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**SENIOR OFFICERS DEBRIEFING PROGRAM**



**CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN**

LIEUTENANT GENERAL JULIAN J. EWELL, (RETIRED)

AND

MR. ROBERT CROWLEY  
LIEUTENANT COLONEL NORMAN M. BISSELL

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## FORWARD

This oral history transcript has been produced from tape-recorded interviews with Lieutenant General Julian J. Ewell, USA Retire, conducted by Mr. Robert Crowley and Lieutenant Colonel Norman M. Bissell, as part of the Academic Year 1978-1979 US Army War College/US Army Military History Institute Senior Officer Oral History Program.

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Interviews with Lieutenant General Julian J. Ewell

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#1

SUMMARY OF THE INTERVIEWS WITH LTG JULIAN J. EWELL

by

MR. ROBERT CROWLEY  
LTC NORMAN M. BISSELL

These interviews of LTG Julian J. Ewell were conducted during 1979 for the Oral History Program as part of the US Army War College's program of Advanced Military Studies. The interviews were conducted during one seven hour session with General Ewell on 10 April 1979 at his home in McLean, Virginia.

SUMMARY: The interview focused primarily on five general areas: highlights of General Ewell's career; the American soldier; mobilization and training; US experiences in Vietnam; and the analytical approach to combat operations. The key findings are included in the following paragraphs.

Career Highlights: LTG Julian J. Ewell entered the US Military Academy in 1935, after studying chemistry for two years at Duke University. He decided that the opportunities for meaningful employment in the civilian economy following graduation looked bleak, so he opted for a military career. After he was commissioned in 1939, General Ewell was assigned to the 29th Infantry Regiment, Fort Benning, Georgia, where he served as a platoon leader. Shortly thereafter, General Ewell was "drafted" to serve with the newly-formed parachute infantry and eventually became a battalion commander with the 501st Infantry Parachute Regiment. He served with the 501st throughout the Second World War, serving in succession as its executive officer, a battalion commander and a regimental commander.

General Ewell saw considerable combat action with the 501st during World War II at Normandy, in Holland, and in the defense of Bastogne. He

attributed the general success of airborne forces during World War II to their high esprit de corps, to the willingness of the men to fight, the unique organizational structure of the divisions, and terrain that favored light infantry units. General Ewell believes that there will be a continuing need for an airborne division in the Army structure, but feels that the great cost will prevent the formation of more than one. Future airborne operations probably will be most useful in low and mid-intensity wars, especially in situations which require rapid introduction of troops over great distances.

General Ewell served as the Commander of the 9th Regiment, 2nd Division in Korea for a few weeks before the Korean Armistice was signed in July 1953. His subsequent career was highlighted by service as the Special Assistant to General Maxwell D. Taylor at the White House during the Kennedy administration and as General Taylor's Executive Assistant when he was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. General Ewell later served as the Senior Military Advisor to the US Delegation at the Paris Peace Talks on Vietnam -- an assignment that he found somewhat frustrating because the negotiations were protracted, progress stalemated, and the tactics of the Communists annoying.

Quality of the US Soldier: General Ewell saw consistent improvement in the quality of US servicemen during his tenure with the US Army. He attributes the improvement to a combination of factors, especially education. General Ewell felt that the American servicemen in Vietnam was the best soldier he encountered while on active duty although he was unable to pin-point the reason for this quality.

In his view, the Army might be able to meet most of its active peacetime requirements with a volunteer force. He felt however, that no one should let labor under the illusion that an all-volunteer army was an ideal situation, having served with these organizations on several occasions. General Ewell believes that the nation would require a draft system to meet any major military emergency and that the machinery for induction should be in existence today in order to respond rapidly to crises.

General Ewell's experience with women soldiers was limited to those serving as clerk-typists, nurses, etc., and offered no solution to the Army's present dilemma on how to employ its growing number of female soldiers.

Mobilization and Training. General Ewell described in some detail the Army's poor state of readiness prior to its commitment in World War II and Korea. He felt that Americans were generally uncomfortable with having a large standing Army and consequently allowed the military establishment to fall into a sad state of disrepair during peacetime. Traditionally, the US has relied on her ability to rally the citizen soldier against aggression and to turn its vast industrial capacity to military production in time of war. General Ewell recalled how during the Second World War and Korea, the U.S. was forced to commit new units to combat that had received a minimum of training and that were led by inexperienced officers. The results were often costly in terms of lives lost because it took men and units several months to become accustomed to the combat environment. General Ewell credited the ROTC program with providing the Army with a nucleus of officers from which it was able to build a large fighting force. In both World War II and Korea, America was able to prevail because it was eventually able to turn from peacetime activities to a war footing in a relatively short time.

Vietnam. General Ewell's philosophy in Vietnam as Commander of the 9th Division and later as the 2nd Field Force Commander was to keep constant pressure on the enemy. His goal was to prevent the Viet Cong from reconstituting its forces and to maximize the effectiveness of his manpower by maintaining a large number of forces in the field at all times. To achieve these goals, he employed a variety of tactical maneuvers which were constantly modified as the enemy changed his mode of operations. By placing a premium on heavy casualties to the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese, General Ewell was able to shatter the Viet Cong's base in the 9th Division's area of operations in the Delta and subsequently reduce his effectiveness in the II Field Force Area.

General Ewell believed that the effective employment of Army aviation assets was one of the key elements in the 9th Division's success in the Delta. The terrain was ideally suited to helicopter operations. In addition, the deliberate methods used to schedule and maintain aviation assets enabled the Division to keep a high percentage of aircraft on combat operations at all times. He was also blessed with well-qualified, highly-motivated combat leaders who were able for the most part to combine imaginative employment of aviation assets and innovative tactics in combatting the Viet Cong.

General Ewell was greatly impressed with the caliber of officers with whom he served in Vietnam. He believed that they were generally more intelligent and better prepared for combat than their World War II and Korean War counterparts. However, he felt that there was no way to predict who would be an effective combat leader. Many officers in Vietnam, who had impressive backgrounds did not measure up to the combat task and their

shortcomings became readily apparent in terms of friendly and enemy casualties. General Ewell believes that good combat leaders are born to a certain extent; effective leadership qualities in combat are difficult to predict, but can be refined in an individual who already possesses them to an acceptable degree.

The press caused the Army some serious problems in Vietnam because they often reported inaccurate or misleading information. General Ewell felt that the press probably should have been censored at the outset of the war, but failing that, the Army should have learned to co-exist with the media by providing information on combat operations and generally being more accessible to representatives of the press. For his own part, he arranged informal news conferences on a regular basis in II Field Force in order to provide information and to answer questions. General Ewell believed that this measure helped somewhat to insure accuracy in reporting about activities in his area, but was no safeguard against inexperienced newsmen or individuals who would not bother to check the accuracy of information they received. He found that TV crews were the most difficult to deal with because they tried to dramatize events rather than report facts.

Analytical Approach. General Ewell used systems analysis techniques as a means to measure the effectiveness of his units. The key to this technique was to determine how frequently units made contact with the enemy and what casualties they would inflict when in contact. Unit commanders were required to provide statistics on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis as a means of determining the combat effectiveness of their units. General Ewell felt that inflicting heavy casualties and constant pressure on the enemy was largely responsible for the success of the 9th Infantry Division

in the Delta during his tenure of command. General Ewell later employed similar techniques as commander of the II Field Force and was able to achieve significant improvement in the success of combat operations in the III Corps Area of operations as well.

General Ewell believed that his analytical approach caused him to be criticized by some. However, he felt that the employment of analytical methods as measures of effectiveness derived for combat engagements were necessary to motivate personnel and maintain constant pressure on the enemy. General Ewell did not feel that enemy casualty figures provided to him by subordinate commanders were inflated because he had a high regard for the moral integrity of his officer corps and periodically conducted surprise inspections of his units. His analytical techniques for measuring combat effectiveness inevitably led to friendly competition among the units of the 9th Division, and II Field Forces. However, officers were not penalized when statistical results of combat operations were low due to the fact their units were assigned an area of operation with limited enemy activity.

INTERVIEW WITH LIEUTENANT GENERAL JULIAN J. EWELL

by  
Mr. Robert Crowley  
Lieutenant Colonel Norman M. Bissell

THIS IS INTERVIEW #1, SIDE #1, TAPE #1, OF THE INTERVIEW WITH GENERAL JULIAN J. EWELL, (U.S. ARMY, RETIRED). THIS PORTION OF THE INTERVIEW WILL COVER GENERAL EWELL'S EARLY MILITARY ASSIGNMENTS AND COMBAT EXPERIENCE AS WELL AS HIS VIEWS OF AMERICA'S ABILITY TO MOBILIZE FOR WAR AND THE QUALITY OF THE AMERICAN SOLDIERS DURING THE PAST FOUR DECADES. THE INTERVIEW WAS CONDUCTED AT GENERAL EWELL'S HOME IN MCLEAN, VIRGINIA ON 10 APRIL 1979. THE INTERVIEWER IS ROBERT CROWLEY, US ARMY WAR COLLEGE, CLASS OF 1979.

MR. CROWLEY: General Ewell, to begin our interview it probably would be useful to discuss those factors that influenced your decision to pursue a military career. As the son of a career Army officer, you had some unique insights into Army life before you made your choice. Perhaps, you could relate the things which weighed most heavily in favor of pursuing the military profession.

GEN EWELL: Well, as you mentioned, I was raised in the Army so I had some feeling of what Army was like although not all that much. I had been mildly interested in the Army but when I went to college I was quite interested in chemistry. I was actually studying to be a chemical engineer. I had been a little turned off by the military because I had gone to the New Mexico Military Institute for a year, my last year in high school. I must say I wasn't too taken with some aspects of the military. So, I went to college and was studying to be a chemical engineer. It was right in the depths of the depression. After awhile I noticed that these big men on campus, who graduated and went out, and came back, were jerking sodas, pumping gas, and really having a hard time in getting into a worthwhile career. So, I began to think more about going to the Military Academy,

and just decided finally I would go. When I was going to Duke University, they didn't have any ROTC. So, I really sort of backed into going into the military and I don't think you could draw any great profound lesson as to how I got into the military, just general interest which evolved over time.

MR. CROWLEY: Well, sir, for our second question perhaps you could briefly describe your career after you graduated from the Military Academy until your assignment to the 501st Infantry Parachute Regiment.

GEN EWELL: After I graduated from the Military Academy, I was fairly high in the class so I had a choice of assignments. At that time you picked your assignments based on your class standing. I asked to go to the 29th Infantry at Fort Benning which at that time was the only regiment in the whole Army that was at war strength. It was fully equipped and was a regiment in the truest sense. Most outfits in the Army were half-strength or two-thirds strength and they had old equipment. Well, the 29th Infantry being a school regiment was at full strength and had all new and modern equipment. It was a very interesting and worthwhile assignment because practically everything you did had something to do with tactics or fighting. You did almost no hash and trash-type work that plagued most outfits between the two world wars. Most Army units seldom got out in the field. I had spent a year or so in the 29th Infantry as a platoon leader, second lieutenant, when they started up the parachute project at Fort Benning. It's genesis was just a platoon. The Army had seen what had happened in Europe in the low countries and in Crete and thought perhaps this was something they ought to get into. They came around and talked to me and asked

me if I was interested in joining the parachute unit - you were supposed to volunteer. I said, "Well, yeah - interesting - sounds interesting. I'll think about it." A month or two later orders came out in the War Department assigning me to the parachutists. I'd never volunteered but I said, "Oh, what the hell. I might as well go ahead." So, I went into the parachute business and just worked my way up as platoon leader, and so on. I guess I spent about two years at the parachute school, and of course, all of my service during World War II was with airborne units. With the tremendous expansion of the Army, promotions were fairly rapid and I guess I was about 23 and a major when I was assigned to a new parachute regiment - the 501st - and I stayed with it almost throughout the war. During that time I did go to several of the courses at Benning - the battalion commander and staff officer course was extremely valuable because as a very young officer, what I knew about battalion command and staff was zero. I'd say the only unfortunate thing was that during that period I never was a company commander, which as everyone knows is almost an essential step in learning how to be an Army officer, troop leader, and how to run an outfit. There's no doubt you caught on pretty rapidly under wartime conditions, and your work week was six days or seven days - as many hours as necessary. You had to learn pretty quickly or fall by the wayside. There's no doubt that as a World War II battalion commander, my colleagues and I really didn't know much about the subtleties of combat and tactics. This was quite different, for instance, than in Vietnam where a typical battalion commander had been in every rank and had been brought along gradually and the scope of his knowledge was much greater than the typical World War II officer.

MR. CROWLEY: Sir, you had mentioned that the 29th Infantry Regiment was the one unit, in the Army that was combat ready or at least combat equipped and ready to go. Perhaps you could explain why this state of readiness did not exist within any other unit in the Army. Were we in such sorry shape at that particular time?

GEN EWELL: Well, if you go back into history you'll find that the US in general and the Army in particular up until World War II, had a minimal military establishment. The Navy was a little better off than the Army because it was the first line of defense. The Army, however, was on real short rations. I forget the exact figures but I think the Army had something like 120,000 men total, officers and men. The money available for modern equipment, like tanks, was limited and although they seem very cheap to us today, in terms of 1935 dollars, they probably cost about 100,000 dollars apiece. I imagine that when they bought tanks then, they'd buy 20 tanks a year or something like that. In terms of modern equipment, the Army just didn't have any. I'm sure you've read in books during the early days of World War II when they were expanding the forces you had ridiculous situations of units training with trucks made to look like tanks, wooden guns. It was just miserable. Of course, they had some World War I equipment left over and they'd make use of that. I would guess it wasn't until 1943, or thereabouts, that Army units really began to get the weapons, the radios and all the paraphernalia that was considered necessary for modern war at that time. So, the reason the Army only had one unit that was full strength was that's all they could afford. In fact, I think, in the Army at that time there might have been only two divisions.

They were sort of jake-legged divisions that were scattered all over the place. I guess the 1st Division, which was in the northeastern United States, was scattered in four, five, six posts and was a division in name only. Then there was the Hawaiian Division which was a little better off. They were concentrated in one area and I think a fairly reasonable facsimile of a division. That's all there was in the Army. The rest were just individual battalions and regiments scattered around the country.

MR. CROWLEY : Sir, with this sort of situation, how did the Army go about the task of absorbing the enormous influx of men that came into the Army at the time of World War II and preparing these people for combat? In retrospect, was this preparation adequate and how might it have been improved? You mentioned your own battalion staff training that proved invaluable to you but also the lack of tactical training that you had at each level of command, and that you had to learn by experience. Perhaps you could comment on these experiences?

GEN EWELL: Well, of course, I came in just before the war in the summer of 1939. For the United States, the war started on 7 December 1941, but it seemed obvious before then that we were eventually going to get involved in the war. Although, it wasn't that obvious. I mean, for instance, the draft act; I think it was in 1940, passed by one vote in Congress. If they hadn't had the draft, we would have really been in bad shape. Anyway, I think people who studied the situation attribute the success of the Army and the Air Force, which at that time was part of the Army, to the Army school system. The Navy was a little different in that they had always had some success in having a fleet in being, so they sort of had hands-on

training. The Army couldn't afford to do things for real so they used the school system to inculcate the skills and so on. The Army also did quite a bit of planning for mobilization -- industrial troop, and so on. Although I'm sure their plans were not carried out the way in which they were written, they at least had gone through the motions of how you gear up for war. I think, of course, a US national trait is sort of pragmatic, really get with it and do it, and we are very good at organizing; I think the Army reflected that national trait. Of course, I think the most striking commentary on US success in mobilizing was Churchill's comment when he came to the United States, shortly after the war. He gave a speech somewhere; I forget the exact place - Pentagon or some place. He said that he thought one of the most amazing things of the war was how the United States had organized the force for victory from scratch. Of course, he expressed this view in beautiful Churchillian language which was very impressive. I think it meant a lot coming from Churchill who had decades of experience in wars and peace and knew what he was talking about. I must say, however, there were lots of things done that would turn your hair gray when you go from say two divisions to 70. I mean, you just wonder how it was ever done. Of course, one very valuable thing that was a lifesaver was the ROTC program. No matter how thin you slice it, you just can't train an officer from scratch overnight. The ROTC program provided a sort of nucleus of people that at least knew how to do right and left face. Although I don't know the figures, I would imagine that the ROTC officer contingent in World War II was many times larger than the regular officer contingent. Of course, eventually, they got OCS started and things like that which took up the slack. The

National Guard was helpful too. Of course, it was a little different in that they came up as units. I think both the ROTC and the National Guard did a tremendous job.

MR. CROWLEY: Sir, was the course that you took for battalion staff work something that was done in anticipation of US participation in the war or was that a matter of normal training?

GEN EWELL: No. It was during the war. Each branch of the Army, like the infantry, artillery, and so on had a basic course that was sort of the second lieutenant company commander level, and a battalion commander and staff officer course that was about major and lieutenant colonel level. Then at Fort Leavenworth they had a division staff officer course. That might not have been the exact title but that's essentially what it was. They just kept plowing people through these courses in order to turn out their prospective company commanders or battalion commanders, or whatever. In fact, at Leavenworth, I think they had not only the regular course, which probably was a short - three, four, five months or something like that. However, when a division was established, the division staff, before the division was actually formed, would go to Leavenworth together and would be trained there as an adjunct to the regular course. I'm sure that was invaluable. Well, for example, in the 501 Regiment, we had a regimental commander who was a brand new, full colonel, who turned out to be a very capable regimental commander but due to a quirk in his Army career had never been to an Army school, and he had missed many levels of command. I don't think he had ever been a battalion commander, and what this fellow knew about running a regiment you could write on a postage stamp. Actually,

I think his battalion commanders and majors knew more about commanding a regiment than he did. But, he caught on and did all right. I think he's an example of one who, due to the workings of the personnel system, had missed some of the training he should have had, but on the other hand just through sheer hard work and native ability, was able to overcome it.

MR. CROWLEY : In peacetime, sir, we seem to have moved away a bit from staff training and most of our training for senior staff assignment today is done at the Command General Staff School. Do you think that it would be useful to introduce this type of training into an officer's career at an earlier period?

GEN EWELL: Well, I'm not entirely familiar with the present system, but I would imagine they still have the equivalent of the battalion commander and staff officer's course at the branch schools. You have to take it. In the branch type schools, major and lieutenant colonel skills tend to be somewhat specialized, and then the Leavenworth course brings you to the combined arms division level. Although I'm sure the courses are changed from time to time, I imagine they tune them to get the best hit they can. Of course, you never have enough time. If you had all the time and money in the world, you could probably justify a Leavenworth course that was two years long. I'm sure they take the 10 months or whatever they have to work with and do the best they can. Hell, I would say that in peacetime environment they probably bring Leavenworth along in about the right place.

