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The Vietnam Archive
Oral History Project
Interview with Col. J.B. Ord, Jr.
Conducted by Col. G.R. Shaunburg
November 3, 1969
Transcribed by Nicol Rincon

Col. G.R. Shaunburg: Colonel Ord is en route to the Marine Corps Development and Education Command in Quantico, Virginia, for duty. Colonel Ord served in Vietnam as CO, 5th Marines and Assistant Chief of Staff G3, 1st Marine Division. The following staff section is provided representation: G1, G2, G3, G4,G5, Comptroller, Communication Electronics, Force Engineer, Force Inspector, Force Safety and Sanitization, Force Supply, and Force Command Center. The debrief will be monitored and synopsized by Major Tuoth, Force Command Center. Classification, unless changed in the course of the debrief, is "Secret."

(Unintelligible instructions of interviewer)

Col. J.B. Ord: To start off with, I went out there in the beginning of October and was assigned immediately to the 5th Marines as commanding officer, relieving Colonel Paul Graham. Regiment at that time was down at An Hoa. The regiment was engaged in operating in the NYAO with one battalion. At the time that I took over command of the regiment, two of the battalions, the 2nd and 3rd , were under the operational control of the 7th Marines engaged in Operation Maui Peak. The 2nd Battalion was out in the Tung Duc Corridor driving from Hill 52 towards the west, and the 3rd Battalion had made an abortive attempt to do a helicopter landing up on the Yongtu Slope and had got blown away in their attempt to get into LZs up there. And so they landed out in the high ground Arizona area and then climbed to the west out into the top of the Yongtu Slope. Until, I guess, the end of October we operated in the An Hoa Basin with one battalion, the 1st

Battalion, which was based on Liberty Bridge and operated mainly in the area of Western Go Noi Island and out in the An Hoa Basin and as far to the southwest as we dare go with that few troops, killed a lot of VC, some in NVA. When Operation Maui Peak secured, we got all the battalions back, we started making sightings over in the Arizona area and we put 2nd Battalion over there and then the next thing that happened before we fairly got our teeth into operating in the Arizona area, was they developed a target up in Dodge City. Some good hard intelligence, the result of the Phoenix Program and other sources, and the idea was to get in there and clean out the infrastructure that had gotten into this harboring site, base area, or whatever you want to call it. And so Meade River was conceived. This was run by 1st Marines, Colonel Lauffer, and again, 2nd Battalion 5th Marines, 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines, chopped to the 1st Marines to participate in this thing. And the big problem, of course, that they had was getting an airtight cordon around the area preliminary to cleaning it out. This brings up the first problem area that any commander or any three has in Vietnam: How do you get enough troops to conduct the type of operations that you need to achieve the troop density that's required in any given area and at any given time, and as you can see how it happened on Meade River and also in Maui Peak. You turn around and you rob one of the regiments in order to get the mass that's required in any given area. The other regiment, the one that loses economy of force operations. Meade River, you know, was a real successful operation. 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines had a rough landing. They got into hot LZs. They had some helicopters shot up and quite a few causalities at the outset. At the final end of the thing, the 3rd Battalion, 26th Marines, one of the SLFBLTs, and elements of 3/5 wiped out the last enemy pocket of resistance and they got what they were after: the infrastructure in that area. Right after that operation secured, and the two battalions that I had chopped to the 1st Marines came back to me. We launched the only schoolbook, Quantico-style operation that I can recall in Vietnam, during my time at least, which was a sweep from Go Noi Island and to the Liberty Bridge area to clean out the An Hoa Basin, headed west three battalions abreast, guiding from right to left, Marines on the line, each battalion with a company in reserve—classic Quantico-style solution—and we swept through the area and really flushed them out. Took about three days to do it and by then it was 7 December, and operations were terminated—this was Operation Henderson Hill that had been going on

