to get more troops in-country in the early stages, and then later to say that yes we were -- the light was at the end of the tunnel.

Q:

Russell, I don't want the -- the impression to come through that -- that you were somehow involved in -- in the participating in the suppression of these infiltration estimates. Can you make this clear what your dilemma was at that time? Were you-- when you sensed that there were pressures from on high to have these infiltration estimates go through, did you try to keep the...
ROLL 101/102/103

COOLEY: No. Not at all; in fact, we probably worked the other way around; that is, that Mike became more intense in supporting his position, and he worked hours and hours and hours on end, and did go up to our higher headquarters, talking with those analysts, and received surprisingly quite a bit of support from them. In fact, what was producing were valid infiltration figures. So there was a -- a reverse effect to this: instead of, you know, sitting back and -- and crossing our legs and say, "O.K., we're gonna buy off on it, don't fight it, guys," we actually became a little more aggressive in this.

WILDTRACK

(CUT)

Q: It's a question that I have in my mind of-- of putting-- I'd like you to -- to explain the position of these young analysts who were -- who were working under you in infiltration. What were they -- what they were seeing in the Fall of 1967? What happened to them?

COOLEY: Well, from a character sketch of-- starting with the individuals themselves, they were exceptional officers...
without question. They were exceptionally smart, very very dedicated, very loyal. Worked extremely hard on the job that they were given to do and felt very very strong in what they were producing. I back that position. They were exceptional people.

Q: "All right. They...in the fall of 1967 these young analysts started to come up with estimates that were increasing the numbers of VC coming down. That's not true...they were....what exactly was happening? I mean...take us back in t time. What were these analysts coming up with in the fall of '67?"

MAN: "They were producing strength estimates of infiltration coming down from North Vietnam that were to be used as part of a process to compute the entire total enemy strength. These figures -- and we felt very very strong, we backed them, we believed in the methodology that was used to come up with it. The officers that were doing this, Bernie ________, Mike Hankins, worked through the night many many nights...INDISTINCT"

Q: "You had faith...you had faith in their work."

MAN: "Absolutely."

Q: "Getazik and Hankins claim that they were producing reports of upwards 15 of 325 thousand North Vietnamese coming down..."
the Ho Chi Minh trail each month. What happened to those reports?

MAN:
The...the reports were sent forward. Before we could publish anything that left our building -- and meaning out into the...the national community or into the...administration back into Washington, it had to be cleared by our higher headquarters. These never got past the higher headquarters. Every time these figures went up, they came back and we were given another figure to use for infiltration figures. These were not accepted. This, needless to say caused extreme frustration on the part of the analysts, Bernie and Mike, continually. This wasn't a one time thing. It kept was a continually recurring thing. Every month we could anticipate going back and forth, back and forth on a quid pro quo basis. What we sent up would come back and we would be given another figure.

Q:
You'd be given another figure? Let's say...let's say the figure that Getasi (?) and Hankins say is 25 thousand, which is one that both of them standby. That goes into the tank -- which was where the next level is, where all the colonels are sitting around...

MAN:
Yes.

Q:
...reviewing the reports. What happens to it when it comes...
Q: cont.

back?

MAN:

When it came back we were given guidance to modify those figures or lower the figures or given another figure.

There were a number of techniques in which the end result of \( x \) strength could be varied, but generally the keystone to varying strength was the estimate that came from our higher headquarters.

Q:

The official estimates during that time were five, six, seven thousand North Vietnamese coming down a month. Does that mean that once these large estimates went up to the large level, they came back down with the old five thousand level?

MAN:

Yes, for most part. We...we...I can't say my memory is that clear at this time to say that every time they went up they'd come back with a five thousand. I'm sure there was some tradeoff back and forth as to what came back but...in...I probably cannot remember any case in which what we sent forward was accepted and went through the system.

Q:

Getazi said, we would hand the...This is Bernie Getazi talking, one of the analysts. He Quote: We would hand the numbers in and they'd come back so ordered....
Q:
This is what Bernie Getazi, one of the analysts, said about the process. Quote: We would hand the numbers in and they would come back so watered down it was ridiculous.

