



Defense Intelligence Historical Perspectives, Number 2

# THE VIETNAM CAULDRON:

## Defense Intelligence in the War for Southeast Asia

Michael B. Petersen  
DIA Historical Research Division




DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

## Report Documentation Page

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## **THE VIETNAM CAULDRON:**

### Defense Intelligence in the War for Southeast Asia

Michael B. Petersen

DIA Historical Research Support Branch

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# Defense Intelligence Historical Perspectives

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*Defense Intelligence Historical Perspectives* is designed to provide an understanding of the Defense Intelligence Agency's (DIA's) participation in military and intelligence developments of the last half century. While history does not repeat itself, it does provide context, guideposts, and a framework for understanding the present. In some ways, the challenges confronting today's Intelligence Community personnel are similar to those faced by their cohorts from earlier generations. While they differ in their specifics, the basic questions surrounding the practice of foreign intelligence and the management of large intelligence agencies have not changed. Management challenges such as the definition of missions and roles, and analytic pathologies such as groupthink, mirror-imaging, and status-quo thinking were all problems confronted by analysts in the Cold War and in the 1990s, much as they are in today's global contingency and counterterrorism operations. Examining the ways in which personnel from an earlier period recognized, addressed, and resolved these sorts of problems—or failed at all three—can inform and hopefully improve current intelligence practices.

The goal of *Defense Intelligence Historical Perspectives* is to inculcate in DIA and the broader Intelligence Community DIA's historical role during the last 50 years, and to educate current and future analysts about the hard-won lessons learned by those who occupied their seats before them. To neglect this story, ignore the lessons of the past, is to invite failure.



# Introduction

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The Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) was the first new agency established by Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara after he assumed office in 1961. The ambitious McNamara intended to reformulate U.S. strategic nuclear policy and reduce inefficiencies that had developed in the Department of Defense (DoD) in the 1950s. DIA was the lynchpin to both efforts. In the early and middle 1960s, McNamara and his subordinates, Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric and new DIA Director Lieutenant General Joseph Carroll (USAF), worked hard to establish the Agency, but their efforts were delayed or stymied by intransigent and parochial military leadership who objected to the creation of DIA because they feared a loss of both battlefield effectiveness and political influence in Washington, D.C.<sup>1</sup>

The work of building the DIA was made all the more urgent by the deteriorating situation in Southeast Asia. By the early 1960s, millions of dollars and hundreds of advisory personnel sent by the U.S. were having a negligible impact on the anti-communist campaign there. As the U.S. continued to commit more resources to the ill-fated government in Saigon, the country found itself drawn deeper and deeper into the maelstrom.

For DIA, the looming war in Southeast Asia would expose major problems in its organization and performance. Especially in the period from 1961 to 1969, DIA, either because of structural weaknesses or leadership failures, often failed to energetically seize opportunities to assert itself in the major intelligence questions involving the conflict there. This tendency was exacerbated by national military leadership's predilection for ignoring or undercutting the Agency's authority. In turn, this opened up DIA to severe criticism by Congress and other national policymakers, some of whom even considered abolishing the Agency. During the war, McNamara's great hope for reforming military intelligence would be swept up in quarrels between powerful domestic adversaries, and DIA's performance left the Secretary of Defense deeply embittered toward his creation. It was only at the end of the war that DIA assumed a more influential role in Southeast Asia. Until then, however, the Agency was consigned to the wilderness when it came to questions about the Vietnam conflict.





## Expanding the New DIA

Between 1961 and 1965, DIA personnel faced the double burden of establishing themselves as a functioning intelligence agency and producing useful intelligence for military planners and policymakers. This would have a direct impact on DIA's ability to support decisionmaking



Lt Gen Joseph Carroll DIA's first Director.

DIA Historical Collection

regarding Southeast Asia. During the Agency's first 14 months, Director Carroll focused most of his energy on organizing the phased transfer of intelligence resources from the individual Services to DIA. By the end of 1962, many of DIA's bureaucratic management mechanisms were in place, and the Agency was capable of producing current intelligence in response to the needs of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) and the Secretary of Defense.<sup>2</sup>

Beyond current intelligence, Carroll's Agency still had not established the ability to produce basic intelligence (such as order of battle and analyses of enemy military capabilities) and strategic intelligence focused on supporting policy and planning. This would come in 1963, with the establishment of the Production Center, the single largest organizational element within DIA. Planning for the Production Center began almost immediately after McNamara approved DIA's Activation Plan in September 1961. Carroll submitted his plan to consolidate the Service production elements into one function within DIA in April 1962, and Gilpatric approved them the following June. The original Activation Plan projected

that the Production Center would be operational by July, but arguments over resources and personnel delayed its opening until 1963.

The Production Center's first Director was then-U.S. Army Colonel Herron Maples, who arrived at DIA in May 1963. Even then, over a year-and-a-half after the Agency's establishment, raw feelings about DIA remained in the Services. When Maples arrived in Washington to assume his post, he was surprised to receive a cold welcome from his old friend and colleague, Brigadier General Alva Fitch, the Army's Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence. Maples visited Fitch in his Pentagon office and was told in no uncertain terms that "the Army was not at all pleased with the way this thing was developing with DIA, and we would probably be on opposite sides of the fence from this time on, so I should be prepared to have a good fight." By 1963, the Air Force appeared to drop most of its objections to DIA, but the Navy, according to Maples, "didn't want any part of it."<sup>3</sup>

The Production Center's home was on the grounds of a private women's school turned intelligence facility known as Arlington Hall Station. Arlington Hall Junior College for Women opened in 1927, but the school suffered badly during the Great Depression and almost went into bankruptcy. In 1942, under the War Powers Act, the Army took over the grounds of the school and hastily erected two large, gray, temporary, two-story buildings (known imaginatively as "Building A" and "Building B"), which would house its Signal Intelligence Service for the remainder of the war. In 1945, it became the headquarters of the new Army Security Agency and later, Building B housed the Air Force Intelligence Center. The Pentagon



DIA Historical Collection

The DIA Production Center Leadership. COL Herron Maples, the Center's Director, sits at the head of the table.

did not have enough space to accommodate the large influx of analysts who would staff DIA's Production Center, so Carroll agreed that DIA would take over Building B from the Air Force. At the same time, he ordered the set-up of an Automated Data Processing Center in Building A.<sup>4</sup>

Carroll and his staff would have been hard-pressed to find a worse facility in which to put their intelligence analysts. In 1942, neither building was meant to serve as a permanent structure, and by 1962, both were badly showing their age. Faulty wiring and shoddy construction made them fire traps. Rats and other pests had long since taken residence in the building. As a security precaution, many outside windows were painted over with black paint, giving the interior of the building the aura of a funeral home. Perhaps most worrisome, the weight of dozens of safes moved into Building B by DIA bowed the building's frame into a concave shape. The Production Center's leadership would take steps to upgrade and refurbish the buildings, but even as they were moving in, Carroll and his deputies began lobbying Congress for funding for a new home.

The stand-up of the Production Center also almost tripled the number of people working for DIA. At the end of 1962, the Agency had 979 civilian and military employees. Manpower authorization for the Production Center added almost 1,700 billets to the organization. Most of the additional personnel were civilians, and for the first time, the number of civilians in the Agency (1,624) outstripped the number of military personnel (1,047). Later in the year, the creation of a scientific and technical production organization, the completion of the Automated Data Processing Center (which utilized an early database system using punch cards and IBM computers), and a directorate for Mapping, Charting, and Geodesy, further boosted the Agency's population. Authorized manpower at the end of fiscal year 1963,





DIA Historical Collection

The entrance to Building B, Arlington Hall Station. The temporary buildings at Arlington Hall Station were showing their age even before DIA moved in.

for example, was 3,089 personnel, and actual manpower was 2,686.<sup>5</sup>

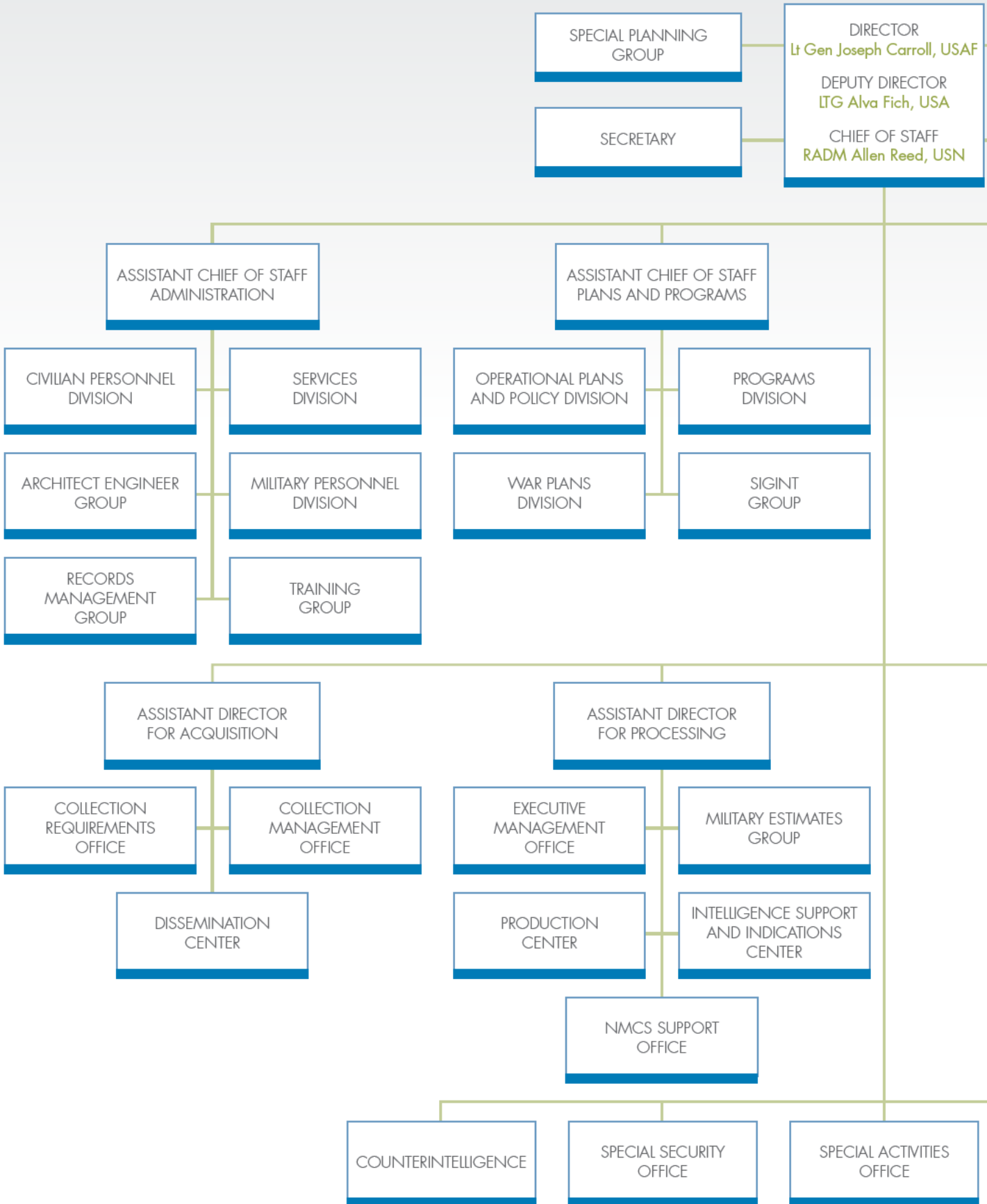
1964 was a pivotal year for the Agency. At the end of March, DIA opened the Dissemination Center, which coordinated the distribution of intelligence products. A month later, the Science and Technology Directorate was finally established. In August, Carroll merged the Office of Estimates with the Current Intelligence and Indications Center (CIIC) to create the Intelligence Support and Indications Center (ISIC) under U.S. Air Force Colonel Charles Gillis. This organization funneled current intelligence to the Joint Chiefs of

Staff and the National Military Command Center (NMCC) in the Pentagon. The ISIC would be the conduit by which national-level military authorities received military intelligence from around the world.

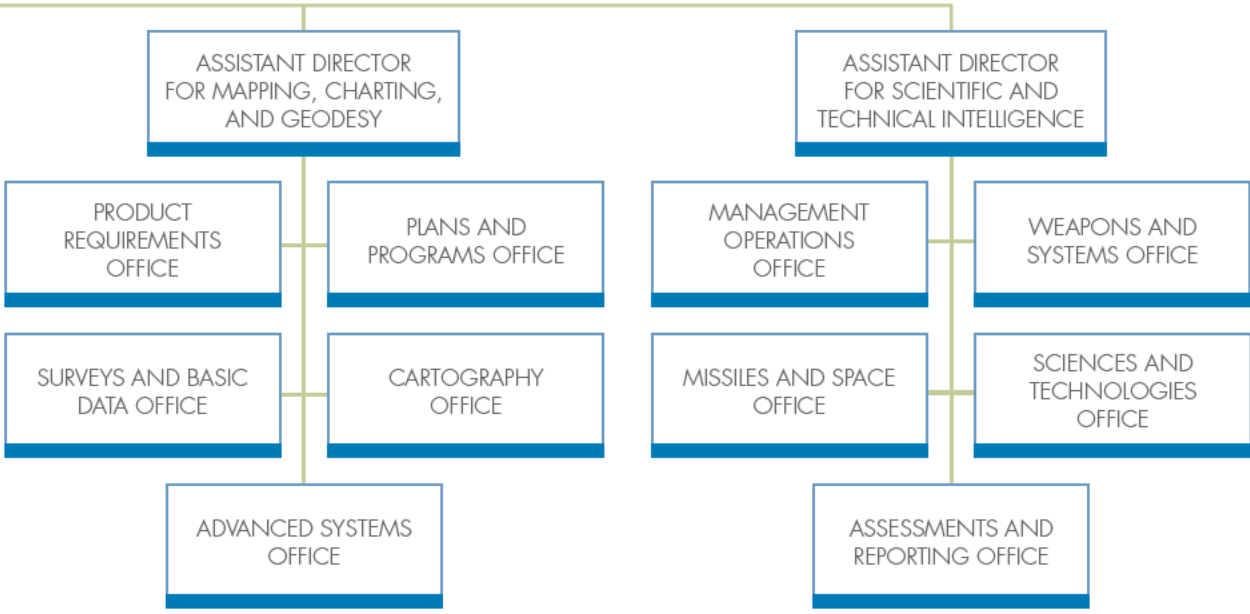
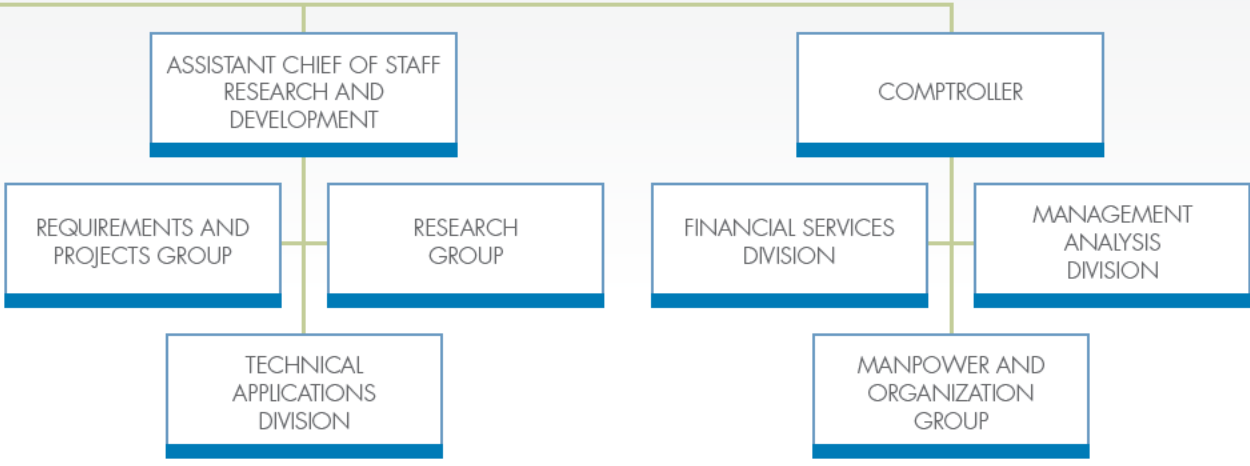
Separately, McNamara also ordered the establishment of a combined Department of Defense Special Missile and Astronautics Center (DoD/SMAC, which would become known by the acronym DEFSMAC in 1976) in April 1964. Previously, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the National Security Agency (NSA), and the Services separately collected and disseminated intelligence on foreign space and missile events. The system was overly redundant and left its recipients with fragmentary and sometimes contradictory intelligence reports on the same event. DEFSMAC combined these functions under the joint management of DIA and NSA. Initially, 81 people from NSA and 23 from DIA staffed the new organization. Their task was to provide 24-hour surveillance of foreign missile and space systems, provide tip-offs of pending missile tests to DoD collection elements, and analyze the immediate results of these collection missions. DEFSMAC would be the backbone of ballistic missile collection and analysis efforts for the next five decades.<sup>6</sup>

By the end of August 1964, Carroll could report to Gilpatric and McNamara that “all of the major organization transfers contemplated in the initial and subsequent organizational directives have been effected.” His Agency could by then produce intelligence on 127 nations, compared with only 62 countries at the end of 1961.<sup>7</sup> Its collection apparatus could task assets to answer national-level requirements and validate collection requests emerging from the Unified and Specified Commands. Through the Intelligence Support and Indications Center in the Pentagon, it could provide worldwide current intelligence to the Joint Chiefs and the Secretary of Defense, and through its Production Center, it had begun supplying other military intelligence to U.S. forces around the globe.

