

Interview with Samuel Halpern

by Dr. Mary S. McAuliffe

15 January 1988

Alexandria, Virginia

ORIGINAL DRAFT with markings by Mr. Halpern

2202 Popkins Lane
Alexandria, VA 22307
February 13, 1988

Dr. Mary S. McAuliffe
Staff Historian
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Dear Dr. McAuliffe,

Enclosed is the corrected transcript of my interview of January 15, 1988. I am sorry I was not able to fill in all the several blanks. If I could hear the tape, I might be able to decipher it. My compliments to the transcriber for getting as much as is there.

I did not realize I was being so earthy, for which I apologize, nor that I was talking in incomplete sentences. The text would never pass muster as even a draft of a term paper in class, but it is what I said. I hope it is still helpful.

Follow up ((If you haven't already received a copy, I suggest you ask [redacted] of HIC for a copy of some ten pages I put together on the "Booknotes" of Bill Buckley's Mongoose, R.I.P. They are more complete than my comments on that subject in my interview and should be appended to it.

I enjoyed doing the interview and am available to do more on subjects thought to be useful.

Sincerely yours,

Samuel Halpern
Samuel Halpern

Interview with Samuel Halpern
 15 January 1988 Alexandria, Virginia
 by Mary S. McAuliffe

MSM: We'll go back to the beginning of MONGOOSE, we're talking 1961 the last part of 1961 through '63 to some extent.

SH: MONGOOSE actually finished at the end of the Missile Crisis in 1962 and lasted exactly one year. From October '61 to January '62 I was Deputy Chief of what was then called "Branch 4" of the Western Hemisphere Division. Branch 4 consisted of Cuba and all the Caribbean Islands. When we started into MONGOOSE, by the time January came around it was quite clear that that couldn't exist any longer in that particular organizational bureaucratic setup, and Dick Helms, who was then the ^{eputy} D/DDP, I guess it was, or Chief of ^{perations} ~~Office~~, I guess, decided to take Cuba, at least, out of WH4 and set it up as a separate branch within WH, still under the Division Chief, ^{then} ~~and~~ Col. J. C. King. In January of '62, because things were getting hot and heavy with the Kennedys on our tail, and I kept screaming--oh, by the way, the man who was the Branch Chief was Ghosn Zogby (of Lebanese extraction), who was a long time Agency employee (he's now dead, unfortunately)--he was Branch Chief, I was his Deputy, of so-called Branch 4. When Cuba was taken out and made a separate branch under J. C. King, Zog (nickname) continued as ^{Cuba} Branch Chief, and I continued as his Deputy until I was screaming loud and long to Dick Helms that this is crazy. MONGOOSE, because it was called MONGOOSE as of October ¹⁹⁶¹ ~~and~~ I'm the guy who came up with the name,--I'll give

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called MONGOOSE as of October 1961--and I'm the guy who came up with the name--I'll give you that background later--which, by the way was never used in the Agency. It was never an Agency crypt. It was an Agency-supplied cryptonym, but we never used it.

MSM: What did you use in the Agency? Was that where "Caribbean Survey Group" came in?

SH: No. That was a bunch of nonsense. The Caribbean Survey Group was something totally different. I'll get into that later. Anyway, I kept screaming to Helms that the likes of a Zogby and a Halpern are not what this operation needs, because this was not a CIA operation, it was a political operation, in the city of Washington, D.C. And, being a political operation, you have to have a big name in charge, you have to have some political power. And I started off with Helms, and he said, "OK, who do you want, smart guy?" So I started off saying, "I think we need Des Fitzgerald," who was then Chief of FE Division (and I'd been his Executive Officer in FE years ago, now called EA Division). But he said "No, he's fighting a war in Vietnam, can't use him." I said, "OK, my second choice is Al Ulmer," who was then Chief of Station in Paris. I had been Al's Exec in FE Division when he was Chief of FE in '56 or '57, '58, I guess. And he said, "No, can't spare him." My third choice was Tom Karamessines, who was then either Chief

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in Vienna or Chief in Rome, I'm not quite sure. I think Chief in Rome. Again, Dick said, "Nope, can't spare him." I said, "My fourth choice is Bill Harvey," who was then Chief, FI Staff/Division D, and I thought he could be spared. Anyway, Dick said, "I'll think about it." A few weeks later, still January of 1962, Bill Harvey came over to a meeting we were holding, Zog and I were holding, in terms of what do we do to answer some of the pressure from the White House. How do we write papers which in effect says to the President "You're just full of it, it isn't going to work, you've got no assets, you wanted it all done by mirrors, and we can't do it, but we'll try." Well, that is not a forward looking paper. And Zog and I had to have some kind of help in terms of how do you draft in the English language something which says: "It isn't going to work, boss, but we'll try." And make it sound good! Anyway, Bill came over one day to one of these meetings, and I thought to myself then, "Whoops, maybe we're going to get Bill to take over." Because this is a political operation inside the bureaucracy of Washington, DC; it's got nothing to do with Castro. Bill came over, and shortly after that particular meeting, which was then in the old Quarters Eye Building, where we were still stationed in the old Bay of Pigs offices--shortly after that, Bill became the Chief of what later became Task Force W. And when Bill came over and Task Force W was created, it was quite clear that Bill could not be subordinate to J. C. King, so Cuba was taken away from WH

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Division and made a completely separate task force all of its own. So, from being Deputy Chief of Branch 4 in WH Division, I became the Executive Assistant to the Chief of the Task Force, TFW, in January '62. I presume that answers your question.

