Let me — I really would like to make one thing clear, which is: just at the outset — which is: /the interview itself is based a large part on your interviews with Sam, and also on the letters that you wrote home on a daily basis, and it's something which I appreciate, we appreciate the candour that you are able to share them, and I — I respect you for that. And I thought it might be helpful just to begin by trying to take you back, to recreate your sense of — of that moment in a letter that you wrote to your And wife at the end of your tours. It read: "We are incapable of recognizing our own errors. The communists make a virtue of public repentance and recantation, but we, contrarily, not only do not recognize the purgatory effect of such actions, but in fact, clinging tenaciously to every craven, stupid, and meddlesome thing we've said in the past. And we spare no current effort to make these fictions seem true. We fail, and then the generals blame the reporters. They're poor (?) enough (?) on their own, but we give them status, they don't merit by criticizing them for refusing to believe our lies. So much from today's political commentary from one of the centurions." Anyway, that was what
Q: Was you were writing home at the end of your tour. But can you go back with us to when you first arrived at (WORD) studies. What was your take on the intelligence operation you were joining?

MEEHAN:

Well, I don't know what you mean, "take"? I think when I first arrived I was like everybody else. We wanted to do what we could during our year there to try to win the war. You don't really know what—what is involved in—in any job until you've done it so, you know, we entered in to it with eagerness and some sort of interest at the outset to try to do what we could.

Q: You know, you were writing home—I asked because you were writing home just four days after you arrived about how you started looking for the— the mock turtle and the march hare.

MEEHAN:

Well, the problem with any— with all of the officers (?) & (officers?) in the joint headquarters there was that they were grossly overstaffed. There were basically too many people chasing too little work to do. Too many medium and medium-grade and senior officers, and everybody trying to make his little marks in the world.
Q:
-- to give a flavour for -- for what clearly was frustration on your part, that -- what must have seemed highly a questionable operation at some point. You wrote this on the 20th of March, 1968: "One can have no small comprehension of the mismanagement of this goddamned war unless he has seen the outright lies and machinations of MacBee(?)'. I'm not talking about the confusion and inefficiency, which to a certain extent are products of all wars. I'm talking about muddle-headed thinking, cover-your-ass orders, lies and outright foolishness on the very highest levels." And here you underlined "very highest levels." "The crime is that you couldn't tell anyone, even if you wanted to; no one would believe it. The place is so utterly incredible."

What was it about MacBee MacBee (?) that made you write those words?

MEX MEEHAN:
I don't know that I could tell you at this any date; that's a specific, probably an emotional reaction of a certain day or a certain week. Throughout the whole period on that staff there, why it was apparent that we were trying to prove one way or another that we were winning the war. A good many of us working-level types had the feeling that for one reason or another we were losing the war. That was personally my view, that we were losing the war. That is not to say that I would have known how to win it, had
I been the commander in chief. But it is to say that we could see mistakes being made, and -- felt reasonably powerless to do anything about it.

But you actually want an extra step. It wasn't you alone; we have another letter here from John O'Donnell. You may not remember him; he was...

I do remember him.

...an enlisted man that ran the computers. And he said similar things: he says he's just finished a project; it's going to the Department of Defense; "if they don't like it, they'll just tell us what they want and we'll just jiggle the numbers to fit what they like." Makes you wonder sometimes.

Well, that may be a slight overstatement. One of the things we had to do -- and I think I can probably guess what he's referring to -- What we had to do in the little section that I ran was to produce studies based on the documentary evidence that we had. Now, these were -- were primarily captured documents with a sprinkling of reports of agents and interrogation of prisoners of war. These were voluminous things. We had thousands and thousands of pages, all
MEEHAN:

committed to some microfilm machine, and the people would search these reasonably systematically — in order to try to determine — Well, for example, the number of — I recall one study, we — we were trying to determine if there was a rising age curve of the infiltrators that we saw coming down the trail. The object of this would've been to prove or to — to suggest that the North Vietnamese were going deeper into their manpower pool, having to use older and older men. This is a tremendous operation. It would take four or five, six maybe, of my people oh, forty-eight hours of almost continual work just to search the documents. Then there was the question of making copies, putting them together, trying to read them and draw some conclusions from it. Frequently, the conclusions that they would come to honestly were not what we had hoped for or what the — whoever generated this study had hoped for. And then we'd discard the thing and start over. On maybe another tack. And this sounds like it's — it's a venal sort of a thing, but it wasn't necessarily in all cases. In some case, it was, of course. But it wasn't necessarily in all cases. In (?) some cases, why, the director of intelligence production would simply wonder if there was a clue, if or if there were some correlations in certain areas, like age or area of the country where they came from. And we'd try to — try to break
MEEHAN:

This is out from the documents that were not available.