MR. CROWLEY: In hindsight, General Ewell, how might the Army have better prepared men for combat during World War II? How might we have reduced our casualties or had better trained men for the situation they were getting into?

GEN EWELL: Oh, that's a good question and I don't know that there's a good answer to it. I think you were under such pressure at the time that it was difficult to keep your head above water and not go under. They probably did the best they could. It's quite apparent, however, that in Korea and Vietnam, particularly in Vietnam, that the infantry soldier was about as well trained as you could prepare anyone in a training center. I had really no great reservations about the training of our men for Vietnam. Well, of course, it was a different situation than World War II. You had a fairly good sized Army, you were conducting a small war, and you had the resources to train them. I'm sure that they could have used another month of training, but in order to meet their personnel limitation, and so on, they just couldn't afford it.

MR. CROWLEY: General Ewell, perhaps you could take a few moments to describe organization and training of the 501st Infantry Parachute Regiment and the 101st Infantry Division prior to their commitment at Normandy. What did the division do in preparing for that operation?

GEN EWELL: Well, of course, the 101st was one of the two early airborne divisions. I think there were five all together. They had a rather odd organization which was thought satisfactory but didn't work out too well: one parachute regiment which had three battalions, and two glider regiments each with only two battalions. The glider regiments during World War II proved to be very difficult to handle, particularly in airborne work because you had to have enough gliders and they were always in short supply. The two-battalion regiment was a real dog. It just didn't have any staying power and just didn't have enough people to control the ground.

They got out of that type of organization very rapidly. By the time the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions were sent to England, the Army had detected this problem and changed over to two parachute regiments and one glider regiment; they also put the two glider regiments together and made one three-battalion regiment. So, shortly before Normandy the airborne division had three regiments, two parachutes, one glider and each of these had three battalions. When they saw that the terrain in Normandy was so terrible, however, they realized the glider people would have all sorts of problems. They added another parachute regiment to the division so both the early 82nd and 101st had four regiments, three parachute and one glider. That organization worked out quite well in combat, and in fact, at Bastogne I'd say that the four regiment alignment was the one thing which saved the 101st. Shortly after the war, when they'd been able to digest its lessons, they changed over to straight parachute regiments with glider follow-on, which was more flexible and worthwhile. That's the way airborne divisions are today, I think, although they probably have brigades instead of regiments. It's essentially a triangular division. Let's see, you asked about training. Well, the airborne divisions were brought along like the other divisions except they had the airborne speciality and I would say there was nothing notable about their training. Of course, when you went to England, and the 101st was there about six-eight months before D-Day, you had no problems other than getting ready for war and were able to focus the training on the operational task. They were able to get the divisions in top form very rapidly because that's all you had to do. I would say considering the training restrictions in England - not much room

and not much space - that they did very well in getting a completely green outfit ready for combat. And boy, some of them were green. I know the 501st was formed in late fall of '42 and was in combat in June of '44, so it had been in existence about eight months. It's very difficult to bring an outfit from scratch and into combat in eight months. A very, very touchy operation. Most of the units make it. Some of them have all sorts of problems. Although, I gave you an extreme case because I think the 501st was the youngest outfit that went in on D-Day - youngest in terms of time it had been in existence.

MR. CROWLEY: General Ewell, based on your experience with the 101st, how effective do you think airborne units were in carrying out their missions during World War II? You might want to use the Normandy invasion, and perhaps the defense at Bastogne as examples of the effectiveness of airborne operations.

GEN EWELL: Well, I think in Normandy they were very helpful due to the terrain and enemy dispositions. There were two US airborne divisions and one British. All three of the divisions in effect were put in just behind the beach defenders in order to isolate them from reinforcement. The terrain was such - hedgerow country - and the rivers and the flooding were such that when you put an airborne unit down there, it was almost impossible for the Germans to get it out. I mean, the Germans were just helpless and there's no doubt in my mind that the reason the landings went so rapidly in the first days was the fact that the airborne had been put in there. The one place they didn't have airborne was in the center of the so-called Omaha Beach, and boy, they had a terrible time getting ashore there. That's

the place at Normandy where you read about all the blood-shed and casualties in getting ashore, making a lodgment and going forward. I know in our sector that once the assault division - I think it was the 4th Division - cracked the beach defenses, it was sort of a Sunday at the beach for three or four days until they had gone through the airborne and started to expand the bridgehead. Of course, at Normandy the airborne drops themselves were a comedy of errors. We had a night drop and I don't think we appreciated the inherent difficulties of a night drop at that time. The troop carrier - transport airplanes - had been brought along very rapidly just like we had and night drops were a new idea. Their techniques just weren't up to the problem and the drops were scattered all over the place. It was a real mish-mash. The only saving grace was that the drops were so disorganized that the Germans couldn't quite figure out what was going on. Although I wouldn't recommend doing it that way, the operation worked out all right. I'm sure we took many casualties that were due to the poor drop. I know the next drop in Holland during September 1944 took place in daylight and was almost a textbook example of airborne landing ten times as effective as in Normandy. Of course, another advantage you had in Normandy is that the so-called hedgerow terrain is very enclosed and ideal for aggressive light infantry, which is what the airborne specialized in. An airborne unit could go through the hedgerow and just tear up the enemy, whereas a standard infantry division, which was keyed more for set piece fighting, had lots of trouble in the hedgerows. They couldn't quite get themselves organized while the airborne went through it like a dose of salts. That worked out very well.

MR. CROWLEY: I gather sir, from comments in this book, Four Stars of Hell, that General Taylor initially thought that the 101st Division would be committed at Normandy for only three or four days until the initial assault forces got off the beaches and then you'd be withdrawn for some other operation. That didn't prove to be the case and maybe you could describe what happened?

GEN EWELL: That was the plan. I think we were supposed to be in a week or something like that. Well, we didn't stay in too long. I guess about six or seven weeks, but it was quite a morale problem with the men. When you say you're going to get in there and really fight like hell for a week and then you say, "Okay, we're ready to go," but you are told, "Well, take the next hill." Thereafter we never told the men how long they would be committed, no matter what the plan was. We said, "Well, we'll be there until we come out," and that worked out much better. In fact, I guess we were in Holland about three months. As you probably know, the US and the Allies in Europe were really short of divisions. They did fine but they could have used five, ten or fifteen more divisions. Most divisions stayed on the line continuously. I mean for six months, a year, two years, three years or however long they were needed there. The airborne divisions were the only divisions that were pulled out periodically because it was felt that when you were planning a new airborne operation, you had to get yourself squared away, and rightly so. There's no doubt in my mind from our experience in the 101st, that if you have enough divisions in a war to rotate them in and out that you can improve their combat effectiveness tremendously. They fight for "X" number of months and they come out for

some training to iron out their kinks. Then when they go back in to combat they are much better. I know in Normandy, for various reasons and because of inexperience, that we fought more or less, as companies. In Holland, we fought as battalions and in Bastogne we fought as regiments and as a division. I think it was partially due to the fact that in between operations we had a chance to train and get the kinks ironed out, and pull the unit together.

MR. CROWLEY: How was it, sir, that the 101st was assigned the mission of the defense of Bastogne, or did that just happen by circumstances?

GEN EWELL ; Well, when the Germans started the Ardenne attack, it was rather unexpected to say the least. At that time, I believe that the two airborne divisions were the only theater reserve which the allies had in Europe. That was it. When the allies sensed that they might have a breakthrough on their hands, they rallied up the reserves and that's all there were, the two airborne divisions. So, they just stuck them in the line and did the best they could. Actually, they had a few divisions in England, I think, but they were green. In fact, I know the 17th Airborne was actually committed later during the Ardenne offensive. In January, 1945 two or three weeks after the Ardenne battle started, an Armored Division was brought in. I know that it was a green armored division which had probably been in either England or in Brittany some place, that was brought into the Bulge. In fact, I saw both of those divisions operate in the Ardenne, and both of them had a terrible time. I mean they had never been in combat. They came in completely green. The winter weather by that time was very difficult. They had all sorts of problems. I know they put the armored division in for about three days and they were so bad they had to take them out and let them shake down for awhile

before putting them back.

MR. CROWLEY: General, the 101st was tremendously outnumbered during the defense of Bastogne. You were facing something like four full German divisions and elements of four others with a light infantry force. How would you account for the effectiveness of your unit in defending Bastogne under those circumstances?

GEN EWELL: Well, that's a good question and we could talk about that for hours. On the one hand, although the Germans wanted to take Bastogne, their orders were something like, "Take it if you can get it easy. If you can't, bypass it and go around and go deeper." So, the German corps and division commanders were trying to decide whether they would take Bastogne with a rush or go around it. They never really tried, although there were a lot of Germans in the area; I'm sure if we'd had a coordinated attack by all the German forces there they would have just run right over us. It's hard to say but it's a possibility. For instance, the first day of Bastogne we ran into a German armored division called Panzerlehrs, and after they made a few attacks against our regiment, and didn't get anywhere, then they slid on around. So, we didn't have to worry about them anymore. The 26th Volks Grenadiers was the next division that attacked us. They attacked us once or twice and it didn't work. Then they left one regiment there as a holding force and slid the rest of the division around. We never took the full brunt of a coordinated attack. Later on, I think the 15th Panzer Division Grenadiers did launch a full scale attack on another part of the perimeter and we really had a battle there. That was one factor. The Germans were not clear in their own minds what they wanted to do and never did pull their

full weight against Bastogne. Then I think from our point of view it was a combination of muck, luck, and pluck. There was a lot of luck because we just got there in time; the 501st, which was sort of the advance guard of the division, got out about three or four kilometers out of town and ran in to the Germans. We arrived essentially at dawn on the 16th or 17th and if we had gotten there an hour or two later the Germans would have been in Bastogne. We would have lost the tremendous advantage we had of controlling the road net and the terrain, which was also very advantageous. Although in a strategic sense the weather was very bad and shut off the air force, we were lucky with the weather. It was cold and foggy. The ground had not yet frozen and was very soft. Since these German armored units were largely confined to the roads, they had difficulty in maneuvering out on the open terrain; the Germans couldn't utilize their armored advantage against our so-called light infantry. We were also lucky in that a combat command of armor had been sent up to Bastogne. It wasn't much. I don't know how big it was, maybe two or three battalions, but they gave us some armored capability. They stayed and then we were sent a tank destroyer battalion which was sort of a low-grade tank that was quite effective in defense. Consequently, we had enough armor there to establish sort of a mobile armor reserve that could back up the infantry. And then, as I mentioned earlier, the 101st had four regiments, so it was very difficult for the Germans to envelope us. We could just keep putting regiments out to the flank, and if we had had only three regiments, we would have been in deep Kimshi. We just happened to have enough to establish a perimeter that would stand up against the German attacks. Of course, there was no

doubt that the paratrooper, although he was drafted into the Army and volunteered for the parachute outfit, was a very tough fighter. I mean, they liked to fight. I don't say that a 100 percent of them were Attila the Hun, or anything like that, but when you said, "Let's get out and go and take that hill," and by God, they went. They were very tough, particularly in defensive situations. You couldn't move them or scare them out. You had to overrun them. This was a very chastening experience if you're trying to attack somebody that just won't quit. Boy, it's tough. So it's pluck, luck and then just sheet guts. By that time the division was pretty professional and they knew what they had to do and did it. We also fortunately had about five or six battalions of artillery. Getting down to the tactics of the thing, when the Germans previously came up in the Ardenne, they'd hit something, they'd go around it, envelope it and go past, or whatever. They never could get through or never could get a handle on the 101st, in that you had a continuous defense. We had lots of artillery, and they had very little. Their artillery was way back in the columns on these jammed roads. When the German Corps that came down on the 101st, the first division hit the 501st, couldn't budge him the second division hit the 501st and couldn't budge him and an armored division came around and had a hell of a time. Finally, the Germans did get sort of an outpost all around us but they really had to go from a sort of an exploitation-type operation to a corps coordinated attack if they wanted to get in there. That type of operation takes time and they just never did get sorted out. As you can see, a lot of factors contributed to the success of the 101st. I think they are all quite well known because the defense of Bastogne, being a rather

glamorous affair, has been fairly well written up. Anyone who's interested can study it in detail.

MR. CROWLEY: Sir, were there any other significant airborne operations that you were involved in subsequent to Bastogne?

GEN EWELL: Well, not subsequent. I was wounded in Bastogne and carried out on my shield and never got back into action. I was involved in Holland in the so-called Market Garden Operation, which has been publicized in the book and movie, A Bridge Too Far. I thought from the US point of view, Market Garden was a very well executed operation. The overall operation was just too ambitious, had too high a risk and didn't work out. I think that both the 101st and 82nd had great success in the Holland operation. As I mentioned earlier, the drop was almost a textbook drop. I know in my own battalion - I was a battalion commander at the start of Holland action - I think we dropped the whole unit. Everybody was there. I think we had one guy with a sprained ankle, and one guy with a cut face or something on the drop. Well, guys don't do that well in training. Everybody was there and ready to go in 20 or 30 minutes. So, it was quite a good operation. Although the terrain wasn't as closed as in Normandy, you had lots of ditches, little canals, sort of hedgerows and little fields. As a result what German armor was around couldn't get at you very well. It was nice light infantry country, Bastogne wasn't, but it was just enough, what with the armor, and so on, that you could get by. Generally speaking, if you put an airborne unit out in complete open terrain and there's any armor around, they're in deep trouble. This factor isn't as true today with more light anti-tank weapons around, but it still has some validity. I didn't participate but they later had a big airborne operation on the crossing

Wessel

of the Rhine in a place called Wessel. The 17th Airborne and the 6th British Airborne were involved and I think that the operation was quite successful. Of course, by then you had thousands of fighters and thousands of transport airplanes. Everybody was well trained and they were doing things professionally, whereas when we started out we were sort of making it up as we went along.

MR. CROWLEY: Sir, looking down the road, do you see today a continuing need for airborne forces, especially in mid-to-high intensity types of conflicts? What missions do you feel are proper to airborne forces today?

GEN EWELL: Well, that's a difficult question to answer. To begin with, I don't think that anyone who has never been in a big airborne operation can appreciate the tremendous resources necessary to conduct one. You have to have air superiority. Well, that means you have two or three thousand fighters. In a real airborne operation, you must have at least a division as a minimum. You have to have enough people to get some elbow room, and to lift a division in reasonable time takes hundreds of transport aircraft. Unless we have some long drawn-out war sort of like the Pale<sup>e</sup>pani<sup>e</sup>sian War when Athens and Sparta fought for almost a century, I doubt if you'd ever have the resources to use airborne in a classical way. Of course, the Russians, who have what you might call a big Army, have something like seven or eight airborne divisions. Now, it seems to me that the Russians aren't dumb and they know what they would do with these airborne divisions. They also have lots of transport aircraft. I guess our national policy and NATO policy is not a war fighting policy. It's a deterrent policy. We aren't geared up for war, whereas the Russian policy is a war fighting

policy and they have the capabilities from the start of the war to conduct operations on a grand scale. Evidently, they think airborne is useful and is something that they want. Of course, airborne operations fit in with their idea of deep penetration. I mean, their idea of an attack is to go 600 kilometers to the channel and, of course, airborne divisions across the Rhine and things like that are very valuable. Getting back to the United States and the US Army, however, I don't think we'll see big classic airborne operations on a division or multi-division scale in our lifetime. We just don't have the resources. So, the question is, "What would you do or what can you do with airborne units?" Well, I think that there are lots of jobs that an airborne division, or parts of an airborne division, can do particularly in low and mid-intensity warfare. For one thing, they have tremendous reach with modern aircraft. You can go out 1000 to 1500 miles and introduce troops. A good example of the use of airborne, I think, involved the Belgians in the Congo some years ago when the rebels were starting to kill off the whites. They got airborne in there. In fact, they used American planes and dropped them in these inaccessible cities or towns and saved the people. So, I think that for mid-intensity and low-intensity warfare an airborne capability is another bow in your quiver that can be very valuable if you can afford the expense. Of course, the other side of the coin is that the airborne division, being volunteers, tend to be very aggressive, scrappy fighters; this gives you sort of an elite unit if you really have to crack something or operate in difficult terrain. We don't go for mountain divisions and I don't think an airborne unit would take well to the Alps but in difficult terrain like that in Vietnam, or Korea

however, an airborne unit can do well, whereas a standard infantry division, which tends to be much heavier and somewhat different in its style of operation, just doesn't do well. I would say that yes it's probably worthwhile for the US to keep one airborne division. It's probably all we can afford.

MR. CROWLEY: General Ewell, I realize that your participation in the Korean War was limited because the Armistice went into effect shortly after your arrival, but perhaps you could comment on the Army's preparedness at the start of the Korean War. What shape was the training base in? How quickly was the Army able to respond to shortfalls in trained manpower? I guess what I want to know is had we learned anything from World War II in getting troops trained and into the field in a timely fashion?

