QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD

QUESTION: George, you outlined the nature of that Nortronic program in general terms. What would you put in it and what would you get out of it?

ALLEN: It was designed to do two things. It involved software, but also a buffer. In those days a buffer was something that you didn't take for granted like you do now. You needed a buffer into which you could pump this stuff and then the software that would enable you to integrate one data stream with another, that would find the common denominators with respect to coordinates and things of that sort. It would enable you to read out on a geographical basis that data.

All of this was connected to a plotter. That was the most beautiful element of it to me. The plotter had six different colors. You could start with the base overlay of the Hamlet Evaluation System scores of all the hamlets in that province for that month. Then you could say let me see the OB.

Now let me change the overlay from this month's Hamlet Evaluation System to last month's against the OB. Let me see last month's OB. You could begin playing it and that is what the software would have enabled you to do. You could convert it to a common geographic orientation and overlay one over the other. We wanted to put in it bomb strikes. There wasn't anything that we wouldn't have been able to do.

I was talking to Tom about this aspect of it at the time. Nortronics claimed that they could do it, whether they could or not. We were doing it manually on the one province. Manually it took a long time, but it worked beautifully, really beautifully, in terms of a device for collating your information and in determining correlations between cause and effect.

GOURE: There was always one difficulty with all our measurements in Vietnam which was that we were really largely measuring physical things or events. What we were unable to measure very much at the time in popular attitudes was such things as loyalty, and so forth. And this therefore, often introduced uncertainties, because it was different to assess changes in attitudes, one way or another. It effected our judgments about what really happened in the hamlet, or in the village or even in the province.
After all you know, the Vietnamese, at least the South Vietnamese, were fighting on both sides. There was also the fact, which we sometimes forget to recall that units were decimated -- a lot of units -- many suffered very heavy losses. Furthermore, this had been a very long war for the Vietnamese.

And remember, that (not surprisingly) when the Americans came in, the Vietnamese idea was "Let them do it. After all the Americans have more of everything. Literally, fellas, you know who is going to finish it. We Vietnamese will still be here when it is all over. Our turn will come anyway, so you Americans can do it for now."

It was all kinds of things like this when we came in. Like air strikes. Besides the air strike story was a totally different one because it had so many fantasy elements in it. The fantasy element was obvious in the reports at least.

Remember the Air Force initially -- what was it 1963 or 1964 -- essentially postulated that a certain level of strike at any location, was going to produce a certain level of casualties, whether it was true or not, and whether anybody had been there or not to check on the results, as long as somebody in intelligence said he estimated something like an enemy battalion was in the area.

That was all it required! It took a long time to stop us doing this. On paper we killed more than the total number of the enemy. In no time at all we had destroyed him twice over, according to reporting.

ALLEN: There were problems with every data stream that we had. You just had to take that into account and realize that there were problems and never pretend or let your thinking about it or dealing with it lead you to present any judgments, that you drew from the data, as though they were set in concrete. It was never that you had a 100% confidence.

You always had to have the fudge factor. You always had to make clear to people that you weren't putting everything you had into the reading of any one, or any one combination, of data streams.

One of our biggest problems, and one of our greatest successes, was the pressures we got from the White House, the
way they used the Hamlet Evaluation System. They were the ones that decided this A-B-C-D-E, or 5-4-3-2-1 scale, you could come up with an aggregate average score for all the hamlets in Vietnam, monthly, and it was 2.163 maybe this month. And they would sit there with baited breath waiting to see what next month’s score would be. And if it were 2.165, two one-thousandths higher than last month, "Great, we’re progressing, we’re progressing!"

They then came to us, and said, "Can you come up with an overall index that would take into account body count, intensity of the conflict, number of attacks, battalion days in the field, and so forth.

I was tasked with taking a team out in the country here for a retreat for a whole week, an intelligence community team: DIA, State, NSA, I don’t know whether you [Tom] were with us on that one or not.

We spent three days there taking the task seriously. At the end of the third day — at the end of our happy hour on the third day — we decided that there was no point in trying to take this task seriously. What in essence they wanted was a Dow-Jones Index on the war. We said, sure, we could give them something that would produce an index, but that kind of thing would mask, as the Hamlet Evaluation did, mask all kinds of turbulence, hide all kinds of turbulence, and would not really have any great significance.

How do you weight the relative value, in that kind of an index, of battalion days-in-action by the Vietnamese and US forces, against number of battalion sized attacks the enemy is mounting against the Hamlet Evaluation System aggregate score for the country for a given month?

And so we went back and reported to Walt Rostow and Company at the White House, that we were unable to come up with a single index.

And I think that was another one. That, I think was my most useful contribution to the US war effort in Vietnam.

GOURE: There were two things, I recall, that somewhat horrified me. One was, there was a special group that I think MACV organized to evaluate how the war was going. Trying to report nothing but military actions and so forth. I was called in there once to comment on one of their
measurements. I saw among them they had areas of enemy activity -- which were rather large red blocks on the map -- taking up half the country and so on. They were very large on that map.

Their procedure was to estimate that if any ARVN or American units had penetrated that block during that month the block was considered to have been neutralized for the month even if the unit didn't get very far into it. I thought was rather an insane way of doing it. It made it look good I admit, it wasn't very realistic from any point of view.

The other one was the B-52 strike. It was decided -- I guess by the Air Force -- that any area hit by B-52s was neutralized for a month after the attack. Except that the Vietcong documents showed that since the enemy knew that the B-52s wouldn't restrike the same area they thought that this was a perfect haven and they were moving right back into the craters, and thought it was a great place to be. I had a hell of a time telling that to the SAC Commander, that this wasn't quite working the way he thought it was.

ALLEN: Your point about the psychological factor is a very valid one. There are a lot of qualitative kinds of things that nobody ever really got into that ought to have been looked into. Among them, for example, was infiltration. The focus with respect to infiltration from the North was always on the numbers and it was on the aggregate number.

How many people came down this month as compared to last month? How many this year as compared to last year? What is the relative level? What is the pattern? What is the trend? Always in terms of numbers, but never in terms of the qualitative aspect of what was coming down.

GOURE: Well, we did that.

ALLEN: Well, sometimes, I don't mean that it was totally ignored. But you were with RAND. I told myself, this is an intelligence question. What is the impact of the infiltration, what impact is this having on the other side's military capabilities and the effectiveness of its forces? And what is it that is coming down? And if you looked at what was coming down in the early 1960s it was cadre. It was platoon leaders, company commanders, battalion commanders and staffs, it was heavy weapons specialists, it was crypto system guys. It was cadre.
Presentation by GEORGE ALLEN

They would send down a hundred and forty men which would include everything you needed down through platoon leader level to create a battalion. And then they would pull up experienced guerrillas from the local forces and you would have a battalion built around these original 140 guys.

So there was a qualitative element there that ought to have been looked into a lot more than it was and it was generally ignored by the intelligence community at least.

Unit histories. I don’t know of anywhere where there was a serious effort by the US to analyze and collate historical data on the activities of enemy forces over time. So that you would have an understanding of how they operated, where those base areas were and so forth, and secondly you would have a base for interrogating prisoners that you got and you could say, Okay, we have a gap in this unit’s history. Your’re from that unit...

EDITORS’S NOTE: The tape had to be turned over here and about two lines are missing. We pick up during Leon Goure’s reply.

Goure: One of the tasks of intelligence was collecting names of enemy personnel. One of the activities was to collect names and collect weapons data. But it took a hell of a lot of effort and very late in the game when MACV started working on the picture of movement pattern, for example. As for history and so forth, forget it.