The Agency had also enlarged its physical presence in Washington and its suburbs. Starting from borrowed office space in the Pentagon in 1961, it had expanded to occupy space at



# Defense Intelligence Agency December 1964



Arlington Hall Station, Pomponio Plaza (home of the Science and Technology directorate), and the Cafritz Building (which it shared with a brewery and in which it conducted reconnaissance photo processing), all in Northern Virginia; the Anacostia Naval Annex (the Defense Intelligence School) in Southeast Washington; and Fort Meade, Maryland (DEFSMAC). DIA personnel were also detailed to various positions at Fort Richie and Andrews Air Force Base—both in Maryland—and in Norfolk, Virginia. At the end of 1964, some 3,600 employees were scattered across the greater Washington metropolitan area.<sup>8</sup>

But McNamara was not yet done ordering the consolidation of Pentagon assets under DIA. The U.S. military attaché system suffered from the same problems that military intelligence did in earlier decades. Duplication, parochialism, and waste had characterized it since the end of World War II. In December 1964, McNamara wrote to Carroll, the Service Secretaries, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Earl “Bus” Wheeler, to notify them that “the time is now appropriate to establish a single Defense Attaché System (DAS) as an organizational function of DIA, in order to improve the management of the total attaché effort.” He ordered Carroll to formulate a plan to integrate the various service attachés into the DAS, which would be managed by DIA. Brigadier General Richard Whitney, DIA’s Assistant Chief of Staff for Plans and Programs, completed the plan in March 1965. McNamara approved it with minor changes that same month, and Gilpatric gave final approval in April.<sup>9</sup>

On July 1, the DAS officially came under Carroll’s authority. The Services, unsurprisingly, resisted giving up control of the attachés, arguing that they fulfilled a military protocol function more than they did an intelligence function, and in any case, whatever information they did collect would be more relevant to the individual Services’ needs. McNamara once again brushed these arguments aside in favor of his consolidated system. DIA became responsible for the selection and assignment of attachés and for maintaining their operations around the world.<sup>10</sup> The repercussions of this would be enormous. Defense attachés would play key roles in some of the Agency’s most dramatic moments over the next 50 years, including during the Vietnam War.

But all of this growth had a price. While it expanded the Agency’s foreign intelligence responsibilities, the bureaucratic aspects of agency building strained the DIA personnel’s ability to keep up with intelligence requirements, particularly in analysis. While more personnel could be assigned to a wider variety of analytical tasks, Agency supervisors also had the responsibility of carrying out analytic duties, building the organizations they ran, and managing DIA’s responsibility of supervising external intelligence functions performed by other organizations in DoD. “DIA personnel have been planners and builders one day, intelligence analysts and managers the next,” noted one official reviewer of the Agency’s development. “It was a difficult at times to find the proper personnel to take care of the daily responsibilities of the directorate,” complained another reviewer. Thus, in the early ‘60s, a process began in which management responsibilities impinged on analytical duties and hindered DIA’s ability to process raw intelligence into finished intelligence.<sup>11</sup>

By the middle of 1964, Carroll’s Agency had assumed virtually all of the functions outlined in its Activation Plan of 1961, along with other responsibilities that were not incorporated in the original plan. The drawn-out process of establishing the Agency meant that DIA would be

bureaucratically hamstrung by its slow development and thus ill-equipped to participate in meaningful intelligence assessments on Southeast Asia, especially in the fateful years between 1961 and 1965. On those occasions when DIA could provide valuable analysis, military leadership would ultimately ignore or disparage this relative newcomer's opinions in favor of analysis done by intelligence specialists already in the region. In any case, as DIA became fully operational, the incipient U.S. conflict in Vietnam was reaching a critical state.

## The Vietnam Conundrum

While Carroll was struggling to bring DIA into being, the Kennedy Administration was grappling with an even larger problem. Since the 1954 departure of French forces from Vietnam, the United States had been providing the government of South Vietnam with considerable economic and military assistance to aid its fight against a stubborn insurgency conducted by the National Liberation Front (NLF), a coalition of various political groups opposing the Saigon government. Pejoratively called "Viet Cong" (literally meaning "Vietnamese Communists") by South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem, the NLF was supported by North Vietnam (DRV—the Democratic Republic of Vietnam), the Soviet Union, and China.

The political case for the NLF was made easier by the corrupt, capricious, and inept government of South Vietnam (RVN—the Republic of Vietnam), led by Diem. Diem prized loyalty over effectiveness, and surrounded himself with family members who were more crooked than they were competent. He also presided over a fearsome campaign against the NLF and its suspected sympathizers, but he could not defeat the dogged insurgency. Diem's hard-line approach drove an even larger wedge between the government and the population, and by 1961, the year Carroll began assembling DIA, his government, facing an expanding insurgency, was beginning to totter.<sup>12</sup>

Still in its infancy, DIA's ability to render meaningful strategic intelligence judgments regarding Southeast Asia was limited. Kennedy Administration policymakers chose to rely instead on various fact-finding missions taken by its senior members (such as an October 1961 mission by military advisor General Maxwell Taylor and Walt Rostow, the president's Deputy National Security Advisor), as well as input from more established intelligence agencies such as CIA and NSA.<sup>13</sup> DIA's work in late 1961 and early 1962 was thus limited to producing current intelligence on infiltration corridors and communications networks, and providing weekly updates to McNamara and the Joint Chiefs on South Vietnamese military activity.

In Vietnam, the United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), which was established on February 8, 1962, to advise, train, and offer other support to the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN), was the primary body overseeing military assistance to that nation. General Paul Harkins, MACV's commanding officer, and Frederick Nolting, the U.S. Ambassador to South Vietnam, shared responsibility for leading MACV, which would come to dominate policy discussions about the ongoing insurgency.<sup>14</sup> MACV's intelligence chief (G-2) was Air Force Colonel James Winterbottom, a specialist in strategic reconnaissance and a man with little understanding of insurgencies.<sup>15</sup>



In February 1962, Harkins, on Taylor's recommendation, set up a Joint Evaluation Center (JEC) under Winterbottom in an effort to craft more authoritative intelligence assessments of the situation. The JEC was conceptually an early forerunner of today's intelligence fusion centers. Originally, it was to be staffed by embassy personnel and CIA and military representatives, and the JCS directed Carroll to support it. Carroll in turn sent DIA's most qualified Southeast Asia analyst, George Allen, as the Agency's sole representative to the JEC. Allen was an analyst in the CIIC and had extensive experience in the region going back to his days as an Army intelligence specialist immediately after World War II. Prior to coming to DIA, he was the senior Indochina intelligence expert in the U.S. Army, Pacific. In 1961, he coordinated the Army's current intelligence program before DIA absorbed that function into the CIIC, bringing Allen with it. He had a vaguely defined portfolio at DIA, serving as a "consultant" to Colonel Gillis, the head of the CIIC, which allowed him a degree of professional flexibility and made him an ideal representative to the JEC.<sup>16</sup>

Allen left for Saigon that month. When he arrived, he received a rude welcome from his new boss. Upon reporting to Winterbottom in Saigon, Allen was told by MACV's G-2 "in no uncertain terms that though I might have been a 'hotshot,' big-time, powerful blankety-blank GS-15 back in Washington, in Saigon I was no better than the lowest-ranked private, that I would enjoy no special privileges, that I should remember for whom I was working, that I was not DIA's employee but his, and that if I tried to communicate with my home office without clearing the message with him, he would fix my wagon (to put it politely)."<sup>17</sup> Perhaps already aware of how Winterbottom planned to run the JEC, no embassy personnel or CIA staff joined the organization.

The JEC's task was to evaluate and combine all-source intelligence reporting to provide finished intelligence products for MACV leadership and policymakers in Washington.<sup>18</sup> Within it, Allen was responsible for coordinating the efforts of the different teams working on the order of battle (OB) and ensuring that they were following a common methodology. After two months of painstaking work, Allen's group in the JEC concluded that there were approximately 20,000 North Vietnamese regulars in South Vietnam and "probably at least 100,000 of the guerilla-militia elements." Winterbottom rejected this latter figure out of hand and forced a revision of the estimate to just over 16,300 total enemy fighters. In May, the figure was then presented by MACV to a satisfied McNamara, who took it to mean that the U.S. effort was bearing fruit.<sup>19</sup>

The disagreement over OB in early 1962 and MACV's assertion of leadership on the issue demonstrated the limits of DIA's capabilities at this very early stage of its development. The Agency lacked the administrative capacity (it could only support the JEC with one analyst) and bureaucratic willpower to energetically challenge MACV's conclusions. There is little evidence that Carroll, consumed as he was with getting the Agency on its feet, was willing to involve DIA in an analytical knife fight with MACV over enemy order of battle. As a general rule, the DIA Director preferred not to challenge the Services directly while he was trying to establish DIA's tasking and managerial authority over DoD intelligence assets. He was a conciliator by nature, and while the approach won him many friends and admirers, it tended to undercut any leverage his position as DIA Director afforded him. It is unclear whether Carroll informed McNamara that the JEC effort did little to resolve the differences of intelligence opinion in the

OB estimates. The Secretary of Defense appeared to believe that the situation in Vietnam was improving.<sup>20</sup> With regard to the conflict in Vietnam, it would be the first in a string of missed opportunities for DIA to assert the leadership role which McNamara originally intended for it.

Even so, between 1963 and 1965, Carroll's Agency began reporting more and more grim news to McNamara. But in many cases, DIA analysis was undercut elsewhere in the Pentagon. For example, an August 1964 DIA intelligence bulletin described a surge of NLF attacks on government targets in South Vietnam, and warned that oppressive government measures, such as a crackdown against Buddhist war protesters, would only encourage support for the communists. But 10 days later, Marine Major General Victor "Brute" Krulak, the Pentagon's Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency and Special Activities (SACSA), wrote to McNamara discounting the importance of insurgent activity. He pointed out that the level of violence was still below what it was in 1962, and that NLF activity was "neither particularly salient nor of long duration" and therefore did not deserve concern.<sup>21</sup>

That same month, Diem imposed martial law and ordered attacks on Buddhist pagodas, which had become centers of non-violent resistance to government abuses. At DIA, Carroll sent a memorandum to McNamara warning that these steps "are likely to further alienate the public from the Diem government and will have serious repercussions throughout the country." Furthermore, according to Carroll, a coup against the Diem government was a very real possibility.<sup>22</sup> The report cast more doubt on the situation in Vietnam, and in yet another effort to get what he hoped would be an unvarnished appraisal, Kennedy first sent Krulak and Joseph Mendenhall, the former political counselor in the U.S. Embassy in Saigon, to South Vietnam. Three weeks later, he sent McNamara and Taylor to assess the situation yet again, but the results of these fact-finding missions did not clarify matters for the president.



The Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University

Buddhist monks protest in Saigon, 1963. DIA analysts argued correctly that any crack-down on the protests would weaken South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem.

Carroll's August memorandum to McNamara was prophetic. After the violent raids on the pagodas, key ARVN officers became convinced that Diem had to be removed, and made a series of quiet contacts with U.S. officials, who indicated their tacit support for Diem's removal. The officers and their men attacked the presidential palace in Saigon, and without U.S. approval, murdered Diem and his brother on November 1, ushering in an era of "revolving-door juntas" until Nguyen Van Thieu came to power in 1965. After the coup, Kennedy ordered a reevaluation of U.S. Vietnam policy, but three weeks later, he was assassinated by Lee Harvey Oswald. Lyndon Johnson assumed the presidency, leaving Kennedy's team in place. The policy review was not completed.<sup>23</sup>

As Johnson was settling into the Oval Office, the first small seeds of doubt about Vietnam began to appear in McNamara's mind. This was in part because as U.S. involvement deepened, DIA's reporting to the Secretary of Defense became increasingly pessimistic. On December 13, Carroll wrote to McNamara that the insurgency was strengthening and its combat effectiveness was improving. His memo directly contradicted the sanguine intelligence reports emerging from Winterbottom's office in MACV, noting that "The Communist capability to extend or escalate the insurgency has not been significantly negated." Six days later, McNamara visited Vietnam with Carroll's report fresh in his mind. The Secretary's own impressions from the trip were just as foreboding: "Viet Cong progress has been great during the period since the coup ... The situation is very disturbing." He concluded that further infusion of U.S. troops would not stem the tide, but did argue for continuation of U.S. involvement at essentially the same level.<sup>24</sup>

## Over the Precipice

Like Kennedy before him, Johnson's Vietnam policy sought a middle ground between full commitment and full withdrawal; and like Kennedy before him, that middle ground would ultimately result in greater escalation. In early 1964, Johnson approved a plan for covert action against North Vietnam known as OPLAN 34-A. A key component of OPLAN 34-A was the so-called DeSoto patrols. These patrols by specially equipped U.S. Navy vessels would gather electronic intelligence on targets in North Vietnam, assist South Vietnamese commando raids, and perform other covert activities.<sup>25</sup>

On the night of August 4, in heavy seas under a moonless sky, two destroyers on a DeSoto patrol in the Gulf of Tonkin, the USS *Maddox* and the USS *Turner Joy*, urgently reported that they were under attack by North Vietnamese patrol boats.<sup>26</sup> The *Maddox* had been attacked two days earlier, but the August 4 attack turned out to be a phantom—the result, according to after-action reporting, of freak weather effects and over-eager sonarmen—but the consequences were enormous. On August 7, Congress passed what subsequently came to be known as the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, which gave the president far-reaching authority to take action to protect U.S. interests in Southeast Asia. That same day, Carroll forwarded an assessment to McNamara predicting that the North Vietnamese would ramp up their efforts in South Vietnam in response. Both sides were crossing the Rubicon.<sup>27</sup>

Armed with his new authority from Congress, Johnson began a review of U.S. Vietnam policy, forming the National Security Council (NSC) Working Group on South Vietnam and East

Asia. DIA representatives sat on the Intelligence Panel of the Working Group. After evaluating the available evidence, the panel concluded that prospects for the Saigon government were “extremely grim,” that increased military action against North Vietnam would have a negligible effect because “the basic elements of Communist strength in South Vietnam remain indigenous,” and that Hanoi could support the insurgency even if it were severely damaged by a protracted military campaign. Sustained attacks, the panel also concluded, were not likely to break Hanoi’s will.<sup>28</sup>

But Johnson never heard this argument. The Joint Staff’s representative to the Working Group, Vice Admiral Lloyd Mustin, made sure of it. Mustin was a career combat officer with little experience in Southeast Asia, but he rejected out of hand the Intelligence Panel’s conclusions. Victory was a matter of military force; the United States should simply crush North Vietnam. Doing so would force Hanoi to withdraw support for the NLF, and the insurgency would wither away. Mustin’s arguments fell on sympathetic ears, and the NSC ultimately recommended few changes to Johnson’s Vietnam policy.<sup>29</sup> Johnson waited until after the elections of 1964 and his inauguration in January 1965 to commit to sustained military action, but in March 1965, Operation ROLLING THUNDER, the sustained bombing of North Vietnam, began.<sup>30</sup>

## Air War over Vietnam

ROLLING THUNDER was DIA’s first serious test during the Vietnam War. After a series of limited and ineffective air raids in February (code-named FLAMING DART), JCS Chairman Wheeler complained that “we do not have sufficient or timely information about the results of the strikes,” that planning was poor, and the choice of weapons used was “open to question.” He ordered Carroll to come up with a standardized and streamlined system of after-action reporting that would improve targeting and ordnance selection. In the succeeding months,

DIA personnel in the Targets Division and Estimates Office in Herron Maples’ Production Center compiled intelligence from U.S. Pacific Air Forces and the U.S. Pacific Fleet (both components under the Commander of U.S. Forces, Pacific—CINCPAC), MACV (itself a subordinate command of CINCPAC), and NSA, and collated the information into finished reports on the raids. Agency personnel then distributed weekly evaluations to McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and senior DoD officials for action.<sup>31</sup>



U.S. soldiers view B-52 strikes at Con Thien, near the demilitarized zone separating North and South Vietnam, during Operation ROLLING THUNDER.

Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University

ROLLING THUNDER quickly progressed into a regular strategic bombing campaign against targets in both the North *and* the South, with the military goal of interdicting the flow of men and supplies into South Vietnam. DIA's analysts were skeptical that this would arrest enemy combat operations. Together with CIA and the State Department, analysts in the Southeast Asia Branch in the Estimates Office argued in March that NLF forces "had the capability and almost the intention [sic] of exerting considerable military pressure even without new or augmented support from the North." But the JCS and civilian policymakers in McNamara's office took this to mean that more force was necessary. A month later, the JCS argued that the ROLLING THUNDER target list was too restrictive to be effective, and they successfully lobbied McNamara for an expansion of the program, including a more extensive target list and the use of B-52s in so-called ARC LIGHT missions. Carroll began submitting even longer target lists to the Joint Chiefs, and ARC LIGHT missions began in June.<sup>32</sup>

DIA's initial evaluations were a cause for cautious optimism among policymakers. An appraisal produced at the end of June, for example, noted that "sustained air strikes against North Vietnam have eroded national capacities ammunition storage, supply depots, POL [petroleum, oil, and lubricants], power plants and military facilities, as well as causing near paralysis of many facets of the national economy." McNamara published an unclassified version of this assessment to the press, and McGeorge Bundy, the president's National Security Advisor, forwarded the report to Johnson, noting that "it suggests that there are real pressures in our bombing program."<sup>33</sup>

As a result, military and senior civilian leadership argued for a further expansion of the ROLLING THUNDER target list to include more political, logistic, and economic targets in the North.<sup>34</sup> The Joint Chiefs argued in favor of removing many bombing restrictions and attacking all of North Vietnam's industrial capabilities, petroleum reserves, and its infrastructure. Most of the Intelligence Community (IC) seemed to agree, publishing a September Special National Intelligence Estimate which backed the notion that an extended U.S. air campaign "might persuade [Hanoi] that the guerilla war could not be prosecuted to final victory." Only the State Department dissented.<sup>35</sup>

But by the end of 1965, DIA analysts were having second thoughts about ROLLING THUNDER. During a bombing pause in December and January, a December intelligence assessment they produced for the JCS questioned whether a sustained campaign could have a long-term effect because of the dispersed nature of the targets in North Vietnam. When it became clear that the bombing pause had failed to produce the anticipated diplomatic talks, their doubts about the potential success of sustained bombing became more acute. In January 1966, they briefed JCS Chairman Wheeler and the rest of the Joint Chiefs that "the Communists certainly believe that their motivation is superior, that lack of clear cut victory combined with domestic and foreign pressures will erode U.S. determination, and that they can outlast the US in the contest—even in the face of extremely heavy troop losses."<sup>36</sup> Such assessments were in direct contradiction to what the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed would occur with the application of increased force, and were met with skepticism among military leadership.