GEN EWELL : Well, as you well know, when the Korean War broke out, the Army was in a rather parlous condition. I wouldn't say that was desirable but it's probably historically the pattern that the US has followed since the Revolutionary War. Our usual entry into war is something like the first Battle of Bull Run. The Korean conflict was no different. However, once we got geared up, I think the Army sort of shook itself out. They knew how to train people and they did quite well. As you may recall, they had a lot of troubles with the artillery and mortar ammunition, but unfortunately that's something that takes time to correct. They had to set up the factories and build, and it takes two to three years to paint your way out of that one. But, I was quite impressed. As you mentioned, I was only in combat in Korea for about a month and it was a very quiet period. I was in a standard infantry division and I was a little uneasy about it, having been in an

airborne unit where you can get the best of the infantry. I was a little apprehensive but I had no complaints at all about the quality of the men in the 2nd Division. They did a good job; whatever you asked them to do, they went ahead and did it. Although it's hard to generalize, my feeling was that the typical private soldier in Korea was of higher quality than in World War II. I'm not sure if this was due to the fact that in World War II you had to draw on everybody, and the quality just went down in the process. I had a vague feeling that the men, in Korea, although no better prepared physically, were intellectually a little smarter and a little more alert. I couldn't prove that; I just surmised that their scholastic level was higher than the World War II group. I noticed the same thing in Vietnam. There's no doubt in my mind that the typical US private in Vietnam, if properly handled, was really a top-notch soldier, really top-notch. Of course, you read a lot about problems in Vietnam, but I think any bunch of soldiers, if they don't have much to do or if they aren't properly handled, have a penchant for getting into trouble. I don't have much to offer on Korea because I just didn't have enough combat time to speak with any authority. One thing that I think is worth commenting on is that when the war ended in Korea, the US and the Koreans, in effect, had an organized, or almost fortified, defensive position across the entire peninsula. By fortified I mean you had the trench systems; you had barbed wire; you had hundreds of bunkers. I think in a regimental sector - I had a regiment at the time - we had something like 400 bunkers. These were really big bunkers and would withstand a direct hit by a 155 mm shell. I mean they weren't any little jerry-rigged jobs. They were made out of tremendous logs. After the

Armistice was declared, we had to draw back slightly due to the way the demilitarized zone was laid out and set up a new position. Well, it was interesting that most people set up the same kind of position that they had before. We had an entirely different situation. If the Chinese, or the North Koreans, or both restarted the war, they were going to start the war in a different way than they had before. You needed a position that had lots of depth and lots of flexibility, so that you could take this first tremendous shock, if they poured four or five divisions down your throat, and not have a shallow Maginot Line-type of thing. It struck me that people didn't sit down and have enough gumption to put the line in differently than they had the month before. That's a real problem. I think one of the difficulties you had in Vietnam was taking an Army that was trained in the classic western military tradition, tactics, etc., and having them fight a radically different war. Some officers, very fine officers, had extreme difficulty in shifting their mental outlook and point of view - to change over enough to accommodate the differences and still maintain the basic fundamentals that were necessary. One thing I noticed rather casually was the capability of the Koreans themselves at the end of the war. I would say that their divisions were combat effective, but just barely. If they really got racked up, they began to fall apart. They didn't have the officers and didn't have what it takes to make a good unit. However, in Vietnam, fifteen plus years later, the Korean units were good outfits, although they had difficulty in adapting to the Vietnamese environment. I think the lesson you draw from this is that it takes an Army a while to mature. I guess there are exceptions like during

the French<sup>w</sup> Revolution when the French armies had to get themselves together in a hurry and turned out to be one of the best armies in the world.

However, in peacetime particularly, it takes an Army a while to mature.

There is no such thing as an instant Army. I think that the US and England to a lesser degree, because of their historical and cultural pattern, tend to resist this idea of giving an Army time to mature. They tend to think that you can call out citizen soldier and say, "The British are coming," and then the next day he can fight. It just is not true.

MR. CROWLEY: Sir, would you comment on the state of the Army's training base at the start of the Korean War compared to what it was at the start of World War II? Were we better prepared in terms of training facilities and units that could be used for training than we were in World War II?

GEN EWELL: I'd have to answer, yes and no. Of course, they had lots of facilities left over from World War II. They had the know-how but the way the budget system runs in the United States, if you have an Army of 500,000 men, your training base is truncated down to 55,000 to 100,000 men and that's it. Obviously to support the Korean War, which wasn't a big war from our point of view, it means you have to expand the training base and get the thing going. I'd say in World War II that you went from a cold start to blast furnace intensity. In Korea you went from a warm start to a hot condition and I'm sure they had a lot of problems, although I'm not too familiar with them.

MR. CROWLEY: Sir, I gather from your comments on the capabilities of Korean units at the close of hostilities that they were not as effective as our own units. Maybe you could draw a parallel between our efforts at

Vietnamization of the war in Southeast Asia in attempts to bring the Vietnamese units up to a standard where they could defend themselves.

GEN EWELL: Well, that's a very complex subject. The Vietnamese had all sorts of problems. In one sense or another, they had been in a war for about 15 years, and their leadership material was very slim. A lot of them had been assassinated, killed, wounded or whatever, and there's no doubt that their leadership, inherent leadership potential and their developed leadership capability, was very thin by US standards. For instance, in a typical US division, you had the cream of the Army as brigade and battalion commanders. Generally speaking, the officers were of high quality whereas in the Vietnamese division I would say that their officer corps was fair minus. I saw quite a difference in that sense. They had another cultural problem in that they still had remnants of the Chinese, Vietnamese, French caste system, and resisted, almost to the end of the war, bringing up officer material from what you might call the peasant or worker class. This obviously penalized them, because they were very short on officer material. I think it would have been a big bonus if they would have had an OCS, a vigorous OCS-type program. And I think what made the situation even worse was that they had a very generous draft deferral or escape policy for university students. They had people going to the university, taking doctorates, when they had units out in the field just dying for officer material. On the other hand, the communists didn't have that problem. I mean, not entirely. They had sort of a mass levy, and boy, they put the people in the Army that they thought they needed. The Vietnamese also had sort of a built-in difficulty in that they were on a

constrained budget, personnel-wise, dollar-wise, and equipment-wise. Most of their resources, either directly or indirectly, came from the United States and they had the McNamara-type ceilings on them which said, "Bang, that's it." For instance, the average Vietnamese soldier didn't get paid enough. If he was married, his family was almost destitute. They had lots of problems like that. I don't know how you would have solved it because it would probably have taken hundreds of millions of dollars to have paid them a living wage. In addition, their equipment was second rate. Although they did give Vietnamese soldiers new rifles, and this and that, there's no doubt if you stacked a US unit up beside a Vietnamese unit, that the comparison was almost odious. The Vietnamese labored under these constraints but they also had to contend with a government that politically was on shaky ground. I don't mean in the sense that you read about in the newspapers. I mean fundamentally in terms of their sociological-political structure. The government was so shaky that they didn't have a draft until they were so scared by Tet that they passed a National Mobilization Law. Until then, their Army just didn't have enough people. In fact, at some time, I think it was in '65 or '66, that they were having more casualties going out of the Army than people coming in. The Vietnamese army was in the midst of a war for survival and was being strangled for lack of replacements. Well, when they passed the National ~~M~~<sup>o</sup>obilization ~~A~~<sup>ct</sup> and they began to draft these kids who were sitting around drinking coke, or whatever, or helping their dads in the rice fields, this situation was partially corrected but they never did really recover from it. For instance, all except their elite divisions had three company battalions, and a three company battalion in Vietnam was

murder. I know, because the 9th Division was the only division that had three company battalions when we started out and it was terrible. Well, all their divisions had three company battalions, and if you put them into combat, after a month or so they were worn out. They couldn't stand it. I think one of the divisions I had supervision over - the 18th - had about five or six battalions in the division. It wasn't a division. It was just a Potemkin facade. So, they started bringing up new battalions, but, as I mentioned earlier, you can't form a battalion overnight. It takes awhile to get going and you dilute your leadership, and so on. We could talk about it forever, but they had tremendous inherent built-in difficulties, some recognized and some I don't think people even thought of. Then of course, they were cut-off on their own completely in about '73 or thereabouts. When the so-called Peace Treaty was signed, the amount of ammunition materiel, etc., that they needed to conduct a semi-modern war, was cut back. Vietnam was no guerilla war; it was, essentially, a semi-conventional war. The amount of materiel you need is tremendous. By modern standards, it runs up in the billions of dollars a year, and although I'm not personally familiar with it, I've been told by people who know, that we strangled them. We just kept cutting down our assistance and maybe if they had been virtuosos they could have gotten by with what they ended up with but war is not a very efficient business. I think that's one of the problems the US had with McNamara trying to fine-tune the war. In other words, he's trying to put in 99 percent of what you needed to carry the war to a successful conclusion. Nobody's that smart. He ought to put in 120 percent, then the war will probably end more rapidly and you'll have wasted 30 percent. If you try

to fine-tune, however, it's very risky. To get back to the original point, I think that the Vietnamese did fair with Vietnamization. Obviously, it didn't work and I think there are many reasons why it didn't work. Some of them were Vietnamese reasons; some of them were cultural, religious and political that you probably could not change; and some of them were directly due to either conscious, unconscious, or subconscious decisions by the United States that didn't work. Of course, I think the main difficulty was that you were fighting a very tough, determined, dedicated communist dictatorship of the most advanced type. I'd say the North Vietnamese were more Maoist than Mao. To take them on, you can't do it with half-measures. You really have to be tough. I mean, we couldn't take them on. In one sense, the North Vietnamese defeated the United States. I don't think it's exactly true, but in sort of a psychological sense it is. How could you expect the South Vietnamese to stand them off with half-measures? It was just impossible.

MR. CROWLEY: General Ewell, let's shift gears and have you comment about your experience serving as General Taylor's Executive Assistant. Specifically, could you explain what were your responsibilities in this assignment? How valuable do you think this type of an assignment is to an officer's professional growth?

GEN EWELL: Well, as you say, it was a most unusual job, very interesting and probably won't happen very often. As you probably know, when we had the Bay of Pigs debacle, there was somewhat of a crisis of confidence between President Kennedy and the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs and the Services. President Kennedy felt that he needed a personal advisor,

who didn't have an institutional commitment, to advise him on matters of security and military, and so on. So, General Taylor was brought in. I think his job at the White House has never been accurately described. I've read accounts of it and most of them I think people just made up; the accounts have nothing to do with what his actual job was. It's just somebody's perception of what it was. Basically, he was the President's personal advisor on military and security matters, and his only responsibility, as he saw it, was to advise the President. He didn't care anything about the White House Staff. Of course, he had to get along with the Joint Chiefs. He couldn't humiliate them and he never would have because General Taylor is a gentleman and essentially believes in working within the system. He did work with McGeorge Bundy because Bundy was the National Security Assistant, but he didn't get involved in any of the White House politics, picayunish back-biting, and so on. Well, he had myself and about three or four other officers as assistants, all of whom were top-notch types. All we did, basically, was to keep General Taylor informed so that he could make suggestions, recommendations, or discuss with the President any military matters which came up. I would say that it was a very useful device while it went on. Although I think we did good work and helped General Taylor a lot, there was no great personal role for me and the other staff members in achieving great things. I think it worked out very well and was very handy. Of course, when General Taylor was made Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, which really was sort of a hangover from this crisis of confidence, there was no longer any need for the office. The President felt then that if he wanted to know something, he could just call General Taylor on the phone and ask him. Also,

I think General Taylor and McNamara had a very good personal relationship. General Taylor worked out very well as Chairman of JCS and the White House office just disappeared. One amusing note, I'm sure you recall a couple of years ago that some admiral, serving as a White House liaison officer, was accused of passing White House papers to the Joint Chiefs and there was a big stink. I don't know any of the details. It may be that he overstepped the bounds, but when General Taylor went as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, we set that system up. One of our officers, who worked in the White House and had an office over there, went to the Staff meeting every morning and would tell us what was going on. It was completely accepted. McGeorge Bundy was for it. I don't think McNamara was for it, but he did not see fit to cancel it out. It was very helpful to General Taylor, because that Kennedy bunch was very ruthless, and they had their people scattered all through Defense, State and I don't know about CIA. Sometimes some guy in DOD would come down and say, "Okay, you are all going to have to do something." So I'd say, "Why is that?" And he'd say, "Well, the White House says so." We'd call up the White House through this pipeline and say, "Who said this? This sounds kind of kooky." And they'd say, "Nobody said it." Then we'd come back to this fellow and say, "By the way, we're working on this project. Now, just who was it in the White House that said we had to do this?" He'd say, "Well, I got this sort of third-hand. I have to check on it." We'd never hear from him again. Some politicians and some academicians are just young fellows. One, they had no sense of how you run an outfit, and two, if they think something is right, they will resort to what are really unethical measures to get their

point of view across. Unless you keep your back against the wall, you really get knifed at every opportunity. So, we set up that system and I guess what happened was, if anything did happen, that whoever was doing it didn't have enough sense to keep himself in reasonable bounds, and they tagged him out. I don't really have too much to say on the White House thing. I guess the one point I would make, and I would say this very cautiously because I wouldn't want someone to over-interpret what I say, is that the basic decisions that the President makes are made in a very straightforward way, in his appreciation of the National interest and what's feasible politically. However, once you get down below the top-levels of government, there is a real jungle. I think it's very difficult for an Army officer, and probably CIA or anyone else, to appreciate how policy is made and how it's arrived at, by this NSC, top departmental level, White House interface. I don't know how you would ever train anybody to understand this without putting them into the situation and you don't have the capability to do that. I know when I went to National War College in the class of '59, we had all the usual stuff about government organization, policies, and strategy, etc. When I got to the White House, I would say that, and this is overstating it, if anything they told us at National War College was true, I don't know about it. Nothing. They didn't have the vaguest idea. I think they have since become more sophisticated in their approach and have a better handle on it. But, they just didn't have the vaguest idea then. Of course, one problem was that the Kennedy crew was unconventional, to say the least; I wouldn't say crooked but very devious. I mean, there were lots of Irish mafia and lots of

currents in there that may not be typical. Well, to cut that off, I'd say that the policy formulation at the highest level is something that has to be seen to be appreciated. The other point, which is really included in that, is that the considerations on which policies are based at that level, are often entirely different than the considerations on which the services formulate policy. I do think it takes considerable imagination and insight for a service to push something that's controversial or debatable up to that level, unless they have some vague idea of what considerations are important at the top level.

## INTERVIEW WITH LIEUTENANT GENERAL JULIAN J. EWELL

BY

MR. ROBERT CROWLEY  
LIEUTENANT COLONEL NORMAN M. BISSELL

THIS IS SIDE #2, TAPE #1, INTERVIEW WITH GENERAL JULIAN J. EWELL.

MR. CROWLEY: Sir, we were talking a few minutes ago about your assignment at the White House with General Taylor, and I wonder if you might comment on where you went subsequent to General Taylor's assignment to the JCS.

GEN EWELL: Well, when General Taylor went to the JCS, I went over there too. I forget the nominal title -- the executive assistant, the executive officer, or something of the sort -- and in effect I did the same thing over there as when I was his assistant at the White House. Of course, it was a much broader type of job, because you not only had to help General Taylor out as the Chairman, but you had to process all the decision papers from the Joint Staff itself. I must say that in the Joint Chiefs and the Joint Staff arena, you were very much under the gun from DOD. This was in the heyday of the McNamara regime with systems analysis, and all that. It really wasn't too easy to work with some of the DOD people for a variety of reasons which I won't go into. Fortunately, General Taylor and McNamara had a good personal relationship and that helped a lot. At that particular time, the JCS was still suffering from practically all of the institutional problems that you've read about, sloppy staff work, etc., etc., etc. I think General Taylor put in some improvements. Then General Goodpaster came in as his special assistant, and later when Goodpaster became Director of the Joint Staff he instituted quite a few reforms that energized the Joint Chiefs situation quite a bit. They still have, however, the inherent

problems of a committee-type operation. I don't know whether you'd ever get them as responsive as you'd like. Of course, any big bureaucracy tends to be pretty unwieldy.

MR. CROWLEY: Moving on to later in your career, you were assigned during 1970 as the military advisor to the US Delegation at the Paris Peace Talks -- a unique experience for most military officers. I think that it would be useful to future generations of officers if you would discuss your responsibilities and contributions to the negotiating process. Also, what are your feelings about the usefulness of this type assignment for military officers?

GEN EWELL: Well, I guess the job had three basic responsibilities. You know the US had an ambassador, or acting ambassador, who was head of the delegation, and he was responsible to the Secretary of State. The military advisor in practice and in theory was under him. I was an advisor to the ambassador and had no formal responsibility to the Chairman of Joint Chiefs. As a matter of convenience and practicality, however, the military advisor had a recognized link to the Joint Chiefs, although it didn't really amount to all that much. The Joint Staff did feed me with all the information on the situation in Vietnam. The third thing you did, which surprised me, was attending the peace talks every week; the session lasted a whole day and was a terrible ordeal. You sat at the table as a member of the delegation, which somewhat surprised me. That was the organizational set-up. Actually, I must say it was a terrible assignment, because at that time the US was, what you might say, stonewalling the North Vietnamese. The North Vietnamese had very clear objectives. All they wanted to do was to take over South

Vietnam under their own terms. Of course, the language was not quite that blunt. The US was not agreeing to anything that the North Vietnamese wanted to do at that time. As a result, there was no movement at all, one way or the other. You'd just go to meetings week after week. The North Vietnamese would get up and give a speech, and then the US, and then the South Vietnamese, and then the Viet Cong, who of course were supposedly independent. Actually, they were just flunkies for the North Vietnamese. That wasn't true for the South Vietnamese, although the US and the South Vietnamese tried to coordinate their position. It was quite clear if the South Vietnamese felt strongly about something they didn't hesitate to take an independent position. As to whether the military advisor was worthwhile, I don't know. It's hard to say. I'll put it this way: the US political position and the military situation were not coordinated, and had no particular logical relationship to one another. So, it didn't much matter what you said the military situation was, the political position was not influenced. About all you could do was to help the ambassador or his staff if something came up. You could find out what actually happened and tell them whether you thought it was important, or unimportant, blown up in the papers, or what. Of course, the peace talks did have the problem with the press. The reporting on the Vietnamese War in the US press was not very noteworthy to say the least. It was very biased so that very often you'd read something in the newspapers that had only a tenuous relationship to what actually was taking place. You'd have to go around and find out what actually happened instead of what was in the paper. What really fried me at the time was the fact that the communist side were con-

sumate liars. I mean, what they would say or whatever they wanted to say was the truth, as far as the press was concerned. I would say that at any one meeting, anywhere from 10% to 50% of what they said was a blatant lie. There was no foundation at all to what they said or maybe it varied from no foundation at all to a little something that they distorted. The US wouldn't rebut any of this. Our representatives would just sit still and take it, and the US press would report what the communists said and give it equal billing to what the US said. We didn't take the opportunity to point out that this was incorrect, "This was a lie, this was false," etc. It got very frustrating. However, I would say that for about six months it was educational to watch the communists operate. They were complete liars, completely dedicated and never budged from their position - no compromise, no nothing. Then, after six months, it just got to be murder. I must say I admire the people in the State Department who can negotiate for years on something like that. It must take the patience of Job and the endurance of an ox to stand up to it. I think the Vietnamese peace talks were probably quite unusual during that period in that there was no movement at all, and we were just grinding away at one another. I suppose in that particular instance the military advisor was just reassurance to the political ambassador. He was political in the loose sense. So, it was useful but not essential. Something like the SALT talks, I think is entirely different. I mean, it's about a military subject; you have to bring the JCS along. I'm sure the military advisor to the SALT talks is not only very important, but an essential member of the team. If you didn't have him, you'd be in deep trouble immediately. One last thing

that did occur to me is that whereas on the US side the delegation was mainly professional State Department officers who were typical Americans, a little more sophisticated in terms of foreign policy, but hardly what you would call related to Attila the Hun. I mean, they're just not very tough by culture or any other way. The South Vietnamese were a mixture of professional foreign office people and civilians. They were probably tougher than we were, but not particularly tough. On the Communist side, I would say probably 75 percent on the Communist side were, I hate to say it, professional killers. They clawed their way up assassinating people, pushing them in the river, getting rid of them or whatever, these guys were really tough. I don't think it had any great affect, however, because we weren't negotiating anything at the time. I often wondered how a Western group with all their civilized attributes can stand up to a dedicated Communist bunch who are ideologically committed, who have a very ruthless ideology, and who can just keep chipping away at you. Any compromise instead of being a 50-50 tends to be somewhere between 60-40 in their favor, or 90-10, or whatever. I just don't see how the US can stand up to that. I guess all you can do is just try to watch out for it and correct it. I don't know for instance, how the VC ever got to the table. I don't know, because there wasn't any such thing as a VC. I mean, it was just a sham, but anyway, they were at the table. Their chief spokesman was a Madam Bien, who was supposedly the foreign secretary of the VC government, or the National Liberation Front (NLF) as it was known. Although her background was quite obscure, the best we could get on her was that she had spent her early years as a fingerman for the Communists.