MSM: Yes, very completely. Thank you. My next one will be a broad sort of one. What, as an Agency historian, do you think I should know about Operation MONGOOSE that I might not know--that is not known or has been misrepresented?

SH: Oh, that's easy. Let me start off--I happen to have this by accident, sheer accident--Bill Buckley's new book, called MONGOOSE, RIP. He says it's fiction, but he also says, on pages 319 and 320, in something he calls "Booknotes," he says, "This is a work of fiction. The most conspicuous historical characters are obviously characters in history. And some of the episodes are drawn from official and non-official, but creditable sources." I'm still reading. I'll take this apart bit by bit as we go and you'll understand why I'm doing it. "Operation MONGOOSE was the name given by the CIA to the attempt to assassinate Castro from 1961 to 1962 and to related questions." Period. End of Quote. That is a bald-face lie from beginning to end. The name MONGOOSE was not a name given by CIA to any operations. Ed Lansdale, General Lansdale, as the Chief of Operations for what became known as Operation

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General of the United States, who we'll presume reported to the President, his brother. Lansdale asked CIA--and I was the officer involved--for a cryptonym he could use for this national--I use the word, "national"--operation. All agencies were involved. It was not a CIA operation. I went to the cryptic reference officer--I forget her name, Mrs. Gilbert, I think--at the time, and I said, "Give me a cryptonym with a digraph on the other side of the world--away from WH Division or Latin America." I said, "This is going to get all over the building anyway, let's confuse them as much as we can for at least five minutes. And when the cryptonym gets all over the world, let's confuse the Russians for a while, because their penetrations abroad will pick it up faster than we will."

But, being an old Far East hand, I said, "How about See what they've got in the MO digraphs." She came up with a whole list of digraphs, and I remember telling this to Fritz Schwartz of the Church Committee Staff. He thought I was playing games when I picked MONGOOSE, because of the old story about the mongoose and the snake--an old Indian proverb or legend. I said, "Nope, I'm not that smart. Totally ignorant. The word MONGOOSE just sounded good." So I picked MONGOOSE, and I gave it to Ed Lansdale. It was his cryptonym, his operation. It was a across-the-board Army, Navy, Air Force, State Department, Commerce Department, Treasury Department--every agency in the government was involved in this one. It was not just ~~something~~ simply a CIA operation.

And we never, never, never used MONGOOSE inside the Agency as a cryptonym to refer to TFW. We had our own action indicator for cables and dispatches, and we had our own info indicator, and that's what we used. We never referred to it as MONGOOSE. I had one rubber stamp made, just for fun and games. I had one rubber stamp made--MONGOOSE. It never saw an inkpad. To this day, it's as clean as a bell. It's never been used. The reason I can say that is because I have it. As a souvenir. So, people talking about MONGOOSE as a CIA operation are just talking through their hat, they're dead wrong. And even looking at the Church Committee reports, you will find that they don't refer to MONGOOSE as a CIA operation. CIA was part of it, no question of that. But so was the Army, so was the Navy, so was everybody else, including the State Department. And that's where you get that reference to the Caribbean Survey Group. That's a State Department, was a State Department-run coordination committee of sorts. It had a fancy title, that's all. It was part of the MONGOOSE activities, but that was State's share of the operation. So, let me keep on going here. He [Buckley] says: "MONGOOSE was a name given by CIA to the attempted assassination of Castro." Not true. MONGOOSE was never an operation designed to assassinate Castro per se. MONGOOSE was an operation to change the government of Cuba, and there were no holds barred, that's true. And if that meant assassination, or if somebody felt that meant assassination,

so be it. But it was not started out as an assassination operation. It was not meant to be an assassination operation per se. The idea was to somehow change the government of Cuba. Even as Lansdale's stupid memorandum talking about assassination, or ~~we're~~ not using the word "assassination" -- that was an afterthought. ^{(I believe Lansdale used "liquidation of leaders" or "some such phrase,"} That came much later in the game.

MSM: In August of '62.

SH: Yes. And we'd been operating since October '61, for God's sakes. So, for Buckley or anybody else to label MONGOOSE a) as a CIA operation and, b) as an attempt to assassinate Castro, is crazy. It's just absolutely false. Let me go on to the next one he's got here. All of which he's trying to prove that everything he's got in here, while it's fiction, is based upon fact. It's not. He says: "The attempt to assassinate Castro via a wet suit to be given to Fidel Castro by James Donovan without his knowledge was made." Not true. The wet suit wasn't even bought. We never even had a wet suit. ^(I don't think.) Donovan went ahead and did it on his own without referring to anybody, as a gift in terms of his negotiations about freeing the Bay of Pigs prisoners. The business of a wet suit was somebody's brainchild. The name of the man who thought of the idea was George McManus. I don't think George is alive anymore, but anyway, George came up with the idea,