What were these people saying to you, your young analysts, when they witnessed this experience? They were seeing something uncomplicated...a flood of...of armed troops coming down to the south and they couldn't get these reports accepted. Well

MAN:
Well, it was obviously extremely frustrating. It was very difficult to maintain a...a continued sense of realism of...that what we were doing was...was being somewhat productive in any manner. The...concept I'm referring to now is wheel-spinning. At times we would...you know, what are we doing. We're producing this. It goes up. It never comes back in the same way. Why are we even trying to do this? Question of productivity of our role. While we went through that philosophy, I feel Bernie, Mike and the entire group actually became angry enough that we worked harder and harder to get these figures through, to the point where...And we were for the most part, backed. I say 'we', I myself in backing Bernie and Mike going to my boss -- in this case -- and he was very supportive of us...

Q:
This is Colonel...

MAN:
This is Jim Meecham.

Q:
Q: Commander....

MAN: Commander....Navy Commander Jim Meecham. And he would bring it then, up to the chief of the order of battle section, and this was originally Colonel Parker -- who was **relieved** from his job.

Q: Pardon me, this would be Everett Parkins?

MAN: **Everett Parkins. Parkins.**

Q: Could you say that? Who...who was...who was that, the chief of order of battle? Could you just say that name again?

MAN: Yeah. Chief of order of battle at the time was full...Army Colonel Everett Parkins. He had a...direct confrontation with our high headquarters and was relieved from his position. **INDISTINCT** This came as a direct shock to us. The...the manner in which he was relieved...the core of it centered around the production of our g strength figures.

Q: As I...as it was described to me by Bernie Getazi, you all had tried repeatedly to get your strength estimates **approved**, but they kept being kicked back. And then all of **a sudden** the joint chiefs asked for a manpower study. And so your boss, Colonel Everett Parkins, decides he's going to go take it in again. **Described** what
happens when... when Colonel Parkins decides to take the report in and send it on to the joint chiefs of staff.

MAN:

I wasn't physically present when this occurred but remember the date quite well when it did occur and I was...on board fairly... I was quite new myself at the time and it was a shock to me to have such a radical reaction to it. But... there was a direct confrontation with him and the other colonel that was in charge in... in counterpart per se in our higher headquarters... but in a superior role. And as related back to all of us and I... I believe it because people in the office there, we knew on a friend and professional basis, it literally ended up into a shouting match. And usually, in military terms when a junior officer ends up in a shouting match with a senior officer, he loses. But in this case, he was obviously standing on his platform of the strength figures that we were presenting. And felt strong enough that he became angry and stood on that platform.

Q:

All right. This is November fifteenth 1967 and Colonel Everett Parkins takes the infiltration reports from your analysts, Hankins and Getazi, and walks them in to put into the pipeline to go to the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington. What happened?

MAN:

To my knowledge those reports just never went through. They were
MAN: cont.

were blocked.

Q:

Who blocked them?

MAN:

This would have been, again, our higher headquarters, and the estimates people involved in coming up with that type of figures from their sources of intelligence and that did not agree with it. The...we...we were directly opposed on this. They did not agree with the figures we were coming up with and it just ended right there. It was blocked.

Q:

You'll have to explain this to me, I mean, this is something which is not clear. A full colonel, Everett Parkins, an old West Point military man, takes a report of the enemy pouring down from the north into the south....

CUT

Q:

...Which is just a cue for you, but you have now been in Vietnam for a month. And it's November 15th 1967. When...your boss gets engaged in a confrontation with his commanding officer. But just start it and explain that moment...what had led up to Everett Parkins taking that report in?

MAN:

Well, we viewed him in...in good military terms as a...our...our commander, our leader, though we weren't in a
structured, you know, unit that had a commanding officer. We were a section within this organization. And...in... very good x military style people working for you, you support them. And we did this. We x felt very very strong. that....

Q:
You believed in those estimates.

MAN:
Absolutely. We felt very strong. Not only believed in them, but...worked with them. I sat down and...and went over the methodology that Mike was using. Bernie and I spent hours together reviewing it. It wasn't just a matter of arbitrarily accepting their mark word and going blind forward and saying, okay, just because they're men I'm going to back them. But we felt very very confident in what they were putting out. And carried that...frustration forward that we can't...what's going on? Why can't we get this through? This is...This is becoming ludicrous. at And...at Ev Parkins the time, who was boss of that section and a West Point Officer backed that position, felt very very strong, got angry enough himself and carried these forward...these figures forward to our headquarters and made a very very strong case for it.