She'd go around and finger people to be assassinated, in addition to being mistress for various Communist officials. Well, this gal was as tough as nails. Being at the delegation and supposedly Foreign Minister of the NLF, she had prestige, spoke good French, and was quite attractive - not beautiful, but attractive. This gal carried a lot of wallop, but she was a real crook. It really made you sick at the stomach to see what she said in the newspapers, etc., really disgusting. Well, so much for that.

MR. CROWLEY: Sir, to wrap up this section, is there any other assignment or experience in your Army career that you would like to discuss or comment on?

GEN EWELL: Yes, I think probably the most profitable tour I had was in the early '60's in Germany. First, I was assistant division commander in the 8th Infantry Division for two years and then I was Chief of Staff for the V Corps. As you probably know, in Germany you have more resources than you do in the United States, generally speaking, and you are closer to the problem, so your concentration on training, tactics, and operations is somewhat greater than in the states. As a result, I think those positions were quite useful, because although you aren't running the show, you're right there at the helm and you really learn as much as you can about division and corps activities. I think in those three years I really learned a tremendous amount and capitalized on my previous training, so it was very valuable. At V Corps I worked under General Polk, who was a tremendous commander. Just to watch him operate was an education in itself. I apologize for being personal, but when I took over the 9th Division in Vietnam, after I had it about a month or so, General Westmoreland came back down

and we went around and looked at things. During the course of the day, he said, "Boy, I must say, you really have gotten hold of this division in a hurry. It's the fastest I've ever seen anybody get hold of a division." That was very flattering and I guess it was true, or he wouldn't have said it. I attributed my success to the fact that I had two years in division in Germany, although the situation was quite different. I knew what had to be done and just went ahead and did it, whereas if somebody had come in there ice-cold, I can see where they would have trouble getting hold of the division. The other interesting job I had was in Berlin, just after the airlift. It was in the 1949-51 period. At that time, General Taylor was US Commander of Berlin, on what was a combination political-military job. He was not only the military commander but he was the political representative of the United States in Berlin. The situation was very complicated, Tripartite Allies, Russians, East Germans, West Germans, etc. The military side was old hat to General Taylor so he dealt with it pretty easily and really didn't get into it all that much. I'd say about 85 percent of the work was political and about 15 percent, if that much, was military. It was very interesting to get into political-type things that Army people seldom see. You were working not just in political-military affairs, but you were working across the whole spectrum of politics from city administration, reconstruction, well, you name it and it was there. Very interesting. Of course, they had a State Department mission there. I forget what it was called, the Berlin Mission or something like that. I guess it had about 20 officers and I was greatly impressed with their ability to: one, report on situations in a factual, meaningful way; and

two, to grasp and solve or, at least, elucidate policy questions. Of course, I guess that's what they had been trained to do and they did extremely well. On the other hand, what struck me was that they were very uneasy in what I would call administration, or getting things done. In other words, if you had to get something done, the average Army officer could do it much better than the average State Department officer. They were used to being observers, and deciders, but not implementers. I know it was the same thing in Vietnam, in the so-called CORDS Operation. In the later years, they appointed State Department people as the regional deputies and then they had a layering of State Department people in there. Although these fellows responded very well, I thought, but you saw this same difficulty of getting the show on the road. Some of them had awful trouble doing it and some of them did it quite well. I'm not saying that's a defect or a weakness. I think it's just inherent in the way the State Department operates, and something you had to keep in mind.

MR. CROWLEY: Sir, let's shift to another area and deal with the quality of men in the Army over the past four decades. There's a growing concern in the Army and in society that today's soldiers are not up to the standards of the past and are not truly representative of American society. From your perspective, what was the caliber of the soldier who entered the Army after World War II and Korea, in terms of education, intelligence, initiative, leadership qualities, etc.?

GEN EWELL: Okay. Well, I don't have too much to say about that because, through a strange combination of assignments, the only truly peacetime service with ~~troop~~ I had was the three years in Germany with the 8th Division and

V Corps as I mentioned earlier. This was in the period '63-66, so that would be post-Korea and pre-Vietnam. My impression was that the soldiers that we had at that time were quite adequate. Of course, that's a very relative statement because if you take a hundred people, I don't care whether it's soldiers or whatever, you probably have somewhere between one and five percent that are crooks, useless, morons or you know what. That five percent absorbs about ninety percent of your time trying to keep them out of jail and out of trouble. Once you eliminate this lunatic fringe, if you'd call it that, obviously you have some real gung-ho-performers, some adequate guys, and some who just follow along behind. I think the difficulty you have today is trying to make use of someone who may have a very poor formal educational background, semi-illiterate or functionally illiterate, or something like that. If you have the time, you may be able to reach him to do something that's really quite difficult. However, it has to be taught by hands-on, rote, repetition training. He can't take a book and learn 75 percent of the subject and then polish it off in training. The problem with the disadvantaged person is that it takes so long to get him up to the point where he may be better than the guy who gets it largely from a book. It just takes a long time. You also have the problem with the disadvantaged in that they have basically lived a rather undisciplined life and they are not used to making choices and so on. I'm sure that even a middle class high school kid these days is pretty wild, but they are used to making judgments, choices, etc. I think that with disadvantaged people you have a higher percentage of disciplinary problems than, perhaps, with people who have had more advantages or are from higher social or economic

strata. My personal experience, however, was that soldiers were quite adequate. During wartime, I think I mentioned it partially before, in my opinion at least the American soldiers who fought in Korea were better than those in World War II, and our soldiers in Vietnam were better than those who fought in Korea. And, I don't mean a little bit. I mean appreciably better. I don't think I could quantify that and prove it, but that's the impression. As to women in the Army, I had no meaningful experience with that at all. The big push on women in the Army came in the '70's and what with Vietnam, Paris and Naples, I had no direct experience with it.

MR. CROWLEY: General Ewell, what role did the women play in the Army during World War II and Korea?

GEN EWELL: Well, in World War II and I guess in Korea, usually in a large headquarters you'd have a WAC Detachment; I think this was probably above Corps. There would be some in an Army headquarters, in theater headquarters, in Corps area headquarters, or something like TRADOC. You'd have a WAC detachment which might be fairly sizeable. It might have anywhere from 10 to a 100 gals and they would be employed as secretaries, stenographers, communication specialists, etc. They were limited to a few specialities because they thought there were a limited number of skills that women were particularly suited for and where the men were not. Many of those skills were in very short supply. The women had their own barracks and their own administration. Although they worked with the men, they were quite separate in every other sense. My impression is they did a tremendous job. Now, they have a situation where there is considerable amount of integration and a much higher female content. I have no direct experience with this situation,

however.

MR. CROWLEY: Did you have any experience during World War II with women casualties? I gather a lot of women served in the Medical Corps during World War II. Was there any incident in which there were a large number of women casualties because of bombing or some other type of attack? If so, what impact did this have on the morale of the troops?

GEN EWELL: No, I don't. I'd forgotten about hospitals. Of course, in the Medical Corps you had a lot of women, nurses, technicians, and so on, although that was nothing new. I mean, that was just sort of a transfer of the civilian approach to the military. It seemed to work out extremely well. Just theorizing, I can see where having large numbers of women in a military outfit on post, or with a unit out in the field, where lots of problems could arise that would not arise in an entirely male unit. How you work around and resolve these problems, I suppose, is something that can be managed in an ideal world. It's a lot easier to just not have the problem, then you just don't have to face it. I suppose they can work their way around those problems somehow.

MR. CROWLEY: I realize that World War II predates the Women's Liberation Movement by a few years, but was there any pressure or any movement at that time to have women play greater roles in the services?

GEN EWELL: No, I think the potential women libbers, if there was such a thing at that time, felt they had made real advances in contributing to the war effort to the extent that they did. Of course, industry used a lot of women due to the siphoning off of men into the services. There were many women who got into industry as welders, or whatever, and that probably took

a lot of pressure off.

MR. CROWLEY: Sir, let's turn back once more to the quality of soldiers. The 120,000 men Army that you described earlier, in the period before World War II, were all volunteers. Were these men the victims of the depression or were they truly professional soldiers, people who went into the Army because they wanted to serve in the military? I guess I'm wondering if you had a weaker, less able individual at that point in the Army simply because of economics than you did at a later date?

GEN EWELL: That's a hard question to answer. I would guess a true answer would be that part of the Army were true volunteers and part of them were refugees from the soup kitchen. My particular experience was in the 29th Infantry which was at Fort Benning, Georgia. For reasons that are not entirely clear, the Southeastern United States has always been much more military-minded than most other areas. I wouldn't be surprised if the true volunteer content of the 29th Infantry was very high. Now, it may be that some of them were refugees from picking cotton 12 hours a day, but generally speaking, the volunteer content was very high. And they made really good soldiers. I think people tend to wax euphoric about the volunteer Army, but I tell them a story that I think tends to put this somewhat in perspective. In the 29th Infantry, the NCO's in the pre-World War II Army probably had 10-15-20 years of service. I mean, it took a long time to become a sergeant or a 1st Sergeant, or something like that. In the 29th Infantry, we thought we had top-notch NCO's, and they were good, but they were largely country boys. Educationally, they were not too well advanced and they had done all their training at Fort Benning where they did the

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same thing year after year, and they had memorized it. They did a wonderful job. The first time that we went out on <sup>man</sup> <sup>eu</sup> ~~maneuvers~~ we found that some of these guys couldn't read a map. At Fort Benning they'd look at a map and say, "Go this way." Well, they weren't reading the map. They just knew that that's the way you went. It soon became apparent that some of these NCO's didn't have the intellectual ability and flexibility to really learn new things rapidly. Then we began to get in these new draftees. It was really rather sad. I remember in my platoon we got this young kid, who was from New York City or some place. I don't think he knew a woods from a park. He wasn't well educated, but he was smart and willing. I think he had been there about six months and he was made a corporal. Gosh, that was unheard of in those days. You could see these draftees who didn't know anything about the Army but had lots of sheer native ability, beginning to come up through this corps of old NCO's, many of whom were top-notch. Here you have a platoon sergeant who has 15 years service, and you knew a year from now this kid was going to have this guy's job. So, I think the idea that a volunteer Army inherently has higher quality and is more professional than one composed of draftees is not a fact. It's a very complicated question. I think a volunteer Army has certain advantages and the draft Army has certain advantages. A mix has certain advantages. All these glittering generalities are very misleading.

MR. CROWLEY: As a follow-up to that question, what problems has the Army experienced when national emergencies necessitated a rapid mobilization of manpower? Do you believe that the United States needs to establish at least the machinery for draft mechanism in case someday there is a need for large scale mobilization?

GEN EWELL: I don't think that even merits an extensive discussion. I think anyone who sits down and objectively views the situation is inexorably driven to the conclusion that you have to have a registration system. To begin with, you must have it and I think looking at it from an administration point of view, it's feasible in that the political costs are minimal. I don't think anybody would be mad about that except some super left-liberal who is against motherhood, or whatever. Now, whether you are going to have a draft during peacetime, at least in today's climate, that's an entirely different question. Of course, the political ramifications of that are quite extensive and quite heated, too, so they're two different questions.

MR. CROWLEY: Well, maybe you could address yourself, briefly, to the question that you just raised. Do you think that given the commitments the Army is facing today, the all volunteer concept is a viable one? Do we really need a draft to have an Army that can meet these commitments?

GEN EWELL: Well, just from what I read in the papers and talking to a few people, I think you could say that the active Army is sort of getting by with the volunteer concept. Maybe it isn't exactly as good as they'd like, but they probably can live with it. From what I understand, the Reserve and the National Guard are dying a slow death, and I think that's bad, but the most critical thing is the Ready Reserve, which is dying a quick death. I think it's quite apparent, if we were injected into any war other than a banana revolution, or something like that, we couldn't make it. There's no doubt in my mind if we went into a European war this summer, after a couple of months we'd have had the course. They'd just be completely flat on their cans. Unless the Nation is willing to use payscales that are more than competitive, not only in the active Army but also in the

Reserve and the National Guard, I don't see how you can make out on a pure volunteer force with the commitments we have. I'm not as familiar with it but I understand that the Navy is really in bad shape. That's worse than the Army. I mean here you have a force that almost has to be a D-Day ready in order to be effective. I just don't think you can put up with it if your Navy is starved for personnel, not only numerically but in terms of quality. Of course, I think the problem from a political point of view is that US national policy has never been to be in a war-ready state. I think the problem is that to have a war-ready Army, or Navy or Air Force, no matter what the size, is a complete departure from US historical experience. It's never been true in our whole history, and regardless of the pros and cons, people are very uncomfortable with this idea.

MR. CROWLEY: One last point, General Ewell. It's been estimated today that lacking the draft machinery that it would take on the order of six months for the US to induct a man into the Army and to bring him to a state of training where he could be committed to combat. What was your experience in World War II in terms of how much time was necessary from induction until a man was trained and be committed to combat?

GEN EWELL: Well, six months sounds like a good round figure. You might be able to shave it a little, but I would say if you were able to give a fellow six months of good honest training, there would be a little slippage. Of course, if a man went into a going unit as a replacement then you could answer the public honestly and say, "Yes, this fellow is in pretty good shape." Now, ideally, it would be nice to have an opportunity to get a

guy in the unit and let him settle down, and so on. Of course, starting a unit from scratch is an entirely different problem. I'd say you would be lucky to get a unit into shape in a year. As I mentioned earlier, I was in an outfit that went into combat after about eighteen months and we were on the ragged edge.

INTERVIEW WITH LIEUTENANT GENERAL JULIAN J. EWELL

by

LIEUTENANT COLONEL MIKE BISSELL

This is Side #1 of Tape #2, interview with Lieutenant General Julian J. Ewell, Retired. This interview covers Lieutenant General Ewell's service as Commander of the 9th Infantry Division and Commander of 2nd Field Force in the Republic of Vietnam during the period of 1968-1970. It is being conducted in General Ewell's home in McLean, Virginia on 10 April 1979. The interviewer is Lieutenant Colonel Mike Bissell, US Army War College, Class of 1979.

LTC BISSELL: As a division commander and a field force commander during this very active period in history, your experiences and thoughts on major issues provide valuable insights to the understanding of past events as well as preparing the commanders and leaders for the future. In order to transition from our earlier discussions this morning on the past significant assignments and experiences you've had, perhaps you could tell us a little bit about your arrival in Vietnam when you assumed command of the 9th Infantry Division. Sir, perhaps you could start by discussing the geographical location of the Division at that time -- their organization and state of readiness and training.

GEN EWELL: Well, to begin with for people who aren't familiar with the Vietnamese war and even some who are, I think you have to realize that the Vietnamese war on any one day probably boiled down to about 10 or 20 different wars. Each was quite different from the other in terms of terrain, weather, and local situation. Every six months, or every 12 months, the war changed radically, so that you always have to remind yourself whether you are talking about the war in the general sense or the specific sense. I could describe something on Tuesday and someone else in Vietnam could

describe the same event and it would sound like two entirely different situations. So, my comments are keyed to where I was, when I was there, et cetera. Well, I think it's rather amusing that when I arrived in Vietnam, the 9th Division at that time had its Division headquarters at Bear Cat which was a fairly new camp east of Saigon, not too far from Long Bien. They had a brigade east of Saigon; they also had a brigade in Long An Province which was southwest of Saigon, generally considered in the upper Delta; and then they had the Riverine Brigade which was generally down around My Tho on one of the branches of the Mekong River, at a camp called Dong Tam. When I arrived, I assumed that I would get a little time to talk to the old Division Commander, get organized and oriented, and take over in two or three days. When I got off the plane they said, "Well, the change of command ceremonies are in an hour." I said, "Well, okay. When is the Division Commander leaving?" They said, "Right after the change of command." His wife had become quite ill in the United States and was undergoing a major operation and he had to get back. So, my orientation of the Division was to meet the Division Commander and say, "How do you do." We walked out and I took over the division. I didn't even know where it was, much less anything else. I don't recommend it but that's the way it happened. Well, I arrived in late February. I forget the exact date but it was probably two, three weeks after Tet. In and around Saigon where we were based, they had policed up after Tet pretty well and I think things were in good shape. Down in Long An Province where one of our brigades was based, that was in pretty good shape. General Weyand who was the II Field Force Commander at that time, said, "You better go down to the Delta; we want to know what's going on down there." I don't

know why they sent me. I didn't know Vietnam from Singapore. I guess it was because I had a Riverine Brigade down there. In fact, although the Riverine Brigade was based in Dinh Tuong Province which was in the upper Delta, at that time it was actually down at Can Tho -- the biggest city in the Delta, down on the main Mekong River. They were down there trying to throw the Viet Cong out of the suburbs of Can Tho. When I got down there to look them over, I'd say they were about two kilometers outside of town fighting two or three Viet Cong battalions. They had not policed things up very well down in the Delta. At that time the area was solely the responsibility of the Vietnamese except for the Riverine Brigade of the 9th Division which wandered around on ships and landing crafts. The psychological situation in the Delta was very bad. I wouldn't say it was defeatist, but it was very tense and very nervous. The troops weren't quite sure whether they were going to make it. So, I went back and told General Weyand, that the place was really on the ragged edge and that we had better do something dramatic or they might have a real crisis of confidence. He said, "Well, okay. You get down there and take as much of your Division as you can and get those VC out of there." I would guess the VC were in battalion strength about three or four clicks outside of My Tho. It's a little hard to say where they were exactly, which was one of the problems. The brigade down at Can Tho finally got the VC out of there. Then we kicked the VC away from My Tho after some tough fighting. My Tho was very near our base camp in the Delta. Vietnamese fighting was very tough to get used to -- particularly using a lot of choppers. We kicked them out of there and then from then on, basically it was ourselves and the Vietnamese. The 9th Division was gradually shifted entirely into the Delta.