Allen: I wasn’t interested in history for per se. (SIMULTANEOUS REPLY BY GOURE UNREADABLE IN NOISE BACKGROUND: Goure: No, but I mean... that’s fine... No we didn’t have that.) I meant a file, a dossier on the unit that would help you to understand. If you looked at a number of units, how typical was this one? Are they all doing these kinds of things? How do they occupy their time when they are not in combat? They fight twice a year, what are they doing the rest of the time? How much training do they do? What kind of training? How serious is it? How technical is it? What impact does it have on their effectiveness? None of this kind of analysis was done.

Goure: Well, one of the reasons you collected names at all -- this is marvelous -- was because of the British experience in Malaya.
ALLEN: Sure.

GOURE: In Malaya, the British felt that they needed to have not only the name but the photograph of every Communist guerrilla in the place.

ALLEN: The serial number on his pistol!

GOURE: And there it got to be a subtraction game. As they would kill a guerrilla they would subtract his name from the list. They tried to apply this in Vietnam. Sergeant So-and-so -- you had the name presumably -- by God, you'd go out in the battlefield and get names. The guy sticks his head up and says, "What is the casualty ratio?" He was now going to find out whom he killed, Sgt. Whu, so we could subtract him. Subtract him! From what? An open pool of North Vietnamese. But that's what they were trying to do!

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The RAND Corporation POW and Defector Debriefing Program

Leon Goure
SAIC

Let me explain briefly how this program began so you understand the context. When the United States started the advisory business in Vietnam, before we actually committed combat troops, one of the things US advisors were precluded from doing was interrogating POWs. The Agency did some interrogation because they were advising their counterparts in the Vietnamese government, but the US Army and the Air Force were not permitted to conduct interrogations.

In 1964, the Rand Corporation got permission from the Vietnamese to do this work, on the grounds that they were an academic institution. They were permitted to conduct this kind of interrogation in Vietnam because they were not DoD, but rather they were an outside organization. Initially they were supposed to do more of a sociological survey. Who are the Viet Cong? Why did this happen? And so forth. Rand first hired Dr. Zasloff, from the University of Pittsburgh, if I am not mistaken, who ran the program for a while, with some people from the Center for Vietnamese Culture, or some such name. This was a US sponsored cultural organization of some sort.

I was in Vietnam in 1964 for other reasons. I was there initially for the Chief of Air Force Intelligence doing a survey to see what could be done and how we could help the situation. In the course of my work I looked at some of the interrogation data and I also looked at some of the Air Force reporting on how we were doing. For example, the Air Force asked questions like: every time we dropped so many bombs how many battalions do we destroy? The Rand team I was with also looked at counterinsurgency techniques in Malaysia, Australia, Taiwan, Okinawa, and other places.

When I returned to the United States, I told the Chief of Air Force Intelligence at some meeting that one of the best ways to verify how the Air Force was doing was to ask the Vietcong. He thought it was a brilliant idea. Since Rand already had this operation going in Vietnam, I suddenly found myself volunteered, 1) because I had had the idea, and 2) because I spoke French. That took care of the rationale as to why I had to go.

So I went in late 1964 because the earlier Rand
operation led by Dr. Zasloff was disbanded. I and two younger colleagues from Rand had to reorganize the program pretty much from the start. It was a civilian operation, initially funded through DARPA, as I recall, with something like $100K per year. We were to select and train our own interrogators, also Vietnamese civilians. Eventually there were some seven Rand staff members and some 20 Vietnamese interviewers, translators, and typists. We reported back to DoD, to General Stillwell the MACV J-2, and to the Vietnamese J-2.

Three months later, I was asked to go to Washington to give some briefings on our findings. I was also asked to brief McNamara. I did brief him and the next thing I knew he said, "What could you do with a million dollars?" I said, "Well, more." (Laughter from the audience) He said, "You got it," which was somewhat of a shock. Remember, in those days a million was somewhat different from the current value. And so we expanded our operation. We were operating primarily out of Saigon, but we had a special team in My Tho which was studying the provincial Vietcong battalion, its activities, and its pattern of movement, and so on.

My participation in this particular program went on for something like three years. Reports went all over the place. Copies of all interrogations, of either POWs or defectors, were given to MACV, to the Vietnamese (but without the names of the prisoners which were withheld on the grounds that they might mistreat prisoners who were critical of the ARVN), to PACAF, to CINCPAC, to SECDEF's Office, and to many others. I had to brief Rostow and the Secretary regularly and so on.

Over five years this program produced about 25,000 pages of interrogations. I forget how many actual people we interviewed.

After that tour, I ran a special team in Danang for General Starbird who had to find out how the enemy operated on infiltration routes. That was the beginning of the sensor program. To correctly interpret what the sensors picked up one had to know the enemy's pattern of behavior. How did the infiltrating units march? How and when did they talk? How and when did they get off the trail? What noises did they make? And so forth.

Apparently, as I discovered, the regular US Army and US Air Force interrogation teams did not ask such questions which would have been a help to resolving this problem. Essentially, their questions about enemy activities stopped
at the border of South Vietnam. Their mission did not include asking questions about Laos or North Vietnam.

I ran that program for General Starbird with my own team of Vietnamese interrogators whom I borrowed from the other program. After the completion of this program I was asked by the US Air Force to help direct a team of the Det 66499 Air Force Intelligence to run another program out of Danang for the purpose of assessing the effectiveness of our bombing of North Vietnam. That is essentially the three activities I was involved in in Vietnam.

The main questions of the first program were: who is the enemy? What makes him fight? What are his vulnerabilities? What is the effectiveness of our actions against him? We developed the necessary questionnaires ourselves.

A lot of special questionnaires were developed also to deal with such questions as motivation for defection, effectiveness of defoliation, the enemy activities in Mi Tho province, etc.

Assessments of effectiveness of B-52 attacks was another project with the results being briefed to the Chief of SAC. The effectiveness of air operations against North Vietnam were of interest not only to MACV and the Air Force, but also to the Navy. So there were various sets of questionnaires.

One thing that I discovered to my shock concerning the HUMINT collection problem occurred when I went to visit PACAF. I wanted to integrate their interest and those of DoD into the questionnaires. They said, "Sure, here are the requirements" and out came a volume of nearly six inches thick.

It turned out that every agency in Washington, and generally in the Army, Air Force, and so forth, was simply cranking out requirements. Requirements were never coordinated to determine where they overlapped, or whether they were still current. This requirement volume was given to the interrogators in the field. This did not work very well.

The interrogator usually looked at the requirements on the first pages, and seldom went any further unless specifically instructed to ask other questions. There was no way for them to deal with such a mass of requirements. They
were totally overwhelmed by them.

The other thing I found out was that the Army and the Air Force interrogation teams, or their organizations in Vietnam, were in a competition to see who could crank out the largest number of reports per month. This was to make themselves look good for MACV I suppose. In other words, instead of making one report per POW, they produced reports in accordance with the individual requirements or requirement number.

Let us say that they had a requirement to obtain the names and armament of a unit. That would make one report. Then if MACV had further questions or they looked at some requirement sheet, a question on where the POW had been camping led to the production of another report and so on. Thus, one prisoner could be the source of a considerable number of reports.

Both the Army and the Air Force were competing as to the number of reports per month they could crank out, although the number of people interrogated per month could be relatively small. But there surely were a mass of reports. This was a little crazy. Each month the Army and Air Force totaled up the number of their interrogation reports to see who had produced more of them.

My team was largely independent, reporting, as I said, to the Secretary of Defense. The J-2 of MACV tried to take us over several times because he was obviously very irritated that we were telling the Secretary of Defense how the war was going without his participation or his having any control over it. The poor man once had to sit through my briefing to the CINCPAC. He had to sit in the audience while I briefed how the war was going, which did not go over very well with him. He never did succeed in taking us over. We were fairly well protected at that point.