As a stepped-up bombing campaign against North Vietnamese POL sites continued into the middle of 1966, DIA reporting channeled through the JCS kept McNamara abreast of its progress. By August 1, targeting analysts estimated that 70 percent of North Vietnam's industrial capacity was destroyed, but the huge risks and expense, coupled with the near impossibility of destroying the remaining dispersed sites, forced McNamara to begin rethinking his support for the campaign. Another joint CIA/DIA analysis completed a month later concluded that the continued attacks were unsuccessful, mainly because the flow of men south continued unabated, and North Vietnam was no closer to agreeing to negotiations.<sup>37</sup>

With the failure of ROLLING THUNDER becoming obvious, McNamara's disillusionment deepened. The Secretary of Defense joined a small group of policy officials who favored a halt to the air campaign. The middle of 1966 also marked an important turning point in his relationship with DIA. When Hanoi failed to back down after intensified attacks in July and August 1966, McNamara concluded that the Defense Intelligence Agency, his solution for eliminating Service intelligence bias and offering civilian Pentagon leadership unvarnished intelligence reporting, had not established its independence from its parent Services and merely parroted Service thinking about the increased use of force. He requested that CIA set up a unit that could monitor the campaign on its own and report its findings to him directly. Years later, McNamara recalled that:

I didn't believe the DIA was trying to deceive me on the results of the bombing ... But I did believe that parties of interest frequently looking [sic] at their operations through rose, what I call 'rose colored glasses' ... And particularly with respect to the bombing operations, I believed that we needed an independent evaluation.<sup>38</sup>

But McNamara's criticism was disingenuous. To be sure, in 1965, DIA analysis tacitly backed the notion that a more aggressive air campaign might force Hanoi to sue for peace. But as early as January 1966, Agency analysts had repeatedly voiced skepticism over the efficacy of expanded attacks, and it was impossible to paper over the failures of ROLLING THUNDER, which Carroll did not do in any case. DIA had already been coordinating with CIA for a year by the time the Secretary of Defense requested a more "independent" evaluation. McNamara, never one to rely on intelligence when his own judgment seemed best, was merely searching for a scapegoat, and he found one in an already unpopular Agency which had been the object of derision since its inception. DIA continued to coordinate with CIA throughout 1967 and 1968 to provide monthly evaluations of the campaign's progress.<sup>39</sup>

But the violent logic of ROLLING THUNDER's advocates continued to win out. In February 1967, Johnson again ordered an expansion of the operation's target list. The joint DIA/CIA appraisals of the attacks on the new targets provided policymakers with a blow-by-blow account of the failure of this most intense stage of ROLLING THUNDER. A report published in June noted that "the massive North Vietnamese construction and repair efforts continue to offset much of the effects of air strikes ... The North Vietnamese still retain the capability to support activities in South Vietnam and Laos at present or increased combat levels and force structures." Interdiction raids on the Ho Chi Minh trail, a supply network stretching from North to South Vietnam through Laos and Cambodia, had little effect beyond short-



Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University

The Dep Cau Bridge, northeast of Hanoi, lies in the Cau River after being attacked by U.S. Air Force F-105 fighter-bombers. Photographs like this one were key to DIA's assessments of North Vietnam's ability to resupply their forces from China and therefore sustain the war effort in the South.

term dislocations. "The North Vietnamese still retain the capability to support activities in South Vietnam and Laos at present or increased combat levels and force structures," the same report read.<sup>40</sup>

Very little progress was apparent even later that year. A CIA/DIA report issued in October noted once again that "because the requirements are modest, the North Vietnamese still retain the capability to logistically support activities in South Vietnam and Laos at present or increased combat levels and force structure." North Vietnamese morale continued to hold as well. As 1967 turned to 1968, it was clear to most civilian policymakers, if not the president and his military advisors, that ROLLING THUNDER was a failure. The ground war for Vietnam was not faring much better.<sup>41</sup>

## Intelligence Estimates and the Ground War in Vietnam

The first U.S. ground combat troops arrived in Vietnam on March 3, 1965, when the Third Marine regiment came ashore in Da Nang. Throughout 1965, the number of U.S. troops in Vietnam continued to escalate, reaching 185,000 by the end of the year.<sup>42</sup> General William Westmoreland, who had taken over command of MACV in June 1964, developed a strategy which centered on inflicting insupportable losses on the communists that would force them to quit the fight—all while keeping U.S. casualties at an acceptable level. To know whether or not Westmoreland's attrition strategy was successful, it was also necessary to have a clear idea of the size of NLF and North Vietnamese regular forces. Thus order of battle estimates continued to play a critical intelligence role in the formulation of U.S. strategy and policy in Vietnam.<sup>43</sup>

In 1966, after a year of heavy fighting, a CIA analyst named Samuel Adams completed his own investigation into the strength of the NLF irregular forces. He concluded that enemy strength in Vietnam totaled some 600,000, twice that of MACV's OB estimate, which held that anywhere from 277,000 to 300,000 enemy fighters, both regular and irregular, were arrayed against U.S. forces. Adams' assessment eventually reached the White House, and in early 1967, National Security Advisor Walt Rostow suggested to JCS Chairman Wheeler that the interested parties meet to resolve the difference. Wheeler in turn ordered Carroll to convene a conference in Hawaii that February.<sup>44</sup>

Carroll considered the conference important enough that he ordered Brigadier General Burton Brown, the Agency's Deputy Assistant Director for Intelligence Production, to lead DIA's delegation. Brown's analysts were already sympathetic to Adams' basic point that MACV's OB needed to be revised. Brown himself favored significant additions to the OB, but none of them were willing to agree that Adams' numbers were accurate. MACV's Colonel Gains Hawkins, who was in charge of enemy strength estimates, conceded that the enemy troop total, including NLF irregulars, could be around 500,000, a substantial increase, to be sure, but still 100,000 short of Adams' figure. Unresolved differences still remained over the nature, composition, and size of irregular forces, especially local militias and so-called "assault youth" brigades (militia forces composed essentially of teenagers), and MACV's operations personnel exerted enormous pressure to keep the number low. Questions about OB estimates lingered well into 1967.<sup>45</sup>

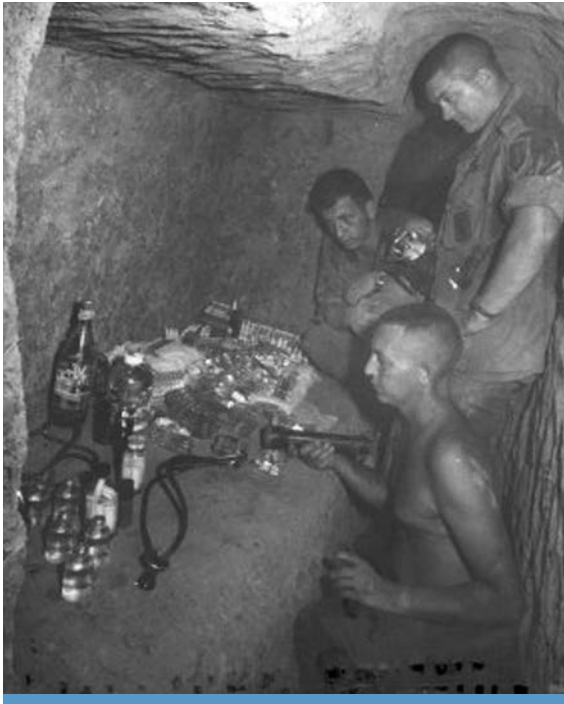


BG Burton Brown, DIA's Deputy Assistant Director for Intelligence Production, 1967.

DIA Historical Collection

Within DIA, order of battle analysis was done by the Southeast Asia Branch of the new Eastern Area Office, located in the Production Center. Analysts here began doubting MACV's estimates in early 1967, after Operation JUNCTION CITY, a huge U.S. sweep through the Iron Triangle north of Saigon. During the offensive, American soldiers captured thousands of enemy documents which gave them much more insight into communist forces. The intelligence windfall provided more evidence to the OB analysts





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U.S. troops examine equipment found in an NLF hospital during Operation JUNCTION CITY, which also led to the capture of thousands of enemy documents.

who argued for an upward revision of the figures. Major John “Barrie” Williams, one of the Agency’s most experienced Vietnam analysts, recalled that “when we started translating these documents and everything, it suddenly appeared to some of the best analysts in the business that hey gang, there ain’t 44,000 guerillas. There could be as many as 112,000 guerillas.” MACV’s response, according to Williams, was to redefine the term “enemy combatant.” “So what happened at this time is recategorized [sic] the enemy, if you will,” he recalled. “It was suddenly decided that political infrastructure was not to be part of the threat. ... I can tell you that infrastructure got zapped, no doubt about it.” Williams estimated the true number of enemy fighters to be around 450,000 to 500,000.<sup>46</sup>

Differences over the numbers grew into a major disagreement between the intelligence agencies in Washington and MACV. During the preparation of a Special National Intelligence Estimate (SNIE) on communist capabilities in Vietnam, CIA wanted to use Adams’ figure of 600,000, but Westmoreland had different ideas. He wanted to eliminate

the NLF’s so-called self-defense and secret self-defense forces from all assessments of enemy OB. These were the very forces that pushed Adams’ estimate up to 600,000. MACV representatives argued that it was impossible to accurately discern self-defense from secret self-defense forces. Any effort to count them, they argued, would be pure speculation and wholly inaccurate. Moreover, as MACV deputy commander General Creighton Abrams put it, these groups “contain a sizable number of women and old people. ... They are rarely armed, have no real discipline, and almost no military capability. They are no more effective in the military sense than the dozens of other nonmilitary organizations which serve the VC cause in various roles.”<sup>47</sup> A marked upward revision in communist forces would also undermine both MACV’s public credibility and the White House’s belief in Westmoreland’s ability to prosecute the war.

Complicating Westmoreland’s position was that MACV intelligence and operations elements had officially claimed that same month that the effort in Vietnam had reached its “crossover point,” that is, enemy losses were exceeding replacements. This argument was spearheaded by Lieutenant Colonel Daniel Graham, the chief of MACV’s Current Intelligence, Indications, and Estimates Division, who would go on to become DIA Director in 1974 and one of the most important figures in the Agency’s history. Westmoreland had made the “crossover” claim previously, but it was Graham’s work that provided the claim with more intellectual weight and therefore greater legitimacy. Based on an “input-output” model instituted by Graham that

compared the number of replacements to the number of losses in the North Vietnamese Army and NLF, MACV's OB estimates seemed to show that Westmoreland's goal of grinding down the enemy was working. According to those around him, Graham's order of battle claims were based on this interpretation of the figures and his understanding of the definition of an enemy combatant, which did not include the self-defense forces.<sup>48</sup> "We honestly believed," recalled one of Graham's colleagues, "that we had reached a crossover point."<sup>49</sup>

DIA's efforts to mediate the dispute between MACV and CIA were futile. By the end of June 1967, Carroll himself had serious doubts about MACV's estimate. According to Williams, the DIA Director believed that the estimate should be revised upward, but, ever the conciliator and perhaps unwilling to challenge the Army estimators in MACV, Carroll made it clear that he wanted to avoid "a knock-down, drag-out fight over the strength figures."<sup>50</sup> Later that summer, DIA representatives met in Washington with CINCPAC and MACV officials, including Graham. DIA's analysts favored an increase in the estimate to approximately 500,000, but the MACV delegation was only prepared to accept an estimate no higher than 300,000. Williams later recalled that Graham insisted DIA should go along with MACV because the latter organization was "the soldier in the field." He claimed in 1983, as did others who were present, that Graham arbitrarily changed the figures to keep the OB estimate under 300,000.<sup>51</sup>

Williams' accusation may have credence, but Graham's position also may not have been as contrived as his critics believed. On one hand, Williams remembers Graham simply crossing out figures and replacing them with lower ones, a clear abuse of intelligence analysis.<sup>52</sup> On the other hand, MACV's institutional definition of an enemy combatant was entirely different than CIA's. Abrams' prior assertion that the self-defense forces were hardly military formations is an indication that the opposing sides could not agree on a single definition of enemy combatant, and their numbers were skewed because of it. The definitional shift made by MACV after Operation JUNCTION CITY worsened the problem considerably. DIA's official position was that while the self-defense forces could be, but were not necessarily, enemy combatants, MACV's number was still too low because it did not include other groups, such as the Communist political cadres, nor take into account the unique circumstances under which individual local militia groups operated. The question of OB therefore may have also centered on an honest difference of analytical opinion between different intelligence organizations.<sup>53</sup>

In any case, the episode did not cast Carroll's Agency in a good light. By not budging on any figure over 300,000, MACV, supported by the Joint Chiefs, demonstrated DIA's inability to resolve intelligence disputes and arrive at a universally agreed-upon estimate devoid of Service bias. Carroll repeatedly asked Williams and other subordinates to try to resolve the results, which they were unable to do. George Fowler, another Southeast Asia analyst in DIA (who would go on to become DIA's Chief of Estimates for the region), was also unhappy with the conclusions, but no one in the Agency could dissuade MACV. DIA was subsequently buffeted by howls of protest from CIA—who misinterpreted DIA's inability to revise the official OB as evidence that they actually sided with MACV—and continually rebuffed by MACV when it tried to revise the 300,000 figure.<sup>54</sup> Months of wrangling between representatives from CIA, DIA, and MACV continued. DIA representatives went to Saigon at the end of June to continue



DIA Historical Collection

U.S. Air Force Major General Grover Cleveland Brown, DIA's Assistant Director for Intelligence Production.

their discussions with MACV, but got nowhere. In October, Carroll sent another team to Saigon, but still MACV would not budge.

Worse, according to John Williams, U.S. Air Force Major General Grover Cleveland Brown, who was DIA's Assistant Director for Intelligence Production, does not appear to have supported his analysts' efforts to convince MACV to revise its estimate. Brown had been the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence in U.S. Pacific Command from 1964 to 1967.<sup>55</sup> In this position, he had backed MACV's position in the OB disputes. He was assigned to DIA in April 1967. Williams recalls that during a meeting at CIA Headquarters in Virginia between MACV, CIA, and DIA analysts led by U.S. Army Colonel John Lanterman (the chief of DIA's Eastern Area Office), Lanterman's analysts had struck an agreement on the figures with CIA that would have forced MACV's estimate upward. Brown initially backed the agreement, but, according to Williams, "Danny Graham would get on the phone and call Grover Cleveland Brown, give him a change of position. 'You're not backing MACV. We need you.' Lanterman would get back [from meeting with Brown] and his positions were changed again."<sup>56</sup> Brown probably

sided with MACV and Graham out of loyalty to an intelligence position for which he was partially responsible when he was at CINCPAC. It appears that even while at DIA, he fell prey to a persistent and long-held bias in favor of analysis done in the field and against analysis done at a further remove in Washington. This apparent internal discord did nothing to resolve the OB question and helped undermine DIA's position within the Intelligence Community and Department of Defense.

The following November, the SNIE that originally ignited the disagreement was published and cited an even lower number of enemy combatants after redefining many statistical categories. It set the total enemy OB between 190,000 and 220,000.<sup>57</sup> On the same day the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) released the SNIE, McNamara announced that he planned to resign his position as Secretary of Defense. DIA's erstwhile champion, "drained in body and spirit," had asked Johnson to call a halt to ROLLING THUNDER and find a diplomatic settlement in May 1967. This was too much for Johnson, who orchestrated McNamara's placement as President of the World Bank during the summer.<sup>58</sup> McNamara would leave office in February 1968, but his departure and replacement by Clark Clifford ultimately had little effect on DIA's internal or external relationships.

Official military estimates on enemy strength, especially as they pertained to communist infiltration into South Vietnam, continued to decline in late 1967. DIA was almost entirely reliant on MACV for intelligence bearing on enemy order of battle, and the Agency had no influence on the OB numbers. Agency personnel sent to MACV the essential elements of information they required, but MACV personnel processed and screened the raw intelligence before sending it to DIA.<sup>59</sup> It was a procedure that opened opportunities for MACV personnel to manipulate intelligence data in ways that bolstered their position, and it effectively



subordinated DIA to MACV. According to DIA's John Williams, the Agency was almost entirely reliant on MACV's reporting. "We took what MACV gave us on infiltration," he later recalled, "and published it to the Washington community."<sup>60</sup> DIA had failed to exert its independent managerial responsibilities over this most critical intelligence issue.

This failure had many fathers. MACV's early authority over Vietnam-related military intelligence issues, coupled with the lingering Service resentment of DIA, meant that military leadership in Southeast Asia and Washington were predisposed to ignoring DIA's analysis in favor of MACV's. This problem was exacerbated by senior leadership within DIA itself. DIA Director Carroll, regarded by his peers as an extraordinarily honorable man, nevertheless failed to forcefully assert leadership on one of the central questions of the war, and was intent on avoiding conflict over the issue of order of battle. Brown, a key senior subordinate, only aggravated DIA's problems by failing to support the independent position worked out by the Agency's analysts. It was in the end another lost opportunity for DIA to exercise exactly the kind of authority over intelligence analysis that McNamara envisioned when he ordered DIA's establishment. The failure to seize on this opportunity eroded DIA's position within the Department of Defense and the Intelligence Community, did nothing to restore McNamara's crumbling faith in the Agency, and would badly damage DIA's public image. Even so, had DIA asserted itself more forcefully in the debate, it is still not clear that it would have convinced recalcitrant MACV leadership or its backers on the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Thus, despite CIA's protests, leadership in the Department of Defense and the White House operated under the mistaken impression that while the United States was making progress in the ground war, even more force was required to achieve victory. But they would be in for a shock within months. Between November 1967 and January 1968, MACV began getting hints of a major enemy strike. Large numbers of NLF soldiers began infiltrating and gathering in major cities, and 20,000 North Vietnamese troops also massed around the U.S. Marine Corps outpost at Khe Sanh, near the demilitarized zone and the border with Laos.