Q:
This is Lieutenant Colonel Everett Parkins.

MAN:
Yes.

Q:
Q: He was your order of battle chief.

MAN: Yes.

Q: All right. How are you talking about that moment when the joint chiefs had asked for a manpower study and... included in it was this business about the increased infiltration. That's what Parkins took up to put into the pipeline to Washington?

MAN: As best as I can recall, yes. That was our job, to produce those figures. That was our charter in life and... and sole mission. In addition to many other studies that we had to produce, which was another facet of this entire section, but... producing the figures of enemy strength was our function. We... we felt very strong in what we were doing. We were bringing it forward. If it was called for by the joint chiefs of staff or whether DIA called for it -- and this went on through the year -- this was not a single isolated case. The entire topic of enemy enemy strength figures was... was extremely controversial throughout the entire year that I spent there.

Q: But what is controversial about infiltration of North Vietnamese soldiers into the south? You didn't feel it was controversial, did you?

MAN: Well, it was controversial because... we did not see eye to
eye with the people were were submitting the figures to. What we were sending forward and what they were saying the figures were were not the same numbers. We were producing much higher figures of infiltration.

Q:
Dramatically higher.

MAN:
For the most part, yes.

Q:
All right. Now when C ...Exhibit Lieutenant Colonel Everett Perkins takes the report in to his headquarters to send on to Washington, what happened?

MAN:
He had a direct confrontation with our higher headquarters, the...the full colonel who was responsible for this area that literally ended up into a...a shouting match, an angry confrontation where he...he felt so strong as to what we were doing and in retrospect -- when we looked back on it, in addition to finding feeling very very taken aback and...and really hurt that this man was fired from his job....

Q:
Wait, this is Lieutenant Colonel Everett Perkins takes his report in.

MAN:
Yes.
Q:
And he is met by...who?

MAN:
At that time, the individual's name was Colonel Morris.

Q:
And you're saying that Colonel Morris would not at let him send his report on to Washington?

MAN:
Of course, not...not sitting in the office with them to know what transpired on a word to word basis, there...there was a confrontation there that said those...I...those figures we aren't going to go forward. Yes, they're going to go forward. I stand on the figures that I'm showing you here....

Q:
Parkins saying these infiltration estimates have to go to Washington.

MAN:
Y's. He felt strong enough, I say again -- not...not to try to ask quote what he said on it -- but, you know, getting information back from people back in the office that witness witnessed it, because it got into a loud shouting contest between the two officers. And...

Q:
Over the question of whether this report could be sent on to the joint chiefs of staff.

MAN:
Yes. Whether those figures would go forward or not.

Q:
And when Colonel Mark Morris said, no, Parkins began to shout at him.

MAN:

What...what the word that triggered off the anger I really don't know. But one would imagine that it had to do with...no, go back and change them. Do something that was contrary to what he felt. He felt very strong, and we had enough frustration up to this point, coming all the way up from Bernie Getani, Mike Bankins, myself, to him that he stood as...as we felt very comfortable with backing our position and the hard work we'd put into it and said, those are the figures. I stand behind them. And he lost on that one.

Q:

As you described it, you felt...if you all felt as if he was carrying the ball instead for you.

MAN:

Absolutely. No question about it. We were very hurt. We...we felt...that should not have happened. Especially the younger and officers working for me and I...was a little more mature in that the fact that I had been in the service a little longer. They watched this type of being fired action take place and...were very upset about it.

Q:

You mean, Lieutenant Colonel Parkins was fired for trying to get this report through...and...
MAN:
He was relieved from his position. Word fired. Yes, he was.

Q:
And the estimates didn’t go through.

MAN:
No.

Q:
What was the message that you all drew from this incident?

MAN:
Well, the message, sitting back, became very clear. You... if you’re going to go to the maximum extent of being that forceful, you’ll just be removed from the job. You know, if you don’t like...if you don’t like the ballgame, then leave it or we’ll tell you to leave it.

Q:
In other words, it was clear to you that it was dangerous to try to push these reports through talking about higher infiltration.