Our reports were all based only on enemy interrogations. There were problems with that. To report on how the war was going on that basis was fine in the sense that one got some sort of impression. And one could to some degree compare what was happening over time if one did the interrogations correctly. One also had some check on the veracity of a POW or defectors and one could see how he changed his story. We might spend one entire day or several days on one man, if he was a good source. But there were several problems.
Presentation by LEON GOURE

One was that we only had random access to these people. To have access to POWs other than those temporarily in American hands one had to go through the Vietnamese J-2 and make special arrangements. The J-2 would either agree to them or not. This was so because the Vietnamese had ultimate control over all POWs and defectors.

Second, one did not have a full list of who was who in the POW or defector camps, so one could not say, "I want access to this guy and that one" and so on. Rather one had whomever the camp commander was willing to give you.

Third, there was no data as to the composition of the total POW or defector pool. So one did not know what the information one had represented statistically as far as the total POW population was concerned. And one certainly did not know what it represented in terms of the totality of the enemy forces.

This was contrary to what Rand had done in the Korean War where it also had sent teams into the POW camps and conducted interrogations, knowing full well the enemy order-of-battle of the enemy and the full composition of the POW camps. We were able, therefore, to develop a statistically valid sample in Korea. In Vietnam we did not have a good statistical sample. We did have overlap. That is, we had quite often people from the same unit and from the same province or the same hamlet. But this was not enough to develop a statistically based sample.

We looked for changes in enemy morale, actions and forces over time. Concerning enemy morale, the interrogations showed us, for example, that the quality of the enemy troops had deteriorated over time, i.e., between 1964 when we started the program and 1970 or 1971 when it ended. There was a definite change in morale, for two reasons. One was that the quality of the North Vietnamese infiltrators was changing. As time went on we were getting lame ducks, literally, people who were marginal draftees at best for health and other reasons. The Vietcong also instituted a draft, where initially they were volunteers. Well, they had the same trouble with their draftees as the ARVN had with its draftees. Namely, the boys didn't want to leave the farm. Furthermore, things turned out to be compounded in the enemy's case by the land distribution program, or the promise of land distribution. If I am a landless peasant and now I am going to get land and a buffalo to plow it, the last thing I want to do is to go off to fight. I want to stay home and plow. So the Vietcong began
Presentation by LEON GOURÉ

to have increased desertions.

Defection rates were affected by various things, including the cultural factor. When a defector decided to come in he sought to bring in a safe conduct pass. He believed that it had to be completely clean and brand new, not creased or dirty, because otherwise the ARVN would take umbrage that he had shown a lack of respect for their property. Now we were dumping these passes to such an extent that in another year every Vietnamese would have been under six feet of them evenly layered over the country and the war would have come to a halt. But in no way would a less than perfect copy of the pass do. We had cases again and again where a fellow had been thinking of defecting, but it had been raining and he couldn't find a clean safe conduct pass and thus kept postponing his defection. All kinds of things like that happened.

We found that defection rates on both sides were relatively comparable over time but in other ways quite different. The Vietcong tended to defect to home and also to us. The ARVN tended to defect home primarily rather than to the enemy. Most often it was not ideological. It was simply that he had been away from his family too long. In the case of ARVN soldiers, if, let us say, he was in I Corps and his family lived in III Corps area he went home because he wanted to make sure his pay would reach his family. The Vietnamese mail was too unreliable, so he often preferred to deliver his pay personally, and then he forgot to come back.

As I mentioned before, the interrogations lent themselves to some kind of analysis. Certainly statistically they were "iffy." First of all, they provided some intelligence per se. We came up with answers to such questions as: what the enemy did to replace destroyed bridges; what he did to protect himself from our bombing; or how he felt about it and how much damage did it do? We did do morale studies. After the first Tet offensive the data showed that morale had gone way down among North Vietnamese troops and Vietcong.

We could demonstrate fairly well that in terms of the enemy action the war shifted nearly entirely to the North Vietnamese. Basically the Vietcong had been defeated and were in decline in terms of numbers and quality, in terms of combat activity and morale. At least that was my impression. What the North Vietnamese were doing became more and more significant. Of course, that varied by region. The North Vietnamese troops also changed in quality over time. But at the same time the South Vietnamese also became more and more
Presentation by LEON GOURE

exhausted. Their better troops were beaten up over time so that one had comparable deterioration also on our side.

The US never understood the war very well. My impression was that there were two wars going on, ours and the enemy’s and occasionally we intersected. Then we had a battle. The rest of the time each one was doing his own thing. Each one had his own territory and each one was doing this hings inside his own territory. The action was primarily taking place in the contested territory between them.

We got some data or impressions on how the war appeared to be going and reported on it. Maybe I should not have produced these reports. I got criticized for it later for not being statistically reliable and also for tending to be optimistic. However, I was required to tell the Secretary how the war was going. We basically produced secondary to our data our impression over time concerning how the war was going which gave grounds for optimism. The point really was the Vietcong were losing, or certainly declining. The question was “Would or could the North Vietnamese sustain the infiltration or not?” That was the uncertainty. If you said, “If they get bombed, why continue?” You had won essentially, even if it took time to clean it up and if you didn’t, if that continued, well then who knows.

The infiltration routes themselves were not effectively attacked at all. Laos was out of bounds to any ground forces. Yet our data indicated that the infiltration routes were quite vulnerable to disruption by special raids. At the same time the data showed that the air strikes had no effect on enemy troops infiltration and were only marginally effective against enemy truck convoys.

Body count was nonsense. The truck count was equal nonsense. Equipment for good interdiction was missing, such as anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines.

It got down to the point where we were going to drop so-called button bomblets in conjunction with the sensors. They were little plastic things about 1.5 to 2 inches in diameter and if a North Vietnamese stepped on it, it went bang, i.e. made a loud noise. When the bomblet went bang the sensor would pick it up. Of course, every buffalo, elephant, and whatever else was in the area would make it go bang. Presumably when enough bangs occurred we sent an air strike to that area. We killed a lot of elephants that way.
The point was we sought to detect the enemy movements that way. Some of us had suggested that since the enemy would recognize very quickly that these button bomblets were related to sensors, we should first of all spread them all over the place even where there were no sensors. Second, since he will connect the idea of this bang with the sensor, why not put a shaped charge in it? Blow a hole in the sole of his shoe. At least this would have been better than nothing. It might have incapacitated some infiltrators and confused the enemy about the function of these buttons. The ideas was rejected because, as we were told, the enemy would sweep them all up and put them on trails used by our soldiers.

The interrogations were useful, I think, in assessing the bombing of North Vietnam because they tended to disabuse the Air Force of certain things. One was that the Air Force had spent half the war looking for large fuel dumps, which they were going to destroy, and there weren’t any! Two, they found out how quickly things got repaired or fixed, such as craters in roads, and so forth. That was useful. Three, they found out that damaged bridges did not stay down a month, which was also good or at least useful information.

We also found out that the strafing runs and the like tended to be ineffective because, as the enemy shot back, the pilots tended to either stay high or to dive shallow to get out of the fire cone so as to avoid getting shot, and so they didn’t accomplish what they were supposed to do. Naturally, the general officers lectured the pilots on how to do it right and naturally next time the pilot had to fly, he wouldn’t do it that way because he did not want to get shot down.

Wrong aircraft for some of the missions was another problem that showed up.

Another question concerned Harold Brown who was the Secretary of the Air Force. The interrogations showed how dependent the North Vietnamese forces were on supplies brought in from North Vietnam, that is, on traditional types of logistic support. Harold Brown’s conviction was that the whole attack and interdiction program was useless because the enemy was living off the land. Brown believed the enemy didn’t need anything, or at least very little other than ammunition, and that otherwise it didn’t matter. Our data suggested it was quite important, particularly in the II Corps and I Corps because there wasn’t much the North Vietnamese could pick up in the Highlands in the way of food and medicine. Besides that they had expenditure of
ammunition, of medical supplies, and of other support.