On January 30, 1968, NLF and North Vietnamese troops launched the Tet Offensive against virtually every important political and military target in South Vietnam. Several weeks of heavy fighting followed, but American and allied forces were able to defeat the attackers throughout South Vietnam, inflicting serious losses. Hostilities associated with the Tet Offensive ebbed and flowed for months afterward, but the outcome was a military defeat for the communist forces, who lost, by some estimates, almost 40,000 men. The Americans had won a tactical victory, but given intelligence assessments and public assurances by policy officials, the Tet Offensive came as a shock in the United States.<sup>61</sup>

After the Tet Offensive, Carroll again sent a team to Saigon, this time headed by his Chief of Staff, Major General Robert Glass, in an effort to readjust the OB estimate. MACV officials still refused to acknowledge any error. According to John Williams, who accompanied Glass along with Lanterman, even MACV's personnel knew the numbers did not add up. "We had our respective positions that we had to support for our agencies, and you know, usually these [positions] are dictated by your commanders," he recalled. "But when you privately sit down over a beer, you know that a lot of the things you are supporting are total and utter horseshit,



National Archives and Records Administration

Saigon was the scene of heavy fighting during the 1968 Tet Offensive.

just total and utter.” The entire experience was, he related, “Probably the most frustrating thing you have ever been into. You were sent out there by General Carroll to do this, and you go back with your hat in hand and say ‘Sir, I can’t get them to come off a dime.’”<sup>62</sup>

Meanwhile, CIA and DIA still could not agree on a specific estimate of enemy strength, but the two agencies were able to come to a wary, but working consensus on related issues. In March, they jointly published an attrition study which argued that despite the losses incurred during Tet, the communists would be able to continue their campaign against South Vietnam unabated. “Hanoi retains the capability of meeting all of its manpower requirements,” it stated. “We conclude that manpower is not a factor limiting Hanoi’s ability to continue with the war.”<sup>63</sup> The next day, Johnson ordered an end to ROLLING THUNDER, indicated that the United States would take steps to deescalate the conflict, and announced that he would not seek reelection.

Despite Johnson’s announcement and the onset of peace talks in May, fighting in Vietnam continued in the spring and summer of 1968.<sup>64</sup> Carroll sent yet another delegation to Saigon in June to negotiate an adjustment in the military OB, but MACV still made no attempt to revise its figures. James Meacham, the head of MACV’s order of battle division, wrote to his wife:

The types from DIA were here and badgered me endlessly trying to pry the truth from my sealed lips. They smell a rat but don’t really know where to look for it. They know we are falsifying the figures, but can’t figure out which ones and how.<sup>65</sup>

Once again, the DIA delegation returned home empty-handed. For the rest of 1968, DIA analysts continued to work with CIA and MACV to come to a mutually agreeable estimate. Despite some compromises by each side over the course of the next year, few in the White House had complete faith in the OB estimates emerging from Vietnam.

## An Intelligence Disaster: The USS *Pueblo* Incident

In 1968, DIA's credibility suffered a series of blows. As the Agency struggled to bring order to the chaotic intelligence picture in Vietnam, 2,300 miles northeast of Saigon, North Korea was embarking on an aggressive campaign to destabilize the South Korean government,



The USS *Pueblo* lies off California in October 1967, three months before its fateful mission.

Naval Historical Center

a campaign that included attacks against American targets.<sup>66</sup> The United States had been conducting intelligence gathering missions against North Korea in international waters and airspace since the 1950s, but tensions had increased noticeably in 1966, when the North Koreans renewed their efforts to “liberate” the South. Important components of the U.S. intelligence effort were signals intelligence (SIGINT) missions in international waters off the coast of North Korea. In 1968, one of these missions was to be conducted by the USS *Pueblo*, a World War II-era freighter recently refitted as a SIGINT collection ship.

The request for the *Pueblo*'s mission came from Rear Admiral Frank Johnson, the Commander of U.S. Naval Forces, Japan (COMNAVFORJAPAN). COMNAVFORJAPAN assessed the operational risk to the *Pueblo* as minimal, and forwarded the request to the headquarters of the U.S. Pacific Fleet (CINCPACFLT) in Hawaii. On December 17, 1967, CINCPACFLT likewise assessed the risk to the mission as low, and sent the request to DIA via the Joint Staff's Joint Reconnaissance Center for its own risk assessment and validation.<sup>67</sup> DIA's own evaluation of the *Pueblo* mission took place 10 days later as part of the monthly meetings to assess the risk of dozens of reconnaissance missions conducted each month. The analysts who conducted the risk assessment were from the Special Reconnaissance Branch in the Directorate for Intelligence Production and from the Directorate for Collection.<sup>68</sup>

Like their counterparts at COMNAVFORJAPAN, Agency analysts assessed the mission's risk as low, but they made a fatal error. In their deliberations, they focused on *airborne* interceptions of U.S. flights by North Korean fighters, and assumed that North Korean boats would only intercept South Korean vessels. The former was occurring with regular, but declining frequency, and the latter incidents had increased dramatically in the last two years. Since North Korean air and naval assets had not previously intercepted U.S. naval

missions, nowhere in DIA's risk assessment of the *Pueblo* mission did this possibility come up. Moreover, since similar missions against the Soviet Union and China took place with minimal incidents, DIA's evaluators assumed the same would be true in a mission against North Korea. They forwarded the CINCPAC request and their own risk assessment to the Joint Reconnaissance Center, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff approved the operation on December 29.<sup>69</sup>

Moreover, DIA's risk assessment process was not built to account for "brushfire" crises like the one that occurred three weeks later. On January 21, North Korean commandos stormed the "Blue House" in Seoul attempting to assassinate President Park Chung-hee. This incident raised tensions to their highest point since the Korean War. DIA began reporting on the incident the next day, but there is no evidence that anything was done in the Agency to reassess the risk of intelligence missions off the coast of North Korea. Indeed, a whole series of indications of increased North Korean belligerence in January was generally ignored insofar as strategic intelligence missions around North Korea were concerned, both at CINCPAC and DIA.<sup>70</sup>

Around noon on January 23, a North Korean sub chaser arrived near the *Pueblo* and ordered the vessel to heave to. The slow, lightly-armed U.S. ship attempted to escape, but was run down by the sub chaser and three torpedo boats, which began firing on the *Pueblo*. One sailor was killed and four others wounded. The *Pueblo*'s Commander, Lloyd "Pete" Bucher, gave the order to destroy the sensitive SIGINT equipment on board too late, and it fell into North Korean hands when the ship was forced to make port at Wonsan, North Korea.<sup>71</sup> The crew was imprisoned and tortured for a year before the North Koreans released them, and sensitive SIGINT equipment fell into North Korean hands.

After the *Pueblo* was captured, DIA was once again lashed by criticism for its performance. A subsequent congressional investigation accused DIA of rubber-stamping its risk assessments. Carroll's performance before the special subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee investigating the *Pueblo* incident did nothing to help matters:

General Carroll was queried at length concerning the specific and detailed criteria used in risk evaluation which include five specific anticipated reaction criteria and five anticipated sensitivity criteria. General Carroll stated categorically that each of these criteria were considered in the risk evaluation process by his Agency. However, he conceded that he could produce no written evidence or supporting document indicating that these criteria had been reviewed in the case of the *Pueblo* mission.

When Carroll was asked why DIA took no action on a late December message from the National Security Agency warning that the minimal risk assessment might be too low, the obviously exhausted Director replied, "I think one would have to take into consideration when it occurred. As to why—the fact that it transpired at night over a holiday is about all I can think of." The final verdict of the subcommittee on this issue was unsparing. "The handling of the NSA warning message by ... the Office of the Defense Intelligence Agency," it concluded, "is hardly reassuring. At best, it suggests an unfortunate coincidence of omission; at worst, it suggests the highest order of incompetence."<sup>72</sup>

It does not appear that DIA analysts rubber-stamped their risk assessment, but neither was their analysis particularly well-done. They conducted the assessment with as much diligence as could be expected, given the extremely limited time they had to do so. The problem was that DIA's analysts based their assessment on past behavior and did not take into account the possibility of anomalous or different Korean reactions. The notion that North Korea would use its own military vessels to stop and board a U.S. Navy ship—something that had never been done before—was never raised as a possibility.<sup>73</sup> North Korea had also targeted American soldiers across the Demilitarized Zone in 1967, but DIA analysts did not link the targeting of Americans on the ground with the potential danger to American sailors offshore. Given the historical pattern, it may be asking too much of DIA's analysts to know what was in store, but the failure to raise this as a possibility was an error in judgment that had fatal results. Moreover, there is no evidence that DIA personnel connected the dangerous Blue House raid with the prospect of increased risk to the *Pueblo*, which was at that point already in the Sea of Japan. The result of this confluence of events was one of the worst counterintelligence disasters of the Cold War.

## A “Kiss of Death”

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, DIA was confronted with huge production demands that it was unable to meet. Intelligence requirements levied on the Agency, combined with staffing shortages and a cumbersome, inefficient bureaucracy, overwhelmed the Southeast Asia analysts. In 1968, 517 linear feet of drawer space “with all types of intelligence data concerning Southeast Asia” went unprocessed. A survey conducted by IBM found that this backlog resulted from an inefficient internal system for disseminating raw intelligence to analysts and poor coordination and exchange of information between analysts. Some 60 percent of the analysts Agency-wide had a production backlog of at least one week.<sup>74</sup> Major General Grover Brown, DIA's Assistant Director for Intelligence Production, argued before Congress that the raw intelligence on Vietnam was “low grade ore,” meaning that it was of little immediate value to the Agency's analysts.<sup>75</sup> Still, it was impossible to avoid the conclusion that there were serious problems in DIA.

Much of the blame for these problems can be assigned to DIA's inefficient internal structure. In November 1966, the Directorate for Processing was reorganized along geographic (instead of functional) lines and renamed the Directorate for Intelligence Production. Within the new “Eastern Area Office,” a Southeast Asia analysis branch was set up, covering Laos, Cambodia, and North and South Vietnam. This was an important first step toward resolving delays that occurred under the functionally organized system, which dispersed the Agency's geographical expertise; but despite some operational improvements, it took another three years to work out the various planning and administrative deficiencies that still nagged the Directorate for Intelligence Production. It was only in 1968, five years after its original establishment, that the Directorate came up with an operating plan that allocated resources against its requirements, and that plan was found to be so deficient that it was rewritten and republished in 1969.<sup>76</sup>

DIA's facilities, scattered as they were around the greater Washington area, did nothing to help matters. Current Intelligence was located in several different Pentagon offices, while



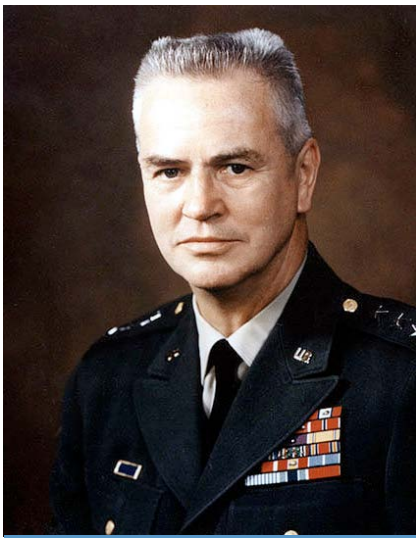
basic and strategic analysis was done at Arlington Hall. Many of their supporting offices were located elsewhere around the Capitol region, making it extraordinarily difficult to organize and manage the intelligence process. George Allen, who had since moved on to CIA, noted that “in DIA the functions were scattered about in various facilities in Northern Virginia, precluding effective integration and coordination.”<sup>77</sup> One problem aggravated another, and left the Agency open to harsh criticism by Congress, the Intelligence Community, and the Department of Defense.

Criticism of the Agency came from powerful sources. In 1968, the House Defense Appropriations Committee excoriated DIA for failing to eliminate duplication and overstaffing, poor management of its assets, and “a failure to properly analyze current intelligence information.”<sup>78</sup> “One could only conclude that the management of your intelligence assets is in a state of disarray,” complained Representative Jamie Whitten to Carroll.<sup>79</sup> During his presidential campaign in 1968, it was reported that Richard Nixon apparently even considered eliminating the Agency.<sup>80</sup> By the beginning of his administration in January 1969, DIA had lost the trust of the Joint Chiefs and the favor of the Secretary of Defense. It was viewed warily by CIA and accused of incompetence by Congress. Adding insult to injury, a flash flood inundated Arlington Hall Station on July 22, 1969, ruining parts of the first floor in both buildings, a data processing computer, and uncounted classified documents. The database was off-line for nine days, the Agency printing plant, for a week.<sup>81</sup>

In July, the same month that Arlington Hall flooded, Joseph Carroll stepped down as DIA Director. Carroll had been in the position for almost eight years by that point, and for all of his work setting up the Agency, he had also overseen its failures in Vietnam and during the *Pueblo* fiasco. In Europe, his Agency—indeed, the entire IC—had failed to provide adequate warning of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, and DIA’s organizational difficulties

were legend in Congress. With McNamara and his successor Clifford gone, Carroll had few patrons in the Department of Defense by 1969. His days as DIA Director may have been numbered ever since Nixon named Melvin Laird Secretary of Defense the previous January. When Laird was a Congressman, he served on the Defense Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee, which DIA had run afoul of in 1968. He removed Carroll, who was apparently experiencing health problems anyway, after the two clashed over issues related to Soviet anti-ballistic missile developments.<sup>82</sup>

Laird did not name Carroll’s successor until September, when he made U.S. Army Lieutenant General Donald Bennett, the commanding officer of VII Corps in West Germany, DIA’s new Director. Before reporting for his assignment, Bennett’s superiors in Germany warned him about the position. The Deputy Commander in Chief of U.S. Army, Europe (USAREUR) went so far as to tell Bennett that “it is the kiss of death to go to DIA.” VII Corps’ commander, who had no experience running



DIA Historical Collection

LTG Donald Bennett became DIA Director in September 1969.

an intelligence agency, was baffled by his selection and could not have been happy with the state of Agency leadership when he arrived. According to Bennett, Deputy Director Vice Admiral Vernon Lowrance had been out of the office for months because of health-related problems. The Agency's Chief of Staff, Major General Robert Glass, retired, but was not replaced because of Carroll's and Lowrance's absence. Rear Admiral Donald Showers, DIA's Assistant Chief of Staff for Plans and Programs, was forced to become de facto Acting Director while simultaneously running Plans and Programs, an enormously difficult task made even more complicated by the demands of the war in Vietnam. "As far as I was concerned," Bennett commented later, "this showed that very few people really cared whether DIA functioned or not."<sup>83</sup>

Like Carroll, Bennett had little practical experience as an intelligence officer. Unlike Carroll, however, Bennett was a fighting man, a man of action with a long and distinguished record of martial achievement, and he was a long-time consumer of military intelligence. This background would serve him well as DIA Director. Born in Lakeside, Ohio, in 1915, Bennett graduated from the U.S. Military Academy and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in June 1940. During World War II, Bennett fought in North Africa, landed on Omaha Beach on D-Day (one of 20 survivors in his landing craft of 65 men), and saw action in all of the major operations in the European Theater until the end of the war.<sup>84</sup> During the Korean War, he served with the Headquarters, Far East Command. After Korea, he occupied various positions in U.S. Army Europe, but returned to Korea in 1962, where he commanded an artillery corps. In 1968, he became Commanding General of VII Corps, USAREUR, where he was charged with preparing for war against Soviet and Warsaw Pact forces, and where he remained until Laird summoned him to Washington to serve as DIA Director.<sup>85</sup>

But Bennett found his Agency marginalized in key strategic decisions regarding the war in Southeast Asia. In March 1969, Nixon approved plans to use B-52s to secretly attack NLF and North Vietnamese targets in eastern Cambodia, an operation code-named MENU. Creighton Abrams' staff in MACV nominated the MENU targets to the JCS, who submitted them to Laird, National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger, and Nixon. All of their message traffic on MENU passed through back channels, and many of the bomb damage assessments were done in theater. While DIA provided some targeting and photo interpretation support during the campaign, its input was limited.<sup>86</sup>

In the first half of 1970, South Vietnamese and U.S. forces launched a series of incursions into Cambodia in an effort to destroy the political and military headquarters of the Communist effort in South Vietnam (COSVN—Central Office for South Vietnam, believed to be located in Cambodia at the time). According to Bennett, DIA was not consulted when military planners formulated the plans to expand the war. Indeed, Agency personnel did not even know the initial incursions were taking place until after they began. Virtually all of the direct intelligence support to the nearly 30,000 South Vietnamese troops and 20,000 American soldiers involved came from MACV. The operations caused a massive domestic uproar and failed to locate COSVN, but netted more than 9,000 tons of military equipment and 7,000 tons of food.<sup>87</sup>

The thrust into Cambodia did have a substantial impact on intelligence debates over Southeast Asia. Within a month, U.S. and South Vietnamese troops captured more than 1 million pages of documents and 32 cases of cryptographic equipment. The documents provided enough evidence for DIA and CIA to settle any lingering questions about OB questions and to resolve the dispute with MACV in their favor. According to General Bruce Palmer, who reviewed the IC's overall performance in Vietnam in the years after the war, the captured records indicated that "the generally higher numbers held by CIA were more nearly correct than MACV's strength estimates."<sup>88</sup> This pyrrhic victory, however, had come too late to salvage DIA's reputation, which absorbed yet another blow when it was revealed, despite its claims to the contrary, that most of the North Vietnamese supplies moving south were coming through the Cambodian port of Sihanoukville, not down the Ho Chi Minh Trail. DIA and much of the IC were lambasted for "a major intelligence failure which resulted from deficiencies in both intelligence collection and analysis," as the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board (PFIAB) put it. It was another setback for an Agency already overwhelmed by the war's demands.<sup>89</sup>

## Raid on Son Tay: A Successful Failure

For several years prior to 1970, Bennett's Agency was responsible for locating American prisoners of war and missing in action (POWs/MIA). Especially after 1966, when it became clear to the Johnson Administration that Hanoi was not about to provide any information about the number and condition of American POWs, the intelligence effort to fill the gap became increasingly urgent. In August 1967, DIA set up an Interagency Prisoner of War Intelligence Committee (IPWIC), bringing together representatives from the Services, CIA, the State Department, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and other organizations. Its chairman was John Berbrich, who would spend most of his career with the Agency and ultimately become the Deputy Director for Intelligence Production. Through the IPWIC, DIA gradually took responsibility for nearly all aspects of POW/MIA issues in Southeast Asia. CIA and NSA gave the issue a high collection priority, and passed any information they collected to DIA. The entire program was code-named BRIGHT LIGHT.<sup>90</sup>

DIA first learned of Son Tay's existence in September 1967, and spent the next few years keeping track of the prison camp as part of its BRIGHT LIGHT duties. When Nixon assumed office, he began pressuring Hanoi to begin releasing American POWs, but met with virtually no success. The president then began actively considering more direct action, and Son Tay appeared to be a good candidate. Aerial photography taken June 6, 1970, revealed that the camp was active, and DIA analysts estimated that as many as 61 Americans were held there (in fact, it never held more than 55). That June, the JCS proposed a rescue operation to the president, who enthusiastically agreed. Immediately, a planning group (code-named POLAR CIRCLE) convened by Brigadier General Donald Blackburn, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff's Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency and Special Activities (SACSA), began preparing operational requirements. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Thomas Moorer, ultimately had authority over the mission, and he, Blackburn, and Bennett were at the center of every major decision made about the raid.<sup>91</sup>





DIA Historical Collection

Maj Gen Richard Stewart managed the analytical effort during the planning for the Son Tay raid.