MAN:
Under the present hierarchy that was pretty clear. The intelligence business, for the most part, should exist on good controversy. That’s what produces good intelligence, is opposing...opposing issues. That’s...that makes good analysis...It is to bounce these off and come up with a good position. And in this case, we felt we had done it from our part, but we’re not...we were not satisfied. We couldn’t understand what they were doing. You know, if...if there was some agreement to sit down with us and...
provide rationale as to where we were wrong, what we were doing wrong, that's one thing to understand. But we never got that feeling as to where we were going wrong.

Q:
You mean, ya no one ever challenged your same documentation?

MAN:
No, not to my knowledge.

Q:
They just challenged the overall estimated.

MAN:
Yes, Yes.

Q:
They just didn't like it.

Wookey:
Well, that...that oversimplifies it a little, because they were in a position, our higher headquarters was in a position to obtain more intelligence information. More in the sense of...from the unilateral intelligence sources, from technical collection and the like.

Q:
But as you've described it, that normally meant that they could add numbers onto the totals, but...very rarely had a reason to make additions or subtract.

Wookey:
Well, it was interesting that...the same analysts in the higher headquarters that were coming up with...figures that...that didn't support our high numbers, Mike Banks...
MAN: (cont.)
would deal with them on a one to one basis. They were contemporaries. They were also young lieutenants or young captains, and received in many times...many cases support from them, that they felt he was right.

Q:
You're saying that the same higher organization at MAC-V intelligence that was rejecting the estimates had analysts in charge of infiltration that agreed with your estimates.

MAN: OVERLAPPING
Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. The below the bureaucracy at the contemporary level. In other words the captain to captain, the lieutenant to lieutenant basis.

Q:
So in the world of infiltration analysts at MAC-V intelligence, there was an agreement on these infiltration estimates.

MAN:
Yes. Below the bureaucratic bureaucratic level.

Q:
But But once you got onto the higher level, something was blocking it.

MAN:
Yes.

Q:
Who?

MAN: MAN:
The man in charge of estimates at that time...who was generally well respected individual, by the name of Danny...
MAN: cont.

Graham. And I know or...Bernie Getzki or Mike Hankins, we may have our own feelings about that, but we're not particularly in a position to say that he...he was not calling this correct. I think history later...late dictated the fact that...that figures were...were underestimated considerably in this case.

Q:

But here....

CUT

MAN:

If I can just go back to this point that we mentioned...figures being blocked and the individual...his name...Danny Graham that was mentioned. From our perspective, we perceived Danny as that individual. Looking back after a number of years and maybe putting that a little...in a little different perspective, we that had headquartered itself was under very very very strong pressures. Very strong pressures of General Westmoreland who had publicly announced that we were entering into what he termed Phase Four, the light is at the end of the tunnel, we're...we're about to wrap this up and we're all gonna be home for Christmas type of logic. All of a sudden now you have an element bringing in higher figures into a system that is so geared up that says, we're winning. You...it was a dichotomy here that couldn't exist...in the system. So there was tremendous amount of pressures. And our higher headquarters was a headquarters dealing with the...the CIA team who was producing a set of figures.
MAN: cont.

And that was...that was open hostility...in terms of that we never did agree on our own figures, except for possibly later in the '68 timeframe, a very short time.

Q:

But, Mr. Cooley, I have to call you that....But consider something. This is not controversial, is it? It's a time of war and what you were seeing and no one was challenging your documentation, was almost a flood of North Vietnamese regular troops down into the South. Tens of thousands of them, and they weren't getting reported.

How, how can that happen?

MAN:

It happened because they weren't accepted in the system. Unless...unless there was something grossly in error in what we were doing. And I couldn't find it. Bernie couldn't find it. Mike...we were...were ultra-critical in our own techniques, these were very intelligent officers. They were not...you know, they were...had...college educations, highly qualified in the area in which they were operating. Very very well motivated. We didn't just...this was not a lark at type of thing thing.

It was done with very very good thought process, good logic behind it. And it was supported in our own structure up through people such as...as Ev Parkins. And subsequent to him from my...the boss that came in after that.

Q:

But...

MAN:
MAN:
It didn't end with him.

Q:
But Mr. Perkins got fired for trying trying to...