Q:

Let me try to at least clear the decks here. I know that — I think that your letter was sort of clear on this, which you were saying that — "I'm not talking about the confusion and ineffectiveness which, to a certain extent, are products of all wars, but about cover-your-ass orders, lies, outright foolishness on the very highest levels." I know that some of these things are — are not pleasant to go back to, but in fairness to you, that's really in part what we're focussing on here. And

on a system that seems to have gone awry at that time, and know how many individuals got caught up in that and got compromised. And where you emerge distinctively, as opposed to everyone else I know of, is having already been willing to talk candidly to a Sam, to share your letters that really reflected your best thinking at the time, and your — and your sense of being compromised. Having wanted to — to do your job as you saw it —

MEEHAN:

Well, I think everybody wanted to do his job as he saw it, but there's a lot of frustrations in that sort of operation, particularly one where the — the — the staff is so heavily overstaffed and there's so many people chasing such a few jobs. I mean, this is one of the frustrations I think we all had, is the feeling that we were doing a job...
MEEHAN:

that either wasn't terribly necessary, or could conceivably have been done at a lower level, or didn't really require the particular background that we had to do it.

Q:

O.K. I'll — leave those aside. Let me go straight to a question which pertains to something beyond that, which — just a little less than two months after you arrived at MacBee (?), which is November 15th, 1967, was beyond the frustration, something very big happened: your predecessor, who was your boss in effect at that time, Lieutenant Colonel (NAME) Parkins, got fired. Now, you wrote home to your wife, "Some day when the war is over, I'll tell you about the infiltration estimates." The war is over. Could you tell us about it?

MEEHAN:

I don't think I can dredge up far from my memory precisely the — the problems that (NAVE?) had at that time.

Q:

Maybe, in fairness to you, what we we talked to — You know, after — after you wrote that, we talked to Colonel Morgan, Michael Hanks — who became the man in charge of infiltration (WORD).x Bernie Katzy: they told us what it was about: apparently they started to discover that upwards of 25-thousand North Vietnamese regulars were pouring down the Ho Chi Minh trail every month, and official estimates held it was only 7-thousand. Well, we when Parkins went to
Q: take that in to Morris, he got cut off at the pass, and, in effect, fired. Were you in the office when Parkinson came back from that incident?

MEEHAN: I think so. And I say I think so; I'm not trying to evade this question, but this is a long time ago. I think I was, yeah. It may be that I wasn't, but I certainly talked to him shortly thereafter, yeah.

Q: What did you learn?

MEEHAN: Fool (?) I don't know. I mean, E was a-- had a great set-to with Charlie Morris; there's no question about that. Part of it was his own fault because of the-- lack of diplomacy in dealing with senior colonel who was quite full of himself. But I think they had or real-- a real genuine difference. I'm not sure that I can reconstruct at this point precisely the difference; it apparently had something to do with the-- the infiltration estimates, but the specific issue of (?) and the numbers involved, I don't think I can...

(CUT)

Q: Commander, if you will, put your -- You know, you -- the other thing you wrote home right after this incident, a letter to-- "Dear Dorothy, I don't want the job..." referring
Q: to Parkins' job that you were about to get...

MEEHAN: Yeah.

Q: "...these people only want to hear one thing, and if you say anything XX different, you just aren't in the club." Did you get a sense right then that something had happened with the firing of Parkins, which was compromising to anyone that might replace him?

MEEHAN: No, no. I didn't have that sense at all. I mean, there was always this pressure, which was more or less subtle, depending on the day of the week, to show we were winning the war. But I didn't have the impression that there was a great watershed in our lives at that particular time. Now, it may appear that from the letters, and I may very well have had that impression then, although — you know — one tends to — each day is the most important day when you're living through it, of course. If you're writing a letter each day, well, you get a series of photographs; you don't get a clear narrative.

Q: Help (?) me (?). Lieutenant Colonel Ev Parkins, West Point graduate. Takes a report which is very alarming about a flood of regular troops coming down into
Q: the South, and is cut off, told he can't send that report in, and he shouts at Colonel Morris; he's fired; you see him afterward. You find out that -- that it's dangerous to report on enemy infiltration. Isn't it?

KEEHAN:

No, that wasn't the conclusion that I had from -- from Parkins' problems with-- with Charlie Morris at all. That it was dangerous. What was obviously dangerous was to yell at the old man. I-- I was never in the position that Ev Parkins was, but it -- it -- I don't know what you're trying to get me to say.

Q:

Forgive me, but if you -- once Ev Parkins the phenomenon continued. The enemy kept coming down the Ho Chi Minh trail in large numbers, maybe it increased; not just 25-thousand a month in September, but more. Thirty-thousand the next month; 35-thousand the month after that. When you took over Ev Parkins' job, did you send in those reports?

KEEHAN:

Oh yeah.

Q:

What happened to make them?

KEEHAN:

I don't know. I m'mm don't know. It— I -- we produced a
MEEHAN:

balance
sheet of numbers at the end of the — at the end of every
month. It wasn't a question of — of sending in specific
reports. We had — we made a continuing study of infiltration,
a continuing study of in-country recruitment, and a continuing
study of — guerilla numbers, and these things
were all sent forward routinely. If I'm not mistaken, the
thing Ev Parkins had a dust-up about was a specific
study, which was a one-time thing, that he went and did battle over. Now my memory may serve me
incorrectly, but certainly I never had occasion to go in
to Charlie Morris and say, "I believe these figures," and have him throw me out. We sent the figures forward, and
I don't know what he did with them.

MEEHAN:

They got blocked. They got blocked.