Over the next five months, Bennett and his Deputy Director for Intelligence, Air Force Major General Richard Stewart, who took over when Grover Brown retired in 1970, coordinated an interservice, interagency intelligence effort. Tasked through DIA, SR-71 reconnaissance aircraft, low-altitude “Buffalo Hunter” reconnaissance drones, and U.S. Air Force RF-4C aircraft appeared with increasing frequency in the skies over Son Tay. Stewart’s analysts poured over hundreds of reconnaissance photographs, human intelligence (HUMINT) reports, SIGINT intercepts, and other data, forwarding finished intelligence to Blackburn’s POLAR CIRCLE planning group. In this stage of the operation, code-named IVORY COAST, the DIA analysts mapped air defense sites on the infiltration and exfiltration routes, developed information on the number of ground troops around Son Tay, and determined the exact layout of the camp and locations of prisoner barracks and guard towers. This massive intelligence effort allowed

Blackburn’s group and the raid’s overall commander, U.S. Air Force Brigadier General Leroy Manor, to develop a plan designed to distract North Vietnamese forces, assault the compound, locate the prisoners, and exfiltrate as quickly as possible. Special Forces operators who would conduct the raid also trained using the intelligence provided by DIA personnel.<sup>92</sup>

The original raid was scheduled for October, but Kissinger ordered it moved to November 21 so that the president would have enough time to review and approve the plan. But in the early evening of November 18, three days before the raid was to take place, Bennett dropped a bombshell on Moorer and Blackburn: Son Tay was probably empty. Richard Stewart’s analysts had noticed that since July, activity at the camp seemed to be declining, but they believed that the prisoners might still be there. Photography taken through early November did not reveal any significant changes. But earlier that day, they had received a tip from a HUMINT source in Hanoi that the prisoners had been moved to a different camp. Even so, communications intelligence and reconnaissance photos seemed to indicate that someone was still in the camp.<sup>93</sup>

Stewart’s analysts sifted the available intelligence, but could not prove either case conclusively. Bennett also hastily ordered several unscheduled reconnaissance flights, but poor weather and mechanical problems prevented them from developing new information. According to historian Benjamin Schemmer, the DIA Director, in a meeting with Moorer and Blackburn, held up an equal stack of intelligence documents in each hand and told the generals, “I’ve got this much that says they’ve been moved, and this much that says they’re still there.” Bennett, the veteran combat commander, the man of action, then recommended they commence with the mission. Blackburn and Moorer agreed, and counseled Secretary of Defense Laird to go forward. After hearing from Laird, Nixon, who was eager for a public



This photo of Son Tay prison camp was taken by a “Buffalo Hunter” drone prior to the mission.

relations victory and determined to send a statement to Hanoi, needed no more urging, and ordered the operation.<sup>94</sup>

Just before 11 p.m. on November 20, 1970, 56 members of the U.S. Army Special Forces climbed aboard their HH-3 “Jolly Green Giant” and HH-53B “Super Jolly Green Giant” helicopters at Udorn Royal Thailand Air Base in northern Thailand and began the final phase of the mission, now code-named Operation KINGPIN. The helicopters descended on Son Tay early in the morning on November 21, under the cover of diversionary attacks by Air Force and Navy fighters over Hanoi and Haiphong. Immediately upon landing, they engaged in a sharp firefight with prison guards as they swept through the compound searching for the POWs who were in fact no longer there. The Special Forces operators lifted off from Son Tay less than 30 minutes later without recovering a single prisoner, but they had also suffered no casualties and achieved overwhelming surprise.

The raid at Son Tay had failed to net any American POWs. Four months earlier, on July 14, 1970, the North Vietnamese transferred the last of the American POWs to Dan Hoi, 10 miles east. The



apparent activity in the camp after the prisoners' transfer was later ascribed to the presence of local farmers. The failure to notice that the raid's primary objectives were not there was due to a combination of poor weather, technological failure, and bad luck. Heavy cloud cover in monsoon season helped prevent effective reconnaissance by SR-71 flights and satellite missions. Of the eight low-level drone missions flown between August and October, six either crashed or were shot down, and two failed to effectively photograph the camp. Bennett's emergency missions fared no better.<sup>95</sup>

Nevertheless, there was a procedural success in this operational failure. Bennett's Agency conducted a coordinated, disciplined intelligence collection and analysis program in support of a joint military operation of enormous complexity and secrecy. Planning for the raid occurred during a time in which DIA's resources were stretched to the breaking point, but the Agency was nevertheless able to pull together national- and theater-level resources, and then provide Special Forces planners with intelligence that allowed them to achieve complete tactical surprise. The Agency was also able to assist the POLAR CIRCLE planners in a complex operation involving more than 100 combat and transport aircraft from three different Services. "I can unequivocally state," Manor wrote in his report on the raid, "that other than the absence of prisoners at the objective, there were no major surprises in the operation. Service and national intelligence agencies' assessments of enemy capabilities and reaction were the basis for the concept of operations and, considering the lack of precedent for this type of operation, were highly accurate."<sup>96</sup> The Son Tay raid had shown a glimpse of what DIA was capable of, but in 1970, the Agency still bore the burden of its past mistakes.

## An American in Paris

Meanwhile, a series of secret peace talks between Kissinger and North Vietnamese representative Le Duc Tho had been taking place in Paris since 1969. The talks were facilitated by the work of the U.S. defense attaché to France, Major General Vernon Walters. Walters, who had previously conducted distinguished tours as the defense attaché to Italy and Brazil, was a masterful diplomat and linguist. Prior to his appointment in Paris, he spent a month in Vietnam and was a fierce supporter of the U.S. effort there. When Kissinger ordered Walters to assist him with his secret meetings, Walters was reluctant. "There were few people who felt as strongly against the North Vietnamese as I did and yet I had been chosen to deal with them," he recalled in his memoirs. "As a soldier I took my orders and prepared for this task which I had not sought."<sup>97</sup> The task was so secret that neither Bennett nor Laird knew about it.

Walters arranged to secretly bring Kissinger into France at least 15 times. The National Security Advisor normally arrived aboard Air Force One, and Walters arranged for him to enter the country without going through customs and attracting attention. Occasionally, Kissinger would fly into Germany, and Walters would have him flown into France from there; at one point, when no other aircraft were available, Walters even convinced French President Georges Pompidou to lend his presidential plane to the effort. Kissinger and his two assistants stayed in Walters' personal apartment in Neuilly, the attaché giving up his bedroom so that the



DIA Historical Collection

MG Vernon Walters as defense attaché in Paris.

National Security Advisor could sleep comfortably. Walters, who spoke seven languages, also served as Kissinger's interpreter during the negotiations, which were conducted in French.

"These were truly tedious and frustrating talks," Walters later recalled in his memoirs. For two years, the two sides remained stalemated. When Kissinger was not in Paris, Walters was busy preparing for his next visit or carrying messages to the North Vietnamese. When Kissinger was in Paris, Walters chauffeured the National Security Advisor around the city, translated, and slept on the couch in the sitting room. At the same time, Walters was also performing his defense attaché duties and serving as a conduit between Kissinger and the Chinese delegation to France, an effort that would ultimately lead to Nixon's famous opening to China. It was difficult, stressful work. "Sometimes I felt like a juggler with three balls in the air, the attaché to France ball, the Chinese ball, and the North Vietnamese ball," Walters wrote.<sup>98</sup>

Kissinger, who could be abrasive with Walters on these trips, also knew the demanding nature of the attaché's assignment, and could not resist tweaking Walters' very Roman nose about it. In October 1970, he wrote to Walters to thank him for his efforts:

I want sincerely to reaffirm our deep appreciation for what you are doing for the country in your many efforts. And we know that your special position does entail sudden and extensive inroads into your personal and professional life.

If I said that you carried out your various roles without complaint you would consider me either hypocritical or deaf. However, I know that you really don't mean it and beneath the gruff exterior beats a heart that is gruff.<sup>99</sup>

Meanwhile, the war rumbled on, and pressure on both sides to come to an agreement ebbed and flowed. Nixon had been slowly but steadily withdrawing U.S. forces since 1969. For much of the period since then, Hanoi focused its effort on rebuilding its supply corridor in Laos and reestablishing secret bases in Cambodia. This relative lull in combat allowed the South Vietnamese government to improve its military position with limited local offensives and make progress in pacifying the countryside.<sup>100</sup> In the Pomponio Plaza building in the Washington suburb of Rosslyn, Virginia, DIA's estimators concurred with an April 1971 National Intelligence Estimate that characterized South Vietnam's prospects for the rest of the year as "reasonably good."<sup>101</sup> For most of 1971, the Agency's analysts stuck to this position, and Nixon could continue drawing down U.S. troops. By March 1972, 95,000 U.S. Service personnel (only 6,000 of whom were actual combat troops) remained in South Vietnam, down from a high of 536,000 at the beginning of 1969.<sup>102</sup>

But at the same time, Bennett's analysts were warning that North Vietnam had grown into an even more dangerous adversary. As U.S. forces drew down, Bennett informed the Joint

Staff that, “the Communists are developing the capability to conduct major attacks that could exceed any activity since the general offensives in 1968.”<sup>103</sup> Those attacks were not long in coming. At the end of March, under a dense fog and drizzling rain, Hanoi launched what came to be known in the West as the Easter Offensive against South Vietnam. ARVN troops fell back in a panicked retreat and South Vietnam’s collapse seemed imminent.

The U.S. had too few troops on the ground to stop the communist offensive, so planners instead turned to tactical and strategic air power, initiating Operation LINEBACKER, the first sustained bombing of Vietnam since ROLLING THUNDER ended in 1968. Once again, tactical bombers and B-52s filled the skies over North and South Vietnam.<sup>104</sup> DIA’s analysts in the Pentagon and Arlington Hall helped draft target lists for the B-52 strikes in North Vietnam, and Richard Stewart forwarded them to the Joint Chiefs of Staff for specific target selection. Agency personnel also carried out bomb damage assessments, and reported on the overall effects of the campaign. Overall, they reported that the bomber offensive was inflicting huge damage on North Vietnam and that the logistics system into the South was under major strain.

In December, Operation LINEBACKER II began as talks between Kissinger and Le Duc Tho languished. LINEBACKER II was the heaviest air offensive of the war, and by that point, both countries were under enormous strain to cease hostilities. In early January 1973, Hanoi indicated a willingness to restart negotiations. On January 15, the White House halted all military operations against North Vietnam, and on January 27, 1973, signed peace accords in Paris.<sup>105</sup>

But Walters was not in Paris to see his work with Kissinger and the North Vietnamese come to fruition. In May 1972, Nixon awarded him for his efforts, promoting the attaché to Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, and he learned of the Paris Peace Accords from behind his desk in Langley, Virginia.<sup>106</sup> His career would last nearly two more decades, and he would bear witness to many of the pivotal events at the end of the Cold War, but his job as an attaché had come to an end.

## A New Role

The U.S. war in Southeast Asia was over, but U.S. involvement there was not. A new Defense Attaché Office (DAO) in Saigon replaced MACV as the chief U.S. military body in South Vietnam. The previous November, the Secretary of Defense had ordered its establishment in order to take over the residual military functions left by MACV. Limited by the peace accords to 50 military personnel, the DAO supplemented this small number with 1,200 civilian employees, most of whom were contractors. U.S. Army Major General John Murray headed the office. It made its home in the sprawling former MACV headquarters, nicknamed “Pentagon East,” at Tan Son Nhut Air Base outside Saigon, and it had small field offices scattered throughout South Vietnam. Murray retired in August 1974, and Major General Homer Smith took his place as defense attaché that month.<sup>107</sup>

The defense attaché’s primary concern in Saigon was ensuring the smooth delivery of military aid and administering the military assistance program to the South Vietnamese. Both Murray





DIA Historical Collection

The U.S. Defense Attaché Office compound at Tan Son Nhut Air Base was the largest U.S. military installation in South Vietnam after the cease fire.

and Smith were career logisticians, and focused much of their effort on this task. To ease the attaché's representational duties, DIA sent a small team under the command of a U.S. Army colonel to the U.S. Embassy. Their task was to perform the attaché's daily representational functions. But the DAO was also responsible for all American military intelligence activities in South Vietnam. Its Intelligence Branch, led by U.S. Army Colonel William LeGro, was the primary U.S. military intelligence element for the collection, evaluation, and dissemination of information on North Vietnamese activities in South Vietnam. LeGro's branch was responsible for overt intelligence collection and analysis on North and South Vietnamese order of battle, as well as enemy intentions and capabilities. The Intelligence Branch also coordinated all of the reconnaissance and surveillance activities in South Vietnam and the intelligence sharing arrangements with elements of the South Vietnamese Joint General Staff.<sup>108</sup> Legro reported directly to the defense attaché and the U.S. Ambassador.<sup>109</sup>

For most of 1973, 10 military and 97 civilian employees made up the DAO's Intelligence Branch. That number was reduced in 1974 to three military and 87 DoD civilians. Most of the

civilians in the Intelligence Branch were drawn from the ranks of DIA analysts who relocated to South Vietnam in 1973. These analysts worked mostly at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, but at least two were posted to each of the U.S. Consul-General compounds in Da Nang, Nha Trang, Bien Hoa, and Can Tho. They gathered friendly and enemy order of battle, provided early warning of cease-fire violations, and attempted to resolve cases of American soldiers missing in action. A DIA analyst who was hand-picked by LeGro to set up the DAO's Current Intelligence Office presented the daily morning "walk-through" intelligence briefings to Murray and Smith and recruited other analysts from within DIA to Saigon. Analysts also sometimes took dangerous trips into Vietnam's hinterlands to gain first-hand assessments of North Vietnamese cease-fire violations and the state of Saigon's own military forces.<sup>110</sup> Years of battling with MACV over issues such as enemy order of battle had tempered DIA's analysts, and it showed. Legro recalled years later that "they were trained and experienced analysts and knew an awful lot about Vietnam. A few of them had a great, really strong handle on enemy order of battle. So I inherited from DIA a group of people that I think were among the very best in the entire federal service as far as analysts on Vietnam."<sup>111</sup>

Life in the DAO reflected the changed nature of U.S. involvement in a war that was no longer its own, but in which it still played a major role. Stuart Herrington, who served under both MACV and the DAO, recalled:

The familiar display of the flags of the nations that had assisted South Vietnam during the war remained in the foyer, but the starched military policeman who manned the reception desk was missing. In his place was an attractive Vietnamese woman in an emerald green *ao dai*. In the building's labyrinth complex of corridors, the khaki-clad legions of staff officers had been replaced by hundreds of American and Vietnamese civilians. Hosts of graceful Vietnamese secretaries glided from office to office as they moved the paperwork generated by all large headquarters. The DAO looked like a bachelor's paradise.<sup>112</sup>

Operationally, the DAO coordinated with DIA and CINCPAC, and DIA assumed responsibility for the management and administrative duties required to maintain the intelligence staff in Saigon. The Agency could also levy collection requirements on the Intelligence Branch, a right that it shared alongside CINCPAC and the U.S. Embassy. Members of the DAO Intelligence Branch briefed Murray and Smith every day, but another key recipient of its work was the U.S. Support Activities Group/7th Air Force (USSAG), located at Nakhon Phanom in Thailand.<sup>113</sup> In Washington, most of DIA's estimates in this period were based on the assessments made in LeGro's Intelligence Branch in Saigon.<sup>114</sup>

These assessments had enormous importance beyond the battlefield. The main factor supporting Saigon's ability to defeat the North Vietnamese was military aid provided by the United States. In 1973, the U.S. sent \$3.2 billion of military aid to the Government of South Vietnam, but Congressional support for the program was weak. In 1974, that number plummeted to \$1.1 billion. That same year, Congress cut funding for fiscal year 1975 to \$700 million. The intelligence estimates of North Vietnamese capabilities and intentions framed an increasingly rancorous political debate over the level of aid that Washington would provide. As the pressure on South Vietnam increased, so too did importance of the intelligence estimates



from a policy perspective. More alarmist estimates tended to bolster the Ford Administration's case to provide increased aid, while sanguine estimates undercut it. Decisionmakers on either side of the debate could point to either estimate to make their respective cases.<sup>115</sup>

In 1973 and 1974, fighting between the North and South continued. Both sides spent this period in what was essentially a strategic clinch. While the Intelligence Community generally agreed that this relative stalemate would last through 1974, DIA and the DAO were somewhat more pessimistic. The May 1974 National Intelligence Estimate illustrated the split between agencies by noting that a full-scale invasion of South Vietnam during the first six months of 1975 was unlikely. DIA analysts dissented, however, characterizing the conclusions on prospects for 1975 as "unduly optimistic" and warning that the South was in danger "of a major North Vietnamese offensive." The point became more salient throughout 1974, as intelligence analysts in the DAO sent back a steady stream of reporting on Hanoi's successful efforts to strengthen its military forces while whittling down Saigon's.<sup>116</sup> By November, DIA reporting echoed its personnel in Saigon, worrying that even a limited North Vietnamese offensive would degrade the South's capabilities to the point that it could no longer fight effectively.<sup>117</sup> In December, DIA analysts warned the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff that Hanoi had tipped the military balance in its favor, and that "increased NVA [North Vietnamese Army] combat activity" was imminent.<sup>118</sup> The U.S. Embassy, the Defense Attaché Office, and the CIA Station Chief in Saigon agreed.