MAN:
Yes.

Q:
...report these estimates.

MAN:
Yes.

Q:
You say the man who had the position to block them was the chief of estimates, Colonel Danny Graham. But in Colonel Graham's shop there were... ... analysts who had access to every piece of information that he would have about infiltration, who agreed with your estimates.

MAN: OVERLAPPING
Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes.

Q:
So how do you explain it?

MAN:
I can't sit here and explain. I don't have that answer.

Q:
Well, what did you all think when you were sitting there in the months before the Tet Offensive watching tens of thousands of North Vietnamese troops coming down the Ho Chi Minh Trail and knowing that they weren't being reported.

MAN: 10335
Well, the...the frustration level was extremely high,
MAN: cont.

needless to say. We felt extreme stress. We were hoping 
through into this and that somebody would realize that... 
that maybe there would be a hard piece of documentation, 
something come through that would open the eyes of 
these people as to what we were seeing at their 
ey level and it was true. It's difficult to say...
sit here and say that...while we saw this blocking that 
they were...they were trying to perceive untruths 
or...or lies. I don't really think that was happening. 
I think they were operating with...with some constraints of their own and with some...some judgements 
of guidance. I don't know what they are. 
I had no idea what they were.

Q:

All right. Did you feel at any time that you were sitting 
on a time bomb, that this was all going to explode at 
some point.

MAN:

We felt that the truth had to emerge at some point in 
it. It couldn't...either we were all going to be fired 
or the entire structure was going to be changed to solve 
it. Or...something radical would happen. I don't think 
any of us anticipated the Tet Offensive, what really 
happened in that sense. That...that was...that was more 
radical than we had ever anticipated.
Q:
And yet you were the only people that knew about the... these tens of thousands of additional troops in the south. 
According to Getazi(?) and Hankins, the two people who had the closest connection to the estimate process, it was more than a hundred thousand enemy that had come down in the south that weren't reported.

MAN:
Over the...the timeframe that...that we're looking at that would probably be true.

Q:
So from September through late January when the Tet Offensive erupts there are over a hundred thousand North Vietnamese regulars that have come into the South that have not been reported.

MAN:
That's basically correct. I think the Tet Offensive bore that out very clearly. I think the overall strength picture, and I know you're...you're focusing in on the infiltration side of it. But if I can just put that in perspective, the entire strength picture bears a little bit of explanation. Because we were also... producing figures. And I say 'producing' it. It's from other elements within our organization who are studying enemy units in country and what their strength was and how many they were losing through capture or those being killed and the like. All of this was going into a strength/picture. But they were suffering a lot of frustrations in their own right as to the numbers of
MAN: cont.

actual enemy in country. And the reason of that is that there were very very strict and rigid criteria established as to when you could carry...carry a unit as actually existing in country. Example: the categories of being "probable" and "Possible" and "confirmed" all were dependent upon how many captured documents you could support it with or how many combinations of captured documents and interrogation reports. And many of those analysts had in their mind very very well supported information that the units existed in large numbers. But they couldn't carry them on their strength figures, because they couldn't come up with this magic number of three of this and two of this. Or whatever that combination may have been.

Q:
You mean, the demands for documentation were so extreme in your opinion...

MAN: OVERLAPPING
Absolutely. They were. They were.

Q:
...that the analysts in the other areas of estimating enemy strength were not really able to do their job. Is that what you're...what you're suggesting?

MAN:
They weren't able to do their job in the terms of being able to produce a good, seat of the pants, subjective estimate. And...and I feel very strong about that. The...the attempt to quantify everything was...was very prevalent
MAN: cont.
You had to have hard documentation to it, it must be quantified right down to the...to the gnat's eyebrow as to where the figures figures came from. Now that's a little understandable because the entire strength picture had come into extreme controversy. It had been picked up in all of the news media as to where we were getting these figures and where were they inflated. And now the issue started to...to unfold that maybe the figures were... were high because we wanted to bring more US troops into the country. So now, almost a paranoia set in that said, these figures must be absolutely rock solid hard.

Q:
You were suggesting something else earlier, which was that...there came a time when higher estimates were not only frowned upon, they were downright discouraged. Was that same...part of this same process as you saw it... the new criteria which made it more difficult to increase the enemy strength estimates?