In talking with the North Vietnamese we found out they really were very dependent on Northern, Chinese, and Soviet canned goods, and that they had quite a normal logistic support system. I finally persuaded Harold Brown that this was significant and he did a back of the envelope calculation of how many trucks it would take and so on. But the main point was that our bombing did interrupt the flow of important supplies. Therefore, if you could have sustained interdiction it would have been more interesting.

The reports also certainly showed what the morale in the villages was. One saw the disintegration over time of the Vietcong cadres. They joined at the beginning and then were attrited. Over time the Vietcong had to change their policy of land distribution. Initially they gave the peasants land. Later they gave them an IOU to be turned in after the war. You will get the land after the revolution has been successful and not before because otherwise the fellow did not want to go to war.

A lot of the recruiting was certainly not ideological. It was simply telling the farm boys, "Come and join us. We dance and sing every night around the camp fire. Life in the village is awfully boring." "Great! Let's go and dance," until the first air strike and then it was no longer fun.

We also found out that even when we had a good Chieu Hoi [Editor's Note: a center for receiving Hoi Chans or returnees] defector program, the village boys, particularly, were very frightened of Americans in the first place.

I recall we had a fellow who was left behind by his retreating unit because he had malaria. He sort of blundered around in the forest and came upon an American artillery position. As I recall the interrogation report said, "And I walked out there and there they were, naked to the waist, and they were big and hairy. And it was horrible!" (Laughter)

You know, compared to Vietnamese we look somewhat different. And that was upsetting to them. On the other hand the ARVN didn't treat the POWs very well so that did not help either. The urge to surrender was dampened at least by the fact that they were very afraid of being mistreated. That was another issue.
On the whole, how was the war going? Well, we could not produce good numbers. We could produce, from the interrogations that went out, reports on the composition of the people we had interrogated from this and that area. We could give an impression on the basis of what they had said of what had changed in terms of attitude, willingness to fight, or perception of the war. But we could not say that it was representative.

The question was, what did this tell you about the whole picture? One could compare prisoners and defectors, North Vietnamese and South Vietnamese, one could compare them by region or sometimes by province, but otherwise there was a limit on what could be analyzed.

We never did compare our interrogations with those of the military interrogators. It was purely an input to the total. But we reported on ours separately. I cannot say, for example, how our interrogators compared with the total take of the interrogations for a given period of time. We were too busy doing just what we had to do with a small team. I finished up with 35 Vietnamese, including interrogators, translators, secretaries, and so forth.

It certainly was not very scientific. However, the Secretary of Defense liked it. So it worked.
QUESTIONS FOR LEON GOURE AND RESPONSES

ALLEN: Any idea of what percentage of the total POW interrogations your effort represented?

GOURE: I have no idea.

ALLEN: I don't recall either. All I recall was that the RAND POW Interrogation Reports were the most useful. In fact the only really good ones we got.

GOURE: Thank you. But it was really a question of the others following this idea of producing the "bitty pieces," their quantitative approach to production. I know because in Danang I had an Air Force Det 66499 team. I had a separate team for doing the North Vietnamese study for the Air Force.

There was also a local Air Force Detachment. To some extent we were talking, occasionally, to the same people. I could see how they were preparing their reports compared to ours. One week later they were still chopping up the same guy with another two or three reports while we had gone through ten in the same time. It was dumb. The Marines did use our stuff simply because we fed it directly to them. But much of it was on North Vietnam which really didn't concern them. I am not sure what MACV did with our interviews.

The Air Force did use the last set of interrogations which were on the bombing of North Vietnam. I discovered later that they were used in operation IRATE which was General Ginzberg's response to the criticism that the Air Force had flubbed the air interdiction program. There were a couple of hundred interrogations which they used. It was raw data however.

The interrogation reports still exist if one ever wished to see them. I gave my total set to the University of Miami. I had no room for them. They filled a dozen file cabinets.

This data is not comparable to the one previously mentioned by John Battilega. There you had consistent reporting by hamlet or province or what have you. At least it was consistently on the same thing. Here you have an unknown sample, in some sense, of a group of people.
Over time one could get a sense of how things are going. Over time one may get ten people from the same North Vietnamese unit. So one could assess trends but one had no guarantees of being right. One had uncertainty about the reliability, about the credibility, about honesty of interviews. One just tried to make the best of it. And it was helpful up to a point.

COMMENT: An interesting question you mentioned, you had one program where you asked the Vietcong, "How is the US doing?" Do you have a feeling of their responses to our actions?

Goure: Bombing, artillery, strafing, troop sweeps, etc. Yes, that was included in the process.

COMMENT: Did the results seem to correlate with our own perceptions?

Goure: No. It demonstrated certainly that very often the air strikes were nonsense. Artillery harassment was often so predictable that it could be avoided. For example, we tried to persuade the Air Force to do offset marking of targets because the moment that smoke bombs went down everybody took off before the strike arrived. That makes sense.

For the B-52s we told them the same story. After the third or fourth raid the North Vietnamese issued an instruction which said, "The enemy lead flight always lays down the bombs more or less in one direction, and all the subsequent strikes or bombs go off to the right of the lead flight. Ergo, everybody move to the left. Furthermore since he doesn't restrike, this is the ideal place to camp afterward because he is not going to do it again for a month."

So a lot of things which we thought were effective were not. Often artillery harassment, for example, hit empty space. On the other hand, in the sweeps, when we really started, he ran. We didn't tend to fade any more at ambush or harassment, i.e. we really mounted the effort.

We also found that there was a lot of intelligence leakage from the ARVN to the Vietcong.
COMMENT: To what extent do you think our interrogations of Afghan rebels would give insight into how the Soviets are doing? I am sure the Soviets like to interrogate rebels they capture. Can we replicate in effect the Soviet intelligence effort?

GOURE: The final results did have an effect on MACV. We did reinforce some conclusions. On the one side there was a critique. You could see that certain things we believed in, or the way we were doing it, were not confirmed by interrogation. On the other hand certain things were reinforced, such as the consequences of the Tet offensive.

What came out of the interrogations on morale, and so forth, was that his morale was truly way down; the opponent had received a terrible beating in that operation. We found North Vietnamese units that had people who claimed that their unit had tried to march back North to defect altogether, only to be halted. So, you know, it varied.

Sometimes the subject gave you anecdotal data to reinforce other information. Sometimes it contradicted what we believed in or what we thought our effectiveness was. They both were true.

COMMENT: What did you learn about our ability to affect their morale? As I look at it that is ultimately what we were trying to do. We were trying to defeat their will to fight.

Now we were dealing with two really different categories of people: the deserters who were already disaffected for some reason, and then your prisoners who, by the fortunes of war, come into your hands. Did you detect any difference between them? And then, was there any consistent pattern in the things that we did that tended to reduce their morale?

GOURE: Well, yes, that is not uncommon as you might expect. If the unit got badly beaten up or got chased consistently, or, for quite some time, the weaker element tended to defect or at least to quit and go back home. Remember that for every POW or defector we got there were others who tried to go home. Not North Vietnamese, but South Vietnamese would just defect to home and disappear.

You know that South Vietnamese villagers became very adept at avoiding both side's draft. The land program was
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not insignificant in this whole issue, at least promises of land. The enemy had the advantage of offering land. The government tried eventually to do likewise.

The problem was the security of the area. A lot of areas became increasingly insecure over time rather than more secure as the war continued. But security had a lot to do with it. The villager kept saying essentially he was caught between two buffaloes butting heads, and the soldier was affected by this as to which way he went. He was going to get smashed by the two sides. The question was how do you avoid this?

COMMENT: How do you get out of the way?

GOURE: Yes, exactly. That was very important. In some sense you played both sides to the extent that you had to. Sympathy varied very much.