with one battalion, the 1st Battalion 5th, during Meade River. Henderson Hill ended and Operation Taylor Common began. Cut it off. (Recording temporarily stops.) Operation Taylor Common, which was run by Task Force Yankee—the ADC group of the 1st Marines Division and an alternate command group—was conceived as part of an overall campaign. This thing really had its genesis with Operation Meade River, which was a Category One operation in support of the Accelerated Pacification Program aimed at the VC infrastructure. It was also aimed at clearing an enemy base area that had grown in the Dodge City area, but primarily in Dodge City and Dien Banh they wanted the infrastructure. Now came Operation Taylor Common. This thing took the 1st Marine Division and a regiment-minus of the 3rd Marine Division, 3rd Marines, deep, deep out to the west in the mountains and the enemy base area 112. This operation you would call a Category Three operation in support of the Accelerated Pacification Program. This was meant to get to the major NVA units that were out in that base area and the headquarters and to clear the damned thing out, destroy as much as we could, seize as many of their stocks as we could find, the caches. The division really did not think that they were going to gain as much physical contact with organized units out there, but we did expect that we would find a lot in the way of enemy stores and base camps. In the meanwhile, the war in the lowlands would proceed while the mountain jungle part of Taylor Common went on. The 3rd Marines, with two battalions of the 5th Marines and two of their own battalions, was chosen to do the operation in the hills. Because of their familiarity with the lowlands, the 5th Marines was given the rest of the Taylor Common, TAOR to operate in and an SLFBLT was added to the remaining battalion—that was one-five—and the first ARVN Ranger group with three battalions came into the AO setup in the same CP site with the 5th Marines and commenced operations and coordination and cooperation. We had a Marine BLT over in the Arizona area along with the Rangers. Throughout this operation, we kept the Marine battalion over there more or less with them. There were some holidays in it. This thing, then, in support of the Accelerated Pacification Program and the part of the campaign that was still going on out in Vietnam, ground on from 7th December until, I guess, doggone near the tail-end of February. This operation achieved the success that they hoped it was going to get in that the base area was cleared. The enemy harboring sites and caches were uncovered. A lot of rice was taken. But the bulk

of the enemy dead, NVA and VC, were killed in the Arizona area and the in An Hoa Basin. The bulk of the rice was taken there. The breakout runs something like somewhere between two- and three-hundred enemy dead killed in the 112 Base Area, and I'd say something like 1400 killed out in the lowlands by the US Marines, and another 740-odd killed by the Rangers. This operation did indeed drive the enemy out of Base Area 112. They went far to the west and to the south, way out just north of Thuong Duc, and that's where they've stayed ever since with their headquarters elements. Some enemy infantry units have gotten back into Base Area 112, but they're down to the south of it around the place called Toc Vic and they really haven't come back in there in great strength since that operation. It was during this operations that the enemy attacks right after Tet commenced. An Hoa took the brunt of it as far as incoming was concerned. For the first time in southern I Corps, Quang Nam Province, as far as I know, the enemy made use of the 120-millimeter mortar. This was reminiscent of Korea. The bulk of it was directed at An Hoa. There's only been one other attack that I know of, on Fire Support Base Ross. Ross was 120s during my time out here. We took 120 mortars, 122 rockets, 140 rockets, infantry mortars, 82-millimeter recoilless, 57, 75—you name it—everything that they had except tube artillery and we did have reports that they were using pack howitzers, 75-millimeter. I never could prove this so I discount it. In An Hoa, we were beat up pretty bad. Fortunately, we had enough emplacements that had been heavily reinforced in there—it didn't look too much unlike Khe Sanh, as a matter of fact—and we were able to withstand it although we did take our lumps. Cut it off for a minute please. (Recording temporarily stops.) As operation Taylor Common phased down, the division prepared to embark upon Operation Oklahoma Hills. It was at this point that I was relieved by Colonel Zaro on the 22nd of March as the commanding officer of the 5th Marines and I moved to the division headquarters and became the Assistant Chief of Staff, G3. This campaign upon which the division was embarked envisaged that once Base Area 112 was cleared, which was to afford some security to the An Hoa Basin and part of the Thuong Duc Corridor, the next step would have to be clearing the hills west of Hill 55 so as to get the northern side of the Thuong Duc Corridor secured, and to drive the main enemy elements which were known to be up in the Charlie Ridge area out to the west. We hoped to catch them in our operation and wipe them out and we also were determined to