MAN:
Oh, I could easily say that. That to get a higher estimate through, you...you had to have absolute unquestioned documentation to that...in unit holdings. And it would take...months...months for some of that to ever...ever get carried in holdings.

Q:
So it really was almost a process which made it impossible
Q: cont.
to...to estimate enemy strength.

MAN: OVERLAPPING
It was very burdensome. It wasn't very timely process.

Q:
This is Everett Parkins...This is the fitness report of
Lieutenant Colonel Everett Parkins and on it there are
two words which says that he displayed a negative
attitude, which from my understanding that his career
was effectively killed as a result of that.

MAN:
Very definitely. That...

Q:
Like to go back to one thing, which is...You've had a
look at this...at what happened here. But...go back now
and just to the memory of that office, MAC-V intelligence,
when Lieutenant Colonel Everett Parkins wa...had his
confrontation with...with Colonel Morris. Did people
know about it? Did the analysts at MAC-V hear about
the confrontation between Parkins and...

MAN:
Oh, very definitely. It spread instantly. We...we heard
about that probably before he left the...the building. The
headquarters. MAC-V building. That came back to us. The...
the office staff up there, we dealt with on a continual
basis passed that back, instantly.

Q:
You mean, people knew even before Parkins went that
Q: cont.
this was a delicate matter...

MAN:
Oh, very definitely.

Q:
He felt that he was taking a certain risk just by trying to put this report through?

MAN:
I think his reputation had been presented that way. While I hadn't too many direct experiences of watching him... at the higher headquarters level, his reputation was one of being... of backing his people. And that... we liked that. We appreciated that. As... as any unit, any organization would. And... he was... he was vocal about it. He was forceful about it. And in this case, it... it went to the point where he... he was relieved from his position for doing so.

Q:
INDISTINCT.... You know, if you think about this Mr. Cooley. Here is Lieutenant Colonel Parkins's fitness report, which effectively destroyed his career in the army. How do you think about him and what he did that day?

MAN:
Well, I felt... that he was being certainly very loyal to us. I... we all felt very hurt by the incident.

Q:
Just to you or was it loyal to what he perceived to be his...
MAN:

It would have to be... I would say for him to go and stand on a very strong platform where he let anger enter into it, to support his point. That he obviously supported the issue of what we were doing. He had to. He obviously came from a West Point background. He was very very well thought of. He... he was straightforward. He did not pull punches.

Q:

Well, any... any West Point career military officer knows that's it's sheer death to shout at a commanding officer.

MAN:

Very definitely. Especially in front of other people.

Q:

So what accounts for Lieutenant Colonel Parkins's behavior that day?

MAN:

I'm sure it was a culmination of many prior confrontations. The frustration of... the... the Getazi's, the Hankins and myself. And... the other analysts in the area who felt this continual frustration. Why are...? Why isn't this... this getting through? Why aren't we being able to produce and see the results of what's coming out of here. I think that... that had to have been transferred on to him to where he felt, I'm going to make a stand on this.

Q:

It was that important. He felt... all of you felt it was that important.
MAN:
Yes, very definitely. And we felt he went to bat for us and felt very very hurt that he was, in fact, relieved of his job because of it.

Q:
You know, two days after Parkins was relieved of his command, of his job, there was a headline in the Washington paper, banner headline saying, The Enemy is Running Out of Men. Attributed to General Westmoreland. Do you remember that?

MAN:
No. Not specifically, I don't.

Q:
But do you remember that very shortly after Colonel Parkins was fired that there was a media blitz really of statements from General Westmoreland, the President, Ambassador Bunker and many others about...the enemy running out of men, the war of attrition suddenly starting to take hold.

MAN:
I smirked when you said that not because I had read the banner headline, but one of the other tasks that the section -- and it basically came under my function -- was studies. Okay, there was the strength and estimates group, producing these strength figures. And there was another group producing studies. One of the first tasks I received on the studies side was to produce some five studies of which three I can remember: One was...
MAN: cont.
they were recruiting and inducting fifteen, sixteen year olds.

Q: OVERLAPPING
Could I come back...Could I come back to that in a minute? I'd like to deal with that. But I'd like to go on with one thing. Which is...the Tet Offensive. Where were you when it broke out?