"Look let's give Jim a present to give to Castro." And the idea was not to assassinate Castro via the wet suit, anyway. It was to disable him, make him sick. But the thing never got off the ground. ^{I don't think we} ~~He never~~ even bought the wet suit. Didn't need to, because by the time we were thinking about it and discussing it and wondering what the devil to put into the wet suit to make him sick, Jim had already given him the wet suit. So we dropped it. And that brings me to another point that's in the beginning of the book here, by the way. Very fortuitous. Buckley starts off the book, in an unnumbered page right in the beginning, quoting from the Church Committee Report, which says, "We have found concrete evidence of at least eight plots involving the CIA to assassinate Fidel Castro from 1960 to 1965." That's totally false. There were no eight plots, because among the plots--the ~~the~~ so-called alleged eight plots--one is the wet suit, which never went off the drawing board. Another one was Des FitzGerald's idea of that exploding seashell. And that one never got off the drawing board; it never even got on the drawing board. Des came in one morning and said he had come up with an idea while he was shaving. "Let's make up a fancy seashell, fill it with explosives, put it on the ground, on the seabed, and when Castro sees it he's bound to go for it, and it will blow up in his face." I looked at Des and I said, "You're crazy. It'll never work." He says, "You're always negative. Go talk to TSD." It's now called OTS. I said, "Okay, I'll talk to them,

but it's crazy. How the hell are you going to control that thing? How are you going to make him go for that one shell among a lot of others on the seabed? In the first place, how the hell are we going to get it onto the seabed?" And he says, "Go find out." Okay, I dutifully went and talked to the TSD people. They looked at me and said, "Is Des kidding?" I said, "No, he wants to know what's the chances." "Tell him it's zero." So I went back and told Des it was zero. That, ⁱⁿ my opinion, is not a plot. And neither is it an attempt to do something. It never got off the ground. And among these eight that they've listed--and I remember making the same notations on the report when I wrote it and made my comments on it...

MSM: This is indeed a quote from the Church Committee?

SH: This is a quote from the Church Committee Report. Among those eight plots are things like this which never got off the ground. We sat around and thought of all kinds of crazy things, because those were the requirements--to think of all kinds of crazy things, and we did. But they weren't plots; they weren't attempted. There were a few that were, and we can get into those later. So, what is being said as fact is not. It's just not true. And, let me go on. OK, the top of page 320: "The attempt to poison Castro by poison pills through his mistress is factual (e.g., Paul Meskil, 'CIA Sent

The very next sentence, after the one quoted from the Church report, in the same paragraph, the report says that not all the plots were actually put into effect and that most ~~of~~ stayed as ideas. P. 71 of the Church Committee report on Alleged Assassinations

(See Vol. I of
the House
Assassination
Committee
Report of 1979
pp. 156-157,
p. 176 and
p. 169.)

Bedmate to Kill Castro,' New York Daily News, June 13, 1976)." The woman--and I remember the story though I don't have the clipping. I remember the story. The woman may have actually felt that she was recruited and working for CIA. We never, never, never, never sent a mistress or a bedmate or whatever you want to call it as one of the activities to try to undo Castro. We just didn't. Other people may have used CIA in terms of a false flag recruitment and convinced her they were working for CIA, and that happened many a time. We know, for example, that the US Army, Army Intelligence, used CIA for cover in some of its activities in support of Operation MONGOOSE, down in Miami, but we didn't know a damn thing about it. And they were claiming they were CIA operators, and recruiting people. And I think there is pretty good circumstantial evidence, if not hard evidence, that the Garcia ^{Kohly} counterfeiting plan, for which they went to prison--he and a brother, or he and a son, went to prison for counterfeiting Cuban pesos--I think the poor people were just taken down a garden path. They thought they were counterfeiting for the CIA. And they weren't. We never got into that. The Army did, I think. And the Army, I think again, used CIA as part of a false flag recruitment for a lot of people. So, I think this poor woman, and she may very well have gone to Cuba for all I know, but she didn't do it for CIA. And we've tried, but there is no way you can correct ^{the} ~~historical~~ ^{public} record. It's impossible. It just won't wash.

Even if you got all the files out, nobody is going to believe you. But that never happened. We did not use the woman to try to get close to Castro. No way. So that's a phony one. Let me think. No, we did try to give him a rifle.

MSM: Which ones are correct in there? In his list.

SH: Well, I'll give them to you. "The allegation to the effect that the Soviet Union had left in hiding in Cuba one or more nuclear missiles, were made by Cuban refugee sources and later by Senator Keating." That's true. Allegations to that effect were made. So that part is true. And Keating was one of the ones making it. But he [Buckley] goes on to say, "These charges were denied by Robert McNamara and John McCone on February 6, 1963." And that's also true. But there was never any evidence that any of the missiles were ever left behind in Cuba. And there wasn't enough geological evidence--and I use ^{word} that ^{carefully}, because the idea was that these missiles were being hidden in caves.

MSM: McCone worried about it extensively.

SH: Oh yeah, and we had cave experts up the gazoo going into this whole thing in terms of the size and shape and configuration of the caves of Cuba, and there was lots of information about it, believe me. Nonpolitical stuff. Purely measurements and what have you. A lot of people ^{had} done a lot of work on that.