Q:

So as far as you know, those figures about infiltration never
passed on to the appropriate authorities up — up the chain
of command.

MEEHAN:

Well, I suppose they did, actually; I don't suppose that
— that they were completely blocked. I — it's hard to say
at this date; certainly, the end result figures that
we produced at the end of each month went all the way to
— to (NAME); there's no question about that.

Q:
ROLL X a/51/1

Q:
All right. But can you resurrect just your—your conversations with—Lieutenant Colonel Ev Parkins after he was fired?

MEEHAN:
No. I don't think I can, really.

Q:
Do you remember your sense of feeling, "I don't want the job," as you wrote to your wife?

MEEHAN:
No, I don't—I don't recall that. I'm sure we were all terribly upset; I personally liked Ev Parkins; he's a good friend of mine, and I'm sure we were all upset about it. I don't recall having a great sense of forseeing that I was gonna get his job at all. Although (?) I may have felt that at the time, sure.

Q:
Do you—Ev, let's just go back to those days, which is November 15th, this incident takes place, and that same day General Westmoreland flies off to Washington and stays at the White House, and he gives a briefing to the press. And as you probably remember, this is the—this is the result which comes forth to the American public: "The enemy is running out of men." What were you all thinking when you saw this word being disseminated by the—high military command?

MEEHAN:
CC1466 MEBHAN:

Well, I think what we were thinking is that this is another thing they've concocted to try to show we're winning the war; this is an argument that I had had more than once with some of the senior officers in the intelligence directorate, which I didn't get fired for because I didn't yell at them. Several times we were pressed to try to demonstrate that the North Vietnamese would run out of men. Well, we did a little demographic study one time, showing that their losses per capita of population were a fraction -- about 20% of what the French had been during the First World War, and that they could essentially go on forever, losing men at that rate, and they would not run out. So this is an argument we had a good many times.

Q:

But you still would -- you were concerned by this kind of reporting back to Washington.

1530 MEBHAN:

Well I don't know that we saw that piece of paper. Sure, we were concerned about the general ideas that we were winning when we thought we were losing.

1556 Q:

You know, what happens is as we go past Parkins' firing into October, November, December, Hankings and Katazy have told us that -- that upwards of 150-thousand North Vietnamese regulars were in the South. Now,
Q: your colleague, a friend of yours named Commander Robert (NAME), do you remember him?

MEEMAN: Yeah.

Q: He went to General Davidson at one point, and tried to urge that they put some of this into the weekly intelligence estimate update. Well, according to Heon (?), Davidson said he didn't like the word 'divisions', and Heon (?) responds, "Call them whatever you want, General, but there's an awful lot of guys, and the sons of bitches all have guns and they're moving south." Well, it didn't get it. Didn't you come to think that you were sitting on a time bomb, that this might all explode?

MEEMAN: I do not have the same as we ever felt we were sitting on a time bomb that might explode. We were concerned, of course, about all sorts of things that were going on. I'd like to think, yeah, you know, we — we all recognised that it was gonna happen, it was gonna blow up in our faces, and — but I don't think that any of us really did at the time. These figures that we had, although they were the best we could produce, and certainly guys like Lieutenant Hanking (?) worked on 'em very hard and were very conscientious about them, nevertheless were fairly soft in some areas;
I mean, they weren't hard things that we thought you could — we could go out to a specific point and there's a division of North Vietnamese infantry lined up. And sometimes of course we — we were wrong. We made some mistakes.

Q:
But you can imagine the frustration of a — a friend of yours, colleague, Commander Heon; you could sympathise with (WORD).

MEEHAN: (OVERLAPPING)
Sure. There's no question about it. And we all had frustrations. There's no question about it. What

Q:
What — what is— Isn't it puzzling, though, to you when you're looking at a— a genuinely menacing phenomenon, and you can't get through.

MEEHAN:
Well I don't know what you mean, "can't get it through". I think I'm having a little trouble with this.

Q:
Well Commander Heon —

MEEHAN: (OVERLAPPING)
See, there's so — there's so much going on over there, and I think this is — I'm having trouble communicating to you the enormous numbers of people involved in just the intelligence directorate over there. There're so many people doing
MEEHAN: so many things. We didn't really have or weren't really aware of the concept of getting it through. I mean, we produced numbers, figures, studies, generally-speaking, the best we could do; sometimes a little bit less than the best we could do -- but anyway, what we could do in the time we had. And we sent them forward, and sometimes things happened to them; sometimes they would give them, lock, stock and barrel, to visiting generals or, indeed, journalists, and sometimes nothing happened to them, and sometimes nothing happened to them, and it wasn't always apparent what was happening.

Q: Fair enough. Tet. Tet. Thirtieth of January, the Offensive explodes in the northern provinces, and in Saigon. Now the night of Tet, you were at a party.

MEEHAN: Yeah. Yeah.

Q: Do you remember that?

MEEHAN: Yes, vaguely.

Q: But there were approximately 200 colonels there.

MEEHAN: Yeah, yeah.
Q: Can you -- can you resurrect that in your memory?

MEEHAN: Vaguely, yeah.

Q: Who were the -- who were the people attending the party?