MAN:
In my BOQ.

Q:
In your room.

MAN:
Yes, in my room.

Q:
Were you...can you...what were you all told once the offensive broke out?

MAN:
really
It took a quite a while before we/knew what was happening. Obviously, the lines of communication were....

Q:
Tell me about that briefing that you had.

MAN:
Okay. After...it was probably two days...on the second day I managed to get to work. And...at that time I don't know how...how...how much time [redacted] elapsed in here, but we were going through a period of survival rather than, you know, trying to get back into, you know, the same humdrum of the job. This was a whole new world. And it...it all
MAN: cont.

something
centered around survival. This was/very very new for us.

But I recall very very specifically one afternoon all of
the field grade officers in this....

Q:

INSTRUCTIONS

CUT

Q:

Okay, this is the briefing.

MAN:

I remember very clearly, one afternoon at work all of the
field grade officers -- and those were majors and above
and it was primarily majors at the time -- were called to
the front of the building for a briefing. And we were told
at that time that...a ...North Vietnamese or Vietcong unit

I don't recall specifically -- was on its way towards

Saigon, specifically our direction, and that there

were no US forces to stop that. That they had been all
diverted up into northern South Vietnam and that's
the...the Hue, Que San(?) arena up there where...where

a lot of heavy fighting was going on. And it was very
clear that we would not be able to stop this. That there

was a very good chance that...the city might be taken.

And this obviously caused great quantities of adrenalin
to flow into the entire group.

MAN Q:

You mean, you were told in this briefing that you might

be overrun.

MAN:
MAN:
Absolutely.

Q:

INDISTINCT

MAN:
Specifically we were told that. We...at that time were given areas of defense responsibility for our building as field grade officers relating to a platoon leader's position, if you will, with our analysts and...support personnel. And issued hand grenades and...set up our defensive positions.

Q:
I presume that in this case you might have been overrun by North Vietnamese regulars that weren't supposed to exist.

MAN:
That, obviously, could be very true. The...the city very...came very very close to falling and that's pretty well documented. And the credit for it not falling is basically to the US Military Police battalion that was in the town at the time. And they took very very heavy casualties. But they basically saved the city until US reinforcements were actually brought in. And that was made very very clear to us.

Q:
But it was that close?

MAN:
It was very very close. This...we're literally talking within a block or...or two away. There were large...large
MAN: cont.
units in the area that had moved in and it was very close infighting in the entire area.

Q:

EXTRA INSTRUCTIONS
CUT

Q:
All right, let me... let me just read you a couple of excerpt Your commanding officer... INDISTINCT
CUT

Q:
Okay, let me... Let me ask you what happens after the Tet Offensive. And I just want to read you a couple of excerpts from your commanding officer's letters to his wife. This is Jim Meecham writing home. The second of March he writes, tomorrow will be a sort of sort of day of truth. We shall see then if I can make the computer sort out the losses since the Tet Offensive began in such a manner as to prove we are winning the war. If I can't, we shall, of course, jack the figures around until we do show progress. And then the next day he writes, we are winning the war and now I can prove it, having received sufficient and adequate guidance from my leaders. What was... what was happening at MAC-V after Tet as far as enemy strength reporting was concerned?

MAN:
Okay, we obviously floundered for quite a while until, you know... how we would recover the entire enemy picture of, you know, where units were and where strength was and

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everything was in a such a tremendous state of turmoil.
But the prevailing philosophy that Jim is talking about
here that came out of this was that the enemy had, in fact,
...had one final, last thrust. This...this was it. The
one all out thing. And while in fact, we had a major
offensive in many of the populated areas, in fact, they
had...they had done it to themselves and this was the
only end of it, that we really had achieved a victory because
their losses were so great. So at that time we...asked
for...through the system and then were given...what was
considered to be enemy losses throughout the entire Tet
period. And ironically, what went back and forth a number
of times, that the loss figures were so high we ended up
with almost no enemy in country whatsoever.
Q:
Explain that if you will.