And the DDI people in those days were able to dig it all up and prove that you couldn't put those missiles in any of the caves in Cuba. Not unless they built special caves for them. And there was no indication that they had ever done anything like that. So, true, allegations were made, and, true, the allegations were denied. He's right about that. I don't know anything about the assassination of Blanco Rico by Rolando Cubela, and that I presume he got from the sources he lists here, as well as I'm sure Granma, the Cuban newspaper, had a lot about Cubela at the time of Cubela's trial. And so a lot of it may have come out there. That I just don't know. The next one is true. The attempt to expedite the assassination of Castro by providing Cubela with an appropriate sniper's rifle is factual. That part is true. ~~The only trouble was, he never accepted it.~~ He never took the pen, the hypodermic pen, that we prepared for him. And the rifle, I don't think he ever took, either. Although we were authorized to give it to him. Or, rather, Des had authorized us to give it to him. The next one is the statement by Castro threatening retaliation against political assassination--that's factual. Yeah, he uses an awful source for that. There's no reason to use George ^{Crile} ~~Kyle~~ on that as a source, ¹⁹⁷⁶ ~~1975~~ [^] Washington Post article of May 2, 1976. Castro's statement was made in September of 1963, and Tad Szulc used it quite a bit, FBIS had it, so there is no reason to use George ^{Crile} ~~Kyle~~ as a source on this. And this one is a queer one: "The sponsorship of Operation MONGOOSE by

(See pp 89+90 of the Church Committee Alleged Assassination Report for discussion about the rifle.)

President Kennedy and Attorney General Robert Kennedy is asserted by Thomas Powers and John Ranelagh." Why use Powers and Ranelagh as sources for that? The Church Committee will tell you that right there. That's crazy. The next one is: "Although any direct knowledge of the plan to assassinate Castro was denied by CIA director John McCone, (Church Committee, Powers, Ranelagh) it is widely questioned that he was in fact ignorant of the operation." He was ignorant of the operation, believe me. He didn't know a bloody thing about it. McCone was literally ignorant of the operation. Nobody was about to go check with him on this one. And, again, the Church Committee report is very clear that depending upon which activity you were talking about, McCone never knew about the Rosselli business; without question he knew nothing about the the Rosselli business. ~~without question he never knew about the Rosselli business.~~ And as far as the AM/LASH or the Cubela activity is concerned, I doubt if even Helms knew about it at the time. Des was keeping this close to his chest. And, as I reported to the House Assassinations Committee under Congressman Stokes several years later, there were four people who knew about the attempt to assassinate Castro using Cubela, and the four were: me, the case officer involved dealing with Cubela, Des Fitzgerald, and the doctor who provided us with the fountain pen made into a hypodermic and told us what to use. Four people in the Agency. Those were the days when you could

still maintain some kind of limited activity, or limited knowledge rather than activity. As I said, I don't think Des even told Helms about it, let alone McCone.

MSM: Why not McCone?

SH: It's the same as you don't tell the President the details. The job of the Agency is to carry out orders. The details are something else.

MSM: And the orders came from...? This is the old question.

SH: As far as I'm concerned, it came from John F. Kennedy.

MSM: Through Bobby?

SH: Through Bobby.

MSM: Through Lansdale? Or just directed?

SH: Directed. Des and ^{the} Kennedys were pretty close.

MSM: Do you know that for a fact, or is that just simply the way you assume it must have been?

SH: I think it's the way he reacted, the way he talked, the way Des talked. The pressures Des relayed. His attitude when the President was killed. And the conversations he had with his wife, Barbara, in terms of going over to the house, the Kennedy house. Things like that. There's no question in my mind, they were close. Now, how close, I don't know. First name basis, sure, no problem. Whether they talked to each other about investments or whether they went on vacations together or not, I don't know. But as far as this particular activity is concerned, there is no question in my mind. Des wasn't just doing these things out of his own mind. The pressures that he relayed practically every morning when we got into the office were just unbelievable. I've never been on an operation like that before in my life, and I have been in some fairly sensitive ones. It was just different. It was just an attitude. We were all under the gun to do something and do it fast. And there were no excuses accepted of any kind.

MSM: "You," meaning you, Helms, FitzGerald, Harvey...?

SH: Well, there are two different periods

MSM: Yes, I realize I'm mixing two periods.

SH: And I happened to be in both periods, unfortunately.

MSM: Pre-Missile Crisis, post-Missile Crisis...

SH: Yes.

MSM: By "under the gun," you mean the pressure that was being exerted by Bobby?

SH: By Bobby and by the President.

MSM: By Bobby on behalf of the President?