MEEHAN: Oh, I can't tell you the list of people -- most of the guys in [maxim the] in the intelligence directorate as I recall, but there were a lot more people than that. I couldn't tell you who -- who they all were.

Q: Was it the --

MEEHAN: (OVERLAPPING)

Most of the -- the senior staff officers from (?) the (NAME) staff.

Q: So it was really the establishment of the in-- of the intelligence division.

MEEHAN: Well they were certainly there, that's right. Most of 'em.

Q: Was there any sense among the colonels there of an imminent attack?

MEEHAN: (OVERLAPPING) No. No. I mean, if you're asking/ if we knew the Tot.
MEEHAN:

Offensive was coming, which I suspect you're trying to get to, the answer is no, we didn't. This is not to say that some -- Let me say, first of all, current intelligence was not my business. My people were not engaged in that. But the guys in the current shop, there may have been in there, somebody, some bright young captain or major that picked up a lot of indications from the various sources they had, and thought something is gonna happen. I have no doubt there were. But certainly we didn't have the sense, and nobody that I had any personal dealings with had the sense that there was going to be a big uprising, a big offensive. We just didn't have it; it came as a surprise.

Q:

So it was just really a -- a pure social engagement involving (INDITINCT)...

MEEHAN: (OVERLAPPING)

W Oh yeah; we weren't having a party to celebrate you're Tet, certainly; if that's what suggesting.

Q:

No, I was really wondering whether they -- whether all of those colonels, which really represents the best thinkers on the war, were sitting there on the eve of the biggest offensive of that war completely unprepared.

(CUT)
Q:

Graham was also at this party.

MEEHAN:

As I recall, he was. I couldn't absolutely testify to that, but I think he was.

Q:

You know, afterward you — apparently General Westmoreland had you all dress up in jungle fatigues for the—

MEEHAN:

After Tet.

Q:

Yeah. Why was that?

MEEHAN:

I don't know. I'm not sure. But we all had to get in— in the green uniforms and — and carry some sort of a weapon around with us.

Q:

you went

Even when you went to the office.

MEEHAN:

Yeah, even when we went to the office. Of course, my office at that time was outside the (NAVE) Compound, so we had to go out— outside the guarded compound to get to it. Which, in my view, necessarily/justified carrying weapons; we had to do that.

Q:

You know, after— after Tet, one of the things that was happening was that it was— I guess it was in fact
Q:
a military victory for the United States. Did you feel that at the time?

CC 3/00 MECHAN:
Yeah, I think we had that sense, that the war — particularly in my shop, that was a lot of the — the undercover agents that we hadn't been able to track and didn't know existed in some cases, rose up; not only showed themselves, but a lot of 'em got killed.

Q:
O.K. And then one of the problems then, from — in your shop, was — there was renewed interest in and pressure to demonstrate success by reducing the figures again. Now —

MECHAN:
Well, yeah — I — I know what you're getting at here, about reducing the figures. Let me say, without complicating a very — I'll try to simplify a very complicated issue: this great balance that we had every month, that we put in enemy figures to and we subtracted enemy losses from. It was a very complicated thing; perhaps we tried to do too much with one set of figures. But we were more or less driven to this by the requirement from all levels of government to produce figures of the number of enemy that we thought were in the country.

The problem here was that we -- some of the things, particularly infiltration and local recruitment, were added to our general
MEEHAN:
uncertainty of-- of the baseline numbers in some cases.
And there were -- that (?) -- we got these figures later.
In other words, a man would come down the infiltration trail; sometimes we wouldn't see him for two or three months
in our records, but when we killed somebody, he came out right away.

Q: Yeah.

MEEHAN:
When you have a steady-state war that goes along with so many
infiltration input, so many killed every month, it works out all
right, and the figures don't get too badly out of -- out of
kilter.

Q: I understand, but you had some concerns about the -- the
reliability of the overall estimate, didn't you?

MEEHAN:
Oh, we always have concerns about -- sure.

Q: Did you think they should've been considerably higher?

MEEHAN: NO, I don't recall having thought they should be considerably
high; I thought they should've been more accurate, but I
think we just couldn't make them any more accurate.

Q: O.K. -- May I call you Jim?
Sure.

Q: At one point, at around February, early February, after the Tet offensive, there are orders that come down to drop the estimates by 24-thousand; and your boss, Colonel Wyler is told that he's to bring the strength totals down, and to take those soldiers any category that from you all wanted to. You chose guerrillas. Correct?

Was there any specific documentation to justify that?

MEEHAN: No. It was my decision; it was — at the time, but it was the — the decision we had always made. In this complicated bookkeeping system we had, the guerrillas were the soft figure.

Q: You mean, if there were — Pardon me, but — you mean if there were orders from on high to reduce the...

MEEHAN: No, no no no. I mean, if — if we had so many casualties, for example, that we had to assess against our — our grand total number, and we couldn't — where there'd be some we could attribute to the 325th division, there'd be some we could attribute to another division, and at the end you have a big bunch left over, and you just take these out of guerrillas. This seems arbitrary, and of course
MEEHAN: It is arbitrary, but it's not inconsistent with the way things actually happened, because after big losses they tend to upgrade guerillas into the regular forces.

Q: You know, you wrote home saying, "I ginned up a new method for accounting for guerillas."