Our actions? Well, we got condemned for certain things quite often. We would attack a village, and the population would say, "You know there is nothing we could do about it. The Vietcong would enter the village with guns. What do you expect us to do? And now you bomb us as a hostile village, and blow it away."

And so that was not very conducive to gaining a positive attitude towards our side. If you destroy the villager's way to live he either becomes a refugee, or the younger people will join the armed forces, in this case the enemy.

COMMENT: This is a point we deal with in Afghanistan.

GOURE: Take away his livelihood, and his base, and his familiar location, and he becomes a rootless. If he is rootless, he goes in either direction, one side or the other.

COMMENT: But can you intimidate people through bombing their villages or through a scorched earth policy?

GOURE: We did. Our cities were full of refugees. By and large the masses of the population went in our direction but not necessarily out of loyalty to the South Vietnamese government.
ALLEN: My recollection was, taking all of the interrogations into account, the conclusion was inescapable, that from their point of view, the single most effective weapon we had was the B-52, in terms of terrorizing and influencing morale and attitudes. Tactical units had ways in certain kinds of situations of coping with B-52s, as you described, but in a situation, where, for example, an enemy unit was laying siege to a place like An Loc or a place like Khe Sanh, the B-52 could dig it out, just dig it out of the earth.

GOURE: In Khe Sanh the Air Force was ordered that come what may it was to ensure that this would not be another Dien Bien Phu. I was working with General Keegan on interrogations at that time and it was going to be the Air force's neck if Khe Sanh fell. The situation was similar to Dien Bien Phu. The air strikes just made a parking lot out of the entire surrounding area. Everything was leveled.

ALLEN: The B-52s in effect drove most of the civilians out of areas that the Vietnamese government did not actively control. That's what refugees in the Vietnam War largely were in 1969-1970. They were people fleeing areas that weren't under government control so that they could embrace the government security forces and therefore not be vulnerable to being bombed. I think bombing, if it is done on a sufficient scale, can have a tremendous impact on the morale of a force. And it is all one-sided.

GOURE: And as you said, the enemy, particularly provincial forces, certainly were affected by it. And it had an important logistic effect. The enemy receive some local support. The village did provide some food, they provided intelligence, housing, chickens, and you could wash your laundry once in a while. It was no fun to just sit in the woods because there was nothing else around you.

For example, in II Corps, in the Montagnard area, this was a little more iffy. The Montagnards themselves were in a somewhat different situation in terms of their attitude. But in some of the other areas it made a great deal of difference.

And that is why, if you talked to the North Vietnamese, they didn't like the Highlands. The South Vietnamese didn't like the Highlands and neither did the North Vietnamese. Nobody liked the Highlands except the Montagnards.
The Vietnamese did not like the mountains and they did not like the jungles. They were essentially people from rice growing flat land. They were not mountain people. And to be in regiments marched down from North Vietnam and stuck right in II Corps in the middle of the mountains was no joy for them.

The only thing that grew was manioc. That was not their favorite food. The best thing they could get once in a while was a dog. They also ate snakes and palmetto worms.

COMMENT: Were you able to determine what caused most of the Vietnamese to Chieu Hoi?

GOURE: It actually varied. As I recall their motivation, we had six or seven categories. Some were just tired, obviously. Others were draftees and didn’t want to be in the army in the first place. For the North Vietnamese it was usually battle fatigue, getting beaten up. For the South Vietnamese it was more often more complicated. Being a North Vietnamese, after all, meant not going home. The South Vietnamese at least had the illusion that if he was a good boy he could go home somehow or other.
VIETNAM PERSPECTIVES
George Haering

[Viewgraph #1: Title Viewgraphs are included at the end of the talk] I commuted to the war in 1965-1966 and I analyzed the air war from the naval perspective. I went out there for a month about once every three months. I am not going to talk about that. I did a lot of technical analysis which I felt was very satisfying and fruitful. What I am going to talk about is some of the analysis that went on back in Washington. I will give you a case history on it.

[Viewgraph #2: SCOPE] Before I do that, however, I want to talk a little bit about the war itself. I have not heard people defining the war very well. I am going to talk about scale, outside input, and whether or not there was an insurgency, and then I am going to give you a case history in which this large mass of data, which was collected on the war, was repeatedly distorted into a theoretical framework. I will next tell you what I am going to tell you.

[Viewgraph #3: SUMMARY] This was a very big war. We had hundreds of battalions, 299 on the US side, about two-thirds that number on the VC and North Vietnamese side, hundreds of battalions, and thousands of fixed wing aircraft, and thousands of helicopters. We ran a million attack sorties into South Vietnam in the course of the war. The decisive things in the war were not an insurgency. These were main force actions. Finally we didn’t do a very good job of analyzing the air war in Washington. Now, I will go into that in some detail. It may or may not be relevant to this conference. It was a little like the problem you have in that we could take photographs of North Vietnam. We knew the amount of air effort that was going into North Vietnam. We had no way of understanding what impact this was producing so we resorted to theoretical analysis.

[Viewgraph #4: Scale: Maneuver Battalions] This chart shows the number of maneuver battalions in South Vietnam. On the top, US, Free World, and South Vietnamese battalions, on the bottom the North Vietnamese and the Vietcong. You will note a pronounced jump in Vietcong and North Vietnamese battalions in 1964, and a pronounced jump in US battalions in 1965. I will return to that later. That probably should have told us something. It did tell some of us something.

[Viewgraph #5: Other Scale Factors] To expand on the other scale factors, depending on when you looked at it, we
had between 1500 and 3000 helicopters in South Vietnam itself. We had 3000 at the peak. We typically had (until about 1970-1971) about a thousand attack capable aircraft in theater. We put a million attack sorties (exclusive of B-52s) into South Vietnam. The peak year was 1968 when we averaged almost 700 sorties a day by fighter-bombers actually dropping ordnance in South Vietnam alone. It was a pretty big war. I do not think you will see something that big in Afghanistan.

[Viewgraph #6: Bombing] This chart shows you attack sorties by tactical aircraft in hundreds of thousands versus year by country. Actually, that is a pretty good graph of the US war effort as a whole. The ground effort and the naval effort both followed that same kind of a curve except that we did not have a big land war going in 1972. It just kept going down. In yellow is South Vietnam, the red is North Vietnam, and the little dotted lines at the top are the sorties that went into North Vietnam in route package six, which is the area around Hanoi and Haiphong. The red was what all the yakamachi was about back in the United States. In white are the sorties into Laos, a fairly substantial effort.

QUESTION: Does that say there were no bombing sorties into North Vietnam in 1969 to 1971?

HAERING: That is exactly what it says.

QUESTIONER: I had forgotten that.

HAERING: We stopped the first of November in 1968 to get the negotiations going. It lasted a long long time. We did actually have a very few sorties into Laos and North Vietnam in 1964 which is where I came in. Cambodia was a very minor effort in 1970 and 1972. We will return to what you can infer from this a little bit later.

[Viewgraph #7: Not included here] Finally, since I work for the Navy, I would be remiss if I did not cover it. What I have here is a chart of the disposition of the US Seventh Fleet in South Vietnamese waters on 1966 on the 15th of July. There are about fifty ships scattered up and down the coast plus three carrier task groups. It was a fairly large naval effort.

[Viewgraph #9: Enemy Order of Battle] To return to the
question of the main force war, I want to re-introduce it by pointing out the total VC strength and VC battalions with the pronounced increase in strength in 1964. And on top of it is the North Vietnamese order of battle. The dotted line at the bottom are Vietcong battalions which have North Vietnamese in them. More than half of the battalion is North Vietnamese.

When you say you cannot fight a war of attrition that is absolutely true if you cannot stop infiltration from outside countries, and if you have a nation that is willing to send a couple of hundred thousand people into that country to form troops. The guerrillas themselves were attrited. Maybe they self-destroyed in Tet, but they were attrited. That is not to say that an attrition strategy is sound; it is the absence of a strategy, but I do not know that General Westmoreland had any other choice.