wipe out the base camps which again we knew we were in that area. This operation was very successful, again as in Taylor Common. The enemy kills that were achieved up in the high ground were not high. The enemy always has the advantages, I see it, operating in the jungle and the canopy. You only get a point-to-point contact. You cannot maneuver on the broad front. So you're at parity with him as far the infantry is concerned. Since your observation is limited and your fields of fire are limited, it's difficult to make use of supporting arms in which we have a distinct advantage. The enemy can always break contact and he can always evade. So this being the case, we're just about equal. We have no advantage and it shows up in the number of kills that you get, unless you trap them and it's unlikely that you can do it. You don't get much success as far as enemy dead is concerned. However, we found a great number of base camps up there—many—and they were extensive. They had training areas. They had hospitals. They had hooches that were double-decked. They had officers' messes, obviously. Patios where they could sit out and sun. Running water piped down from the streams in bamboo conduits. They had nice furniture up in there. They had food. They had rockets. They had weapons. They had obstacle courses where they trained their people. They had places out there where they taught them to go through our barbed wire and wire entanglements were all laid up in there, so they could practice on this. They were dug in and apparently they been dug in for some time. All of this was found and all of it was wiped out. But our best efforts to get behind the enemy, which we did by going very deep with some of our forces, working back toward the east, were not successful. They broke into small groups, the 31st NVA Regiment, 141st NVA Regiment, and an artillery rocket outfit that was up there dispersed. The only contacts that we made were with small groups, going at you with infantry mortars, the 50-caliber that they had up there, 12.7s—they used those to good advantage against our helicopters—but again it was just like the war in Base Area 112. But the operation was a success. It drove them out of the Charlie Ridge area and this place has never been rebuilt. They're back into the area, but they're not in there with great numbers. The numbered regiments—the 141st and the 31st—infiltrated back into the area but now they're after rice. Their base camps are gone and we keep them moving. This operation, then, drove these elements which were preying upon the lowlands just south of Da Nang, out of the area, and the natural sequel, then, to that operation was the next one

to come, Pipestone Canyon. This thing was aimed at clearing once and for all Go Noi Island and again Dien Ban-Dodge City area, which as you all well know had been heavily fortified by the enemy, and had been used by them for time immemorial. They were in there when the Viet Minh were operating and they were still in there before Pipestone Canyon commenced. We had run operation after operation in the area but we'd never been able to get enough troop density nor enough supporting arms in there, nor had we stayed long enough to really clear it out. The one ingredient that we really needed—a land-clearing operation—we had never really been able to do. We'd made a pass at it before—this was a long time ago—but we really hadn't done the job. Pipestone Canyon, then, aimed to do all these things and it was a multi-national and a multi-battalion operation involving the 1st Marines, involving the 51st ARVN Regiment, and involving the ARVN Ranger Group and the ROK Marine Corps this time. We made a move from north to south, swept through the Dien Ban area, pushed in from the west to block, and then counter-swept the Dien Ban area. So they thought we were going to stay away from the island. Meanwhile the ROKs put a block across the south part of Go Noi, below the island. We worked the Dien Ban area, destroying fortifications. They'd sweep down one day and then go back where they had been the day before and catch more of them, wipe out the trenches, wipe out the holes, wipe out the bunkers. We finally got ready to go on to Go Noi. We pasted the hell out of it with air artillery and naval gunfire. It looked like they were hitting Iwo Jima. Really put it on there heavy and then went in by helicopter assault and one armored column; two battalions by helicopter on the south side of the island to drive north and one battalion in from the west, along with the armor, and then turn and go north, east of the railroad berm. We swept the western part of Go Noi as a preliminary to this thing, and then they got in there and stayed in there until they'd blown all they could. We had an army land-clearing company, half of it, and we made up the other half with our own bulldozer assets. This outfit, a provisional land-clearing company with a Marine rifle company to secure it, went on to Go Noi, and they were told, "You stay until Go Noi is a parking lot." And today Go Noi is a parking lot, and I guaran-damned-tee that there's lots of dead gooks out on Go Noi that are buried. When they first started bulldozing, the stench of death on Go Noi was unbelievable, and it was all coming from underground. They had concrete emplacements that made the caves on Iwo Jima