MEEHAN: Yeah.

Q: Doesn't sound very reliable?

MEEHAN: What doesn't sound reliable? The guerilla figure.

Q: The method that you chose to bring about these force reductions.

MEEHAN: Well how — how would I — how should I have done it to make it more reliable?

Q: I was only quoting your own words, and I "I ginned up a new method for accounting for guerillas."

MEEHAN: You don't like the word, 'ginned up'.

Q: It's not the question of like or dislike; I was wondering...
Q: I'm wondering what you meant (?) by it.

MEEHAN: (OVERLAPPING) Well, that doesn't necessarily mean -- in the jargon of the time, the words 'ginned up' do not necessarily connote lack of reliability.

Q: I'm sorry to press you, but you know, later -- later you wrote again that "it was no solution, of course; we just found a way to postpone the inevitable day of reckoning." Now you're talking about guerillas. "I hope it comes after I'm gone because the roof may fall in. I can't say more; I'll explain when the war is over." Could you explain that?

MEEHAN: I don't think I can now; I mean, just simply because I don't remember precisely what I was talking about at that day.

Q: But doesn't it indicate that there was a process which you did not respect....

MEEHAN: Oh, absolutely.

Q: ...that you were applying to reduce guerillas.

MEEHAN: (OVERLAPPING) That's right. That's right. -- Well, that I was applying, and
it was a more or less my decision to -- We'd always done this, but I could've probably argued for doing it a different way, but it was my decision to assess this against the guerrilla figures.

Q:
Your letters indicate that there was a greater concern about the legitimacy of this process. What were you worried about when you said, "The roof might fall in."

MEEHAN:
Don't know that I can tell you at this date, to be honest with you. I just (INDISTINCT)...

Q: (OVERLAPPING)
MIKE JIM, you know what's -- see, my frustration at the point and -- and -- is that your letters home at this point come to be marked by repeated references to lying. The word is lying. I mean, here's one entry: "I've never in my life assembled such a pack of truly gargantuan falsehoods," and another one, you say, "In other words, we will lie. We've become mesmerised by our own lies about winning the war," and then there's this one: "Some day, it may come out about how much we lied about these figures." -- It sounds to me like you were talking about being put into a position where you were asked to participate in the faking of intelligence. How else can-- can we look at it?

MEEHAN:
Well, I mean, you can look at that way if you...
MEIHAN: We certainly weren't faking any intelligence; we were trying to come up with conclusions based on intelligence and imput...

CC 3645 Q: They're your words. "Lying! In other words, we will lie." "We're mesmerized by our own lies." "Some day it will come out." "Hope the roof doesn't fall in."

MEIHAN: Well, I think I think these lies have to do with -- I'm just guessing because my memory doesn't serve me this far after the event, but I -- I think these lies had to do with our judgement of the way the intelligence ought to have been interpreted. The interpretation of this, you know, is a — a number of steps, of which we were one, and if I — I think the end result didn't — our recommendations were not taken, and we didn't like it.

Q: Simple enough though; isn't it. You felt very badly at the time (?)... MEIHAN: (OVERLAPPING) Of course we felt bad about it. I mean, obviously we felt bad about it. I mean, you always feel bad about — when your boss doesn't take a your advice, or judgement... BUT

Q: But — today — the way you present it, it sounds as if this was a — an argument over methodology, but these are your words...
Q: from that time, and they are -- words that are specific; they're about lying. They're your words.

MEEHAN: (OVERLAPPING) Well -- well, I mean, — so what — what do you want me to say about them?

Q: Well, I was trying to have you put some light on it.

MEEHAN: Well, I'd not sure I can. I mean, we've been over this several times. I'm not sure at this point it's -- we're (7) 12 years after the Tet Offensive, and I'm not sure that my memory can serve me to describe to you what specific operation I had in mind when I said "lie" on that — in that letter.

Q: But you're a reasonably precise man; you've living has always been writing accurate, clear intelligence reports; you were talking about lying, and talking about it as if you were put into a compromised position which you didn't like.

MEEHAN: Well, I certainly didn't like the position I was in.

Q: Let me jump ahead to a moment — and maybe we can come back then. You know, it's April first — how are we on this
Q:

(HEEHAN OVERLAPPING HINDISTINCT) On April first...

HEEHAN:

You're gonna have to speed things up here...

Q:

CC 3841

O.K. Give me a little more time cos other-wise we'll be in a pickle. On April first, you probably remember very well, the end of March, the President resigned. And afterward, you were called to a meeting in General Davidson's office; it was a meeting attended by all of the key people in the intelligence section. And at that meeting, Colonel Graham called on—on you and Colonel Wyler to help him erase the computer's memory.

HEEHAN:

Yeah.

Q:

What was he asking you to do?

HEEHAN:

Well, again, the specifics of this are fairly complex. We had a —

Q:

In its simplest form.

HEEHAN:

— a running account of enemy in the country that we kept on a computer, for which we had a couple of fairly good anchors way back in antiquity, and some checks in since then that
MEEHAN:

indicated we were basically on the track, or we thought we were basically on the track. One of the problems of doing this on a computer is it's fairly simple to go back at any one specific time way back even in several months or years ahead of time, change the base line then, and automatically, without any effort, changing all the figures since then. [Up to that time, even though some of the current estimates and the current figures had been juggled around with, we had not really tinkered with our data base, if I can use that jargonistic word. And — and Danny Graham was asking us to do it. We didn't like it.]