SH: Oh yeah. Bobby was on the phone to case officers on the Task Force, and later the Task Force became ~~called~~ SAS. And Bobby's secretary--Angie, or Angela--she was on the phone relaying orders from Bobby, as well. To case officers, right down in the--we were in the basement, ~~GE~~^A, whatever it was--and I remember we had to have a case officer, for example, whose sole job was to carry out Bobby's wishes vis-a-vis the underworld--let me call it the gangster world. This case officer was given--and I'm not trying to be racial on this thing, or ethnic--was given an Italian-sounding name. The guy looked like he belonged on the Redskins' line. Huge, big, hulking guy. Lovely fellow, marvelous guy. And his sole job in life was to go to the various people that Bobby sent him to, all underworld types, all across the United States, because Bobby had the idea that since the underworld had had

lots of connections inside of pre-Castro Cuba, that they must have left their own staybehinds behind there. And therefore they knew the place, and had the place pretty well wired for information. Knew how to survive. And why the hell wasn't CIA tapping this resource, this marvelous resource? And we had to tap it. So we assigned one guy full time, and the telephone calls he got from Bobby, right out in the--we had a big front area, the only way we could devise it: there was the Chief's office, the Deputy Chief's office, my office, and then what they called the "big arena," where we had ^{several} ~~a bunch of~~ secretaries out in a big bullpen kind of thing. We had a couple of phones, the outside lines, out in that bullpen. And ~~that thing~~ Charlie was always answering the phone or being called to the phone, because his boss was calling--namely, Bobby. And, "OK," Charlie would say, "Guess I got another trip to make." And so, the pressure was direct. It didn't go through channels, believe me. McCone didn't even know about all this. Helms didn't know about this, except for what Des told him. Charlie would stick his head in to me--he wasn't going to bother, first Bill Harvey, and then later Des--he wasn't going to bother them with all those details. "I'm going off on a trip." You don't bother the boss with, "I'm going off to Denver, I'm going off to Las Vegas, I'm going off to Miami, or whatever. He would stick his head in and say, "I'm off again, Sam, good-bye." I'd say, "See you when you get back." What else can you do? And the whole idea was to

go out and talk to these people, whoever they were, and bring back all these wonderful ideas on how to get rid of Castro. And that was the phraseology--"get rid of Castro." It didn't mean assassinate him, per se, just meant change the government. But if it meant assassination, fine, too.

MSM: Bobby used that phrase extensively in meetings, and it can be taken either way.

SH: Take it exactly what the phrase is--"get rid of." He didn't say, "get rid of, except don't have him break a leg," or "get rid of, but don't have him catch a cold"--just "get rid of." You can take it any way you want. There were no holds barred.

MSM: Most of the activity, the assassination attempts, you seem to indicate took place under Des Fitzgerald rather than...

SH: Not true, not true. The ones I knew about. There's only one basically, the AM/LASH operation. The only one I was directly involved in. I say these four people were the only ones involved in that one. Under Harvey, Harvey being a good old bureau man, kept his own counsel, and all of his dealings with Rosselli were unknown to me and unknown to his deputy. (Pause for telephone call). I was commenting about the fact that under Harvey, his dealings with Rosselli were not known to

anybody. They weren't known to Ted Shackley as Chief of Miami (JMWAVE in Miami, the station). They were not known to Bruce Cheever, who was Harvey's deputy. They were not known to me, Harvey's Exec. Harvey kept his own counsel. And I guess about the only one who even knew that Harvey had been in touch with Rosselli may have been Shef Edwards, but Shef would never know the details. Shef maybe put Rosselli and Harvey together, or at least his Office of Security did, originally, but Harvey wouldn't tell anybody a bloody thing, I'm sure. So McCone wouldn't know about that, and that's what I was referring to here. I think McCone's an honest guy, and when he said he didn't know that there was an assassination going on or _____? what have you, I believe him. Every second of the way.

would need to hear tape

MSM: How come Helms didn't?

SH: What Harvey told Helms, I have no way of knowing. On the AM/LASH?

MSM: No, I mean Helms didn't seem to believe that McCone could not have known.

SH: Well, the only thing I think with McCone is the same, and he said it in the Church Committee report, is that he couldn't have gone along with any kind of assassination because he

would have been excommunicated from the Church, and he is a very devout Catholic. And so, I take the man at his word. Why Helms thought that McCone had to know something, I don't know.

MSM: Because he did indicate this again and again throughout the hearings. It's an interesting mystery.

SH: I don't know. He had better relationships with McCone than I ever did, that's for sure. So I don't know. I didn't know McCone from a whole in a wall. First time I really got to see McCone in action was when I was a DDP representative to the inter-agency committee doing the after-action report on the Cuban missile crisis, which McCone chaired. And I saw him first time in action, in real action, with coat off ~~and in~~ shirtsleeves, into the wee hours of the morning--and it was quite a session, several sessions. And McCone was a rough taskmaster, very rough. And at the time I thought he was an awful DCI, but in retrospect, I think he was the best one we ever had.

MSM: For what reasons?

SH: The guy knew how to manage. He had to ^{be close} ~~yield~~ to the President, which is the first job of any DCI--at least in our days, that was the first thing. We didn't have to worry about Congress

^ so much in those days. And maybe it's ^{new} in the world now, and you have to divide your loyalty, which I think is wrong. Because as far as I'm concerned, CIA is a part of the Executive Branch, and the head of the Executive Branch is the President, and not the Congress. And I think there's a division of labor there which Congress steps over the line too often on all kinds of things, not just intelligence. Anyway, McCone had good relations with the President, both Kennedy and then Lyndon Johnson, and when he lost that good connection with the President, Johnson, he quit. And that was the right thing to do. And he quit in '65. He wasn't asked to leave, he quit. And I think McCone knew how to get things done, knew how to manage, knew how to delegate, and did not confuse himself with all kinds of minutiae, as some of our Presidents have done. Like Carter and Kennedy.