Ford continued to lobby a skeptical Congress for millions of dollars in military aid, and DIA's analysis enmeshed the Agency in the middle of the aid debate. An appraisal published on January 10 by Charles Desaulniers, DIA's most senior Southeast Asia analyst, noted that while an all-out offensive was unlikely in the next six months, "The South's armed forces will finish fiscal year 1975 in a greatly weakened condition at the \$700 million US military aid level. ... Under current funding and at existing consumption rates, the government's stockpiles of ammunition and other critical combat supplies will be depleted to a near 30-day intensive combat reserve no later than July 1975."<sup>119</sup> At the end of the month, Ford ordered then-DIA Director Lieutenant General Daniel Graham to Capitol Hill to describe the dire military situation facing South Vietnam. "Looking downstream," Graham told the assembled representatives, "we think that the South Vietnamese are in for some very serious difficulties. This is due partly to logistics drawdown and partly to the impact of current events on their will to resist."<sup>120</sup> None of this had any impact, however. In early February, Congress rejected Ford's request for \$1.3 billion.

The final North Vietnamese offensive against the South began in March 1975, and Hanoi's troops quickly overran South Vietnamese forces in the Central Highlands and near the demilitarized zone. The rate of the South Vietnamese collapse was stunning, even to the North Vietnamese, who had to continually revamp their plans to keep up with the South Vietnamese armed forces' dissolution. With no American troops on the ground, its military stocks vanishing, its government rife with corruption, and parts of its army paralyzed by desertion, South Vietnam imploded. By the end of March, nearly 40 percent of the country was in Hanoi's hands. "At this rate," Desaulniers and his colleagues in DIA noted, "the military situation has worsened faster than even the most pessimistic observer predicted a week ago."<sup>121</sup> In Saigon,

defense attaché General Smith predicted that enemy forces would make for the city as early as possible. They arrived on the outskirts of Saigon a month later.

## Operation BABYLIFT and the Tragedy of Flight 68-218

As South Vietnam crumbled in March and April 1975 and North Vietnamese forces closed in on Saigon, the plight of that city's war orphans surged to the forefront of American consciousness. For years, private foundations in the U.S. had coordinated the adoption of Vietnamese orphans by American families, but the imminent collapse of the South Vietnamese government prompted prospective U.S. parents and private agencies to press for a more expeditious evacuation of orphans from the country. After South Vietnam formally requested that the U.S. immediately move 2,000 orphans from Saigon to the United States or friendly countries, President Ford ordered their evacuation.<sup>122</sup>

At Tan Son Nhut, Homer Smith moved extraordinarily fast, and what would be dubbed Operation BABYLIFT began April 4. The plane used in the first mission was a C-5A/GALAXY transport, number 68-218, that was scheduled to deliver 17 105mm howitzers to the South Vietnamese army that same day. Ground crews off-loaded the weapons and loaded some 250 orphans (authoritative estimates differ—an accurate accounting of orphans and Americans is difficult because some people who were on the flight were not on the passenger manifest, while others who were not on the flight were on the manifest). To supervise them, and to evacuate non-essential U.S. citizens under the cover of the operation, Smith ordered his division chiefs to identify staff in the DAO who could tend to the children during the flight.<sup>123</sup> Among these evacuees were five female employees of DIA. At 4:15 p.m. Saigon time, the last of the approximately 300 passengers were loaded on-board and the transport took off.<sup>124</sup>

Twelve minutes later, tragedy struck. At 23,000 feet and 10 miles off the Vietnamese coast, the locks on the rear cargo door of the C-5 failed, and the aircraft suffered a rapid decompression. Debris filled the cabin. The aft pressure door, part of the loading ramp, and the cargo door all blew off and severed the pitch, trim, elevator, and rudder cables, rendering the aircraft unflyable. Despite the pilots' heroic efforts to make an emergency landing at Tan Son Nhut, the C-5, flying at 269 knots (310 mph), crashed in a marsh two miles short of the runway. It skidded for 1,000 feet, became airborne again, flying for 2,700 feet, then landed and broke up. The impact crushed the cargo deck, where almost all of the orphans were kept.<sup>125</sup>

Smoke from the crash was visible from the air base. As word filtered into the DAO compound, rescue parties were hastily organized. One person manned the Intelligence Branch while everyone else moved to the air terminal on base or the crash site to assist the rescue effort. The plane was impossible to reach by car, so helicopters ferried out rescue personnel and brought back bodies. Robert Edison, an analyst in the Intelligence Branch, recalled:

I worked at the airport taking the bodies off the choppers and carrying them over to ambulances to take to the morgue or the hospital or whatever. Some of the babies were alive. What got to me was the smell. The vomit, the feces, and perhaps above all the smell of fear and death in those so young. A baby can only cry, but these infants were so terrorized that they couldn't even cry. It was horrible and gruesome.<sup>126</sup>

Recovering the remains took several days.<sup>127</sup> In total, 138 people died in the crash, including 78 children and 35 DAO personnel. Five DIA employees, Celeste Brown, Vivienne Clark, Dorothy Curtiss, Joan Pray, and Doris Watkins, were killed in the crash. It was, as Homer Smith recalled years later, “a shattering, shattering experience,” and would stand as the single largest loss of life in the Agency’s history until the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.<sup>128</sup>

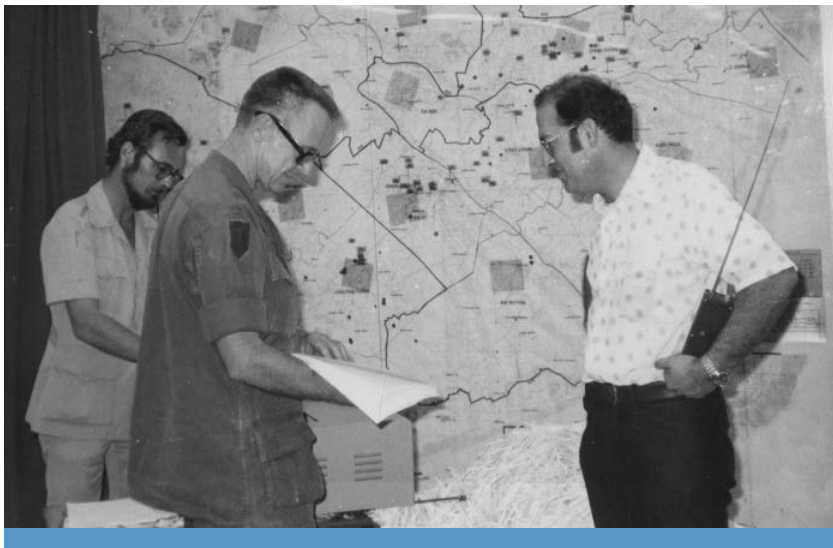
## Exodus

The next day, the atmosphere in the DAO was suffused with grief, but the war made no allowances for mourning. A last attempt by President Ford to secure military support from Congress for the government of South Vietnam failed, and North Vietnamese troops advanced steadily on Saigon throughout April. By the end of the month, artillery shells and rockets were falling inside the city and at Tan Son Nhut.

U.S. evacuation planning had languished because U.S. Ambassador Graham Martin did not want to give the South Vietnamese the impression that the U.S. commitment was anything but full and therefore refused to countenance evacuation. Smith, however, could see the writing on the wall. In March, against Martin’s wishes, he had begun laying plans to evacuate U.S. personnel and their dependents. By April, the North Vietnamese forces pouring into the South and advancing on Saigon accelerated his planning. He set up a Vietnamese evacuee processing center on April 1 and ordered non-essential U.S. personnel to Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines. But as the month progressed and conditions worsened, the DAO staff, working with planners from U.S. Navy Task Force 76 in the South China Sea, developed even more elaborate contingency plans to evacuate the remaining U.S. citizens and their Vietnamese families, South Vietnamese

personnel who worked with the Americans, and other “high risk” Vietnamese, such as the families of Vietnamese military and government officials.<sup>129</sup> “I’m not suggesting that [the fall of South Vietnam] may happen,” Smith diplomatically told the Saigon press corps, “but hell, anybody who’s got any smarts at all can look at the situation and figure out what kind of risk there is involved.”<sup>130</sup>

This early work proved to be extraordinarily important later in the month. On April 20, a full-scale U.S. evacuation began after North Vietnamese troops



Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University

COL William Legro (center), chief of the DAO Intelligence Branch, shreds classified documents with two members of the 500th Military Intelligence Group on April 29, one day before the final evacuation of the DAO.





A U.S. Marine stands watch as two Navy helicopters land in the USDAO compound, April 30, 1975.

DIA Historical Collection

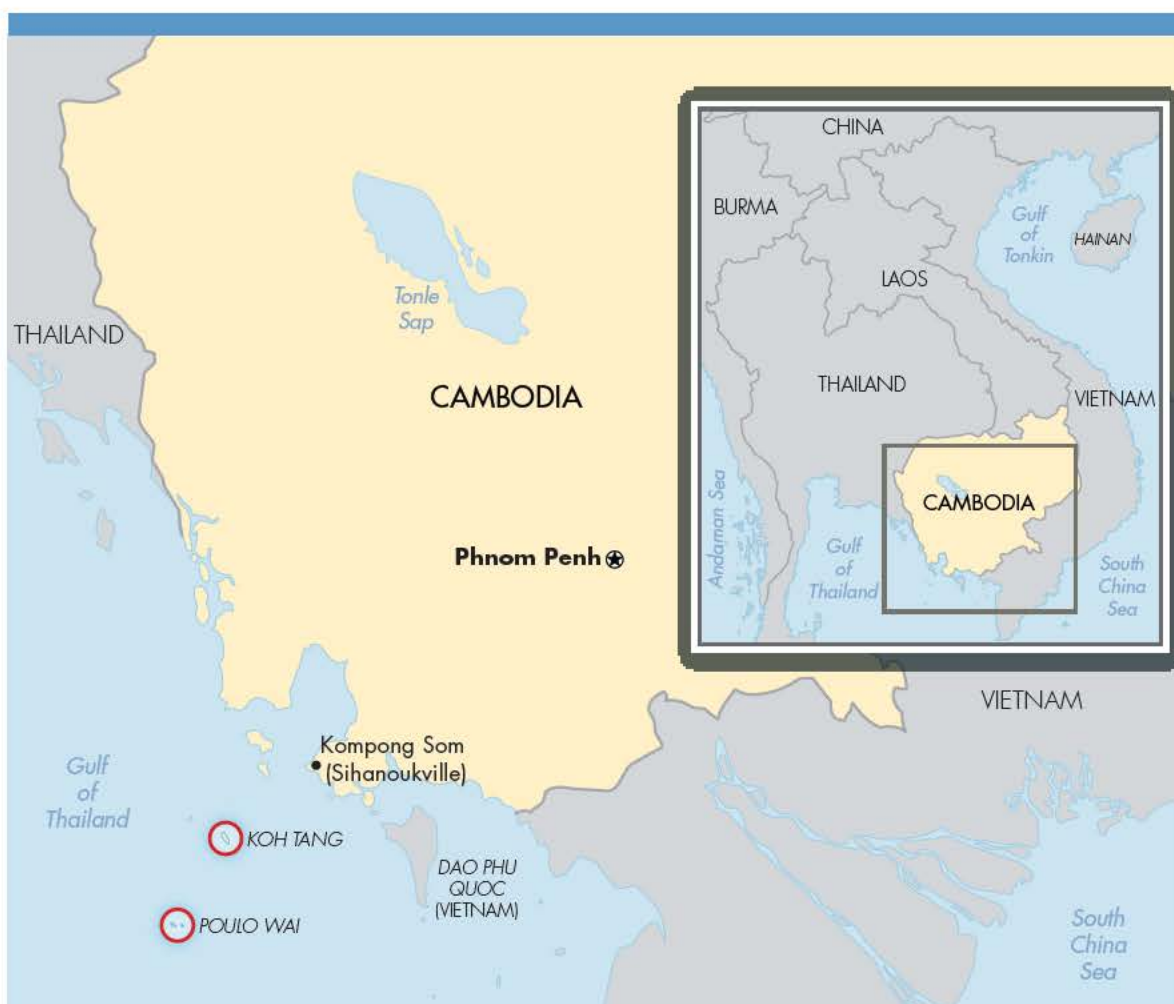
arrived outside Saigon. A near panic engulfed the city as tens of thousands of Vietnamese attempted to leave the country, swarming the gates at Tan Son Nhut and the U.S. Embassy. With Smith's support, the DAO staff cajoled, bribed, begged, and hoodwinked to evacuate as many civilians via airlift as they could. The DAO Intelligence Branch also shut down on the 20th, and its staff managed to ship their intelligence files to USSAG in Thailand. Intelligence Branch personnel either evacuated or stayed behind to assist evacuation operations.<sup>131</sup>

North Vietnamese troops broke into the city between April 26 and 28, and began putting Tan Son Nhut and the DAO, by then code-named ALAMO, under rocket fire on the 29th. That day, the final evacuation of all U.S. personnel and their Vietnamese dependents, code-named Operation FREQUENT WIND, began. Rocket damage to the runways made fixed-wing evacuations impossible. U.S. Navy helicopters began streaming in and out of the DAO compound and the U.S. Embassy beginning at approximately 10 a.m., airlifting the last remaining Americans and several thousand Vietnamese out of the city to waiting Navy ships in the South China Sea. In the entire month of April, Smith and his DAO staff managed to evacuate some 130,000 Americans, Vietnamese, and third-country nationals, a feat for which the general was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal (First Oak Leaf Cluster) and the deep affection of generations of Vietnamese Americans. On April 30, the Government of South Vietnam formally surrendered, ending some three decades of nearly continuous war.<sup>132</sup>

## Epilogue: The *Mayaguez* Crisis

One last fight remained, however. In Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge had seized power from the government of Lon Nol on April 17. Within weeks, the tiny Khmer coastal defense forces began engaging in petty piracy, attacking Thai fishing vessels and harassing larger merchant ships in the Gulf of Thailand. On May 12, the U.S. cargo vessel SS *Mayaguez* steamed into the gulf on a regular shipping assignment.

Just after 2 p.m. (3 a.m. in Washington), a U.S.-made Khmer Rouge swift boat, captured after the fall of Lon Nol, sped from the island of Poulo Wai and intercepted the *Mayaguez*. Khmer soldiers boarded the freighter and forced it to make for Poulo Wai, but the American crew managed to transmit an SOS, which was picked up by the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta. From there, news of their capture reached DIA's National Indications Center in the Pentagon and the White House later that day.<sup>133</sup>



The *Mayaguez* Incident, May 1975.

Shortly after the information reached the Indications Center, John Hughes, DIA's Deputy Director for Collection and Surveillance, laid on a collection blitz to locate the *Mayaguez*. Hughes contacted the JCS Joint Reconnaissance Center urgently requesting photo coverage of Poulo Wai, and asked CINCPAC for continuous P-3/ORION aircraft operations, as well as RF-4C reconnaissance flights over Phnom Penh, Sihanoukville, and Poulo Wai. Hughes requested U-2 photographic coverage of Poulo Wai as well. The next day, a P-3 flight discovered the *Mayaguez* anchored off that island.<sup>134</sup> Over the next several days, Hughes' directorate continued to coordinate the collection operation between U.S. Pacific Command, NSA, Strategic Air Command, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. On May 13, after it was located, the Khmer Rouge forced the *Mayaguez's* crew to steam for the island of Koh Tang, nearly 40 miles to the northeast, 60 from the Cambodian coast. When it arrived there, its crew was off-loaded onto two fishing trawlers.

The Khmer Rouge refused to release the ship and its crew, and President Ford, eager to avoid an incident similar to the capture of the USS *Pueblo* in 1968, authorized the use of force to return the ship and crew. All indications were that the *Mayaguez's* crew was being



The *Mayaguez* off Poulo Wai. Khmer Rouge swift boats can be seen alongside the vessel.

DIA Historical Collection

held on Koh Tang. As plans for a combined Air Force and Marine assault on the island came together, DIA published an estimate of Khmer Rouge military forces on the island. The estimate held that between 150 and 200 men, backed by a variety of heavy weapons, occupied the island. That estimate, however, never made it into the hands of the Marines who would conduct the assault. For reasons unknown, it arrived at the USSAG base in U Tapao, but was never briefed to the combat forces preparing to assault Koh Tang, who expected meager resistance from 18 to 20 Cambodian irregulars with small-arms.<sup>135</sup>

When the Marines assaulted Koh Tang at first light on May 15, they met fierce resistance from a dug-in force nearly 10 times larger and with far more skill and firepower than they

expected. Helicopters delivering the assault forces were shot to pieces, and the attack stalled.