Q: Was the the equivalent of burning government records?

MEEHAN:

No, no. Not at all. It's — wasn't equivalent of burning burning anything. All...

Q: (OVERLAPPING) (INDISTINCT) destroying...

MEEHAN: say it was No. I wouldn't/equivalent destroying anything at all. It was — we had a long series of accounts, a running...

(CUT)

Q: Maybe you could just explain it a little bit, which
Q: is that — that there comes a time when Colonel Grahame asked you and Colonel Wyler to tamper with the computer's memory, to change the database in some way.

MEEHAN: That's it.

Q: You said 'no'.

MEEHAN:

Q:

MEEHAN: Well, we didn't say no. I mean, this thing wasn't our private property; it belonged to the intelligence directorate. We were the custodians of it; we didn't like what Danny Grahame proposed to do. We didn't want him to do it. At the end of the day, we lost the fight.

MEEHAN: He did it.

Q: With your help?

MEEHAN: Never (?) got my help. I mean -- he took the -- insofar as we were the custodians of the records; well, we gave them to him; we were ordered to give them to him, we did. And some of my computer people went up to him in the -- in the techniques of -- of doing this.
Q:
This was Bernie Katzzy.

MEEHAN:
CC 4089
This was Bernie Katzzy.

Q:
What exactly did they do?

MEEHAN:
4093
Well, they changed the database way back. We have this running record that started years before, with additions and subtractions each month, retrospective with corrections, and ideally we came up with an accurate figure at the end of the month; certainly we came up with a figure at the end of each month. Even (INDICENT) even though we had, on occasion, tinkered around with the monthly figures, all of which were pretty soft and which were estimates — it got harder as time went on, but on any given day, our figures for that day was a pretty soft figure. We tinkered with those, but we never had really compromised the overall system because we could always go back and start from ground zero and work forward again. And indeed, if we tinkered with this figure today, as long as we didn't change it permanently, why at the end of the day, it would work out.

And we would still get a— six months from now, we'd get a better figure for today, regardless of what we changed, how we changed this estimate; there was nothing permanent here. Now what Danny Graham was proposing to do was go
MEEHAN:
go back and -- several years before, and change/tmm data
base, which would've changed the figure tmm for every
single month from then on.

And why did he want to do it this? What was he worried about?

MEEHAN:
I don't know that I can recall the specific issue.
I suppose/that — that the figures were getting too far out
of balance at that time, between what we thought was true and
what he t thought should be true. I think I — Its only fair for me to say at this point, of course, that
Colonel Grahame had access to a lot of different kinds of intelligence that we didn't — my section didn't.

I understand. But there was a -- this was in -- this was for
you a moral dilemmas. You had a done a number of things
that you didn't like doing before.

MEEHAN:
Yeah, we didn't want — we didn't want to tinker with the
data base at all.

That was tantamount to what? In your mind? It was
something you -- you couldn't get yourself to do, but why?

MEEHAN:
Well, I don't know. I don't know if I coulda been — coulda
been criticised for it. I mean, to a certain extent, all of these figures were estimates; they were -- they were -- it's not like going out and counting a whole -- whole bunch of people in a football game.

Would it, for instance, have been against military regulations to do that?

No no. It was certainly not a falsification of official records, if that's what you're asking.

Was it-- but you drew the line and said no.

Didn't want to do that; didn't want to do that. -- But we didn't have any choice. At the end of the day, why, my people had to go up and -- and assist him to do this.

And was it a hard thing to do? Was it easy just to go in and

...well, there wasn't -- there wasn't anything -- No, I mean, physically no; there wasn't anything to it. It was, you know, a couple hours work for a computer

You know, you -- you wrote to-- to Adams saying, "I'm
MEEHAN:
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of these figures were estimates; they were -- they were --
it's not like going out and counting a whole -- whole
bunch of people in a football game.

Q:
Would it, for instance, have been against military regulations
to do that?

MEEHAN: (OVERLAPPING)
No no. It was certainly not a falsification of military officer's
records, if that's what you're asking.

Q:
Was it -- but you drew the line and said no.

MEEHAN:
Didn't want to do that; didn't want to do that. -- But we
didn't have any choice. At the end of the day, why, my people
had to go up and -- and assist him to do this.

Q:
And was it a hard thing to do? Was it easy just to go in and
(INDISTINCT CROSSTALK)...

MEEHAN: (OVERLAPPING)
...well, there wasn't -- there wasn't anything -- No,
I mean, physically no; there wasn't anything to it. It
was, you know, a couple hours work for a computer
programmer.

Q:
You know, you -- you wrote to -- to Major Adams saying, "I'm
Q: Glad you got hold of Bernie Katazi; he was the key man in the great computer hassle. As I think I told you, about the end of my tour, he was more or less seconded (?) to Danny Graham to tinker around with the whole historical basis of the thing.

X367 MEEHAN: That's right. That's correct.