MSM: Kennedy, too?

SH: Oh, Kennedy was awful on minutiae. As I testified to the Church Committee--Bobby, particularly, and the Special Group (Augmented), which was the group that oversaw or had the oversight for the Operation MONGOOSE--when we presented plans to them for sabotage operations into Cuba, the questions were, "What kind of shoelaces are the men going to wear?," and "what's the gradient of the beach?," and "what kind of sand is there?" Now that's ridiculous for a man at that level to

worry about that kind of stuff. That's the same thing that happened during the missile crisis itself, when the White House was trying to tell the Navy commanders at sea, the Admiral of the ^{Atlantic} Fleet, how to load his guns. In what order to put the armour piercing, the tracers, what have you, bullets in the machine guns, in the airplanes. Now that's nonsense. And this is why, I think, George Anderson finally ended up as Ambassador to Portugal. He got kicked out of the CNO job because he tried to tell the White House, "Hey look, the Navy knows how to run a ship at sea, for God sakes." And that's why I say McCone was a good officer, a good director--I think he's the best. So anyway, that digresses from MONGOOSE.

MSM: Can we go back to the beginning of MONGOOSE?

SH: We can go back. I just took this [Buckley book] as a text. I got so mad when I read that. Because people will believe it. That's the trouble.

MSM: You were talking about MONGOOSE's origins in October of '61. The first document I find in DCI papers is the first meeting McCone attends. It appears to be an early meeting, if not the first. As I recall, it is about November 21st in '61. Richard Goodwin is there, I believe, Lansdale, Bobby, the President and McCone. Very small group. And they are discussing things, and it is very much at the beginning.

SH: It's not really the beginning

MSM: It's after the beginning, okay. And McCone says, "Okay, this is fine, but all this activity, all these operations, are going to have to come under the oversight of the 5412 Committee. The President agrees, and Bobby agrees. Somewhere along the line we seem to get a Special Group (Augmented). It is never quite clear. Is Special Group (Augmented) the Special Group 5412 plus Bobby?

SH: Yes. And Taylor, General Taylor. That's the augmentation. You've got it, right there.

MSM: I've read it a different way. I think Powers, Ranelagh and those have described it as coming out of Special Group (CI), which was a much larger...

SH: Much larger.

MSM: And CI seemed to have nothing to do with Cuba. It was everything but.

SH: That's correct. I think the Church Committee history of that, I think Karalek^{As} got this particular part of it right. She got a lot of things wrong. As a matter of fact, when her history came out, in '75 or '76, I sent her something like

twenty-odd pages of handwritten corrections of things that I knew about, so she didn't get it ^{all} right, either. But I think in this particular aspect...[comment on Church Committee report]. Oh, there's tons of stuff that's wrong with that.

You should see my copy of the thing, it's all marked up. Of things that I know about. God knows there's lots of things I don't know about. And I know more than I need to know, I suppose anyway. But anyway, coming back to the Special Group (Augmented) and the origins of Operation MONGOOSE, I think that the creation of the Augmented, I think it's fairly accurate if my memory serves me, in the Church Committee Report itself--and you can check that, look at it. I don't want to take the time now; we can if you want to. But let me give you a little bit of background on this. I came back from Saigon in October '61. And after giving my report to both Des, who was then chief of FE Division, and to Bissell, and to (I guess) Helms, as to what I thought about the situation in Vietnam at the time--and this was when there was a grand total of 3,000 Americans--men, women, and children--in Saigon, if you can imagine what it was like. It was beautiful. Still a little old French city, except that the VC, the Viet Cong, were all over the place. After giving my report about how bad I thought the situation was and some recommendations as to what should be done, I was told to take a few days off, go home and relax, forget about it. And I didn't have any assignment at the time as to what I was going to do next. I

I'd have
to hear
the tape to
try to sort out
this piece.

^ was sitting out in the back yard here and had the radio on and a beer in hand, and suddenly they announced that Walt Rostow and two guys from the White House were going out ^{on} ~~in~~ a mission to look at the situation in Vietnam. I said, "Well, my report had some effect, anyway. They won't believe me, but at least they're going to go check me out." I went back into the office in October '61, and I was told to go see Bissell. Bissell, whose career had been ruined by the Bay of Pigs, and everybody knew it, and he didn't know how long he was going to be around anyway--he allowed as how he had a job for me. And the job was Cuba. And I said, "Where the hell is that?" And so, he sent me over to see Zog. And that was the first time I'd ever met Zog. And then, that same day Bissell called for both Zog and me to come back and talk to him. And it was at that time, early October '61 (and I can look it up on my old calendar to see just what day it was, if necessary), he said--and this is actually quoted in the Church Committee report, because I'm the guy who told them--Bissell said he had been in the Cabinet Room at the White House, and he was told by both the President and by Bobby to get off his ass and get rid of Castro. That's the beginning of MONGOOSE, as far as I know it. And then he said that Ed Lansdale was probably going to be in charge of the operation. It was going to be a government-wide operation, under tight control, and that Ed would probably come over to get a briefing from us. Well, Ed came over--this was before MONGOOSE itself was actually