We gradually pushed the VC back and started beating on them and I would say in about a year, we really had things in good shape and going up -- it was a long haul.

LTC BISSELL: How about the organization of the other two brigades? When you first took over, did they have in their structure the four companies per battalion.

GEN EWELL: That's a good point. I think I mentioned earlier that the 9th Division had been sent over to Vietnam under severe personnel constraints. As a result, they had three company battalions and only nine battalions. Later on that year, they began to change over to four company battalions. The three company battalion was a real dog in Vietnam. It was a semi-area type war and you couldn't cover the area with three companies and keep personnel in the field continuously. Using four companies, you could rotate companies and keep the men fresh. With three companies, you were on the horns of a dilemma. If you kept them in the fields all the time, they'd wear out; if you kept a company back, you only had two companies to work with. Just terrible! I think in each brigade, we had two infantry battalions and one mech battalion. The Riverine Brigade, of course, had three infantry battalions. I do remember that when I first started looking into the matter, I asked how these battalions were organized? I think out of nine battalions in the divisions, I had six different organizations. Eventually, we got squared away. I do think, for instance, the Riverine Battalions were tailored to the riverine-type operation, which was a bad mistake. They operate very well in a riverine role but if you put them on any other task they had all sorts of problems. They didn't have any vehicles; didn't have this; didn't have that. I think it's much better to have a sound, general

purpose organization and when your mission changes you just informally change the organization around and don't try to tune the unit up too much. For instance in Vietnam, if you changed the structure of the unit and it takes you six months, by the time the six months is over, the situation is different from when you started. It's much better to have a good, sound, general purpose organization.

LTC BISSELL: If I might pursue for a minute your thoughts on the Riverine Brigade -- your second brigade -- could you briefly discuss how the brigade was employed and how effective you thought they were even though limited in capabilities.

GEN EWELL: Well, of course, you had to be in the Delta to understand it, but the Delta is a very sizeable area. It must be two or three hundred miles each way or something like that. It's laced with about seven big rivers. They are as big as the Potomac south of Washington. There were hundreds of little creeks and rivers and lots of canals which were man-made. So that you have a tremendous water network on which the people are highly dependent. Much of their communication and everything else takes place on these waterways. The Viet Cong, who were essentially natives to the area, used these waterways for the bulk of their communications and logistics. It was well known at the time, although not always admitted, that the Communists and North Vietnamese had big supply depots in Cambodia which were just up the road from these waterways, maybe a two hour trip. The Communists would just go up there and pick up their rifles and their ammo and bring it down at night and resupply themselves with great ease. In fact, it was a popular misconception that the Viet Cong had old home made rifles, et cetera. In reality, in 1968, the Viet Cong had brand new AK-47's, they had ammo,

and everything they needed. Well, the Riverine Brigade had about five or six Navy ships, small freighters, small passenger ships, LST's and so on, which had been converted for carrying this force and all its supplies around on the big rivers. When you went to a place and you were going to have a big operation, big ships would go over there. Then they had, I guess about four to six hundred small craft. They weren't small; I mean they were just small compared to a ship. These were passenger craft, which were sort of gun boats, as well as a couple of other varieties, which had armament and were used to carry the men to make actual assaults and then furnish fire support. Being smaller and having fairly shallow draft, they could go up all these small creeks and canals. So, the operational concept was based really on the force the French had during the French Indochina War -- Infantry with boat. In concept, you would try to find out where the enemy was; make a landing on both sides and surround him. Well, this concept worked extremely well, particularly when it first started because the Viet Cong, for a variety of reasons hung out along the rivers, creeks and canals. There was more cover there, and they were away from the road nets which the South Vietnamese controlled. The Viet Cong hid in many of these areas right along the creeks and rivers. So, the Riverine force had really good success for a year or more. Well, the Viet Cong weren't stupid and they began to realize it wasn't very healthy to hang out along the river banks. So, they began to move elsewhere. Then, some of these operations would just fall in thin air. I mean there wasn't anybody there even though you thought there was. It also tended to be a little expensive in terms of friendly casualties. For instance, a typical Riverine operation might run you a kill ratio of somewhere from six to one to fifteen to one.

So that meant, even if you had a good day and were able to corner a Viet Cong unit and kill or wound 50, (I don't know how many got away and a lot got away) it would probably cost you 5 to 15 casualties. It was a relatively expensive operation in terms of friendly casualties. When I came in, it was quite apparent that the riverine operation was beginning to go downhill, not that it wasn't inherently a good idea. The unit had just worked themselves out of a job. There were still lots of jobs to do, however, and they'd wander around and do them. Finally it was decided that the 9th Division should take over Kien Hoa Province which was south of My Tho. It was a very tough area and one that was sort of the home base of the Viet Cong. The whole northern Delta was actually the birthplace of the Viet Cong movement and their ostensible capital if they had one. So we had to go in there and clean them out and it was very tough. There were lots of coconut groves, which are, without going into detail, just terrible to fight in -- terrible. That's one reason the Riverine casualty rate was high. We found that the Riverine force generally lived on its boats which were air conditioned and had hot showers and all the good stuff. Consequently, the battalions and brigade didn't have the feel for the country and, it was quite a psychological and physical strain on the men. Here you are going from the rice paddy to an air conditioned place with hot showers and then back in the mud for the next two days; it just didn't work out. Eventually, we unhorsed most of the Brigade and put the Brigade headquarters right in the midst of the Kien Hoa, right next to the Vietnamese headquarters. We took one battalion off the boats completely, and kept the other battalion on the boats mainly because there wasn't any real estate to put them on. The whole Delta was about a foot above the water level and to find dry ground was a little tough

as you well know. We found that as the Riverine force began to learn the terrain, they really began to get after the Viet Cong in Kien Hoa and just kicked hell out of them. So the force actually depended more on choppers than they did on the ships. You had a sort of a 180° switch in the Riverine operations. I thought it was a great idea at the time and it worked out very well because as we began to unhorse the Riverine force, the Navy began to get very aggressive in the Delta. The Navy needed the little crafts that we had. And as I mentioned, we had hundreds of them, so we would slip the Navy 50 or 100 of these crafts under the table and they'd take them and run around interdicting all these waterways. It worked out very well.

LTC BISSELL: Sir, as the commander of the 9th Infantry Division you were well known for the employment of many innovative tactics and techniques such as jitterbug, bush master and checker board operations, night hunter raid and search operations as well as the employment of people sniffers and snipers. I'm wondering if you would care to comment on some of the more successful daylight operations that you developed down in the Delta and why they were successful. Perhaps what application they might have for future endeavors?

GEN EWELL: Well, of course, if you're really interested, I will plug my blue book, Sharpening the Combat Edge, which Jim Hunt and I wrote. It goes into a considerable detail on these things and is to the best of our ability and knowledge, completely factual. I would say the great invention that we had in the Delta was the so-called jitterbug. Colonel Hank Emerson, the 1st Brigade commander invented the jitterbug, perfected it and polished it to a fine edge. Essentially, it was a very sophisticated form of the eagle

flight in which a brigade would reconnoiter a province (a province would be the size of a state like Rhode Island or a fairly big area.) The brigade would put two battalions on the ground and then they would have one battalion that would jitterbug the whole province and, in effect, put a full press on the province. The air cavalry based on intelligence would go and check out various places. As soon as they found some enemy, you would start calling in companies and throw a seal on them. Although this sounds easy, it was very difficult in execution. There are a lot of interesting coordination problems with the air cavalry, the gun ships, the artillery, tactical air, etc. It was sort of like rubbing your head and patting your stomach at the same time, but it could be learned. When you would throw a seal on this enemy outfit, usually you had to hang on to them for part of a day, overnight and the next day. Then, if you had a good seal, you could almost destroy the entire outfit, which would be a company, two companies or even a battalion. Using this technique in Dienh Tuang province, Colonel Emerson, over a period of a few months, essentially was able to break up every communist battalion in the province. If he didn't break them up, they got so scared that they separated so they couldn't be pinned down as a battalion. Then I shipped him up to Long An where there were about five communist battalions and he did the same thing there. It was really a virtuoso performance and probably possible only in the Delta which was super ideal for air mobile operations because you could land practically anywhere. I mean, you had complete freedom of operations. The only problem with the jitterbug was that it was so complex that it took a real master to do it well. So, eventually, we had to simplify it. You can read about this in the little book, but we made it about half as complicated. It

worked about half as well, but the average battalion commander could do it. When the communist units began to break down, the pure jitterbug wasn't quite as useful because the targets were smaller. Eventually, we began to turn more to ground patrolling which could search out an area more thoroughly and just use the jitterbug to keep the full press on the province. Emerson's Brigade using the jitterbug was fifteen times as effective as the average brigade. And that's fifteen times -- I mean that's like General Motors making fifteen billion dollars instead of one billion. I mean, it was just a virtuoso tactical performance, but admittedly, too complicated for the average commander. It took almost a musician to orchestrate this thing. I think the most important thing that you didn't mention was the fact that the 9th Division really was able to implement effective night operations. There was nothing magic about this. But of course, you had to have night vision equipment. If you took any book on how you conduct a night patrol or a night ambush and if you do that well, you'll run a good night patrol or night ambush. It takes practice and it takes meticulous care. We eventually got to Long An province. The VC had just about given up daytime operations because it was so tough. Colonel Geraci had the brigade. He was operating at night and was getting 65 percent of his results at night. Never heard of before in Vietnam. I think it was much easier in the Delta to operate at night than in the jungle. I would say that the 9th Division by effective night operations was able to take the night away from the VC and almost paralyzed them at night. This was catastrophic for the VC because they had always been able to work at night almost with impunity. So you'd clobber them in the daytime, you'd clobber them at night and there wasn't any place to go. This was very

demoralizing. You could almost sense their frustration. We had a lot of variations on helicopter operations. I think the only one that's worth mentioning in the time available is the so-called night hunter operations which basically was to take a chopper and put a mini-gun, gatling gun, or machine gun on it and a big night vision device. You would run the canals at night and due to the reflectivity of the canal you could see the enemy. Of course, the whole country was under curfew. Nobody was allowed out unless they had a light on their sanpans. You could see the sanpans on these canals. We started out using Cobra's for these operations. The Huey's with the night vision device would spot them and put a tracer on them and then the Cobra would come in and shoot them out. When we decided to put the mini-gun in the Huey, you didn't need the Cobra and you saved two Cobra's; you could actually do the whole job with one ship. This in effect gave you a little tiny gunship, like the Air Force had the big sophisticated gunships. Eventually, the U.S. Army, Vietnam began to fabricate these kits and you'd have two kits per plane that were detachable. So, if the plane went down you'd just shift the kits to another chopper. If your gun jammed, you had another gun and you could get, five or six hours out of a chopper a night. These night operations were very effective in the Delta, but not as effective elsewhere because you didn't have this perfect visibility. I think this was a noteworthy equipment innovation, whereas most of our innovations were pure tactics. It was quite impressive to me that with pure tactical innovations you could improve the effectiveness of a unit by 100 percent. You didn't change the people. You just did it right or you did it a little different and it didn't cost any money -- all it cost was sweat. I think another important thing worth mentioning is the

medical phenomena known as paddy foot. This is a complicated condition which occurs when you walk in water for extended periods of time and your feet begin to deteriorate. When I first took over the 9th Division, we found that 50 percent of our infantry battalions were ineffective due to paddy foot. That means in a battalion of say 400 riflemen, 200 of them couldn't fight. Well, this is pretty bad. Well, to make a long story short, due to a very complicated series of tests and the medical community analyzing these diseases over a period of months we got hold of it and were able to get the paddy foot problem to where it was quite manageable. This was a real medical feat because it was the first time that a unit in difficult tropical conditions had been able to operate without having horrendous casualties from the climate and the indigenous diseases and so on. Of course, there were lots of other things like malaria pills, hepatitis, etc. But, this made it possible to conduct prolonged operations in the Delta. The Vietnamese didn't have this problem because they didn't go out on long operations. They'd go out for a two or three day thing and then they'd go back to the barracks for a couple of weeks. We were able to statistically prove that you could stay in water for 48 hours, but if you stayed 49 hours, your paddy foot incidence began to skyrocket. So our companies would go out for 48 hours and then they'd come in unless they were heavily engaged in a fight. By rotating your companies, you could keep battalions in the field continuously, but no company was ever out longer than 48 hours. Once we solved the paddy foot problem or managed it, we started a technique where a battalion was in the field 365 days a year. Constant pressure. I mean, the battalion was always there. This really got to the VC's because they were used to being able to regenerate when you'd take off the pressure.

Boy, when you put it on them all day and all night, playing it 30 days a month, they just couldn't stand it. As far as I know, we were the only division in Vietnam that did that. Every other division for a variety of reasons would essentially operate in the day and a little at night. They'd go out on sweeps and they'd come in for rest. We did what I called a full court press 24 hours a day, seven days a week. I think you could say honestly that we really broke the VC in the northern Delta, really broke them. I think this was the main contribution along with other things such as night operations and so on. Very difficult on the men, though. I figured it out once that a man pulled about 120 hours of work a week. As a result, you had to watch them very carefully because they were being pushed to the absolute limit of their physical ability, capabilities and stamina. The doctors had to really watch them and if they saw that the men were losing weight or getting jumpy or whatever, you'd have to ease it off. But, one good thing, it kept them out of trouble. I mean, you didn't have any trouble with dope, drinking, anything. Boy, they were either fighting or sleeping or eating or washing -- no time to get into trouble. I guess another technique that paid off very well was snipers. It's a long story but anyway we thought we'd have snipers, which isn't a new idea. The Delta was ideal for it. So we started snipers from scratch and all I can say is, God, don't start anything from scratch. It took about a year of painful work to get this thing going. It's a long story, but when we finally got it going, for instance, we had 80 snipers in the Division who were good shots to begin with, trained them and used them mainly at night. These 80 snipers did about as much damage as a whole battalion, which could be considered about 1000 men. More importantly, they actually worked with the companies.

They'd go out with a company and a platoon would set up and really just protect the snipers and the snipers would do the shooting. The men finally realized that if you'd use your rifle right you could knock these people down. As a result we finally got to where the average rifleman would shoot at Viet Cong with his rifle and began knocking them down. By this time the Viet Cong were in such bad condition that they were hiding out and didn't want to fight anybody. They just wanted to stay alive. As a result, a typical engagement involved the scouts and a squad or a platoon. The scouts were up front and when they saw a couple of VC's, they'd exchange a couple of shots and the VC would take off. That was an engagement. That's all there was to it. We studied these engagements and finally trained our men to be ready for a shoot out like the OK Corral. The action in military terms is what's called quick kill type shooting. Every third day when they were out of the paddy they'd practice shooting. If they couldn't get the hang of it, we would make them a radio operator or something else. They would get so they could see a guy and in five or six seconds get off, one shot -- bam and he's dead. The VC either couldn't shoot back that fast or couldn't hit our men if they did get off a shot. As a result, you got astronomical enemy casualties with very little friendly casualties. That's one advantage I forgot to mention earlier about the night operations -- the so-called kill ratio was astronomical, about 100 to 1. In other words, you'd knock off 100 VC and you'd maybe have one guy killed by accident more or less. Hardly any casualties. With this quick kill variation, your friendly casualties were low, very low. So, as a result of these tactics, I think the last month I had the Division -- either March or April 1969 -- we killed something like 2300 VC and NVA and captured maybe five, ten or fifteen.

During the same period I think the division had 50 casualties, and the kill ratio was something like 85 to 1. This was unheard of on a large scale in Vietnam. In fact, I would say that the 2300 enemy casualties probably was equivalent to the typical kill of five or six divisions. This success was achieved basically with some imagination and the use of standard tactics developed to a very high degree of skill. As mentioned earlier the method employed consisted of a company out two days and back one. They'd go out two days and every third day they'd sit down and formally go through the four or five key operations; day patrol, night ambush, shooting, mine and booby traps, and whatever the battalion commander thought was important. They'd go through this every third day; if a guy couldn't do it, instead of keeping him in the outfit, we would take him out and put him somewhere else. As a result, the skill level just kept going up and up and up. Very successful. In fact, so successful that many people in Vietnam thought we were cheating or something. They didn't believe the results. I later applied the same techniques on a much looser scale up in II Field Force and it was quite successful up there. Of course, one problem was that in II Field Force it was mostly jungle. As you well know it is hard to work in a jungle. Lots of people didn't believe in this concept. Nobody could believe that a PFC with a rifle could go out and just murder these people. I say murder -- I mean just completely shatter a Viet Cong outfit or a NVA outfit who were supposed to be masters of the jungle. They are almost as bad in the jungles as we are although they were very tough. This small unit type of operation was hard to put across, particularly at the NCO and private level. They didn't want to get killed and this sounded kind of dangerous to them -- boy they were very skittish about it.

LTC BISSELL: Sir, having supported your division during that period of time,

it is obvious that you appear to have motivated the personnel in your command to a lot of innovative thinking on tactics, techniques, and procedures. I wonder if you would discuss briefly how you created this type of climate and attitude among personnel?

GEN EWELL: Well, I think to begin with on the one hand, the 9th Division didn't do anything different. I mean we did all the command, leadership, administrative things in the standard way, but we tried to do them well. We did add a little extra zip of innovation that I thought was quite useful. Of course, we tried lots of things that didn't work out at all. Many things we thought were a good idea, turned out to be a complete flop. If something worked out well, one reason it worked out well was that it was quite unexpected. The VC were great pattern operators and they could see how you were operating. If you changed, it took them three, four, or five months to adopt to it. Then, they'd begin to close you out on the new techniques. I think Hank Emerson was very successful with some of these innovations because anything that worked in Vietnam, I don't care what it was, we were for it. We did encourage innovation. I don't think in any formalized way. For instance, Emerson had a Captain Mike Peck who was a terror in daylight patrols. I mean this guy was Attila the Hun. He could patrol Potomac Park and kick up ten VC and take care of them. He was just a master and nobody believed that you could conduct a daylight patrol in the Delta and accomplish anything other than getting your can shot off. We were a little short on choppers for awhile and Peck would go out on daylight patrols and just have a field day. So, we started doing a lot of daylight patrolling and capitalizing on his success. I think Peck got plenty of reward -- two DSC's and a couple of Silver Stars or something. He was

a wizard, a wild man in the field. He eventually got shot up, but that can happen to anybody. So there was, I think a very receptive climate to innovation. Although I did watch it because there were a lot of innovative ideas and you only have so much energy, so many resources and can only do so much. If the brigade and battalion commanders thought something was real kooky, then we'd forget it. Lots of divisions had thoroughly rigid SOPs, which were applied throughout the divisions. Well, I would say in the 9th Division -- we ended up with 10 battalions instead of 9. Everyone of our battalions had a different situations and we did not impose any rigid structure on them. The brigades were different and the battalions were different. Although we managed it very intensively, the battalion commanders were encouraged to fit their operations to their particular situation. Every week we'd have a big pow-wow which I'm sure got very tiresome to the battalion commanders. I guess we'd take maybe two or three hours in every week and would discuss every operation that had taken place in the whole division. All the battalion commanders were present and I think there was a lot of idea interchange at these meetings. I think it was very helpful, although we tried to ease up on the competition because some battalions were in a dry hole. You couldn't expect a guy to pump water out of a dry well, however, if a battalion saw some other battalion was getting 400 or 600 kills a month, and they were getting 50, they would immediately think I'd better get off my ass and do something.