[Viewgraph #10: Main Forces Decisive] As you can see though, the majority of the fighting after 1968 was done by the North Vietnamese. Let's talk about the insurgency and the war in general. It is easier, I think, if you work backwards. The North Vietnamese took over South Vietnam as a result of a fullscale conventional blitzkrieg in 1975. They had tanks and artillery, they brought SAM sites with them, they had people on trucks moving day and night on the roads that they had built. That was the decisive event of the Vietnam war.

They had tried in 1972 on a somewhat smaller scale, but still with tanks and artillery. They were opposed at that time by US tactical air and by the South Vietnamese. In 1968 they tried it in the cities with battalions, not guerrillas. And in 1964 and 1965 you could see the beginning of that main force war. One of the scariest things in 1964 was in December when the 9th VC division, somewhat east of Saigon, attacked and overran a district headquarters and held it for a couple of days. They did not just run away, they held it. They pretty much wiped out two South Vietnamese battalions, one airborne and one marine. That was scary.

We also knew in December of 1964 that there were Vietcong regiments walking South, not the guys that were going to be cadres for South Vietnamese Vietcong battalions. These were formed as North Vietnamese regiments. And in the middle of 1965 we had a bloody battle at Nha Trang in II Corps where the First Cavalry Division got mixed up with a North Vietnamese Division. So the outline of the main force war, the template, was already there in back in the early days. Everything else just followed it. The North Vietnamese kept escalating until they finally won.
They wrote a history about it. The Chief of Staff at the time was named Van Tien Dung and he wrote a book about it. They broadcast the book over Radio Hanoi, and these are some of the things he said:

- First, he said that in order to win they had to progress to a main force war. Start with small units, build to big units, and finally attack the cities.

- He also said something which leads me into my case history of how we analyzed the air war. He said, my biggest problem was logistics. I had a big logistic problem. I had to make sure guys had enough food, ammunition and weapons. This is what you just heard from Leon Goure in his discussion of North Vietnamese interrogations.

Now, let us talk about how we analyzed that problem in Washington. Our analysis of the strategic impact of the bombing, our intelligence estimates were very similar. They had the same kind of methodology and they had reached the same conclusions. They were mostly theoretical and when there were fragmentary contrary indicators they did not change. The analyses were the same in late 1965, they were the same when I came back in 1966, they were repeated in 1967, and they were reprinted in 1968 and 1969. There were minor changes in them. They were updated but the fundamental analysis was never changed.

They had the following methodology. They estimated road capacity, they estimated logistic needs, and then depended on a statement of intent. This was done, not just by CIA, not just by OSD, not just by DIA, but even by a group of extremely eminent scientists on a summer study for the Institute for Defense Analyses. All used essentially the same methodology.

Their findings were always as follows: the road capacity in North Vietnam over the roads and railroads and shipping was very large. The logistic needs of the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese were very small. The intent of the Vietnamese was not to have a main force war, but to have an indefinite low level war of attrition. It was a mirror-image of our war of attrition.

You do not have to be a genius to realize that having said those three things there is nothing that you can do to North Vietnam that will make them stop the fighting in South
Vietnam. You can destroy them, but there is nothing you can do to interdict that will reduce the scale of the war in South Vietnam. That is a syllogism like one plus three equals four.

[Viewgraph #14 Second Overlay] The theory that was used is as follows. The road capacity methodology was the kind of thing an engineer staff officer does to determine whether he can supply a division or a corps on a specified mission. He takes the number of vehicles on the road and the average speed he thinks they can operate at. He asks, is the road two lane or one lane? Do they have to move in convoys? It is the kind of thing with which you can compute the capacity of Shirley Highway at rush hour. It was entirely theoretical. It was then adjusted to reflect the effects of the bombing. For example, you take a factor of two out here because they only move at night. You reduce the speed from twenty-five to fifteen miles per hour for the same reason. Maybe they have to ferry across a river so you introduce a delay there. You end up with a capacity estimate that is basically used by logisticians.

Logistic needs were based on one data point (the observed level of fighting) and then an estimate of how much ammunition was expended in that level of fighting, and maybe a little bit of medical supplies. But no food. The estimate of intent, at least in the JASON study by IDA, was defended by the argument, "The infiltration hasn't gone up. There is no evidence of a decisive Dien Bien Phu type of battle," (unfortunately, for these guys, they were writing in the summer before the before Tet offensive) "and, the capacity was so much greater than the requirement. Clearly, if they wanted more they would use more." Well, there is a little bit of circularity there.

In addition to that, as I pointed out up here, everybody noticed that not only was the capacity very large in North Vietnam, but it had been increased. The North Vietnamese were building more roads. They had more capacity in 1966 and 1967 than they had before the war. Everybody agreed to that.

[Viewgraph #15: Logic] That leaves you with a certain problem in retrospect, and at the time it was pointed out that the logic of these studies was -- he's got more than he needs, and he is building more than he needs, and he doesn't intend to use it. Few people asked the question because the question might lead to an unwanted answer.

[Viewgraph #16: Contrary Indicators] In addition to
that, at the time one could say other things. I just talked about why is he building unneeded capacity? We had excellent technical intelligence if you could find it. If you could find it you could find things like, here is a guy on a road that everybody agrees, after the bombing, has six to eight hundred tons per day theoretical capacity, and this guy is operating along that road and he says I am getting fifty tons per day down that road on trucks. In addition to that I have taken the wheels off some of my trucks and put railroad car wheels on them, and I am pushing flatcars, and I am getting fifteen tons per day down the railroad next to road that way. We had little indicators of this type which didn’t suggest that he was rich in capacity.

There were other things you could say about the logistic needs estimate. Before the bombing started in North Vietnam, the troops in the first three regiments that came down rode through North Vietnam. They were in trucks in North Vietnam. It was hard to find, but we found about seventy or eighty POW reports which stated how they moved through North Vietnam. They used to drive, and then they started marching, and the march that they had to undertake was about from New York to Yorktown, Virginia. It was not a short march. It was not a trivial thing. Although they could have driven it in a day or two, it took them a couple of weeks to march.

The logistics requirements didn’t say, why do they have practically no anti-aircraft guns in STEEL TIGER, the Southern part of Laos, and why is the flak so much lighter down south in North Vietnam? Why is there none in South Vietnam? A 50. calibre machine gun in South Vietnam would cause a FAC (Forward Air Controller) to call in attack air from all over the country, it was so rare.

And when we stopped bombing — we used to stop bombing for between a week and a month at intervals during 1965, 1966, and 1967 — all of a sudden you would see trucks like you see out of this window right now. They were all over the place, hundreds of trucks bumper to bumper.

And every now and then, but not very often, they would send a steel hulled trawler down south. We don’t think they ever got one through. About half the time they would wander all over the South China Sea, and then finally go back to North Vietnam, but the other half of the time they would get zapped in South Vietnamese territorial waters. After 1965 we don’t think they ever got one through. We certainly saw a lot of attempts.
None of this said they are rich and don’t need the capacity. Once again, the intent, relied upon 1966 through 1968, went away shortly after the JASON people published their report. We know for sure that there were two divisions on their way to South Vietnam, and then we had the Tet offensive. The Tet offensive was unquestionably a main force action and it was unquestionably not a low level war of attrition.

[Viewgraph #17: 1968 Update] This sort of analysis was repeated. Here is an example of what was done in 1968 and then reprinted in 1969 as still being valid. The road capacity was further increased to reflect the building the North Vietnamese had done. The logistics estimate was kicked upward by about a factor of two to reflect the fact that they were having rather heavy combat in South Vietnam. The intent, for a low level war, was asserted again, but not justified with evidence. In an "Oh, by the way," comment the syllogism of these three things was acknowledged in the analysis.