But the crew of the *Mayaguez* was no longer on Koh Tang. On the evening of the 13th, they boarded a fishing trawler and were sent to Kompong Som (formerly Sihanoukville) harbor on the mainland. U.S. reconnaissance aircraft spotted the trawler and its escort boats on the way to Kompong Som—they sank the two swift boats escorting the trawler—but assault planners in U Tapao believed the crew was still on Koh Tang, and the attack went forward. At 9:35 a.m., in the middle of the assault on Koh Tang, the Khmer Rouge released the crew, but combat operations on Koh Tang would continue for almost 11 more hours. Fifteen Airmen and Marines were killed in action. Three who were accidentally left behind became missing in action, and 50 were wounded.<sup>136</sup>

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The *Mayaguez* incident brought to a close one of the most challenging periods in the history of the Defense Intelligence Agency. Those years saw the Agency grow in both size and capability, but it also quickly ran up against severe limitations as a result of Service parochialism, internal management difficulties, and serious foreign intelligence challenges. In the early 1960s, Agency personnel had to juggle the difficulties of establishing DIA with managing, analyzing, and distributing finished intelligence to civilian and military consumers around the world. With regard to the effort in Vietnam, the Agency's slow development put it several steps behind the more robust, yet flawed intelligence effort set up by MACV.

During the war itself, DIA sat at the nexus of disagreements between CIA and military intelligence organizations, and between officials in the field and in Washington. This position placed the Agency squarely in the cross-fire when disagreements over critical issues such as bomb damage assessments and enemy order of battle emerged. Unfortunately, DIA leadership did not move

with alacrity or energy to mediate disagreements, and in the case of the order of battle dispute, its senior leadership may have even exacerbated the problem by reflexively siding with MACV. The Agency's other missteps, such as its performance in the *Pueblo* fiasco and the accumulation of an intelligence backlog that caused an uproar in Congress, only made matters worse. By 1968, influential critics openly doubted the efficacy of a DIA.

In 1969 and 1970, DIA's performance in Southeast Asia began showing small signs of improvement. This very gradual improvement reflected the Agency's evolution over the course of the war. Its analysts had by then the benefit of grappling for years with the conflict's key questions, and late in the decade, DIA received an infusion of new leadership that reenergized analytical and managerial efforts by taking advantage of intelligence opportunities as they presented themselves. But limited victories, such as its successful support of combat operations in the Son Tay raid and later, the Koh Tang assault, were obscured by larger failures in those operations that were not entirely of the Agency's making. When the war between the U.S. and North Vietnam formally concluded in 1973, DIA personnel assumed a critical new role by systematically providing intelligence assessments from within South Vietnam itself. While from the DIA point of view, their work was path breaking, it did not convince a skeptical Congress of the need for continued support to the government in Saigon. Despite these incremental improvements, in the early 1970s, neither military leadership nor policymakers were yet convinced of the Defense Intelligence Agency's necessity. The next decade would determine DIA's ultimate fate.



# Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> This history is more fully recounted in Michael B. Petersen, "Legacy of Ashes, Trial by Fire: The Origins of the Defense Intelligence Agency and the Cuban Missile Crisis Crucible," *Defense Intelligence Historical Perspectives*, 1 (October 2011).

<sup>2</sup> See Petersen, "Legacy of Ashes, Trial by Fire."

<sup>3</sup> LTG Herron N. Maples Oral History Interview, 22 June 1981, Texas A&M University Oral History Collection, 204-205. Fitch became DIA's Deputy Director in 1964.

<sup>4</sup> *On the Trail of Military Intelligence History: A Guide to the Washington, DC Area* (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command, undated), 16-17. Does this need a date?

<sup>5</sup> Defense Intelligence Agency Manpower Trends, 19 February 1982, HRSB file "Manpower." The gap between authorized and actual manpower was about 13 percent, somewhat higher than what would become the agency's standard eight to 10 percent, and can be blamed in large part over unresolved issues with the Services.

<sup>6</sup> "DEFSMAC: A Community Asset," undated, [www.nsarchive.chadwyck.com](http://www.nsarchive.chadwyck.com), accessed 11 July 2011; Richard L. Bernard, "The Defense Special Missile and Astronautics Center," undated, [www.nsa.gov](http://www.nsa.gov), accessed 11 July 2011.

<sup>7</sup> See collection of weekly strength reports in folder "Manpower," HRSB Collection; Deane Allen, Working Paper, "The Defense Intelligence Agency," 71; DoD Directive C-5105.32, "Defense Attaché System," 12 December 1964, in Allen and Shellum, ed., *At the Creation*.

<sup>8</sup> Defense Intelligence Agency Manpower Trends, 19 February 1982, HRSB file "Manpower."

<sup>9</sup> McNamara to Carroll, "The Defense Attaché System (DAS)," 20 March 1965, in Allen and Shellum, eds., *At the Creation*, 411-412; "The Defense Attachés," [www.dia.mil](http://www.dia.mil), accessed 11 July 2011.

<sup>10</sup> "The Defense Attachés," [www.dia.mil](http://www.dia.mil), accessed 11 July 2011.

<sup>11</sup> Working Paper, "Historical Review of the Growth of the Defense Intelligence Agency," Vol. I, Part I-3, "A Backward Look," p. 2 and Part IV-2-b, "History of the Directorate for Acquisition," p. 11-12. Overtime for DIA employees was ten percent higher than the federal government average.

<sup>12</sup> James S. Olson and Randy Roberts, *Where the Domino Fell: America and Vietnam, 1945-1995* 2nd Ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 64-65. On the surface, Diem appeared to be an ideal U.S. ally in South Vietnam. He was a dedicated anticommunist, Catholic, and highly educated. Even so, he was no democratic politician. Nepotism and cronyism were rampant in the Diem government. Diem's brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu, an opium addict and admirer of Adolf Hitler, was the political boss of South Vietnam and privately despised the United States. Nhu's father-in-law collaborated with the Japanese occupation forces during World War II, and eventually became South Vietnam's ambassador to the United States. Between one and two million Vietnamese died under Japanese rule, mainly because the Japanese expropriated the annual rice harvest and sent it to Japan. See Nicholas Tarling, *A Sudden Rampage: The Japanese Occupation of Southeast Asia, 1941-1945* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001), 251. On the selection of Diem to rule



South Vietnam, see Thomas L. Ahern, *CIA and the House of Ngo: Covert Action in South Vietnam, 1964-1953* (Washington, D.C.: Center for the Study of Intelligence, 2000).

<sup>13</sup> George W. Allen, *None So Blind: A Personal Account of the Intelligence Failure in Vietnam* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2001), 131. On intelligence input to policymaking decisions, see Ahern, *CIA and the House of Ngo* and Robert Hanyok, *Spartans in Darkness: American SIGINT and the Indochina War, 1945-1975* (Ft. Meade, MD: Center for Cryptologic History, 2002).

<sup>14</sup> Graham A. Cosmas, *MACV: The Joint Command in the Years of Escalation, 1962-1967* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 2006), 36-41; Kaplan, et al., *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Vol. V, 274-275*. Command over U.S. forces in Vietnam ultimately lay with Pacific Command, which delegated its authority to three subordinate organizations: MACV, Pacific Air Forces, and Pacific Fleet. MACV eventually acquired air and naval component commands, and commanded all U.S. forces in South Vietnam. See Ronald Cole, et al., *The History of the Unified Command Plan, 1946-1999* (Washington, D.C.: Joint History Office, 2003) 33-34.

<sup>15</sup> Allen, *None so Blind*, 133. John Newman, *JFK and Vietnam: Deception, Intrigue, and the Struggle for Power* (New York: Warner, 1992), 192-193. Winterbottom also uncritically accepted South Vietnamese reports about progress being made against the insurgency and included them in his own assessments.

<sup>16</sup> Allen, *None So Blind*, 129-131.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>18</sup> The JEC was eventually folded into MACV HQ in May 1962. Allen complained that "lip service" was paid to the JEC for some two months, but that "The concept of a Joint Evaluation Center reporting directly to the ambassador was never seriously tested in Vietnam." See Allen, *None So Blind*, 134.

<sup>19</sup> Allen, *None So Blind*, 133-136; Newman, *JFK and Vietnam*, 255; Neil Sheehan, *A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam* (New York: Random House, 1988), 289-290.

<sup>20</sup> One observer has argued that Carroll, an Air Force officer with no combat command experience, did not understand or care about ground OB. See T.L. Cabbage II, "Westmoreland vs. CBS: Was Intelligence Corrupted by Policy Demands?" in Michael I. Handel, ed., *Leaders and Intelligence* (London: Frank Cass, 1989). George Allen believed that Carroll had caved to the wishes of his superior officers and did not want to challenge prevailing opinion on the JCS. See Allen, *None So Blind*, 133-165.

<sup>21</sup> *Pentagon Papers, Vol. IV-B-4, 17*, www.nara.gov, accessed 5 July 2011.

<sup>22</sup> Carroll to McNamara, 21 August 1963, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, Vol. III, Vietnam* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1991) 264-265.

<sup>23</sup> Turley, *The Second Indochina War*, 51-53, 101. Olson and Roberts, *Where the Domino Fell*, 103-104.

<sup>24</sup> Carroll to McNamara, "The Viet Cong Improved Combat Effectiveness and Insurgency Posture," 13 December 1963, and McNamara to Johnson, 21 December 1962, both in *FRUS 1961-1963 IV, 707-710, 732-735*; Robert McNamara, *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam* (New York: Random House, 1995), 104.

<sup>25</sup> Kaplan, et. al., *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Vol. V, 501*.

<sup>26</sup> "Bay of Tonkin Attack, 4-5 August 1964," 25 August 1964, and "Chronology of Tonkin Gulf Incident," September 1964, Digital National Security Archive, <http://nsarchive.chadwick.com/>, accessed 3 January 2008; Kaplan, et. al., *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Vol. V, 521*. See also Robert J. Hanyok, "Skunks, Bogies, Silent Hounds, and the Flying Fish: The Gulf of Tonkin Mystery, 2-4 August, 1964," *Cryptologic Quarterly*, www.nsa.gov, accessed 3 January 3.

<sup>27</sup> *Gravel Pentagon Papers, Vol. III, 192, 207*; Taylor became ambassador on June 23, 1964.

<sup>28</sup> Kaplan, et. al., *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Vol. V, 525-526*; *Gravel Pentagon Papers, Vol. III, 212-213*.

<sup>29</sup> *Gravel Pentagon Papers, Vol. III*, 213-215; Kaplan, et. at., *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Vol. V*, 527.

<sup>30</sup> Kaplan, et. at., *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Vol. V*, 527; James Clay Thompson, *ROLLING THUNDER: Understanding Policy and Program Failure* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 28. The U.S. began conducting limited airborne "armed reconnaissance" in Laos in December under the code-name Barrel Roll. The raids were designed to interdict the flow of supplies south, but were of limited success.

<sup>31</sup> *Gravel Pentagon Papers, Vol. III*, 333-336.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 384.

<sup>33</sup> Bundy to Johnson, 29 June 1965, Lyndon Johnson Presidential Library. I am indebted to a fellow DIA employee for making this document available to me.

<sup>34</sup> *Gravel Pentagon Papers, Vol. III*, 384; Raborn to Johnson, 8 May 1965, National Security Archive, <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com>, accessed 1/3/2008.

<sup>35</sup> SNIE 10-11-65, "Probable Communist Reactions to a US Course of Action," *Estimative Products on Vietnam, 1948-1975* (Washington, D.C.: National Intelligence Council, 2005), 297.

<sup>36</sup> *Gravel Pentagon Papers, Vol. IV.*, 68; DIA Special Intelligence Supplement, "The Big Picture in Southeast Asia," 13 January 1966, *Vietnam National Security Files, 1963-1969* (Frederick, MD: University Publications of America) roll 4, frame 71.

<sup>37</sup> *Gravel Pentagon Papers, Vol. IV.*, 6, 11, 111, 354; Thompson, *ROLLING THUNDER*, 52-53.

<sup>38</sup> McNamara Deposition, *Vietnam: A Documentary Collection: Westmoreland vs. CBS* (New York: Clearwater, 1985), fiche 331, 87-88.

<sup>39</sup> When Clark Clifford succeeded McNamara as Secretary of Defense, the joint CIA/DIA reports became known as "Clifford Reports."

<sup>40</sup> "An Appraisal of the Bombing of North Vietnam (Through 19 June 1967)," June 1967, Declassified Documents Reference Service (DDRS).

<sup>41</sup> "An Appraisal of the Bombing of North Vietnam (Through 16 October 1967)," October 1967; "An Appraisal of the Bombing of North Vietnam (Through 18 December 1967)," December 1967, DDRS. There is even evidence that the bombing actually helped the Communist Party of Vietnam promote and install some of its social programs. See Turley, *The Second Indochina War*, 93-94.

<sup>42</sup> NSAM 328, "Presidential Decisions with Respect to Vietnam," 6 April 1965, [www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/nsams/nsam328.asp](http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/nsams/nsam328.asp), accessed 26 February 2008; Findings cited in Raborn to Johnson, 8 May 1965, DDRS. A June 1965 DIA report noted that the Viet Cong began an extended campaign in May. See also DIA Report, "Casualties High in South Vietnam as Viet Cong Activities Increase," 8 June 1965, LBJ Library National Security Files (Frederick, MD: University Press of America, 1985), roll 17, frame 41. Olson and Roberts, *Where the Domino Fell*, 302.

<sup>43</sup> Turley, *The Second Indochina War*, 64-65; Joseph McChristian, *The Role of Military Intelligence, 1965-1967* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 1975), 3-4.

<sup>44</sup> James J. Wirtz, "Intelligence to Please? The Order of Battle Controversy during the Vietnam War," *Political Science Quarterly* Vol. 106, No. 2 (Summer 1991), 248; Wheeler to Carroll, "Statistics on Order of Battle and Infiltration," 19 January 1967, in Paul Kesaris, ed., *Vietnam and Southeast Asia, 1946-1976* (Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, 1982), roll 4, frame 54.

<sup>45</sup> CIA Memo, Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs to Deputy Director for Intelligence "Revising the Viet Cong Order of Battle," 11 January 1967, in Kesaris, *Vietnam and Southeast Asia, Supplement*, roll 4, no. 54. The OB process took in four types of enemy units: regular PAVN forces, Viet Cong main force units, Viet Cong local

units, and Viet Cong irregular forces (including guerillas, "self-defense" forces, and "secret self-defense" forces. The latter two were essentially militia forces that planted mines and booby traps, stored supplies, and sometimes sniped at U.S. and ARVN troops. They were the forces that drove up the Adams OB estimate).

<sup>46</sup> John Williams Deposition, *Westmoreland vs. CBS*, fiche 438, 19-20.

<sup>47</sup> Abrams to Wheeler, 20 August 1967, Joint Exhibit 252B, 1-2, and Westmoreland Interview Transcript, 17 May 1981, Joint Exhibit 349, *Westmoreland vs. CBS*.

<sup>48</sup> Daniel Graham, *Confessions of a Cold Warrior: An Autobiography* (Fairfax, VA: Preview Press, 1995), 54-55.

<sup>49</sup> Wirtz, "Intelligence to Please?" 245-246. Douglas Kinnard, *The War Managers* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1977), 69-70.

<sup>50</sup> Williams Deposition, *Westmoreland vs. CBS*, fiche 438, 30.

<sup>51</sup> CIA Memorandum for the Record, 5 July 1967, Kesaris, *Vietnam and Southeast Asia, Supplement*, roll 4, no. 844; Williams Deposition, *Westmoreland vs. CBS*, fiche 438, 30.

<sup>52</sup> Williams Deposition, *Westmoreland vs. CBS*, fiche 438, 30. Ford, *CIA and the Vietnam Policymakers*, 94, 100-101; T.L. Cabbage II, "Westmoreland vs. CBS: Was Intelligence Corrupted by Policy Demands?" in Michael I. Handel, ed., *Leaders and Intelligence* (London: Cass, 1989), 157.

<sup>53</sup> George Hamscher Deposition, *Westmoreland vs. CBS*, fiche 263, 38-39. Abrams position arguably betrayed a misunderstanding of North Vietnam's supreme military commander Vo Nguyen Giap's doctrine, which held that regular troops, guerillas, and local militias all constituted essential core elements that had key roles to play in the communist military effort.

<sup>54</sup> Williams Deposition, *Westmoreland vs. CBS*, fiche 438, 60; Ford, *CIA and the Vietnam Policymakers*, 91.

<sup>55</sup> Major General Grover Cleveland Brown Biography, [www.af.mil/information/bios](http://www.af.mil/information/bios), accessed 12 Nov. 2011.

<sup>56</sup> Williams Deposition, *Westmoreland vs. CBS*, fiche 438, 38-39.

<sup>57</sup> SNIE 14-3-67, "Capabilities of the Vietnamese Communists for Fighting in South Vietnam," *Estimative Products on Vietnam*, 429. DCI Richard Helms elected to accept MACVs numbers in the interest of avoiding a split estimate. Less than a week after the SNIE was issued, Westmoreland publicly announced that enemy strength was approximately 248,000. CIA was incredulous. See Ford, *CIA and the Vietnam Policymakers*, 102-103.

<sup>58</sup> Edward J. Drea, *Secretary of Defense Historical Series, Volume VI: McNamara, Clifford, and the Burden of Vietnam, 1965-1969* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2011), 1; Olson and Roberts, *Where the Domino Fell*, 170. See also Robert S. McNamara, *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996).

<sup>59</sup> MG Grover Cleveland Brown Testimony, House Defense Appropriations Sub-committee, 90th Congress, 2nd Session, 10 April 1968, 457.

<sup>60</sup> Williams Deposition, *Westmoreland vs. CBS*, fiche 438, 45-52.

<sup>61</sup> Turley, *The Second Indochina War*, 97-106. Buzzanco, *Masters of War: Military Dissent and Politics in the Vietnam Era* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 314-315. See also James H. Willbanks, *The Tet Offensive: A Concise History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

<sup>62</sup> Williams Deposition, *Westmoreland vs. CBS*, fiche 438, p. 37, 35-36.

<sup>63</sup> Joint DIA/CIA Study, "The Attrition of Vietnamese Communist Forces, 1968-1969," 30 March 1968, DDRS.