formalized, because I don't think that was formalized until sometime in November--McCone wasn't even on the scene yet. McCone may have been a gleam in Kennedy's eye, but he sure as hell wasn't in charge yet. He was ^{not} on deck. I don't think McCone came around until November, sometime. Ed came over and started all kinds of screwball ideas and laid out his plan for the operation. All the agencies of the government, particularly CIA, State Department and ~~and~~ aspects of the Defense Department were going to detail men, money and materiel, plus space, to what amounts to a new agency headed by Lansdale. And these people and the money and everything else was going to be taken away from these agencies, on detail, and Ed was going to run a new agency against Castro. This was Ed's idea. No other way to do it. Well, we thought it was crazy.

MSM: McCone thought it was crazy.

SH: You're damn right, because we sent out papers right away saying, "Whoops, what's going on here?" McCone, Rusk and MacNamara, not only said "No," they said "Hell, no. The money is appropriated to the respective agencies by the Congress of the United States; we're responsible to the Congress of the United States for that money, etc. etc. You can't take the stuff away from us. We'll do all we can to help, but through the normal chains of command." So in effect, Lansdale became

Chief of Operations, technically and theoretically through the various Secretaries--the two Secretaries and the DCI plus whatever other agencies he needed help from. In practice, Ed dealt directly, for example, with ~~with~~ Bill Harvey after Bill was named in January of '62. Before then, Lansdale dealt directly with Zogby and me. And he used as his ^{liaison with us, a} ~~man named Frank Hand,~~ ^{man named Frank Hand,} ~~quits; switch to second side)~~ ^{man named Frank Hand,} . . . and Frank was the guy who was actually the legman between Lansdale and Zog and me. I knew Frank from way back--he was an old Agency guy, and he had been sent to the Pentagon on detail. As a matter of fact it was Frank's suggestion that got me thinking about ~~about~~ something bigger than a Zogby and a Halpern. At this level, you need some political weight in this town, and that's when I went through that whole business about getting somebody else. And I remember Frank saying, when Bill Harvey was picked in January, he said to me, "Now, Sam, the Agency is showing good sense. They finally put a real top-notch operator in charge." That was the attitude of Bill as a rough tough s.o.b. On the outside. Inside, he was soft as melted butter. A wonderful guy to work for. If you didn't mind having a loaded gun pointed at you. So MONGOOSE began in October '61, shortly after I got back from Saigon, and didn't become formalized until, I think it was, November '61, and that's when you had your meetings that you probably have records of.

MSM: Right. Right. There's a Presidential Directive that appears at the end of the month.

SH: Okay, as you well know, by the time a Presidential Directive gets put together and signed, a hell of a lot of stuff has happened before. And, while theoretically that's the formal beginning of an activity, its genesis is long before that. It's just like the Church Committee. It didn't spring up out of nothing in January of '75, it began months and months and months before, by other people who were looking into destroying CIA, and they succeeded. Anyway, that's the beginning of MONGOOSE. And, as I say, I didn't even give that the cryptonym until sometime in '62. So, you didn't even have a name for it. But he was looking for it. That's the beginning of it.

MSM: A period that I find terribly interesting in respect to MONGOOSE is the Cuban missile crisis. During the crisis, the Agency has been portrayed as being a rogue elephant in Cuba, and...

SH: And Garthoff's latest articles about the teams that Bill sent in?

MSM: Right. What was really going on with Operation MONGOOSE during the Cuban missile crisis?

SH: The teams that Bill sent in were not sabotage teams, contrary to what Garthoff says. They were, in effect, pathfinder teams. Intelligence teams, reconnaissance teams--whatever phraseology you want to use. They were not, repeat not, sabotage teams. And you don't have to accept my word for it: go talk to the guys involved who were down in Miami at the time. Talk to Ted Shackley--that's who ^{ere} the teams left from, from Florida. And Ted is in town somewhere. But those were pathfinder teams. Reconnaissance teams. Bill's idea was, that if the US forces were going in--and everything looked like they were going to go in (they sure as hell were getting ready for an invasion, and they were making no secret of it, they wanted the Russians to know)--they were going to need some kind of help getting in. And it is always nice to have somebody on the beach waving you in, telling you that's the way to go. Rather than go stumbling across some landmines or something.

MSM: Was this his idea alone?

SH: Bill's? That I don't know.

MSM: This is what I need to find out.

SH: I don't know if you'll ever find out. Maybe you'll find out by talking to Ted, but it's possible even Ted wouldn't know.

Bill was a man who kept his own counsel. I don't think Bruce Cheever would know either, if you talked to Bruce--Harvey's deputy.

MSM: My question really comes down to, when did the President call a halt to MONGOOSE operations?

SH: It was long after the Missile Crisis.

MSM: Okay. Because it has been claimed that the intent of and the direction from Bobby and the President was to call a halt to operations in Cuba during the Missile Crisis.