Q: Now, if that had gotten out at the time, if Secretary McNamara had been told that somebody had gone in and done this to (WORD) these computers, what would the response have been?

MEEHAN: Well, I don't know. I mean, you're trying — you're trying to make something harder than it is here. We didn't think this because we thought our data base was right; we thought we had some fixes back there with some very reliable documents; we'd spent months of our lives working that system; we thought it was okay. We didn't want it fiddled with. However, we wouldn't've had — I think we could've lost an argument before an objective jury about this; officers senior to — to me and to anybody in my section would've said, "We have seen other evidence that justifies — " Indeed, this is the argument Danny Graham made, "We've seen other estimates that now justifies our correcting our data base; this is why we have it on a computer;
CC4448
we realize now that we were wrong three years ago; therefore we choose to reset the system, based on our estimates. At the end of the day, of course, their estimates were the estimates. I mean, the — every estimate starts out at the bottom and filters up to the top, and various people can put in their judgement of the — on these things. It wasn't our judgement, and we didn't like it. But I don't think that it was hard and fast enough that any one of us could've gone to Secretary McNamara and say — and said, "Danny Graham is tampering with official records." And as and made a case that he would've believed.

CC4508 Q:
Can I express a certain amount of wonderment. You're now a reporter. You were then an intelligence analyst. You were writing home to your wife...

MEEHAN:
Yeah.

4527 Q:
...very clear-cut language. "I'm not talking about the confusion in and inefficiency, which to a certain extent are products of all wars." You said that you were "talking about cover-your-ass orders, lies, from the very highest levels." Your letters are filled with talk of lying. Isn't it more clear that something stronger, questionable was happening than you are now allowing yourself to (WORD)?

MEEHAN:
Well, it's not all clear that -- that -- that these particular sentiments were applying specifically to these sets of numbers that we're talking about. It's not clear in my mind even that -- that that's what I was talking about. We were all disillusioned with the way we had to operate in that war out there. And -- and we didn't like it.

Q:
You know, let me read you another section: "We shall see 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 we can't, we shall, of course, the jack em/figures around until we do show progress." You wrote that.

MEEHAN:
Well, so what?

Q:
So, aren't you saying that you were manipulating figures to come out with preconceived notions as to what the estimates should be? Faking intelligence.

MEEHAN:
No, no. I'm not saying that at all.

Q:
A You say, anyhow, "We are winning the war, and now I can prove it, having received sufficient, adequate guidance from my leaders."

MEEHAN:
(INDITINCT) Well, — we certainly weren't faking any intelligence. Nobody that I have any connexion with ever faked any intelligence.

What were you doing? How do you describe this?

How do I describe what?

Your own characterisation of the process that you were pursuing.

Look(?) the problems that we had are as follows: we had a set of numbers that we tried to keep in balance. When we had large numbers of losses, these had to come from somewhere. Now, I started to— to outline this system before, and I didn't quite get finished with it, but the fact of the matter is whenever we would have a large loss, it's almost invariably in that system,— It may have been a bad system; it was just the best we could think of. — that we wouldn't know where to take these losses from.

Gee, /I hate to do this: this is you again, X to your wife: antics

"Dear Dorothy: You should've seen the people and I had to go through with our computer calculations to make the February strength calculations come out the way the general wanted them to. We started with the"
answer and plugged in all sorts of figures until we found a combination which the machine could digest. And then we wrote all sorts of estimates showing why the figures were right. And we continued to want the war."

What could be clearer than that? You're not producing honest intelligence reports.

MEEHAN:

Well, there isn't such a thing as an honest intelligence report; there's my view and somebody else's. We quite clearly didn't agree with the figures that we were having to use, but it's not a question of honesty or dishonesty, and I think it's wrong of you to try to use those words.

Q:

I was only asking you to try to tell us what happened.

MEEHAN:

Well I've been trying — I've tried two or three times, and I have yet to get to the end of the story. It's a long, complicated story, and I'm not trying to force it on you if you don't want to hear it, but the fact of the matter is when you have a large number of losses, you have trouble finding where these guys have come, because invariably you haven't got all the additions (?) that should go with that number of losses into the system at that time.

MEEHAN:

Pardon me, but let's take El Salvador, or the Soviet Union today. If — if the DIA (?) military intelligence to
prove that there are 3-thousand missiles aimed at us, and they start with the answer, what's the point of having an intelligence service? Shouldn't we be...?

I have any idea of what you're talking about, or what the connexion has to...

Let me make an analogy: if you're trying to figure out how many guerillas there are in El Salvador today, you should begin, I presume, in a classic sense by adding up the reports of the different units and coming to a total.

Not necessarily. I mean, there's two or three ways to go about this. We're getting in an area that's very, very complicated here.

Well, please -- please help me, because it's not a mystery what-- (INDISTINCT CROSSTALK)

I mean, you're trying to -- (INDISTINCT) get me to say that we all falsified intelligence, I'm not gonna say it cos we don't have any sense of having done that.

What do you have a sense of having done?

I don't know how to answer...
Are you proud of your performance, of Ewan Mac-V's performance i-...?

MEEHAN:
Well, of course not. But I mean, I don't see the connexion.