<sup>64</sup> See Ronald Spector, *After Tet: The Bloodiest Year in Vietnam* (New York: The Free Press, 1993).

- <sup>65</sup> James Meacham Correspondence, 24 June 1968, Joint Exhibit 214K, *Westmoreland vs. CBS*.
- <sup>66</sup> In 1967, North Korean infiltrators destroyed two U.S. Army barracks, killing or wounding twenty-one soldiers. That year, more than 100 South Koreans and Americans were killed by North Koreans. See Richard Mobley, *Flash Point North Korea: The Pueblo and the EC-121 Crises* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2003), 14-15.
- <sup>67</sup> Thomas Johnson, *American Cryptology during the Cold War, 1945-1989, Book II: Centralization Wins, 1960-1972* (Ft. Meade, MD: Center for Cryptologic History, 1995), 440, [www.gwu.edu/nsarchiv/index.html](http://www.gwu.edu/nsarchiv/index.html), accessed 2 Sep 2010.
- <sup>68</sup> DIAXX to DIAP-2, "Information for DIA DR on Pueblo," undated, and Commentary/Answers on Pueblo Incident, undated, both likely Feb. 1969, Folder "Miscellaneous Pueblo Material," DIA HRSB Collection. Though the Director of DIA's Special Activities Office, which coordinated intelligence collection with the larger Intelligence Community, claimed to have consulted DIA's North Korea specialists for their risk assessment, North Korea analysts denied it.
- <sup>69</sup> Draft Memorandum, DIAXX-DIAPP-2, "Information for DIADR on the PUEBLO," undated.
- <sup>70</sup> Mitchell B. Lerner, *The Pueblo Incident: A Spy Ship and the Failure of American Foreign Policy* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2002) 60-61).
- <sup>71</sup> Johnson, *American Cryptology during the Cold War, Book II*, 443.
- <sup>72</sup> *Inquiry into the U.S.S. Pueblo and EC-121 Plane Incidents*, Report of the Special Subcommittee on the U.S.S. Pueblo of the Committee on Armed Services, 28 July 1971, 1653-1654, 1656.
- <sup>73</sup> A study by the historian Richard Mobley also concluded that since the Soviet Union did not harass these missions (and indeed conducted their own), risk assessors reasoned that the North Koreans would also act within these established norms. See Mobley, *Flash Point North Korea: The Pueblo and the EC-121 Crises* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2003).
- <sup>74</sup> Dessert Memorandum, "Information from HACIT Relative to Backlog of Intelligence Data, 6 Mar 1972, HRSB "DIA Command '70s," Box 1, Folder "Command Section Signed 1972."
- <sup>75</sup> Brown Testimony, House Defense Appropriations Sub-committee, 90th Congress, 2nd Session, 10 April 1968, 457. Major General Grover Brown was a member of the USAF, while Army Brigadier General Burton Brown ran the Production Center at Arlington Hall. DIA employees differentiated between the two by referring to "Blue Brown" (Grover) and "Brown Brown" (Burton).
- <sup>76</sup> "Reorganization of DIAPP in November 1966," undated, HRSB, DIAC Carousel Records, Cab 1B, Shelf 4, Org-Reorg, Misc., Folder "503 Thru 549."
- <sup>77</sup> Allen, *None So Blind*, 131.
- <sup>78</sup> Quoted in *Department of Defense Appropriations for 1970: Hearings Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives*, 91/1 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1969) 20. The title of the subcommittee's report was "The Management and Conduct of Military Intelligence Activities in the Department of Defense," published March 1968.
- <sup>79</sup> "Spy Output Too Large For Chiefs," *New York Times*, 10 July 1968, 41.
- <sup>80</sup> "Defense Intelligence: Calling Nixon's Bluff," OSD History Staff Collection, File "Intelligence, 1969-1970," Box 740.
- <sup>81</sup> Richard Homan, "July Flood Ruined Secret Papers," *Washington Post*, 9 November 1969, 58. In October 1966, a three-alarm fire struck a storage area in Building B at Arlington Hall Station, destroying some electrical equipment and personnel records, but employees were able to return to work that same day. "Fire Strikes Top Secret Defense Hall," *Washington Post*, 1 November 1966, C5.



<sup>82</sup> James Carroll, *House of War: The Pentagon and the Disastrous Rise of American Power* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006) 334-335. Carroll's removal is examined in Michael B. Petersen, "Up From the Ashes: Defense Intelligence in the Era of Détente," *Defense Intelligence Perspectives*, Number 3, forthcoming.

<sup>83</sup> Donald V. Bennett Oral History Interview (OHI) transcript, U.S. Army Military History Research Collection, Senior Officers Debriefing Program, Tape 9, page 30, 32-33; hereafter cited as Bennett OHI.

<sup>84</sup> Bennett, an artillery officer, came ashore on the border of Fox Green and Easy Red sectors on the eastern portion of Omaha Beach as part of the second wave of U.S. troops. He assumed command of the leaderless Third Infantry Battalion and advanced its soldiers off the beach. For his actions, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the second highest military decoration that can be awarded to a member of the U.S. Army. See Bennett OHI, Section 1, pp. 67-69.

<sup>85</sup> Donald V. Bennett official biography, HRSB. Bennett's appointment as DIA Director and his efforts to reorganize the Agency are discussed further in Petersen, "Up From the Ashes: Defense Intelligence in the Era of Détente," forthcoming.

<sup>86</sup> Graham A. Cosmas, *MACV: The Joint Command in the Years of Withdrawal, 1968-1973* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 2007) 285-289, 314-315.

<sup>87</sup> Donald V. Bennett Oral History Interview, U.S. Army Military History Research Collection, Senior Officers Debriefing Program, Section 10, pp. 7-8; Bruce Palmer, Jr., "US Intelligence in Vietnam," *Studies in Intelligence* Special Issue, June 1984, National Security Archive, <http://nsarchive.chadwick.com>, accessed 26 July 2008; Louis Sorley, *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1999), 191-216.

<sup>88</sup> Sorley, *A Better War*, 208-209; Palmer, "US Intelligence in Vietnam," 81. Sorley concludes, however, that the documents backed MACV's OB estimates instead, though most historians support the point that the findings proved CIA's argument.

<sup>89</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Vol II: Organization and Management of U.S. Foreign Policy, 1969-1972*, document 224, <http://history.state.gov>, accessed 5 October 2011. Nixon's ire was reserved mostly for CIA. "Give me a report on those changes [to CIA, recommended by the PFIAB]," he wrote in the margin of this memo. "I want a real shakeup in CIA, not just symbolism." See also Thomas L. Ahearn, Jr., *Good Questions, Wrong Answers: CIA's Estimates of Arms Traffic Through Sihanoukville, Cambodia During the Vietnam War* (Washington, D.C.: Center for the Study of Intelligence, September 2004).

<sup>90</sup> Benjamin F. Schemmer, *The Raid* (New York: Harper and Rowe, 1976), 29-30; John T. Berbrich Briefing, "The Role of the IPWIC," c. 1971, HRSB working file "POW/MIA." Stuart Rochester and Frederick Kiley, *Honor Bound: The History of American Prisoners of War in Southeast Asia, 1961-1973* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Secretary of Defense, 1998), 204.

<sup>91</sup> For a complete history of the raid and its planning, see Benjamin F. Schemmer, *The Raid* (New York: Harper and Rowe, 1976).

<sup>92</sup> *Commander, JCS/Joint Contingency Task Force Report on the Son Tay Prisoner of War Rescue Operation, Part II*, C1-C8, [www.dod.mil/pubs/foi/](http://www.dod.mil/pubs/foi/), accessed 28 October 2011; Schemmer, *The Raid*, 37-79.

<sup>93</sup> John Mitchell, "The Son Tay Raid: A Study in Presidential Policy," unpag., [www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/1997/Mitchell.htm](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/1997/Mitchell.htm), accessed 3/8/08.

<sup>94</sup> Mitchell, *ibid*; Schemmer, *The Raid*, 178.

<sup>95</sup> Mark Amidon, "Groupthink, Politics, and the Decision to Attempt the Son Tay Rescue," *Parameters*, (Autumn 2005), 121.

<sup>96</sup> *Commander, JCS/Joint Contingency Task Force Report on the Son Tay Prisoner of War Rescue Operation, Part II*, ii, [www.dod.mil/pubs/foi/](http://www.dod.mil/pubs/foi/), accessed 28 October 2011.

<sup>97</sup> Vernon Walters, *Silent Missions* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1978), 511.

- <sup>98</sup> Walters, *Silent Missions*, 513-514, 519, 521.
- <sup>99</sup> Kissinger to Walters, 10 October 1970, Walters Gift Collection, HRSB.
- <sup>100</sup> Sorley, *A Better War*, 272-277; Palmer, "US Intelligence in Vietnam," 96, 91-92.
- <sup>101</sup> National Intelligence Estimate 53-71, "South Vietnam: Problems and Prospects," 29 April 1971, <http://www.cia.foia.gov>, accessed 1 August 2008.
- <sup>102</sup> In July 1971, DIA representatives also joined an ad hoc task force under the Operations Directorate (J-3) of the Joint Staff as well as a CINCPAC task force, both of which were designed to improve the Republic of Vietnam's interdiction capabilities on the Ho Chi Minh Trail and plan future interdiction operations. See Webb and Poole, *History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff*, 144-145.
- <sup>103</sup> DIA Intelligence Summary, "Vietnam," January 1972, HRSB Vietnam-UN-Tet-Laos, 1969-1981.
- <sup>104</sup> Olson and Roberts, *Where the Domino Fell*, 246-247; Webb and Poole, *History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff*, 161-162, DIA report quoted on 177-178; Stephen P. Randolph, *Powerful and Brutal Weapons: Nixon, Kissinger, and the Easter Offensive* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007) 181-182. Also in May, the U.S. began mining Haiphong Harbor, a provocative move that ran the risk killing Chinese or Soviet sailors on resupply missions to North Vietnam.
- <sup>105</sup> It is unlikely that the bombings accomplished what ROLLING THUNDER had failed to do, that is, force the DRV to finally sue for peace. Historians of the Vietnam War indicate that the DRV receptiveness to peace talks was tactical, an effort to stop the bombing and create space to build up its armed forces for another major push into the South.
- <sup>106</sup> For a full accounting of Walters' activities in Paris, see *Silent Missions*, 506-583.
- <sup>107</sup> Webb and Poole, *History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff*, 324-325; Palmer, "US Intelligence in Vietnam," 101.
- <sup>108</sup> William LeGro Fact Sheet, "Intelligence Branch Functional Statement," 22 June 1973, Vietnam Virtual Archive at Texas Tech University (hereafter cited as VVA), [www.vietnam.ttu.edu](http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu), accessed 28 April 2009; USDAO Intelligence Collection Plan, May 1973, VVA, [www.vietnam.ttu.edu](http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu), accessed 28 April 2009.
- <sup>109</sup> William Legro, *Vietnam: From Cease-Fire to Capitulation* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1981), 19.
- <sup>110</sup> William LeGro, "Intelligence in Vietnam After the Cease-Fire," *INSCOM Journal* (March-April 1997), 28-29; Legro Fact Sheet, "Regional Liaison Officers and Provincial Observers," undated (probably June 1972), VVA, [www.vietnam.ttu.edu](http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu), accessed 28 April 2009; Author's interview notes with James W., 1 July 2010.
- <sup>111</sup> Laura Calkins Oral History Interview with William Legro, 21 November 2005, VVA [www.vietnam.ttu.edu](http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu), p. 439, accessed 25 October 2011.
- <sup>112</sup> Stuart Herrington, *Peace with Honor? An American Reports on Vietnam, 1973-1975* (San Francisco: Novato Press, 1983) 14-15.
- <sup>113</sup> USSAG was the organization responsible for any U.S. military operations in Vietnam should they be ordered by the President.
- <sup>114</sup> USDAO Saigon, "Annex B to DAO Saigon OPlan 001, Revised; Intelligence," 15 July 1973, ; USDAO Saigon, "Collection Plan," May 1973; Legro Fact Sheet, "Current Intelligence Production," 21 June 1973; All documents located in VVA, [www.vietnam.ttu.edu](http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu), accessed 28 April 2009).
- <sup>115</sup> Olson and Roberts, *Where the Domino Fell*, 255; Marilyn B. Young, *The Vietnam Wars, 1945-1990* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), 291.
- <sup>116</sup> See the collection of DAO Military Intelligence Summary and Threat Analysis (MISTA) documents held by the Vietnam Virtual Archive, [www.virtualarchive.vietnam.ttu.edu](http://www.virtualarchive.vietnam.ttu.edu).

<sup>117</sup> NIE 53/14.3-1-74, "The Likelihood of a Major North Vietnamese Offensive Against South Vietnam Before June 30, 1975," in *Estimative Products on Vietnam*, 629; Webb and Poole, *History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff*, 356-357.

<sup>118</sup> DIA Special Defense Intelligence Notice (DIASDIN) 787-74, 4 December 1974, DIA Classified Library Collection.

<sup>119</sup> DIA Intelligence Appraisal, "The Vietnam Situation," 10 January 1975, DIA Classified Library Collection. DeSaulniers was the Defense Intelligence Officer for Southeast Asia. Frank Snepp has noted that not even Defense Attaché General Murray was sure how much equipment the South Vietnamese had left. See Snepp, *Decent Interval*, 108. Olson and Roberts, *Where the Domino Fell*, 258.

<sup>120</sup> Graham Testimony, *Hearings Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations*, House of Representatives, 94th Congress, 2nd Session, 30 January 1975, 13. Graham's role as DIA's Director is examined in Michael Petersen, *Defense Intelligence Historical Perspectives*, No. 3, "The Soviet Target, Part I: Sizing Up Colossus," (Washington, DC: Defense Intelligence Agency, forthcoming).

<sup>121</sup> DIA Intelligence Appraisal, "An Assessment of the Current Situation in South Vietnam," 20 March 1975, DIA Classified Library Collection.

<sup>122</sup> In the U.S., President Ford had been moved to action by the pleas of New York's Cardinal Terrence Cooke to rescue the orphans, who were housed Catholic orphanages in Saigon.

<sup>123</sup> Coy F. Cross II, *MAC and Operation BABYLIFT: Air Transport in Support of Noncombatant Evacuation Operations* (Scott Air Force Base, Illinois: Military Airlift Command, 1989) 33-34; Ron Steinman, *The Soldiers' Story: Vietnam in Their Own Words* (New York: TV Books, 2000), 297.

<sup>124</sup> Stuart A. Herrington, *Peace With Honor? An American Reports on Vietnam, 1973-1975* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1983), 166; Thomas G. Tobin, et al., ed., *Last Flight from Saigon* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1978), 29.

<sup>125</sup> Cross, *MAC and Operation BABYLIFT*, 38-39; United States Agency for International Development, *Operation Babylift Report* (Washington, D.C., 1975) 3.

<sup>126</sup> Robert Edison internet post, "It Hurt Then and it Hurts Now!," url unknown, 1994. My thanks to James W. for making this document available to me.

<sup>127</sup> MG Homer Smith, "The Final 45 Days in Vietnam," Vietnam Virtual Archive, [www.virtual.vietnam.ttu.edu](http://www.virtual.vietnam.ttu.edu), accessed 24 May 24 2011. Smith wrote this paper within a few days after his evacuation from Saigon.

<sup>128</sup> Steinman, *The Soldiers' Story*, 298.

<sup>129</sup> Their tasks were further complicated by the work of a team from the Military Airlift Command sent to investigate the C-5 crash. The effort involved arranging transport for search parties and hauling wreckage to Tan Son Nhut. For a detailed description of the evacuation planning, see Tobin, et al., *Last Flight from Saigon*, 14-46, and Snepp, *Decent Interval*, 217-377; Palmer, *U.S. Intelligence in Vietnam*, 114. In the end, DAO employees, worried about the fates of their Vietnamese friends and colleagues, helped evacuate thousands of Vietnamese who were neither legally eligible nor "high risk."

<sup>130</sup> Bert Okuley, "President Ford Orders Massive Evacuations of U.S. Citizens from Saigon," 17 April 1975, Vietnam Virtual Archive, [www.virtual.vietnam.ttu.edu](http://www.virtual.vietnam.ttu.edu), accessed 16 August 2011.

<sup>131</sup> Author's interview notes with James W., 1 July 2010.

<sup>132</sup> Palmer, *U.S. Intelligence in Vietnam*, 114-115; DIA Intelligence Appraisal, "The Fall of the Republic of Vietnam," 10 May 1975.

<sup>133</sup> John F. Guilmartin, *A Very Short War: The Mayaguez and the Battle of Koh Tang* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1995), 26-27.

<sup>134</sup> Log of DIA Activities Related to Mayaguez Incident, File "Mayaguez," HRSB; Ralph Wetterhahn, *The Last Battle: The Mayaguez Incident and the End of the Vietnam War* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2001), 334.

<sup>135</sup> The assault force planners believed that the total number of men, women, and children on Koh Tang was around 100. Comptroller General's Report to the Subcommittee on International, Political, and Military Affairs, Committee on International Affairs, House of Representatives, *The Seizure of the Mayaguez—A Case Study of Crisis Management*, 90-91. An NSA history speculates that since only highly classified SIGINT could provide reliable information about the Khmer force on Koh Tang, classification issues restricted the passage of this information to combat forces. See Thomas R. Johnson, *American Cryptology during the Cold War, 1945-1989, Book III: Retrenchment and Reform, 1972-1980* (Fort Meade, MD: Center for Cryptologic History, 1998) 18.

<sup>136</sup> For a complete review of events, see Guilmartin, *A Very Short War*.





## About the Author

**Michael B. Petersen** is a Historian with the DIA Historical Research Division. He previously served on the staff of the National Security Council and with the Nazi War Crimes and Japanese Imperial Government Records Interagency Working Group (IWG) at the National Archives and Records Administration. He holds a Ph.D. in History from the University of Maryland, College Park and is the author of *Missiles for the Fatherland: Peenemünde, National Socialism, and the V-2 Missile* (Cambridge University Press, 2009).

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