LTC BISSELL: Well, sir, in your book and also today, you've alluded many times to the Viet Cong and their adjusting to different tactics and techniques after a period of time. I'm curious about your perception of the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese as tacticians. How flexible and

effective were they in coping with these very different things? Were they merely reactive or did they seem to have a system and a good plan of approach to what they were doing?

GEN EWELL: I think they were very good at what they tried to do. Of course, a lot of their operation was what I would call political rather than military. For instance, they would go into a hamlet or village and tell them that if they didn't shape up somebody was going to get their head knocked off. They were very good at that. I mean, they spoke the language. The ends justified the means to them, so they had no compunction whatsoever. I think sometimes they did some things for image purposes, but if they did something nice, it wasn't because they wanted to be nice; it was because they thought it was a good idea. So, you would try to break them away from the village or the hamlet because the villagers and the farmers didn't like them in the first place and they'd turn their back on them. It was extremely difficult to do, but once you learned how to do it, it was easy. The VC's primary military efforts, other than mines and booby traps, were pre-planned raids. For instance, they'd go back to a base area, they'd refit, patch up their wounds, get new people, do some training, meticulously plan a raid, probably take a night or two to get to the place; conduct the raid, and then withdraw. They would conduct one or two operations a month and if you could disrupt this cycle, they didn't conduct anymore operations and you could really choke them off. Of course, it's easier said than done, but basically, if you got in their base area and rummaged around, they couldn't plan the raid and the unit would just die off. In Vietnam the only way you could really disrupt the whole Communist operation was by sheer attrition. You had to attrite these hard core VC because they were so dedicated.

Your intelligence was so imprecise that the way we operated, you just cut off big slices off the whole structure and if you did this long enough the structure began to fall apart. Once you had done that, I mean you'd cut off their political control over the people. You'd cut off their military operations, and you'd attrite their structure so it began to fall apart. Once you did that, then you could really begin to get on with pacification. Until then you just wasted your time on pacification -- by the way this view of pacification is very controversial. As you inferred, the 9th Division and II Field Force have been highly criticized for being Attila the Hun or Jack the Ripper or something. I'd be willing to go before a knowledgeable jury of 10 people and if they studied the situation for a week, I think they would agree that the only way you ever make progress against a very dedicated Communist movement that's massively supported from an outside sanctuary is just to cut them to ribbons. There are a lot of political and other ramifications that I haven't gone into that made things very difficult in Vietnam, as you well know.

LTC BISSELL: Sir, let me switch streams a bit and talk about army aviation. It appears very obvious that aviation played a very significant role in Vietnam throughout all Corps areas and probably more so in the IV Corps and the Delta than others. How significant was army aviation on our planning and conduct of operations? If we had not had aviation, how much of a change would we have had to make in our strategy and our approach to operations or wouldn't it have made that much difference? Perhaps it would have just taken a little bit longer sometimes to accomplish our tasks and objectives.

GEN EWELL: Well, to begin with, the conventional wisdom states that to put down a vigorous revolutionary or insurrectionary movement it takes a force

ratio of about 10-1. The best force ratio we ever had in Vietnam was about 6 to 1 in II Field Force which was the highest in the country. It was less than that in other places. With choppers and 6 to 1 ratio, you could make definite inroads into the Communist movement. So that's one measure. In other words, it reduces your required force level. Of course, if we had had 10 to 1 and the choppers, we could really have gone to town. There is no doubt in my mind that the Vietnamese war would have been extremely difficult without choppers. I don't know whether it would have been as bad as the French experience, but anyway it would have been real tough, real tough. As you've alluded, in the Delta where you had that open terrain, the chopper was priceless. I mean it was priceless. One reason the 9th Division did a lot of things with choppers is that we were very short on choppers compared to most divisions. As a result, in order to get things done, we had to squeeze every ounce of good out of the choppers we had. Consequently, we did lots of things with choppers that other people didn't do just out of necessity. For instance, when I took over the division, I think our maintenance rate was about 50 percent available or some figure like that, which was about standard in divisions throughout Vietnam. My recollection is that when we really got our maintenance under control, and this is extremely difficult, our availability rate became about 86 percent and that's astronomical. That's water walking. I don't know what your outfit did, but. . . .

LTC BISSELL: Seventy to seventy-five percent was very good.

GEN EWELL: We were flying our helicopters about 100 hours a month. Most outfits flew about 70 or something like that. For instance, when I got to II Field Forces, we found that up to a certain point the more you flew the choppers the better they were. The peak point was about 104 hours a months.

So, if you had 100 choppers and you flew them 70 hours a month, your availability was down and you really didn't get the return. Whereas if you flew them 104 hours a month or somewhere around 100 we'll say, you got maximum return because your availability peaked rather than went down. Of course, if you went past 104 hours then your availability began to go down. Well, for instance, I mentioned that the 9th Division didn't do things all that different. I think one reason that our maintenance was so good was because we had about eight things that were stressed. We also found that our error rate on parts ordering was about 40 percent. That meant that 40 percent of your requisitions that were in effect just got kicked out. Well, we took the regulation and we took about six kids, high school kids that were smart. They didn't know a chopper from an alligator, or a spare part from anything. We taught them exactly how you requisition this stuff and got our error rate down to about four percent. And then we studied the regulations and there were several completely legal quirks in the regulations that allow you to order more parts -- parts for this, that or the other thing. By following the regulations exactly, we were pumping parts out of the whole theater. Everybody else was requisitioning them and their requisitions were getting kicked out. They'd come down to the 9th Division and say "Where in the hell did you get that part?" We would say, "Oh, we just requisitioned it. Here you want one?" I'm not saying we had parts running out our ears but we didn't have any parts problems, roughly speaking. So I think that's a good example of how by doing things exactly right, nothing radical or revolutionary, we were able to do very well. We also rationalized the aircraft fleet. I don't know whether you knew that. If you had four or five different kinds of planes

in the division, we rearranged them so that they were still tactically sound. We'd rearrange the planes so that the aviation company would only have one or two kinds of planes; this meant their spare parts inventory, maintenance requirements and everything were greatly reduced. The air cav troop has three different kinds, so we didn't change them because that's sort of unique. In general, a lot of our army aviation innovations were bred of necessity. For instance, we'd chop the air lift companies -- the assault helicopter companies in half. In other words, we worked with half companies. We also chopped the air cav troop in half. By working with half companies, in effect, you doubled your capabilities. Not exactly, but sort of. The big bonus was in the fall of '68 when it was decided to make a big push in the Delta and the Delta got a lot of extra choppers -- air cav troops and assault helicopter companies. The 9th was doing so well that they gave us in effect two air cav troops and two assault helicopter companies. We almost had as many choppers as an air mobile division. With that many choppers, it meant that you could support every brigade, almost every day. There is no doubt that both the chopper company and the air cavalry troop unit working together continuously greatly improved their efficiency. That was really one reason the division did so well in early '69 because we had lots of choppers. We figured, and in the book you can see, that there was also a definite skill involved in the use of helicopters. If you projected how well we should have done with the choppers, we were doing much better -- that was the skill.

LTC BISSELL: Sir, I'm curious as to what limitations, if any, army aviation imposed on the conduct and planning of operations. One of the concerns today is the fact that we are spending too much money on instrumentation

packages for the OH-58 scout and AH-1 attack helicopters to give them the all-weather, night capabilities. In retrospect, would adequate instrumentation on organic army aircraft during the seasons where you have the worst weather conditions have changed the nature and magnitude of tactical operations at all?

GEN EWELL: Well, as a general statement, and this is subject to lots of caveats, the Delta and the area around Saigon were VFR flying, 100 percent of the time. Of course, you'd have rain showers etc., but I don't think you needed any instruments. I say this kidding slightly but you didn't basically. I don't think a pilot needed to know how to fly on instruments in that area. So, the situation didn't arise that you're alluding to. Now, in some place like Europe, God, there is no doubt in my mind that if you don't have some minimum level of instrumentation you're really dead because the flying conditions are so dismal in Europe. I don't mind hearing anybody criticizing us, but we required our pilots to fly 140 hours a month which is the absolute legal limit. I think it's 141 or something like that. Well, in order to do that it meant that everybody had to fly. I mean, God, the S-3, the cooks, everybody had to fly to get that much cockpit time and to keep 100 hours on the choppers. Well, the aviation battalion commander came around and he was disturbed that the pilots weren't getting their instrument training. I said, "Oh, Christ, don't tell me that. Now tell me what your problem is." He said, "Well, we're supposed to do so much instrument training and also we're supposed to do this and supposed to do that." I said, "Well, how much time does that take out of a tactical operation?" Well, so many hours, I said, "I can't afford that but you've convinced me. We're going to do instrument training, we're going to do this other thing

and we're going to do these other things, and you know when you are going to do it? You are going to do it to and from work." And they did it. Army aviation has its problems. The same sort of problems that you see in an aggravated form in the Air Force. I know at one time we were having trouble with cowboys (pilots) buzzing people on the road and once or twice they either killed or severely injured some passenger or somebody. We were also having trouble clobbering tail rotors on tactical landings. Well, they had these God damned boards -- what do they call them -- air safety boards or something. After three months they would tell you that it wasn't pilot error, it was something or other. I'd say, "All right, if you have to do that, go ahead and do it, but starting now, it's against the rules for anybody in this division to fly under the ground with a chopper and that means no more busted tail rotors. You got that? And also, it's against the rules to take an LOH out and fly it below the ground and clobber someone on the ground." Well, that stopped those problems right then. No more of that. But these damn boards -- I think six months later they would have still been doing the same thing. You had to be careful though. You couldn't actually discipline somebody until one of these boards had reviewed the incident. You really just had to put the pressure on them and say, "Now, I'm not going to punish you if you do it, but by God, you'd better not do it in the first place."

LTC BISSELL: Sir, let me switch to the close air support role. I'm talking about the effectiveness of the attack helicopters that we used in Vietnam and, of course, the high performance aircraft. What are your perceptions of the effectiveness of the two and the need for both. Perhaps one may be better suited for operations in the Delta. Did we need both capabilities?

GEN EWELL: Well, I'm sort of a majority of one or a minority of one on this in that I don't think that in Vietnam either the gunship or the fighter bomber in the general case were much good. Not much. Oh, the fighter bomber was useful but not particularly helpful. Now, this view is tempered somewhat by the fact that in this highly evasive period you didn't have any big targets. I mean there wasn't much to get a handle on. On the other hand, I think the gunship was very reassuring to the infantryman. It gave him a lot of assurance and security to know that if he got in a tight spot a gunship would be there in fifteen or twenty minutes and start hosing off the countryside. So, psychologically the gunship was, I think, quite useful. My difficulty with the gunship is that the rockets were so inaccurate that you couldn't hit a bull in the ass with a bass fiddle. The mini-guns were okay. However, I think in many situations, the gunship would be very useful. I think the same thing would be true in many situations with the fighter bomber -- they were very useful. It's just that we had gotten out of the big knock-down, drag-out fights and we were mainly doing what you would call high precision work, like fixing a watch. The fighter bombers just weren't capable of doing that high precision work. I know in the Delta, one of the difficulties was that they didn't carry a big enough bomb. With that squishy ground down there, you had to have a direct hit with a 250 pound bomb to knock out a bunker. A 250 pound bomb would fall ten feet away and it wouldn't budge. If you had a 500 pound bomb, it would miss and it would sort of dig up the whole landscape. We did get some use out of napalm occasionally in a real tough situation. I think now that they were of some use but not decisive, not important. I can see in other situations such as Europe or Iran where they would be extremely important. So, I'm not shooting Santa Claus. I would like to mention one thing that is sort

of somewhere in between innovation and the analytical approach. When I went to the II Field Force, there was no doubt, although I didn't say so publicly, that the divisions there were not really carrying their weight and they were having a lot of trouble in the jungles. I'd say the kill ratios were around about 10-1 which was about the traditional Vietnamese level. Well, this meant that they, if they are going to knock off 1000 a month, meant 100 U.S. dead. God, after being in the 9th Division that U.S. casualty rate made me extremely uncomfortable. So, I sent my deputy around to talk to all of these people that have been out in the jungle and try to figure out how the hell we can do better. I was in somewhat of a quandary because I hadn't had any jungle experience. Down in the Delta you had some micro-jungle or mini-jungle, but you didn't have this extensive jungle. In fact, generally speaking you didn't have extensive jungle in III Corps area either. It's what I'd call a scrub jungle, not the massive rain forest. My deputy, General McCowan, went around for about a week and talked to everybody. He told me what he thought the problems were and we made up a very simple little paper with suggestions as to how to do better in the jungle. Well, the big thing that he found was that most of the casualties in the jungle were not due to fighting. They were due to trying to retrieve dead or wounded who had been shot; that's when you got all your casualties. So, we put out an almost absolute rule. When someone was hit in a patrol or a fight, you would not go in and get him out. You would complete the maneuver, take the pill box or bunker from the rear and once you had cleaned up the situation, then you'd go back and take him out. By following this little rule, they were able to get their kill ratio in solid jungle up to 25-1. This was not only high for Vietnam in

general, but had never been heard of in the jungle. There was nothing dramatic about this improvement. It was just a case of looking at jungle fighting, determining how it went and deciding how to change it a little bit, so as to be more advantageous for your side. I mentioned that we specialized in rifle work and, as you know with the M-16 rifle, you can shoot it full automatic or single shot. The difficulty is that in order to hit anything full automatic you have to be a wizard with an M-16. I mean you have to be a super shot. It can be done but it takes a real Daniel Boone shooter. We had a rule in 9th Division that nobody but scouts could use full automatic. Nobody could use it; it had to be single shot. The scouts could only use full automatic if they felt they had to scare the enemy away. I think that rule had a lot to do with improving our shooting. Of course, it also took the ammo consumption way down. I mean, instead of the men carrying these tremendous loads of ammo, they wouldn't go out carrying more than 200 rounds. In some places, they'd carry 400 but I don't think many of them carried that much. They'd just stick it right in their pockets.

LTC BISSELL: Sir, I'd like now to discuss some outside influences that commanders had to contend with while in Vietnam. When we look at the overall tactics and strategy of U.S. forces in Vietnam, you can't help but wonder what impact political, civil, military interactions played on the conduct of the war. What limitations, if any, were imposed on you by civil military leaders that tended to impede or hinder the accomplishment of your mission as a division or field force commander?

GEN EWELL: Well of course I think the military-tactical side of Vietnam was very tricky. What made it much more tricky was just what you've alluded

to -- all this other pacification, Vietnamization, etc. I think it's very difficult to generalize because every province, every district, every situation was different, but I had two rules. One is that you would try to get a very close meshing of pacification, which is sort of the old blanket term for all this other stuff, and military operations. The other rule was that military operations would be given first priority in every case. That doesn't mean you wouldn't do pacification, but this gets at what you might call winning the hearts and minds of the people. I'm all for that. It's a nice concept, but in fighting the Viet Cong and NVA, if you didn't break their military machine you might as well forget winning the hearts and minds of the people. The Communist's doctrine was to control the people through force. Unless you can get that force out of there, nothing else can happen. Oh, for three or four months things might look like Sunday at the beach or something, but if you didn't really clobber the Communists they'd regenerate and come back and pull the rug out from under you. The meshing of pacification and military operations was difficult, very difficult. In the 9th Division, we sort of circled around it and I think made some progress. In our weekly meeting on operations we devoted a lot of painstaking coordination to the interface of military and pacification operations. I think to go into detail about the coordination of these operations would be endless. When you got up to II Field Force, it was a little different in that the field force commander in effect, commanded CORDS in his area. There was a very strong technical line to Bob Komer who originally was Deputy for CORDS, and later to Bill Colby who took his place. CORDS was under your control in the formal sense, I guess. Well, without being critical, I found that the pacification program was too

formless. I mean, they had 20 or 30 programs and they were all just sort of wiggling around like worms. So eventually, we sat down with the CORDS man, who was Charlie Whitehouse, a pretty high ranking State Department officer -- an FSO-2, I think. He was quite young and very smart, but had never run anything and never been in Vietnam and as a result he had his problems. Anyway, we sat down and took the HES ratings for the whole sector and the provinces. I think there were something like nine, ten or eleven provinces, an unmanageable span of control. Many people criticized this system greatly, but, if you really studied the HES ratings, in effect, it outlines a program for pacification and gives you tick marks to show how you are doing. We finally isolated about five or six or what we called forcing factors. We felt that if you could crack these and get movement, they would pull the rest of it along with you. So, we realigned the CORDS operations to support these five or six forcing factors and then realigned the military operation without interfering with it but by shifting around a little bit to drive these forcing factors. There's no doubt in my mind that once we got this tuned up it worked very well. I don't think the Vietnamese Corps commander was particularly charmed with this sort of analytical-management approach, but he was willing to go along with it and gave it some reasonable support. On the military side, we in effect were able to drive all the major Viet Cong and NVA units out of the whole region. They were all in Cambodia. They'd jump across the border occasionally and we'd beat them up and they'd go back. With pacification, I would say that towards the end there were only a handful, maybe four or five, insecure hamlets in the whole region. I'm not saying that it was peaceful all over, but the whole general level of pacification and local security had been

raised tremendously. I think it is important and it's not impossible to coordinate the two. The real problem was on the Vietnamese side and I don't say that critically, but they had a French-type of government where the province chiefs had to go back to Saigon for everything. They had no daddy there and if they wanted cement, they had to go to the ministry of cement; if they wanted nails, they had to go to the ministry of nails, and it was just impossible. Well, eventually they got what was called a pacification council, which was an inter-government body in Saigon that would decide what would be done and tell all the ministries what to do on all pacification matters that came up. This eased that problem, but the governmental structure was not really suited to fighting a war. I think we'd have the same trouble in the United States if you had a similar situation.