The question of why the North Vietnamese have all of this capacity and aren’t using it was acknowledged but it was left as an unanswered question. And the study said, "There is just a very slight probability that the bombing limits their capacity at some level very much higher than they are doing today."

[Viewgraph #18: Final Demo 1975] Finally, in 1975, we have Van Tien Dung again, and in his 300 page book he has about 300-400 quotations on the logistic system. In his book he says things like, he is running hundreds of thousands of trucks. The troops know that they have enough to eat. That the logistics system wasn’t adequate in 1968 and 1972. They were running trucks bumper to bumper day and night. (We didn’t see very many trucks in the day time when I was there.) And he has hundreds of thousands of tons to support his offensive. Hundreds of thousands of tons!

[Viewgraph #19: Requirement Estimates] The largest requirements estimate we made in 1967 through 1969 equated to about 25,000 tons a year. If Dung is correct and he moved at least 200,000 tons in a year, then we were off by a factor of ten.

That is not directly relevant to what you are looking at in Afghanistan, but it raises problems about what you do when you analyze something that you cannot get direct information on. This used to be one of my problems during the war.
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[Viewgraph #20: Oh by the Way ... Problems of Remoteness] I never went West to a carrier without learning something I didn’t know, or without having something I thought I knew turn out to be different. There are three things involved here.

You will always hear about the usual ones. How accurate are the reports? Do the people have a motive to be honest or to shave the truth? Do they say one thing and mean another? All those things are a problem.

The biggest problems that I noticed were, first and most important, that you don’t know what you don’t know. This is the worst problem. This is an omission. You cannot understand something that you do not know, and if you don’t know you don’t know it. You are in big trouble.

Unknown ignorance. We started flying to North Vietnam in 1964. In late 1966 Hank Hise came back and reported to the Chairman of the JCS, and was sent on by him to McNamara, and was sent on by McNamara to Johnson, and one of blinding revelations that Hank brought back was that the reason there isn’t much bombing going on in North Vietnam in November, December, January, and February, even though you pump the sorties out is that there is a thing called the Northeast Monsoon. The clouds go down to very low levels. They long since learned that flying around at an altitude of a couple of hundred feet over North Vietnam is not conducive to long life. Therefore the monsoon cut sorties into North Vietnam significantly. But that wasn’t known in Washington for two years.

Guys like me who flew back and forth never thought to tell anyone. We thought everybody knew it. That is part of the problem. Why should I tell you something that we all know? I don’t want to insult you.

Then, secondly, we all have implicit mental images that we unconsciously apply to something that seems familiar. The easiest one to think about that is the example of the Eskimos who have about twenty words for snow. We think of snow as snow. But snow is a lot of different things to an Eskimo: old snow, used snow, hard snow, soft snow, wet snow. It makes a lot of difference to him. To us it is just some white stuff on the ground that is going to go away.

What is a desert? We all have mental images of a desert. Now there are at least five or ten different kinds of deserts
and they different impacts.

We used to call sorties "armed reconnaissance sorties" in Vietnam. Armed reconnaissance implies that we are flying around looking for something. Well, it was actually a code word for anything that wasn't a major strike on a JCS numbered target in response to a JCS directive. People in Washington operated on the assumption an armed reconnaissance sortie really was looking for trucks.

So these are the things to look at in your own minds and when you look at somebody else's war. Be very careful about this one. This is very hard. Everybody here has a mental image of a dogfight. We have been to a lot of movies. Now I have a mental image of Afghanistan that was conditioned by Kipling. I can tell you that anybody in this room that hasn't been in a dogfight, hasn't been upside down while still being rightside up, and hasn't weighed a thousand pounds. You do not get accurate mental images of things like that. The only solution to that is to go.

[Viewgraph #21: RECAP] Now let me summarize what I have told you. I told you that Vietnam was big. I told you the insurgency was small. In strategic terms it was a minor part of the war. It was an economy of force type of operation. Maybe it self-destructed and maybe it just got overrun by the North Vietnamese.

I told you that I think we clearly could see that we underestimated the impact of air power. There would not have been a 1975 general offensive if we had the air power there that we had in 1972, or to put it another way, it would have met the same fate that the 1972 general offensive did.

More generally, if Vietnam was so big, and a main force war to boot, what was is it relevant to? It is as if the Pakistanis were fighting the Russians, and they were blood brothers to the Afghans. That isn't what is happening in Afghanistan, and it doesn't happen in many wars where you get a civil war with main force units.

Now you can see you cannot easily destroy insurgents. That is obvious. On the other hand, they don't do very much all by themselves.

And when you look at these analyses, even the ones that
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look like they have data on the war, be very careful about — is this a theoretical analysis or is it a real data analysis? A lot of things that are supposedly data oriented really have a very strong theoretical base on which data is strung.

And you see it even in hard science. A guy develops a theory and he is in love with it. It is his son and he clings to it in the face of contrary evidence. You see that in geophysics, in astrophysics, and you see it in operations research all of the time. That is all I have.
QUESTIONS FOR MR. HAERING AND RESPONSES

MODERATOR: We will take a few questions before taking a break after which we will have a panel which will try to relate how all of this relates to Afghanistan.

QUESTION: If the US had stayed in Vietnam, how would your graphics have changed?

HAERING: How would my graphics have changed? I don't know. It is hard to say.

QUESTION: Would the bad guys have gone to a main force war against US troops?

HAERING: Well they sort of didn't. They sort of said, we will give you back your POMS and get out of the country. That was their solution to the problem and those were the terms we gave them. Who knows what they would have done. They were slow learners twice. In 1968 and then they did the same thing again in 1972.

QUESTION: That's right.

HAERING: I would not bet on them being a slow learner the third time. But I don't think that is very important. The fact is, we were the slow learners. We were slower learners than they were.

ALLEN: I would like to make a couple of comments. Much of what you say has a great deal of validity and I would not quarrel with most of it at all. But some of it I would quarrel with substantially. You make the fundamental point that here is General Dung saying 200,000 tons we moved, and trucks bumper to bumper, and hundreds of thousands of vehicles moving. He's talking 1975. You are talking, your data showed it, 1967-1969. In 1975 they were supporting an offensive by twenty divisions or more. In the 1967 and 1969 they were supporting operations by the equivalent of about seven of those 1975 divisions. So the level of supply requirement and the level of supplying effort for 1975 was several orders of magnitude greater, as you do admit, in 200,000 tons. Sure, our estimate, at least the Washington estimate, in 1967-1969, of 25,000 tons a year, isn't that far out of line given the fact that the forces being supported in 1969 were about one fourth of those in 1975.
HAERING: It is in the sense that it omits all of those nice to have things like food and ambulances, and driving troops along roads, and having SAMS in Southern Vietnam.

ALLEN: I say there is something to be said for it, but it isn't quite as devastatingly different, I think, as you maintain. I think you are overlooking the fact that the offensive he was talking about was something entirely different than the level of operation being conducted in 1967 and 1969.

HAERING: My argument would be, that one of the reasons they were different would be for one of two reasons. One is that the North Vietnamese thought that they were going to win with the level that they did put out in 1968 and 1972.

ALLEN: I don't think they did. I differ with you there.

HAERING: And the other thing you can say is, they put out the best that they could and why couldn't they put out more? It was because more meant 200,000 tons and they couldn't move 200,000 tons.

ALLEN: Well, more didn't mean that in 1972. I don't think they expected the 1972 offensive to win the war, to defeat, even what was left then of the US forces. I think there are other reasons for that offensive. They were trying to keep us honest in Paris to try to persuade us we ought to focus on the negotiations and not on something else.

HAERING: They sure miscalculated then.

ALLEN: Why is that?

HAERING: That brought the B-52s into downtown Hanoi and Haiphong, and the mines into the ports.