like a damned amateur effort. They'd taken all the railroad iron on the national railroad, they'd gotten concrete somewhere and they used these materials since wood was short, to build their deep bunkers. How they keep the water out of that stuff, I don't know. They must be the best hydraulic engineers in the business because they had caves that went down thirty meters and the water apparently never got into them when Go Noi flooded, but all of that is deep, deep underground. It's flat. So Pipestone Canyon, which had this as its goal, was successful. Go Noi was taken care of and the enemy is not back on Go Noi. Go Noi is only good for one thing now, and that's farming, except there's no people there yet. So the important thing, then, was to do the things that are necessary to make it possible to start farming on Go Noi again. One of the first things that had to be done was to open up the highway that went from QL1 and Dien Ban to the west above Go Noi, which is Route 4. Had to get that thing open. Hadn't been used for God knows how long. In addition to opening Route 4, over as far as the road that went down the Liberty Bridge and Dai Loc, they had to push on out to Thuong Duc. Because there are a lot of people that live out there, that are pro-GVN but are isolated, and that long valley that runs out to that CIDG camp. General Simpson said, "All right, we're going to do Pipestone Canyon and as part of this thing we're going to open up the Thuong Duc Corridor and Route 4, and this was done. It is open and it is in use and it has made a significant difference in the pacification of that area. I've driven all the way out there and all the way back. The road is little better than a pioneer road because you can make six-by-sixes pass on it, in most of the areas. We got Marines out in that valley now, operating west of Hill 52. The ARVN are not out there but RFs are and CIDG operates out of Thuong Duc. That area is secured. The contact out in there, the enemy still tries to get across the valley and down to the Arizona area to get rice, but that place doesn't belong to Charlie any more. You get contact out in there if you want it and look for it and you find your foraging parties but the people are using the road. The people are traveling back and forth and they never did this before. Pipestone Canyon continues, at least it did up until the time I left, and a lot of people ask the question, "Why does Pipestone Canyon continue?" This portion of the brief is classified NOFORN. The reason Pipestone Canyon continues is that it gives the 1st Marine Division an area of operation in the Dodge City-Dien Ban portion of the ROK Marine Corps' TAOR, which otherwise would not be open to us unless we made a

special negotiation with the ROKs every time we wanted to go into it. So, in effect what has happened is that by their concurring and participating in Pipestone Canyon, they have opened up to us their AO, and we're the camel. Our nose was under the tent and now we're into it and we're going to keep it going as long as it's expedient to do so. The boundary between the ROK Marine actual TAOR and where the Marines actually are located in the western part of their TAOR has changed back and forth from east to west and a boundary has recently being established by the MAF, which was reluctantly accepted by the ROKs and accepted with great pleasure by the 1st Marine Division. This boundary has since, because of the ROK's discomfiture with it, been moved slightly to the west. They're now happy with the result. They have three companies west of QL1—one in the north, one just above Go Noi Island and one on the eastern end of Go Noi. Then over at the mouth of the Phu Loc Valley they have a rifle company. These companies are in there little forts. That's where they stay. If they patrol out from them they go out short distances and ambush. It's very dangerous for anybody to get close to those forts, but as far as the area between the forts is concerned there west of them, it's Highway One and it's all Charlie unless the Marines are in it. The Marines are in it. So this is the reason, then, that Pipestone Canyon has continued. I expect that sometime in the near future it may phase down, since we got a working arrangement now with the ROKs that satisfies General Lee and satisfies General Simpson. Of course, we'd always had the support of the MAF commander in what we're trying to do out there. I'm sure he recognized the problems. I think the ROK Marines are great fighters. I'm sure that there must be some political reason for their being held so closely into their TAOR. When they get out they really get with it. They're tigers but they don't maneuver a hell of a lot. And they're sort of inflexible in the way they use their forces. That's all I'm going to say on that as far the NOFORN part is concerned. To go on, then, from Pipestone Canyon rapidly, when we got the Dien Banh area cleared out and Go Noi, the enemy had to go somewhere and they, of course, attempted to evade us on Go Noi. I don't think a hell of lot of them got away, really, but some of them obviously did. They exfiltrated through the block which the ROKs had set up south of Go Noi, and they exfiltrated into the Que Son Mountains, the Duy Xuyen Moutains, and worked their way up in that area where they did have caves and places where they could hide. Also, this was proximate to one of

their rice pickup points, warehousing areas, down to the mouth of the Phu Loc Valley. We knew that they were going up in there if they got out but they'd get out to the south and so we planned Operation Durham Peak as the next step. This, again, was a Category Two operation to push these people farther on to the west. This was run by 5th Marines with reinforcement from the 1st Marines this time. It was a successful operation. It was extremely difficult because of high winds, high attitudes, very, very rugged mountains and again canopy similar to Base Area 112—a lot of rock and boulders, and most of the enemy in this area were not in base camps but they had caves and prepared emplacements, in terrain that was very favorable to them and very disadvantageous to us. Nevertheless, the operation succeeded in running them out of there, and go they did, and where did they go? They went to the west down toward Tak Pek and they went down into to the Que Son district, into the Americal AO. Now, with Operation Durham Peak secured, we turned in the division our attention to the Category One operations, and this is the close-in stuff. And at the same time that this was going on, General Nickerson advised us that he wanted to effect a realignment of the division boundary so that it coincided with the political boundary on the south. This is of course, the Quang Nam-Quang Tin boundary. Now, to do this we had to take over a large chunk of real estate from the Americal Division, the 196thLight Infantry Brigade. So just about the time that we had gotten the enemy pushed away from the vital area, the lowlands around Da Nang and south of Da Nang, and just about the time that we had enough troops we figured to really turn to on doing the things that have to be done now in close, and just about the time where each one of the regiments had at least a swing battalion available to them, we fell heir to another 166 square miles of real estate. So we had to realign the division completely, and this meant pulling the 7th Marines out of their TAOR, which we did, and putting them down in the Que Son District, relieving the 196th Brigade. I flew over the area—I'd been down there before because we'd worked with the 196th when I was in the 5th Marines—but I never really looked at the real estate down there. This time as G3, I was interested in it and it presented a totally different picture than the area around Da Nang for some reason. I think we'd fought over so much of the area around Da Nang that you sort of get used to seeing the hooches with their roofs blown off and the shells of where the farms used to be. Que Son district was peaceful. All the houses had roofs. The

farms were prosperous. I didn't see any ruins. The roads obviously were sort of native-style roads. They hadn't been upgraded too much and it looked to me like there just wasn't much down in that TAOR at all. Fire Support Base Ross had some US Army heavy artillery down there but it had been held by a battalion of the ARVN, and the 196th Light Infantry Brigade had its CP out at Baldy, which is out to the east near QL1 and they had a battalion that operated out of that area. The rest of their forces were disposed further to the west and to the south. They didn't have a lot of troop density in the area. After we got in there with the 7th Marines and started to operate, we found out why it looked so peaceful because they didn't have a lot troop density so they couldn't do a hell of a lot down there. The ARVN apparently—these were people from the 2nd Division—were pretty thin and they didn't do very much, either. When the 7th Marines got in there and started roving around through the area, they started making contact all over the place and the next thing we knew, down in the western end of the area just above Hiep Duc, the 31st Infantry and the 7th Marines, 2/7th seven specifically, got into a hum, and all of a sudden they had their teeth into the 1st VC Regiment. So then we had a different war. The operations in this new AO, then, the fact that we had to move a regiment down there, slowed down the effort that we had planned around Da Nang in the form of additional cordon and search and clear operations. But not too damned much because the ARVN meanwhile were forming an armored brigade which now is in-being and in operation. This meant that the 51st Regiment would be able to participate more in operations, would be free to maneuver, and at the same time more RFs and more PFs were coming. So what I'm really saying is that although it wasn't apparent—you know, you just didn't see this happen all of a sudden—after maybe a month or six weeks you suddenly realized there are fewer Americans around but there are more Vietnamese carrying rifles, and so you really began to see very gradually this Vietnamization thing taking place and there's no doubt about it, it's happening. It's slow, but by golly, it's happening. This 1st ARVN Armored Brigade that I mentioned now is operating with the 7th Marines in the Que Son AO, and they've had a lot of good contact down in there. The enemy that went out of the Durham Peak area into the foothills that lead from the south—the piedmont of the Duy uyen Mountains—that's where they had harbored—and on down toward Hiep Duc, where the 1st VC was, and the operations that are going on down there now are driving

them out of the area and they're killing quite a few of them. So you can see the picture that was drawn in our effort to have a campaign that flowed from one thing to the other, and gradually formed a shield behind which the process of pacification could get on. Up in the 26th Marines AO, the enemy never has been in there, not in the past year, in the strength that he has in other areas. I think the terrain is more difficult for him logistically. It's probably the reason why they don't have the large base camps up in there and large units don't operate out of it. They do come down for rice, but the 26th Marines has been able to keep them pretty well out. Now the 26th Marines is chopped not only operationally to the division, but has been assigned to the division. All three of their battalions are in-country under their command and we have taken over an additional thirty nine square miles of real estate north of Hai Van Pass. We're leaving a battalion from the 101st Airborne Division. So the TAOR is rather large, extending from Phuoc District north of Hai Van down to the Quang Tin boundary. The shield that we had planned, I think, exists in fact. The NVA, obviously, and the main force VC, if they want to penetrate this thing by infiltration, they can do it. There is no way that we can keep them out unless we have troop density such as we had in Korea, and this is a luxury we'll never have in this type of war. So the foraging parties and the sappers and the small groups that carry maybe five rockets are going to get through your screen. The sensors make it a lot more difficult for this to happen, but it can happen. On the other hand, the large enemy attacks where battalions maneuvered and tried to get into Da Nang from the south or penetrate from the west, I think they're a thing of the past. The character of the war has changed. At least it has in Quang Nam province. Whether or not the withdrawals that are taking place will touch the 1st Marine Division too soon is something I'm not prepared to discuss. But it would be very good for the Vietnamization thing if that division were left there to do what it's doing now and to permit the Vietnamese to get a little farther along in developing, at least in Quang Nam, their heavy artillery capability, to further refine the 1st Armored Brigade's capability, to maybe get their infantry strength up a little more, and most, most importantly to get a division headquarters to head up the 51st ARVN Regiment. This armored brigade and the Ranger group, which really, as far as combat troops are concerned, is a divisional equivalent, and they have 155s and 105 artillery, but they've got no tactical headquarters, and this is what they need. Quang Da

Special Zone fills the role of the division. Quang Da Special Zone is not set up to function as a tactical headquarters. They operate out of an old French caserns over Da Nang. They don't even have a fire support coordination center. You can't get a single plane out of them when the ARVN artillery is shooting even though we got it jury-rigged now that permits us to do it. So obviously what they need is a division. Given enough time and enough Marines to keep things reasonably quiet, they'll have one.

Briefly, then, I've gone over the main events that transpired during my tour and it was at this point that my orders became effective and I had to leave Vietnam and here I am and that concludes this portion of the presentation. Now, having delivered myself of this oration, the conference, as you all desire, is open to any questions you may have.

(Unintelligible question)

JO: The land division performing in the Go Noi area, and who is going to take care of the real estate problem that's involved? Let me go back to Harry Painter, as G5 of the 1st Division. As Pipestone Canyon was ending the land-clearing phase of it, at least, the next thing that came up, obviously, we'd sit there and talk about the new parking lot and the fact that we'd never be able to pave it, engineers and paving being what they are in Vietnam. And what was it good for? Obviously, it is arable land. It's rich. You can grow anything in it. Obviously to anybody that's ever been on a farm in the United States, or seen the way we raise our own crops, this place was just prime ground for this sort of thing. So, General Simpson sent a letter over to the MAF, which was passed to the…(end of tape)

You're familiar with…The idea of going into mechanized farming on a large scale on Go Noi, and Mr. Firfer thought this was the greatest thing since canned beer, and they really got behind it. But as things often happen in Vietnam, you get up against the practical reality of the Vietnamese and in this case this is exactly what happened. They could see the value of this but they could not see how it would be compatible with their land tenure system. Because Go Noi had been owned as little bitty paddies and parcels by many, many, many, many people, and so the question was how they were going to work it out. Well, there is a gentleman, a Vietnamese government official over in Hoi An and he happened to have all the land records and he is the expert. This guy thinks he can sort it out. And this is how they're working it. What they plan to do is to resettle the

people either on it or around it—the island, that is—who originally owned the real estate, try and marry them back up with as much land that they can, and then make a massive effort to assist them in getting the land back into production that way. It means we're going to have to open the road from QL1 to Dui Xuyen District Headquarters. That thing is operational but it's not in real good shape. And then push it on across the base of Hill 119 south of Go Noi and on over to Liberty Bridge. Then we'll have a beltway all the way around Go Noi and the people can travel easily to Go Noi overland. You could, of course, do it on the river but overland you've got to have a communications system before you can open any area up to resettlement. You've got to be able to get in there when you need to with troops to keep it secured. This is within the ARVN capability of keeping that place cleared. They have a battalion that's in Go Noi permanently. The ROKs have an outpost on Go Noi that's manned by a reinforced company, that's a permanent thing. And they've got ARVN just north of it and we have our troops now in the Que Son AO to the south. I think to answer your question specifically, if this gentleman—and I can't recall his name—can sort this thing out from the point of view of who really owns the land and how much of it can they redistribute, that they will be able to make this thing work. It's certainly…there's no deliberate effort on the Vietnamese part to sabotage it. They recognize they have got a problem but they think it's a good idea and they're going to go ahead with it. It's capable of producing not only the entire deficit of rice that exists in Quang Nam Province, but again a like amount, so that you would have from Go Noi alone a surplus of rice in Quang Nam Province after their needs were taken care of, if it were farmed in this fashion. Anything else?

Unknown Questioner: (Unintelligible) of G2. I'm very much interested in the retention program, per se, and any concepts or doctrines in your utilization of the primarily (Unintelligible) your balance of pressure system. I'm familiar with what you have, but not quite so familiar with how far you've come along. I understand that the 26th Marines in the Hai Van Pass, possibly, are using the balance pressure system. Any comments you have?

JO: Well, the balance pressure system is a fairly highly refined system in the 26th Marines and part of the 1st Marines AO. I can show you a map after the meeting exactly where the system is located and how much of it is in, portions of it that are under

construction and the part of it that remains to be done, where the readouts are, how the readouts are handled, how the reaction to the readout is handled. This is a working system, and this thing is great. It only has one drawback. It doesn't tell you what direction they're going in. Obviously, if you had two of these things, one, and then another line, you could tell which way they were going. But as far as I can determine, there's no way that you can cheat. If you go by it, it's going to read it out. It's just that simple.

Unknown Questioner: This would be very helpful if you have a moment or two. We have this already up on a map here, and you probably do, too (Unintelligible).

JO: I'll do the best I can with it and my time is at your disposal. I'm going to remain until I answer all the questions that the staff desires. As I said in the meeting, we can do this down in the 2 Section.

Unknown Questioner: I appreciate that. I have one other question. We haven't noticed too much as far as the ROK Marine Corps is concerned, on the KIAs in the caves. This is a constant thing, possibly this portion should be uniform. But I have a hard time justifying the KIAs. There always seems to be "five in a cave, five in a cave, five in a cave." I don't know if you have the specific count on that. Is it valid?

JO: All right, this is NOFORN. The first thing is this: The weapons they capture in relation to the bodies that they produce is a very, very high ratio and I'm sure you've noticed this.

Unknown Questioner: Which would tend to make it valid, supposedly.

JO: That's right. That validates it, doesn't it? On the other hand, it may be that the weapons were in the caves where the people took refuge—already were in the caves—because we find many caves with abandoned weapons: small arms, rifles, and things like this. Chi Com grenades, some of our own M26 grenades that they found. But we find this everywhere. So this then tends to invalidate it and this makes you ask another question: Who were the people that were in the caves? Were they NVA? Were they VC? Or were they unfortunate civilians? That's all I've got to say on that one.

Unknown Questioner Two: Well, as long as Colonel Ord will be down for a few minutes, unless you have questions specifically (Unintelligible).