LTC BISSELL: How about the role of the press, sir? As you know the press was a controversial issue in Vietnam and it will certainly have an impact on future conflicts. As a division and field force commander, did you have any specific way that you handled the press in your daily operations?

GEN EWELL: Well, that's a good question. I'd say the answer is yes and no. I think General Abrams believed that his predecessor, General Westmoreland, had been crucified by the press. To a certain extent, these were self-inflicted wounds because he talked too much and made some rather grandiose predictions that didn't come true, etc. I don't think it was ever enunciated in cold print, but it was quite clear that Abrams' policy was not to tell the press anything, just let the events speak for themselves. He felt that if they report the events, you'll have a favorable press; if they don't like your not talking to them, that's their problem. Well, this did give

you some problems because there's no doubt that the press was there and they had a job to do and they couldn't drink all the time. They had to justify their existence. If you didn't give them a story they'd go around and dig one up and usually, the one they came up with didn't have the broad perspective that you would like to have put on it. So, that gave us a lot of problems. Eventually, II Field Force got permission to hold sort of a press conference about once every month or two. We'd call them in and tell them what we had been doing and answer any questions. Of course some of the questions you could say, "Well, we didn't stop beating our wife because we weren't beating her in the first place. Now do you have a real question?" Or something like that. Some of the newsmen would ask matters which were either highly sensitive or actually security matters and you might have to dissemble a bit. I don't think you would actually tell a falsehood but the answer might not be what you would call completely responsive to the question. We didn't have much problem with that. I don't think I had what I considered a real problem with the press the whole time, I served as II Field Force Commander. The one thing that did sort of irritate me was that a fellow came out to a unit and visited or you talked to him and then he'd write a story which would come out in the paper somewhat skewed or biased. Well, you'd call him in and say, "Hey, where did you get that? That isn't what I said." He would say, "I know it. The re-write desk did that back in the States, or the TV people or the editor did that back in the States." Well, you never could get a handle on this situation. I mean you didn't know whether this guy was telling you just a slight falsehood or whether the guy back in the States had twisted the story or what. It was fairly frequent to have a story rotated 45° on you from where it

happened in when it went back to print. Of course, you also had the enterprising reporter who would go around either to a bar or to some pal and get some story and write something which may have been well intentioned, but did not reflect the actual situation. For example, I know after I left the Delta some months a story came out in the papers in the States that said that since the 9th Division left the Delta everything down there has been quiet and pacification is going great and it's wonderful. The 9th Division isn't down there upsetting everything by all this terrible fighting. Well, I told him I'd like to see him the next time he came by and he came in and I said to him, "Where did you get that story?" You mean to say that they haven't been doing any fighting down in Dienh Tuang province lately?" He said, "No, it's just as peaceful as a Sunday afternoon." I said, "Well, to begin with whoever told you this, I disagree with him completely. If they haven't been doing any fighting down there, they are in deep trouble. I'll be willing to bet you cold cash that it won't be long until it's apparent that they are in deep trouble." And sure enough, about a month or two later, some ARVN battalion down there was just about decimated. The Viet Cong had regenerated, got themselves in a nice spot, and really lowered the boom on ARVN. I never did see the guy again. I would liked to have seen and said I told you so. Anyway, this was typical. If some guy down in an advisor's headquarters was dedicated to the hearts and minds business and felt honestly and with fervor that the way to pacify Vietnam was to be kind to everybody, including the Communists, he couldn't be more wrong. I think one problem you have in a structure like that is that if the press goes in at three or four different levels you are going to have three or four different stories. If you are accessible to the press, to a reasonable

degree, this guy might have come back and said, "Well, hey, some fellow told me this, what do you think of it?" If he had asked me what I thought of it I would have said, "I think that guy is 179<sup>0</sup> wrong, and I can prove that I am right and I think he's just misguided." Another problem you had in Vietnam, and I'm sure it was the same in the early days of World War II, is that most of the correspond~~ence~~<sup>ts</sup> were there on a short tour. Most of them were new. What did they know? I mean some guy from Harvard or something. What did they know about military operations. It was just like a high school newspaper reporter trying to report on the Washington scene or something. They had all sorts of problems. On the other hand, you had a few old hands who were very good, but extremely discouraged. I mean, they had seen it all. They had been there when they were going to have this great campaign and nothing happened; another great campaign and nothing happened; etc. I flew over Long An Province once with this old southeast Asia hand, an Australian I believe. He had been in Vietnam for four or five years, and he pointed down and said, "Do you see those marks there on the ground?" And I said, "Yeah." He said, "That's where a strategic hamlet was four or five years ago. This was going to save South Vietnam." It had just completely disappeared. All you could see was where the buildings had been. Although these guys were very knowledgeable, they had in effect, subconsciously or consciously reached the conclusion that there was no way you could win this war. They would write an article and say, "Terrific operation, great success, but it doesn't matter because five years from now it'll all be forgotten." Once they decided in the first early days not to have censorship. I think that was out. You could never have instituted censorship. If you had done it at first, I think you could have made it

stick. When you didn't institute it, you'd had had it. How do you handle the press? I don't know. It's a real problem. TV is worse. The newspapers and magazines are bad enough, but TV is worse. The war was so dispersed and low level that for a TV crew it was almost impossible to take a picture of actual fighting. I'd say it would just be luck, good or bad luck, if they took a picture of actual fighting. They had to take pictures, I mean, they were there and most of the pictures were staged to some extent. They were after the fact pictures that either were admittedly after the fact and very dull or they would sort of dramatize the situation and show something that actually wasn't. The TV cameraman could not report the Vietnamese War accurately. It was impossible. As a result, he reported something else. Of course, the easy thing to do is show some poor mother sitting by the side of the road, crying or ten bodies lying there all shot up. These were unfortunate situations, but had nothing to do with the war itself. I don't know. It's a real problem.

LTC BISSELL: I guess the real question is-should there ever be a time when censorship should be imposed in future combat type situations?

GEN EWELL: Well, I think obviously the answer to that is yes. If course, if you had censorship I think it's then incumbent on the military authorities to be very forthcoming on official information and provide access to information. You can't have somebody just sitting there and not getting anything. I think if he gets nothing he's going to dig something up.

LTC BISSELL: Sir, in your book, you note that one of your major keys to success was imaginative and effective leadership of junior officers. I would like you to briefly address your feelings on the quality and effectiveness of the officers and leaders during the Vietnam conflict based on your

experiences and background in Korea and WWII. How did the leaders of units in Vietnam compare with those you served with in Korea and WWII?

GEN EWELL: Well, that's not a very fair question because I think that the answer would tend to be misleading. As you know, the officers in Vietnam who were put in key slots tended to be outstanding officers. I mean, very high quality. I would say in the 9th Division that at any one time you might have two top notch brigade commanders, one good or fair and seven top notch battalion commanders, one and two good or fair. That number is way off the bell curve, if you know what I mean. It's biased way on the high side. It wasn't too bad in Korea where I had a regiment. I think in Korea the regimental or brigade commanders tended to be pretty good. The battalion commanders were a little more uneven; I don't know why. Vietnam was really not a war. I hate to say this, but I mean, what were the casualties? I think the casualties in Vietnam were less than a year's auto deaths or something like that. In WWII, you might have as many casualties in a division in a day as you had in all of Vietnam in a couple of weeks. Vietnam just wasn't much of a war, but WWII was very tough. Although it would have been nice to have had battalion commanders in WWII who were skillful and tough, most battalion commanders had minimum professional skill unless they had been in combat a long time. What you were looking for was somebody who was tough enough to take it. Unfortunately, real toughness in combat is something that isn't distributed to a 100 percent of the population. I don't think you can put a number on it but I would guess out of 100 men who were battalion commanders, that maybe somewhere between 25 and 50 percent could not stand up to really tough fighting. They just didn't have the moral and intellectual guts and courage to stand up to it. You have to take these

guys out, so that the problem in Vietnam and in World War II is entirely different. Then of course in WWII, you were operating against a very broad base instead of operating on the top of the quality triangle. You were operating way down at the bottom. I think in the regiment that I had in the 101st Division we were very fortunate in that the four or five battalion commanders whom I had personal contact with were very good -- one was fair. He happened to be a regular officer. The other four were reserve officers. He just didn't have it. It's hard to say why.

LTC BISSELL: As a followup question, let me ask you to discuss a theory I have often heard expressed: sometimes officers who are outstanding as peacetime commanders, are frequently not good combat commanders and vice versa. Do you find any truth or validity to this theory?

GEN EWELL: No, I don't think you can prove any correlation. I think I would say that it is extremely difficult in peacetime or even wartime, before you go into combat, to put the finger on somebody who is a good combat commander. I think some people are better at it than others, but I would say if they picked 100 combat commanders that there would be some small percentage in some cases, larger in others, where they were completely wrong. The guy just didn't have it. Now I think one thing I didn't mention about Hank Emerson was that he was, in my opinion, the greatest brigade commander in Vietnam. And I saw a lot. I mean he was great! Super combat commander in every sense of the word. He had an uncanny knack for picking people. One reason he was great is that he carried around a bunch of battalion commanders who were super fighters. Well, you know, it's like a football coach, if you have a bunch of horses and you're a good coach you have a great team. Well, the same way with Emerson. One thing about Emerson,

and I never discussed this with him, but he was very athletic, very scrappy and very team oriented. He sort of ran an outfit like you would a football team or something. You know, lots of hipper-dippers and the let's go and give it to them type. I think that the people that he picked, fit into this syndrome, if you call it that, and worked well in it. Now it may have been that somebody was a more dignified, more reserved type who was a good commander. If he had been in Hank's brigade he probably would have done all right but he wouldn't have been as comfortable in that situation. I don't know. That's a good question. When I went over to the 9th Division, it wasn't getting its share of good people because all the high prestige, high glamour divisions were taking them. I'm sure that the 25th and the 9th Division, were getting adequate officers but they weren't getting any real water walkers. So, I was given permission to recruit anybody I could recruit for the 9th Division. I guess we recruited about three or four brigade commanders and about 10 or 15 battalion commanders and we had a very high success rate with those guys. I don't know why. They just said they were good and later on they turned out to be good. I vaguely remember one battalion commander just couldn't get it and unfortunately, in Vietnam there were a small percentage of people who just couldn't get it. It was just too confusing for them and they couldn't get it. I know that I inherited one brigade commander who had all the tickets, but he just couldn't get it. Fortunately, he was leaving shortly and I didn't can him or anything, but God I was glad to see him go. I mean, it was uncanny. This guy had the brigade in Long An Province and they hadn't stirred up a good fight in weeks or months. I put Hank Emerson's brigade in there and Emerson took a week to go up and case the joint before he took over. He took over

at noon on Tuesday, and by 1:30 he had a major contact and from then on he had about three major contacts a week, every week. The other guy hadn't been able to find anything. Hank was in there just throwing them in all directions. I mean, he was just an artist. It was as though there were two different worlds and I don't know how you figure that out.

LTC BISSELL: Let me ask you a real basic question. How do we measure the effectiveness of a commander in combat? What criterion are we using to measure a good combat commander?

GEN EWELL: Well, a good commander is somebody who does every task, or most every task given to him in either an outstanding or creditable way. Of course, there is some personality involved. I'm sure if you had somebody who was a consummate slob that no one liked, even if he did a perfect job, he wouldn't get the credit as someone else with a little more savoir-faire and charm. Of course, one difficulty you had in Vietnam is that some people got the idea that their success was measured by their body count or their kill ratio or something like that. I've heard, although I have no personal knowledge of it, that it's been alleged that some people even falsified these figures to project a good image. I don't believe it. Well, I could believe it, but I think it was probably rare. There is no doubt that in Vietnam that you could tell the best battalion commanders and the best brigade commanders I had; a blind man could tell who was best. Now you would have some guys who unfortunately were in a very difficult situation -- no enemy. He didn't look as good on the books, but you just had to carry the guy and overlook his lack of productivity until you could shift him somewhere

else where he could get his teeth into something. In WWII it was a much more episodic and cyclic war. I mean, you had long periods of quiet operations and then you'd have a crisis coming in the window for two, three weeks and it was quite apparent who was doing the job there. Usually the guy who wasn't doing his job very well in World War II would fold up. He couldn't stand it. He would not have combat fatigue but sort of a low order combat fatigue and you'd have to take him out.

LTC BISSELL: Sir, there are many philosophies that state that Vietnam created perhaps a drift towards micro-management. Maybe that's the wrong term, but do you feel that the capability of brigade commanders and higher, to constantly observe, and sometimes change the conduct of operation from the C&C aircraft, sometimes intimidated or perhaps stifled the innovativeness of a squad or platoon leader, as well as the company commander or battalion commander?

GEN EWELL: Well, I think there is probably something to that. I know in Korea I hated the chopper because our division commander was somewhat of a nut and I won't mention his name. You couldn't keep him away because he had that chopper. God, seeing him come along was really bad news. I'm sure we had the same problem in Vietnam. I think if a commander rigorously tried not to interfere with subordinate unit operations and helped people out that he did build proper delineation of authority and responsibility. I really was surprised several years after I came back from Vietnam when I ran into one of my battalion commanders and he said, "You know, I really loved fighting in the 9th Division. You were around all the time but you never told us what to do." He said, "You let the brigade commander do it." Well, I don't think that's exactly right. I'm sure I

told them what to do occasionally. However, I think that you must guard against over controlling or what you call micro-management. Of course, in a big war, like WWII, you don't get into this because as a regimental commander you had plenty to do. You didn't have time to fool with running battalions. You had a full plate. A battalion commander and everybody had a full job so you didn't get this pressing down. The difficulty in Vietnam was that at the division and perhaps brigade, the commanders didn't have anything tangible to get their teeth into and there was a temptation to go down and interfere. That had to be guarded against.

LTC BISSELL: The next question addresses the analytical approach that you adopted for measuring the combat effectiveness. It appeared to be performance and activity oriented. For example, measuring the results of an activity to determine the efficiency of that particular unit. How did you develop this system? Did you have the system and employ it before Vietnam or was this a system that you developed after assuming command of the 9th Division? What methods did you use to employ a cross check on the statistical information that you did acquire?

GEN EWELL: Well, we sort of backed into it. I think the first time I ever used it was in Europe. At that time in Europe, you had what you would call the prescribed training program. You had a list of 86 things you were supposed to do in 22 hours. It was impossible. The 8th Division was in trouble because it had been an Infantry Division and converted to mech and it was having considerable growing pains. That's quite a transition. So, we sat down and figured out what we were supposed to do. Roughly speaking, we found that about a third of our time was on guard duty, not only normal

guard duty, but at nuclear storage sites and various other places, plus what you might call ash and trash. You know, sweeping the barracks, cleaning up etc. We found that we also spent about a third of the time on maintenance. Well, being in an armored mech unit you have tremendous maintenance. So, we found we were spending only about a third of the time on training. Well, if you took a week and divided it by three, you saw that you only had a very limited number of training hours. Then we looked at the training program and it was apparent that you couldn't get from here to there. We finally worked up a program and got permission from the Army commander to do only the training that we thought was high priority and forget the rest. Well, we did this for about six months and boy, really brought the division up. Now, I'm sure we skipped some important things but the things that we thought were important got done well; the rest we didn't even bother with. This experience sort of gave me the idea that if you really went into things it worked out. We had a somewhat similar thing happen in tank gunnery. We had very profitable results from a deep study in tank gunnery and I won't go into the details here. Then I was at the Combat Developments Command at Fort Belvoir for a year and a half or two, and I became quite interested in the analytical approach to military problems and saw some possibilities there. When we went to Vietnam where you had this horrible formless war and formless operations and everything was a mess, we just began picking away at how we would keep tract<sup>k</sup> of what we were doing and manage it. Fortunately I had an extremely able Chief of Staff, Jim Hunt, who just retired as a major general recently. This analytical system evolved by osmosis, more or less. I think if I started a similar system now I would change it a bit, because the system we finally developed with some of the terminology

and some of the ways it was done were not the way you'd like to do it. In any reporting system you can't change it too much because it's a learning process. Of course, you have to watch it because if you have too elaborate a system you turn your commanders into poop sheet artists when basically they are supposed to be out fighting and keeping statistics. is a secondary thing. I think the key is that the reporting system and the command or management system should be the same. In other words, if you're reporting on what you're supposed to do and you use the reports to influence your command, then the commands that are put out influence the results. The two are the same instead of having a reporting system that is detached from the operations. There is no doubt in my mind that it's an extremely valuable technique mainly because if you see what you're doing and then you study it, you can determine how to change it, rather than doing it intuitively. You can do it based on the combination of facts and judgments. The only reservation I have is that in Vietnam you had sort of an assembly line war; it was a repetitive operation, day after day, and you could fine tune the operation. Anybody could do it. I mean, all you had to do was keep fine tuning it. In a big war like in Europe during WWII, it's episodic. You have long periods of not much action and then you have a critical period of about a month. It's not clear in my mind how you would apply the same sort of analytical technique used in Vietnam to an episodic war.

LTC BISSELL: Sir, to what extent did this analytical approach to measure combat effectiveness stimulate competition among subordinate commanders?

GEN EWELL: Well, I think it obviously stimulated competition. I think the real problem was to hold the competition within reasonable bounds. Obviously,

if you have super competition, I think it's destructive to morale and results. My approach was to essentially work on the bell curve and the guys who were doing well just needed a pat on the back. I would also try by exchanging ideas and using encouragement to get the guys on the low end of the totem pole to improve their performance, so that the average level of performance would go up. I don't want to sound boastful or anything, but there's no doubt that the art of command is an art and it's very difficult to tell someone how to do it. Some people instinctively do it well; some people can improve by learning; and some people might as well forget it. They just have a knack for antagonizing people, goofing off, or something all the time. Did I answer your question?

LTC BISSELL: Yes sir, you did. For my last question -- I would like to return to a comment you made earlier today. Several times you alluded to the fact that many people criticized you while you were commanding the 9th Division and Field Force II because of the heavy emphasis on body counts during operations. I would guess that their criticism would be based on the fact that personnel were so obsessed with trying to get body counts that possibly they were getting some civilians killed to enhance the body count. In addition, there was possibly a tendency to inflate figures to make the unit look good. I guess the basic question remains -- are the figures reported valid or are they inflated throughout the reporting system? What means did you have to validate the body count reports?

GEN EWELL: Well, to begin with, although I always was very loyal to my commanders and had implicit trust in them, I always had a little thing in the back of my mind that I didn't trust anybody completely. In WWII for instance, I'd seen very isolated instances of shooting prisoners and very minor war crimes.