MAN:
The loss figures that came out of the Tet Offensive were
absolutely fantastic. They were very very high. I
Some of that may be a little understandable, because how
do you get that information? Trying to decipher, you know,
what was the enemy, what were the civilian losses? How to
and sift out who was the real enemy?
Q:
But go back to what you were saying before. The enemy
losses were very high, and what happens if you calculated
them all:

MAN:
MAN:
I well, I say...being all little bit fictions in what I'm saying, that when the loss figures were...were initially put in in our trial runs, this back and forth bit until we came out with acceptable figure was that Jim's referring to, yes, you know, he's received the guidance and now we're winning the war. But initially, when we put those figures in, the...the enemy loss figures were so high we had almost no enemy left in country. And people...the analysts in our headquarters would...would look at that and say this...this is unbelievable. This is a little too unbelievable.

Q:
Well, wait a second. General Westmoreland has just asked for a his two hundred thousand more troops. And you're saying that the strength levels, after you want subtract the enemy killed during the Tet Offensive were coming out...not exactly zero but at minimum.

MAN:
A lot of the guidance that we received in this...and...in modifying those losses centered around civilians and...

Q:
All right. But let's...Listen to this one: this is on the thirteenth of March 1968. It was the thirteenth of March 1968 and orders apparently came down to your...ship to drop the order of battle strength estimates to two hundred and four thousand. That night thirteen March, your superior...commanding officer Jim Meehan writes home to his wife. This is what he says, you should have seen the antics my people and I had to go through
Q: cont.

with our computer calculations to make the February strength estimates come out the way the general wanted them to.

We started with the answer and plugged in all sorts of figures until we had found the combination with the machine could digest. And then we wrote all sorts of estimates showing why the figures which we had to use were right. And we continued to win the war. What is that all about?

MAH:

Again, a...the thesis was that the enemy had...had really lost...lost the war and committed all of his resources into this. And...most of that...reverse engineering or the reverse...of...putting the answer in and coming back, had to do with...as I would...as I can best recall now, the casualty figures. That was...that was skyrocketed anyway. Later on the entire enemy arm strength holdings were reset. How this occurred later when a...a delegation went back to Washington and met at the national level, put their best heads together and I...again, don't know what went on per se in those meetings, but came back with a guidance and we reset those figures. Most of that guidance, if not all, was given to us.

Q:

what...what do you mean? You reset the figures?

MAH:

Again, this became a...a little bit of a more controversial issue in several meetings which I did attend as to how we would do this. And that is...for the most part...
Q:
What was the problem first of all?

MAN:
Again, the...the problem was...not enough...what we were carrying in strength wasn't...wasn't sufficient. We had to come back into real world and...and reset something that was realistic. Because now...as it began to evolve that maybe the enemy wasn't on his last legs. Maybe that there were much larger numbers in country than we had anticipated.

Q:
You mean, then you knew you were carrying on the books.

MAN:
And that we were carrying on the books. Something had to be done. The entire enemy strength holdings had to be...be reset, given this quantity of losses. And if it ranged, you know, from astronomical figures down to...some set of figures that perhaps produced the result that Jim Messerschmidt refers to here.

Q:
You're talking about a historical figures. You had to go back and change them.

MAN:
To the best of my knowledge we went back several months and reset. That was a controversial issue. Controversial in the sense that...if you reset now in time x and carried it forward, or went back and made it a graduated increase over say a three month period....to the best of my
MAN: cont.

Recall knowledge, we went back some three months and
reset those figures. It wasn't a question of whether we
were right or wrong. It was quite obvious that something
was radically wrong. So the issue of guilt was there.
It became a matter of how do you...how do you...present
that now and in what manner do you do it. There was one
side that as said, we're going to make a sharp cutoff point
now and start from here and just...raise our...figures
and carry it forward. The other said, let's go back in
time and raise some of these figures and we'll show a
graduation. And we will...in my subjective terms as I'm
relating it to you...okay, we were...we went out of
then. We've gone back. We've looked at it and we've
changed our figures. Now, here in retrospect is what
we think it should have been and here's the climb now
in...in real time, here is where we are.

Q:

Let me...let me ask you something...different. Then I'd
like to come back to it. You said that...you told me that
after...quoting you, we had a controlled output. What
did you mean by that?

MAN:

If you wanna cut here, 'cos that's got me cold.

Q:

Let's keep going. ENDING

MAN:

I don't...

Q: