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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
28TH MILITARY HISTORY DETACHMENT
11TH ARMORED CAVALRY REGIMENT
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96257

AVIC-WE

11 April 1970

SUBJECT: Exit Interview

Office, Chief of Military History
Washington, D.C. 20315

1. The following interview was conducted with Major Robert D. Foley, Commanding Officer of the 541st Military Intelligence Detachment from October 1968 to February 1969 and Regimental S-2 from February 1969 to October 1969. The interview was conducted by SP4 David E. McSpadden, 28th Military History, at Major Foley's office in Quan Loi, Republic of Vietnam.
2. The tape was recorded on side 1, channel 1, at a speed of 1 7/8 IPS on a National Tape Recorder. Tape number 5 was used.
3. There are no restrictions placed on the tape. The tape covers lessons learned in Vietnam by Major Foley.
4. Major Foley is a graduate of the University of Maryland. In 1957 he was commissioned in the Signal Corps; in 1964 he transferred to Military Intelligence. Major Foley has attended the Basic and Advanced Courses, the CIC Agent Course, Defense Against Sound Equipment Course, and the Photography Course.
5. The following is a transcript of the interview:

Question:

What are the duties and responsibilities of the Regimental S-2.

As S-2, I formulate and evaluate all information, turning it into useful intelligence which is disseminated throughout the Regiment to troop and company size units as well as to higher headquarters. We also serve as spokesman for the Regiment about the incidents and activities which occur

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in our AO. Among these we plan visual reconnaissance, B-52 and Sniffer boxes. Under my OPCON is the 541st Military Intelligence Detachment, which augments the Regiment very well with additional personnel to do the order of battle duties, the PW interrogation, the counter-intelligence activities, and the image interpretation— all of these functions contribute to the worthiness of the Regiment.

Question:

One of the past lessons learned in the 11th ACR is that intelligence from other units doesn't come quickly enough to be of tactical value— not necessarily OPCON units, but units in nearby AO's. Has this been a problem in your year here? How long does it take for this information to get here?

Answer:

I think the principal fault in this is in communication, passing information from one source to another. In the normal role of the Regiment, where we have been used as a mobile fire brigade by the Corps, at times we are introduced into new AO's where we haven't been recently and, as a result, have had to scrounge our information when we are in an AO. We initially make contact with the last tenants in the area to obtain any information they have, although it may be meager. We have our own capability of getting a good handle on an area in a matter of days where we think we know most of the MFV, IFG and history of what has happened in the area. To prevent this same thing from happening, when we leave an AO, we keep a complete data bank of all our holdings on an area and turn it over to the next recipient. We turn that information into the Division repository, when we are OPCON, so it's available for the next unit.

Question: The ARVN's are accused of being a vast security leak. Has this been a problem?

Answer:

I have heard this conjecture many times. I find in our dealings with the ARVN, in time frame here, nothing has happened to substantiate this allegation. I think, naturally, one is somewhat reserved in displaying their plans, but the Regimental CO has always dealt very freely with our Allies in that respect. I feel rightfully so. In dealing with any third nation force, it is an item which must be considered. But I think that our TO are geared on such a timely level, the enemy could not act wholeheartedly, even if he knew our plans 24 hours in advance.

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Question:

Evaluate enemy capabilities, monitoring radio, and intelligence capability. What do we need for greater security?

Answer:

The enemy's capability of intercepting our radio traffic is one of the most underrated things of this conflict. He has many English-speaking people, he realizes the merit and worth gained from this method of operation, and I think he does it to a large extent. Being a free-speaking people as the Americans are, I'm sure we give away a great deal of information in all of our media, at home as well as abroad— TV radio, and person-to-person. Because of this, in a tactical situation there are many things said in haste, in clear text which could be of great assistance to the enemy from time to time. That's why we have encrypting dividers and secure modes which we can talk over an insecure means and still be protected. It is imperative that this be pressed home to our people so we don't give away any more than we should in tactical situation.

Question:

It has been noticed that the enemy is very good at planning attacks. Is there any way we can predict the use of sapper units or their movements?

Answer:

As you may recall on the night of 11-12 August, when the last highpoint started partly against Quan Loi, Aspen, and Sidewinder, we felt we had a good handle on these attacks. The best intelligence, of course, is a human source—if possible, hearing a PW or Chieu Hoi. Second best are documents, sightings and things of this nature.

As you may recall, we had access to a Chieu Hoi on 31 July, who on the next two days revealed to us the entire attack plans of the 9th VC Division in Binh Long province. He did indicate the attacks would take place between 5 and 15 August. Having this and other indicators from sightings by the Air Cavalry Troop, discovering trail movement, visual reconnaissance sightings and other indicators of what we call early warning signals, give us a pretty good handle on things.

On the night of the attacks we did brief that we felt that the 11th was a likely night of attack. Two days, 9th and 10th, we had considerable activity on the periphery of the rubber. However, the day of the attacks

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was a complete stand down. This in itself can be an indicator, because they have already gone into their assembly areas and staging areas, and they are resting that day prior to the attacks that night.

Question:

What is the greatest lesson learned for you this year? Have any of your basic ideas changed?

Answer:

I came into this job with what I thought was a fairly open mind, trying to utilize all the assets which were available. I think our Air Cavalry Troop is the greatest asset we have from an intelligence point of view. The other assets we have such as Red Haze and Sniffer, all of these electronic devices are fine. But, they are like anything else; they are only information gathering devices. Until the information is brought back and evaluated with other information, only then does it become intelligence. As a result, sometimes we are required to react too strongly, by pressures from higher headquarters, in the utilization of these devices and the reaction to their findings. I think this is something that has been taken away from the prerogative of the CO and his staff.

Question:

Evaluate the ARVN intelligence. Would they have as much success as we have had?

Answer:

I'd answer that question with some reservation that their intelligence is good. First they have a marked advantage because they are all linguists; they have some liberties allowed in their interrogation procedures that we are not allowed. They don't have the sophistication in as many of the technical means of gathering intelligence as we do, but in time they may have these as well. I think their capability is quite good; however, the limitations are the same as all intelligence people have had in the past wars— information, when it becomes intelligence, is useful only when it is acted upon a timely basis. Many times the ARVN element is so regimented that until the boss at the highest level says this is what we will do, no one is allowed the freedom of action until the plan is concurred by many channels. We think this is one of the drawbacks in their system.

Question:

From past experience, what would you change in the S-2 organization?

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Answer:

I think you first have to think of those things you desire and those things that are feasible. As far as personnel, our present system, as long as it is augmented by BIC, is adequate. Even though we are fighting a war, there are still many paperwork submissions that must be made. As a result, from a clerical and administrative standpoint, our section could stand some augmentation.

One thing I think would assist over here, not just from an intelligence viewpoint but also operationally, if we could increase the secure mode of communication down to the troop level. So, the command track would at least have security with its squadron and in turn, as the squadron does with the Regiment. We could control a great deal of this random transmission that does give the enemy information.

The one other addition, if it could be programmed far enough in advance, would be to have the S-2 take the 47 week Vietnamese Language Course. I think one could do his job better because he could communicate first-party rather than through a liaison or interpreter. I think this would establish more rapport between the S-2 and the counterparts.

Question:

How do determine the reliability of interviews with Chieu Hoi?

ANSWER:

Most of the PW's or Chieu Hoi's, once you overcome their initial fear and gain their confidence, establish a rapport. It's found that they are effective talkers and quite willing to talk. Generally speaking, they are quite cooperative. They don't think of themselves as traitors or stool pigeons when they talk. One of the reasons, I think, is that when they come into our hands, they immediately find that the truth has been misrepresented.