ALLEN: Yes, but they still got a settlement in 1973, a couple of months later, that was entirely to their advantage, and which set up the ultimate takeover which they managed to carry out. I won't quarrel with your point, but had the US Air Force been in there in 1975 the results might have been different. But the fact was that what they had done up to that point was deliberately arranged so that the thing that
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had kept the US and the Vietnamese in there up to that point, which was the effectiveness of our air, was no longer a part of the equation. I think you are right, but some of the arguments you make to support it are a little oversimplified and slightly askew.

HAERING: I think the point for this audience is that we can have a discussion like this and if you don't have any really good data then it fundamentally turns on an estimate of intent. And intent is the hardest thing to estimate.

ALLEN: Even retrospectively.

HAERING: Even retrospectively. Not only because people's intent changes but also because their stories change. One thing Dung does imply is that they did try in 1968 and that they did try in 1972 and that they weren't adequately prepared. He doesn't actually come out and say, we were defeated. People don't do those things I guess. I think, he does say that but he doesn't say it in a way that you can snap the thing shut. Anyway, if it turns upon intent I think you are in big trouble in these analyses.

ALLEN: I think the fundamental point that we grossly misinterpreted the logistical aspect in the mid and late 1960s is valid. We underestimated what they needed and we also underestimated what they were delivering. You write off the trawler bit as having been totally unsuccessful. The reports I saw at the time indicated that when we discovered the first one which we were aware of which had made the voyage, and which we sank or at least we bombed it at Ran Choi, was actually about the 24th one at Quang San.

HAERING: Are you talking about in 1965?


QUESTION: We are talking about capacity here. That was critical. Do you agree with the overestimation of capacity? The impression one always gets is that we so overestimated capacity that we believed that we could bomb that thing to death all day and that we could never stop it.

ALLEN: The point that I would make with respect to that is, they were building into it redundancy that was necessary because we were bombing it.
HAERING: Yes.

ALLEN: We weren't discounting the capacity as he implies that we were. In order to get a single line through, they had to have eight alternate roads and fourteen alternate bridges and fords and so forth.

QUESTION: Is it accurate to say that because of this redundancy the bombing was ineffective? Is that the implication of your analysis?

ALLEN: That was the implication of our analysis, yes, that bombing cannot effectively interdict the flow of supplies.

SEVERAL IN THE AUDIENCE COMMENTING AT ONCE: That is the key.

COMMENT: He is saying exactly the opposite.

BRINKERHOFF: You are saying, if a real effort had been made, we could have been a victor of the supplies in 1968 and 1969.

ALLEN: I, as an Army Reserve officer, would have to take a parochial view to the effect that the best way I know of to interdict a line of communications is to sit on it. I have yet to see in any war historically a line of communications cut, interdicted, completely by bombardment either artillery or air.

SOURE: I looked at that, at least I tried to do that, when I did the interrogations. I came out with the following impressions. We did bomb the route, the trails in Laos. They were the ones that counted because of bringing the supplies down [?? UNCLEAR IN THE RECORDING]. The bombing to some degree helped to widen the trails, or increased the numbers of them also. We were clearing the forest by doing it.

But at the same time I found out that they had stationed companies of workers all the way down to fix the roads every time we made the run. My impression was that what we should have been after is the delay, the interdiction in terms of the cumulative delay of supplies rather than kill of trucks.
Presentation by GEORGE HAERING

ALLEN: Delay of supplies, attrition on what's being moved.

[SEVERAL OVERLAPPING COMMENTS]

GOURE: That you could have helped by having, for example, an interdictory strike, and whatever holes you had dug into the darn road, you should have maintained a CAP of orbiting planes at night with flares to prevent these guys from actually filling them. Every twenty-four hours you delayed that convoy you delayed every subsequent convoy and so forth. And you were gaining a good deal by delaying the sequence of supplies. But if you were going to go up and just cut kill, which was one of the favorite objectives of the interdiction program, then you weren't going to accomplish that.

GIESSLER: Well, as an Air Force officer doing analysis there in 1970 we effectively did that. I recorded all kinds of numbers that showed that what we did was we stopped those trucks from coming down.

COMMENT: We killed those same trucks.

GIESSLER: We also stopped bicycles and anything else, but it is interesting that -- and something that Allan had pointed out earlier -- how the same numbers looked from different points of view and what you used them for. We were doing analysis of a Wing operation and how well were we accomplishing our mission? Now maybe the 13th Air Force and the rest of the people didn't know what our mission should be, but in fact we had a mission and we went out to accomplish our mission. Our mission was to lay bombs on trails where there was evidence that there was something coming down. We capitalized on sensors and all kinds of other reconnaissance. And we layed bombs on those trails, truck depots, transshipment points, and anything that moved.

That somebody somewhere higher up hadn't thought out how to really fight the total war wasn't the question. But that is one of the things you run into when you do analysis like this, and that is, that everybody has a different point of view of what the objectives are. We thought that we were accomplishing our goals and were doing a super job.

ALLEN: Another point in support of his fundamental contention would be that whole business of the Cambodian
supplied route that all of a sudden came to our attention in 1970 when we overran the North Vietnamese sanctuaries on the Cambodian border. We discovered to our amazement -- and boy, the whole intelligence community failed on that one -- that tens of thousands of tons had been shipped into Cambodia by sea.

Now if that was in fact being done, why was it being done if you had all of this excess road capacity in the North? There are a couple of explanations for that. The stuff that was going into Cambodia was to support the war in the extreme South, whereas, in those days, the stuff that was coming down the trails was basically destined for the areas in II Corps and I Corps and supporting the war in that section.

But the fact is, later in 1975 he was delivering stuff all the way down there.

HAERING: And he wasn't using Cambodia.

ALLEN: Yes, he wasn't using Cambodia to accomplish it. But in 1975, there hadn't been interdiction for two years of any sort, anywhere.

HAERING: That was what he was bragging about, his 16-meter all-weather road.

ALLEN: And your point also about the fact that there was no anti-aircraft in the South. I assume that what you were implying there was that he really would have profited from having some air defense capability in the South to protect his bases when they were in sanctuary.

HAERING: You would think so.

ALLEN: And anti-aircraft systems, on the other hand, have a tremendous ammunition requirement. And the fact that he didn't have it, didn't have anti-aircraft, assumes that they were just avoiding that dimension of the logistical problem altogether. I think there is a valid statement to be made there. I would not say that the interdiction was a useless effort on our part. In fact, it made a tremendous contribution to the war, by forcing him to put more men in the pipeline, to expend the resources necessary to make redundant his lines of communication, and it put constraints
on the amount he could move which tended to limit the level of the war he was willing to support. I would suggest though, that my conclusion from a lot of that, was, I think they were getting what they wanted to run the level of war they wanted at the time they were running it. There is a lot I would like to talk to you about the Tet offensive and whether or not they self-destructed or what. Very interesting.

* * *
VIETNAM

PERSPECTIVE
Summary

- VARIABLE BUT LARGE
  - Hundreds of battalions (both sides)
  - Thousands of
    - Helicopters
    - Fixed wing
  - A million TACAIR attack sorties SVN alone

- INSURGENCY ECLIPSED BY MAIN-FORCE WAR

- LOUSY ANALYSIS HERE
SCOPE

- Selected characteristics of the war
  - scale
  - outside input
  - insurgency?

- One characteristic of our response
  - invariant
  - largely-theoretical analysis
    (at least of the air war)
Other Scale Factors

1500-3000 Helicopters (in SVN)

~1000 Fighter/Attack (in Theatre)

~1,000,000 SVN Attack Sorties '65-'72
(670/day in 1968)
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**Enemy Order of Battle**
1964-5
IA DRANG
NVA REGIMENTS
VC DIVISIONS
Main Forces Decisive

1975 Invasion

1972 Easter Offensive

1968 Tet