Q:
What we're really trying to do is just to determine in your own mind what actually happened. Is this something which -- which should cause people to be concerned about the reliability of our intelligence reporting? Or not?

MEEHAN:
I think -- you mean at that time? You mean the reliability of our intelligence reporting at that time?

Q:
Yess.

MEEHAN:
I think certainly we ought to be -- you know -- be concerned about it. It's certainly open to doubt that that we (?) were getting the -- the correct answers out of it.

(CUT)

Q:
Do you understand that the -- I mean, what Sam and I are both trying to say right now.

MEEHAN:
I understand perfectly well what you're trying to say.
Q:
And...?

MEEHAN:
I don't agree with it.

Q:
Well, not -- not that -- agree with it; it's a question of whether there isn't some way to to reach a -- -- Well, I would love to -- have you present this history with some perspective which would be...

MEEHAN:
Well I've done the best I can do. I'm sorry / it's not satisfactory to you.

Q:
No, it's not -- it's not that; it's just that I -- you know, just I'm -- I'm sorry / to have had to have been a hectoring (?) force here. I would've like something different.

MEEHAN:
Well I mean, you -- to quite clearly know what you want me to say, but that's not the perception that I have.

Q:
No, that's not. I was really was only trying to -- well, we'll wait a second... Let me try to give you a little bit of a sense of what seems to have emerged. Do I -- In this whole exercise, you know, we've talked to a number of different people, and what -- what has happened to many of them...
altogether sure about how formidable a man he is...

MEEHAN:
Well, he wasn't there through much of this.

Q:
Well, but different people at different levels have all felt very badly about what happened; they don't think it was right. And —

MEEHAN:
Well, I didn't think it was right, but -- there's no reason to say that -- the thing is, you know, any different from the way I actually saw it, or remember now that I saw it.

Q:

MEEHAN:
You see, you've missed this one point, and I keep coming back, and I've been over this with Sam, and he -- you know, we don't agree on this. But the fact of the matter is: each -- at the end of each month, we didn't have much faith in that figure anyway. And if some guy says, "Look, we want to change this," why (?) there's -- there's hardly any way to argue it about it, really.

Q:

MEEHAN: (OVERLAPPING)
Except when it comes to something as-- as really basic...

As long as we didn't— as long as we
MEEHAN:

didn't tinker with the database, you see, this would all wash out, sooner or later. This is a temporary figure.
As long as you don't... tinker with the... antecedents... dates. This is all— this is all temporary, and it all washes out. These... a figure for this month changes each month for six or eight months.

Q:

But the database is something different.

MEEHAN:

That's it.

Q:

Because then— then you're doing something permanent.

MEEHAN:

That's it.

Q:

And you can't get back.

MEEHAN:

Well I suppose you could keep a duplicate record, but basically what you say's true. That's right.

Q:

So it's really... it's like going back through the files and creating a separate set of records, and then burning the originals.

MEEHAN:

Yeah, except I think records is probably too strong a word for this.
Q: The memory of the computer.

HEEHAN:

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Well, I mean, these weren't records in the usual sense that you said — I wrote a支 cheque for $17-dollars and 52-cents on this day. They were all a little softer than that. Although we thought — the — you know, the early records were pretty good; we thought the data base was not too bad.

Q: But you took what you was a principle stand at that point, which was no...

HEEHAN:

No, /We didn't like that.

Q: No xi dice.

HEEHAN:

And— and we didn't do it. And then we he had to do it on his own. He had to get Katazi a up there and do it on his own. We didn't do it.

Q: Did that compromise Katazi?

HEEHAN:

Well, I don't know compromise. I mean, you know, he — he's — here's a lieutenant in the army that's ordered to do a specific job on a computer, and he did it. That's all.

Whether (?) he's compromised by it or not I don't
Would -- would Danny Grahame feel embarrassed by this if he were asked about it?

MEEHAN:

I doubt it. I imagine he would -- he'd say he had good reasons to do that.

Q:

But you would feel...?

MEEHAN:

He said -- he said that at the time he had good reasons to do it.

And you challenged that.

MEEHAN:

We didn't challenge that he thought he had good reasons; we just thought we had better ones for him not to.

Q:

(WORD) remember, he went off to -- well, when he went off to Washington earlier, to defend the figures, with you as a part of the team, didn't you actually tell the DIA ( ), "Look, this is an issue of a battle between the civilians and the military, and you've got to line up on our side."

MEEHAN:

(WORD) I think he probably did, yeah. I think he
MEEHAN:
probably did.

Q:
So it—it...

MEEHAN:
and I mean, I didn't personally sit down with him in/the DIA, but I expect he said something like that to them.

Q:
Was the orchestrator of this campaign?

MEEHAN:
Yeah, I think he was; yeah. He was— he was certainly the head man of that particular delegation.

But in terms of all of the adjustments in the force estimates...

(INDISTINCT)...

MEEHAN: (OVERLAPPING)
Oh yeah, oh yeah. Well, that's not true either. No. He—he and Morris were both a kind of co-equal.

Q: Yeah.

MEEHAN:
And in fact, they were no equal in the organisation charts, although Danny was quite clearly the more equal of the two.
— I must go, really.

WILDCAT

(CUT)