JO: Is there anything else?

Unknown Questioner Three: Yes. Lieutenant Colonel Chapman with A3 Ops. What the current concept for deployment of reconnaissance assets?

JO: That's a pretty broad order. Within the 1st Marine Division, Division Reconnaissance Battalion operates under the operational direction, if you want to call it that, of the Assistant Chief Staff G2. The 1st Force Reconnaissance Company operates under the operational control of the CO, although it's not physically located in the same area. However, when a requirement exists for an independent reconnaissance effort such as existed during Operation Taylor Common, the Force Reconnaissance Company was divorced from the recon battalion and was assigned under the operational control of CG Task Force Yankee. After Taylor Common ended, the recon requirement in the 5th Marines TAOR, which returned to its normal size—i.e., the Taylor Common area and the whole rest of the An Hoa Basin—still existed. So the First Reconnaissance Company was left in direct support of the 5th Marines, and conducted an independent reconnaissance effort down there, although in response to requirements that were generated by division as well by the 5th Marines. And the requirements that were generated by division usually were consonant with the things that the 5th Marines needed to know, and the regimental, too, and the division, too, of course, stayed locked in on it. So it operates that way or it operates directly under the CO or the recon battalion. Is that what you wanted to find out?

Unknown Questioner Three: That's part of it. We'd heard that there was consideration, assuming the operational control over force recon company. Specifically why (Unintelligible).

JO: Now you're getting into how the MAF commander utilizes the recon capability within 3 MAF. At this stage, with the 3rd Marine Division in the process of redeployment to Okinawa, he is faced with a void in the north. The 1st ARVN Division is doing a very able job, along with the 5th Mechanized Infantry Brigade, in filling the void. But the reconnaissance requirement is acute, and in order to satisfy the requirement the 3rd Force Reconnaissance Company has been left in-country, and this company now is going to execute a force reconnaissance mission under the force commander's operational control. Not only that, but the MAF is taking command, of ADCON if you wish, of the recon company. It will be based on Phu Bai. I presume that one of the reasons some of the helicopter assets were left at Phu Bai—Marine, that is—with the re-

disposition of the wing assets at Quang Tri, is to support this recon requirement. Now, in addition to the Force Reconnaissance Company, the Delta Force is operating in the northwestern part of the old 3rd Marine Division TAOR. This organization is under the operational control of CGI Corps, General Long. CGI Corps and CG 3rd MAF operate about as close as you and the guy next to your desk up in your office. So the requirements of the MAF being consonant with those of the I Corps commander are then satisfied by the manner in which the Delta Force now being used, which is to screen the area up there, find out what the hell is in it, the main crag area, the old Scotland AO, that whole area even around as far east, I think, as Mudder's Ridge, and way out toward the DMZ. This thing, then, you might say, is a MAF-directed or a MAF-coordinated effort, and now with the capability they use the 3rd Reconnaissance Company and have them directly responsive to the MAF G2. He's got an additional capability. There is, again, consideration of taking over the 1st Force Reconnaissance Company and the Army long-range reconnaissance patrol capability. I do not know at this stage exactly how far this plan has progressed. I have heard that we're considering attempting this thing sometime after the 22nd of November. As this requirement to coordinate these recon efforts grows, and the MAF has more and more of a direct operational finger in it, they have more and more operational problems that, of course, they can sidestep if the division is taking care of the requirement. Concomitantly, if they're using 1st Force Recon Company out toward the Lao border in Quang Nam, somebody's got to be able to react to them if they get in trouble. You've got to have the dedicated helicopter assets. You've got to have up to a battalion able to be lifted out there, and the air is getting less. They're moving helicopters out of country. Battalions now, in this enlarged division TAOR, are harder to come by. You've got a problem on your hands. I'm not sure they've got it worked out yet. They did not have it when I left. Anything else? All right, gentlemen, I will be available to any of you in your offices or any of the other staff sections if you want to get into any details on some of the other things you may be interested in. This terminates the debrief.

GS: Thank you Colonel Ord we appreciate you coming here, of course you said earlier you been through this yourself. We also appreciate your coming to the staff section later I'd like to talk to you myself after that, too.