In a semi-insurrection type of war it is very difficult for the average soldier and junior officer. I mean, your opportunities and temptations for, well, I won't call them war crimes, but for things that begin to get on the border line of the rules of land warfare are infinite. In addition, the Communists conducted the war in a way so as to entice you into that type of operation--the beating up of villages, etc. You have to be super careful. I'm leading up to your question. For instance, one reason we stressed taking prisoners in the 9th Division, not that we took many, but we took more than anyone else -- I would say that we took 100-200 percent more prisoners than anyone else, and that was a handful, but we took them. Well, one reason was to get information and the other was so that our units didn't shoot prisoners. I didn't tell anybody that, but that was my objective -- so they wouldn't shoot prisoners. Then you have other pipelines, chaplains and various other people to keep your ears to the ground so that you hopefully can detect any tendencies towards shooting civilians or whatever. To get back to the body count question, when the 9th Division really got going, and I remember getting up into astronomical figures, I was delighted but I didn't believe it. So every month we'd have sort of a little IG team that would go around unannounced. They would check out the previous day's results. Naturally, they couldn't go out and count the blades of grass, but they would talk to various people; the company commander, squad leader and etc. We found that the figures we were getting were valid within plus or minus three or four percent. Well, that was quite encouraging. So, we continued that. If somebody felt inclined to cheat, which I doubt, but if he did, he knew that some day somebody was coming around and check on him. I think this periodic check encouraged the people who otherwise might be

tempted to cheat -- encouraged them to be honest. One of the main things I preached in the Division and in the Corps is that false reporting, although it's unethical and wrong and dishonest, penalizes the unit itself. You don't know what the unit is doing if your own reports aren't accurate. A good example of this is perhaps a division in II Field Force that might have schemed, when their level of conflict was very low. The best way for them to improve was to rate high on a system I called contact success ratio. That meant that if anybody saw an enemy and killed or captured him or picked up some documents, that was a success. If nothing happened, that was a zero. Well, if a unit had a success ratio of about 65, that was water walking and they would be tearing the communists up. I mean their body count would be high, their kill ratio would be high, and I mean they were in -- they were in clover. If their contact success ratio was about 40 percent, they might as well be in Kansas. I finally got around and told the division commanders what I wanted them to do. Well, I went down to a division about two weeks later and said, "Well, how are you doing on contact success ratio?" "Great!" They responded. I had a briefing and it started out okay -- last week, we had 676 contacts and our contact success ratio was 100 percent. "My that's unbelievable," I said. "How do you define contact success and how do you define a contact?" They said, "Well, contact is where we come up against the enemy and we kill, wound, capture, or whatever the enemy." I said, "Well, what's contact where you come up against enemy and he gets away and nothing happens?" "Oh, we don't count that." I said, "Now, come on, we are not playing games with one another. The object of this operation is to teach your individual rifleman, and your squad leaders, that he has to handle small unit engagements with a high degree of success." They would reply, "Oh, that's

right." What you're trying to do at division level is to know which battalions are not professional and are not doing this right so you can go in and straighten them out. At the battalion level the commander wants to know which company is not professional. However, I think this was not a case of deliberate falsehood. It was a case of somebody not understanding what you're driving at. It was the same way on body count. I think it would be very detrimental to put too much pressure on body count because obviously if some guy was in a very dry area, after two or three months, he might think that his head was on the block. Well, to begin with I think I only canned one or two battalion commanders in my whole time. It had nothing to do with body count. I only remember one of them clearly. To begin with, you had to give a guy about a month or two to get going, particularly if he was ice cold. Then, you had to help him out, you know, and hopefully he'd get up on the step and take off. I think this guy that I relieved had been in about two months and in every engagement that he got into, he'd get four or five killed and ten or fifteen wounded. That isn't much in WWII terms, but in Vietnam it was a lot. I mean four or five men killed was a tenth of the division killed per whole month in one battalion in one day. Well, this guy just didn't seem to be able to get hold of it and after a couple of months, I just felt it was unfair to the men in the battalion. I didn't care about him; I just couldn't have the men in the battalion having a commander going out and getting them killed or wounded all the time. So, I yanked him, but I'd say in our division there was very little pressure on somebody getting axed. In fact, my feeling was that if a brigade or a battalion commander wasn't doing well, it was basically my fault. I hadn't been able to tell him how; he either didn't know how to do it

instinctively or I hadn't been able to tell him how to do it. Of course, I'm sure eventually you'd run out of patience with somebody. I know I had at least one brigade commander in the division that I would have like to have canned, but he had about two more months left and I put up with him. In the Corps, I would say I had two division commanders that I would like to have canned but they were both on the tail end of their tour and I decided against it.

LTC BISSELL: As we sit here, sir, I have been thinking about the problems with body count on night operations. I can see a commander would really be torn on a night operation such as the night hunter where you engage a bunch of sanpans in the river and see silhouettes in them. As you open fire, you can see the body silhouettes falling into the water. However, you don't know for sure if they are dead or just hiding in the water. The commander certainly wants to get credit for the contact engagement; however, he has no way of technically counting bodies to validate his figures. How did your mission commanders determine body counts on night missions and how were they validated?

GEN EWELL: Well, I don't know. It's a problem obviously. To tell the truth, I never flew a mission of that type. In fact, for the reason you mentioned earlier, I really leaned away from getting involved in small unit operations. Even if I wanted to get in there and see it, my feeling was that it was the platoon leader, company commander or whatever's job, so I never flew one of these night hunter missions. But they tell me that with a big scope -- about a foot and a half across -- that on most nights you could almost read a newspaper in the sanpan. I mean you could count four guys and two big bundles, etc., so their counts were fairly reliable. Now,

whether some of the guys swam under the bank or something, who cares. Actually, we weren't dealing in very big numbers, although that operation was very, very tough psychologically on the Viet Cong because it interfered with their night supply. I think a good night on night hunter would be about 15 killed with about five engagements -- two or three apiece, something like that. I think you just have to expect that you will have a little slippage, and of course, if you have a big contact, it was quite easy to get some double counting. You know, one company counts this way and one company counts another and there is a little overlap. That didn't bother me too much because I figured you could never count the wounded; they got lost. My reasoning on the body count was to keep tract of the Communist population. I figured that if you think you killed a 100 and actually only killed 90, you might have wounded up to 100; well, what the hell! I just wasn't too concerned about it. I do think you have to watch it. I think the main philosophical criticism of keeping track of body count is that it tends to brutalize the war. In other words, you're trying to kill people. Well, to begin with in Europe if you surrounded a bunch of Germans, they would surrender. Well, there was no doubt we won and they lost and in effect you had taken a whole unit out of the war. The Communists, due to their indoctrination and control didn't surrender. I would guess if you got 15 prisoners a month that was astronomical. And they were usually beat up or else defecting. The only way you could really measure your effect on the Communist apparatus was to line up the bodies, except for the Chieu Hoi. Now, there is no doubt, and I mentioned this in the book, if you put tremendous pressure on the Communist machine, the Chieu Hois would squirt out the sides like rats out of a sinking ship. If you got 2,000 or

3000 Chieu Hois out of a province in a month, you know those Communists were really hurting and this tended to destroy the link between the Communist apparatus and the people. The Chieu Hois were sort of the reluctant dragons that were the link between the two. Actually, in measuring unit proficiency, there are a lot of things other than body count that can be used -- many possibilities. The kill ratio I think is more a measure of your skill and also a measure of the casualties it cost you to accomplish something. The contact success ratio is a report on small unit action; how many, how fast you are attriting the Communists. There were about 8 or 10 things which put together, sort of assessed the effectiveness of a battalion. Nobody really puts a number on how the battalion commander is doing. You would say well, this guy is outstanding or he's very good or he's good or he's fair or he's marginal. And it just takes good common sense. Okay?

INTERVIEWER: Sir, that completes our time and my questions. On behalf of the US Army War College and the US Army Military History Institute, we thank you for a very long, but an extremely enjoyable and informative day. It's been extremely enjoyable and very worthwhile.

GEN EWELL: Thank you.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

LIEUTENANT GENERAL JULIAN J. EWELL, UNITED STATES ARMY

Julian J. Ewell was born in Stillwater, Oklahoma, November 5, 1915. He attended Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, and the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York, graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree in 1939. As a second lieutenant of Infantry, his initial assignment was with the 29th Infantry at Fort Benning, Georgia.

Early in World War II, Major Ewell joined the 501st Infantry Parachute Regiment of the 101st Airborne Division and remained with the regiment throughout the war. He jumped into Normandy on D-Day and into Holland as a Battalion Commander. In October 1944, he became the commander of the regiment and led the 501st during the defense of Bastogne in the Battle of the Bulge. He was wounded during this action and was awarded the nation's second highest decoration, the Distinguished Service Cross, for extraordinary heroism.

Following his return to the States in May 1945, Colonel Ewell attended the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas and after graduation, remained at the College as an instructor for three years. He went to Germany in 1949 serving initially as executive officer to the U.S. Commander, Berlin, and later as chief planner of the Seventh Army at Stuttgart.

In July 1952, General Ewell attended the Army War College at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. After graduation in 1953, he was sent to Korea where he commanded the 9th "Manchu" (Infantry) Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division, during the last stages of the Korean War. Following the end of

hostilities, he became chief planner of the Eighth U.S. Army in Korea. He returned to the United States in 1954 and spent four years at the U.S. Military Academy as commander of a cadet regiment and later as the Assistant Commandant of Cadets.

In 1958, General Ewell attended the National War College, and, following graduation, spent the next two years on the Army General Staff as a planner. In 1961, he moved to the White House as Assistant to General Maxwell D. Taylor, the Military Representative of the President, and from there with General Taylor to the Pentagon in 1962 serving as Executive to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Following his promotion to Brigadier General in April 1963, he returned to Germany as the Assistant Division Commander of the 8th Infantry Division. In this job, he served as Joint Task Force Commander during NATO's SOUTHEX exercise in Turkey, and as commander of Army Forces in NORTHWIND - the largest European Airborne Operation since World War II. In 1965, he was transferred to V Corps Headquarters where he served as Chief of Staff until his promotion to Major General in April of 1966.

Returning to the United States, he became Deputy Commander and Chief of Staff of the Combat Development Command at Fort Belvoir, Virginia. In February 1968, General Ewell became the Commanding General of the 9th Infantry Division (Old Reliables) in Vietnam. He led the "Old Reliables" in the counteroffensive following the enemy's Tet attacks, in the opening and repairing of Highway 4 leading south from Saigon, in the May battles south of Saigon, and in the attacks on the Viet Cong forces in Long An Province. During the fall of 1968 and winter of 1969, the Division

inflicted heavy losses on the Communist forces south of Saigon and in the upper Delta area. For its actions, the 9th Division was twice awarded the Vietnamese Valor Award - Army Level and the Civic Action Award - the first American Division to receive these awards in Vietnam.

On 3 April 1969, General Ewell was promoted to Lieutenant General and assumed command of II Field Force, Vietnam, the largest U.S. combat command in the world at that time.

In June of 1970, after more than two years in Vietnam, General Ewell reported to Paris where he served as the Military Advisor to the U.S. Delegation at the Paris Peace Talks. He became Chief of Staff in June of 1971 to Allied Forces Southern Europe at Naples, Italy. General Ewell retired from the Army on 30 June 1973, after 34 years of active duty.

Since retirement he has been a military consultant for a wide range of research projects and studies sponsored by the General Research Corporation, Stanford Research Institute, System Planning Corporation, and U.S. Army Materiel Systems Analysis Agency.

PERSONAL DATA:

Born: 5 November 1915, Stillwater, Oklahoma  
Father: George W. Ewell, (LTC, US Army) Deceased  
Mother: Jamie Offut Ewell (Deceased)  
Married: Beverly McCammon Moses of Rutland, Vermont  
Children: Gillem Julian  
Stephen Landon Moses  
Dale Scott Moses  
Official Address: 6823 Melrose Drive, McLean, Virginia 22101

EDUCATION:

Duke University, North Carolina -- 1932-34  
United States Military Academy -- 1939 (BS in Military Engineering)  
The Infantry School (Off Comm) -- 1941  
The Infantry School (Bn Cmdr & Staff Off) -- 1942  
Command and General Staff College -- 1946  
Army War College -- (1st Course) -- 1955  
National War College (Regular Course) -- 1959

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF PROMOTIONS:

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Temporary (AUS)</u>	<u>Permanent (RA)</u>
Second Lieutenant (Infantry)		12 June 39
First Lieutenant	9 Sep 40	12 June 42
Captain	1 Feb 42	15 July 48
Major	23 Sep 42	14 May 51
Lieutenant Colonel	6 May 43/1 Jul 47	22 Mar 57

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Temporary (AUS)</u>	<u>Permanent (RA)</u>
Colonel	10 Mar 45/13 Aug 52	12 Jun 64
Brigadier General	8 Apr 63 (DOR 26 Mar 63)	31 Jan 66
Major General	1 Apr 66 (DOR 1 Jul 61)	27 Nov 67
Lieutenant General	15 May 69	

U.S. DECORATIONS AND AWARDS

Distinguished Service Cross -- Awarded for extraordinary heroism during the defense of Bastogne

Distinguished Service Medal (w/4OLC) -- The first awarded for his outstanding service as Deputy CG of Combat Development Command. The second made in recognition of his distinguished performance as Commanding General, 9th Infantry Division. The third for service as Commanding General, II Field Force. The fourth for service as Chief of Staff Allied Forces Southern Europe.

Silver Star (w/OLC) -- Both awards received for gallantry in action in the Normandy campaign.

Legion of Merit (w/OLC)

Bronze Star Medal

Air Medal (w/20OLC)

Purple Heart

American Defense Service Medal

American Campaign Medal

European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal (w/arrowhead & 4 bronze service stars)

World War II Victory Medal

Army of Occupation Medal (Germany)

Korean Service Medal (w/2 bronze service stars)

National Defense Service Medal (w/OLC)  
Vietnam Service Medal (w/7 bronze campaign stars)  
Presidential Unit Citation (w/OLC)  
Combat Infantry Badge (2d Award)  
Army General Staff Badge  
Presidential Service Badge  
Master Parachutist Badge  
Joint Chiefs of Staff Identification Badge

FOREIGN DECORATIONS AND AWARDS:

French Croix de Guerre (w/Palm)  
Belgian Order of Leopold, degree of officer (w/Palm)  
Belgian Croix de Guerre 1940 (w/Palm)  
Netherlands Bronze Lion  
Belgian Fourragere 1940  
Netherlands Orange Lanyard  
Korean Order of National Security, Second Class  
Korean Order of Military Merit Chungmu  
Korean Chungmu Distinguished Military Service Medal  
Order of the Italian Republic, Officer  
Thai Most Exalted Order of the White Elephant, Third Class  
Thai Order of the Crown, Second Class  
Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation  
Vietnamese National Order, Third, Fourth and Fifth Class  
Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry (w/4 Palms)  
Vietnamese Army Distinguished Service Order, First Class

Vietnamese Honor Medal, First Class  
Vietnamese Civil and Educational Medal, First Class  
Vietnamese, Army Level, Valor Award, Fourragere (2 Citations)  
Vietnamese Civic Action Award, Unit Citation (3 Citations)  
Vietnamese Civil Action Honor Medal, First Class  
Vietnamese Honorary Parachutist Badge  
United Nations Service Medal  
Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal (6 stars)

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF ASSIGNMENTS:

12 Jun 39 Commissioned Lieutenant, Infantry USMA  
1 Jul 42 Asst Comdt, Parachute School, Ft. Benning, Georgia  
18 Dec 42 Regimental Executive Officer, 501st Parachute Infantry  
21 Jul 43 Battalion Commander, 3d Bn, 501st Parachute Infantry  
6 Jan 44 Same -- European Theater of Operations (ETO)  
7 Oct 44 Regimental Commander, 501st Parachute Infantry, ETO  
20 Feb 45 Deputy ACofS, G3, 1st Allied Airborne Army, ETO  
4 May 45 Deputy ACofS, G3, Hq, AGF, Washington, D.C.  
20 Feb 46 Student, C&GSC, Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas  
1 Aug 46 Instructor, C&GSC, Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas  
1 Sep 49 Executive Officer, USCO, Berlin, EUCOM  
20 Oct 51 Plans and Policies Off, Plans Sec, Hq, 7th Army, EUCOM  
3 Jul 52 Student Off, AWC, Carlisle Barracks, Pa.  
9 Jul 53 Regimental Commander, 9th Infantry Regiment, FECOM  
7 Dec 53 Chief, Plans Div, G3, Sec, Hq, Eighth Army, FECOM  
11 Aug 54 CO, 2d Regiment, USCC, USMA, West Point, N.Y.

1 May 56 Asst Comdt of Cadets, USMA, West Point, N.Y.

11 Aug 58 Student, National War College, Ft. McNair

9 Jul 59 Chief, Army War Plans Div, Dir of Plans, ODCSOPS, Washington, D.C.

1 Jul 60 Chief, Long Range Analysis Grp, ODCSOPS, Washington, D.C.

3 Jul 61 Exec Asst, Off of Mil Rep of the President, Washington, D.C.

1 Oct 62 Executive to Chairman, JCS, Washington, D.C.

5 Jul 63 Asst Div Cmdr, Maneuver, 8th Infantry Division, USAREUR

5 Jun 65 Chief of Staff, V Corps, USAREUR

24 Jun 66 Deputy Cmdr, and Chief of Staff, CDC, Ft. Belvoir, Va.

25 Feb 68 Commanding General, 9th Infantry Division, Vietnam

3 Apr 69 Commanding General, II Field Force Vietnam

2 Feb 70 Advisor U.S. Peace Delegation, Paris, France

Jun 71 CofS, Allied Forces, Southern Europe

1 Jul 73 Retired

PUBLICATIONS:

Sharpening the Combat Edge: The Use of Combat Analysis to Reinforce Military Judgment, Ewell and Hunt, Department of the Army, Washington, D. C., 1974.

Strategic Army Study (STARS 70), Department of the Army, Washington, D. C., 1960.

The Regular Army Officer of the Future, Ewell, Knowlton, et al, US Military Academy, West Point, New York, January 1958.

Airborne Operations Manual, Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 1 June 1949.

Informal Thoughts on Study Management at the CDC Level, Headquarters, CDC, Fort Belvoir, Virginia, February 1968.

Impressions of a Division Commander in Vietnam, Headquarters,  
II Field Force, Vietnam, September 1969.

Impressions of a Field Force Commander in Vietnam, Head-  
quarters, II Field Force, Vietnam, April 1970.

15 February 1979  
(Date)

MEMORANDUM FOR: DIRECTOR, USAMHI, CARLISLE BARRACKS, PA 17013

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