SH: We never got any word. At least I never saw any orders to that effect. MONGOOSE was a hell of a lot more than just an assassination plot, as I tried to explain. All of our activities around the world, in terms of intelligence collection--all of our assets inside the island of Cuba, on the island of Cuba, were still being tasked for collection of intelligence, no matter what the hell was going on. And in that regard, MONGOOSE didn't shut down. Until after the missile crisis.

MSM: And as far as you know, no one told or gave the direction to shut it down?

SH: Never saw it. Never heard of it.

MSM: Was Harvey fired or removed from Task Force W during the middle of this missile crisis? And, if so, what happened?

SH: I think it was right after--well, the Missile Crisis only lasted about what--ten days?

MSM: It was over by October 28.

SH: Yes, 14 days, two weeks. What happened, as far as I know it--and this differs from what you're going to get from Walt Elder, if you talk to Walt (Walt was McCone's Exec., and sometimes I think he forgot he that was an Exec. and not the Director, but that's between Walt and me, and we've had this over the years--we're old buddies). Harvey, at the White House, told the President and Bobby what he thought of them in no uncertain gutter language, in McCone's presence. He just let himself go. The exact words I'll never know--I don't think anybody will ever know unless McCone remembers them. But Bill was so mad, so angry at the whole effort (I guess maybe even starting with the Bay of Pigs, for all I know)--at the attitude and the way the Kennedys handled themselves, in that they were more concerned about the Kennedy escutcheon than they were about the security and safety of the United States. The Kennedy name meant more to them than anything

else. And Bill just let himself go, to the point where McCone had to remove him and couldn't let him go back to the White House again.

MSM: This was during the missile crisis?

SH: During the Missile Crisis.

MSM: Do you know when?

SH: I'd have to really think about that one. I just don't know.

MSM: Where did you hear this? I'm curious.

SH: From Bill.

MSM: From Bill!

SH: And from Bruce Cheever, who also heard it from Bill. Bill just let himself go. He told President Kennedy what the hell he thought of him, that's all. It's very hard to do that to any President and survive, let alone with the Kennedys. And McCone had no choice but to remove him. And then, when that happened, somehow Helms got into the act (Helms was then DDP), and Helms saved Bill's ass, and didn't fire him. And he kept him out of McCone's view. And not so many weeks or a couple

of months later, he sent Bill off ^{to be} Chief of Station, Rome.
 Just to get him the hell out of the way, so he wouldn't be
 around the building and all that kind of stuff. And Bill went
 off in early '63 to Rome. And Des came down (I say "down,"
 because we were still in the basement), he came from FE
 Division to head up the Task Force, because Des had already
 blotted his copybook with MacNamara, anyway, about VietNam.
 We had some strong characters in those days. Guys who didn't
 give a good goddamn about anything except getting the job done
 right. And Des came down to take over from Harvey. And
 changed the name from TFW to SAS. So that's where Harvey, in
 terms of his relationship.... And he was saved by Helms.

stood
 with the
 Kennedys and
 McCone (?)

MSM: So this account, this report that at the height of the missile
 crisis, the Kennedys ordered a complete halt of operations
 against Cuba, but despite these instructions Harvey approved
 the landings, and as a result of that, McCone so livid with
 Harvey that he removed him from Task Force W--that is just not
 true at all?

SH: Not as far as I know.

MSM: Not as far as you know. Okay.

SH: And I was there. If such an order had come through, I would
 have had to have seen it. Bruce Cheever would have had to

have seen it. In order to transmit it down to the troops. Somebody would have had to send a message to JM/WAVE. There's no other place. JM/WAVE was our station in Miami, actually south of Miami. But anyway, you have to find such a message in the cable files, and go through the cable registry and see if you can find it. And you won't find it. As far as I know, you won't find it. There was no such standdown, as far as I know.

MSM: That's very interesting.

SH: Not during the missile crisis. By jingo, we were looking for information everywhere you could find it, and there was only one way to get intelligence--that's from agents. And so we were looking and looking and looking.

MSM: Could it possibly be the other way entirely--that, instead, during the missile crisis, the Kennedys were putting the pressure on Task Force W, putting the pressure on for operations?

SH: The only pressure I remember is pressure for information. Information, information, information. They wanted to know what was going on.

MSM: How about sabotage?

SH: No, that had stopped anyway. Simply because we couldn't, you couldn't put together an operational plan that was going to satisfy the Special Group (Augmented) well enough to get it going. Every one of our plans, every single one, had to be presented to the Special Group (Augmented), so they could ask about things like shoelaces. It took months, literally months, to put that kind of stuff together. Like the Matahambre mine, for example. And it was kind of crazy. So when you talk about sabotage operations, they weren't going off like clockwork every hour on the hour, every day on the day, every week on the week. It took weeks and months of planning to get even one going.

MSM: But the Kennedys--I've found some evidence that Bobby was demanding an increase in sabotage operations right into the early part of the missile crisis. That he was putting pressure on.

SH: You may have found, I don't remember that particular...

MSM: You don't have any...

SH: No recollection. If I saw a piece of paper, I might remember a piece of paper I might have looked at. But there definitely was not a standdown as far as I know--not on intelligence collection or propaganda or anything like that. But the

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S - sabotage operations--we didn't need to have Bobby keep on pushing us. By that time we had enough of the whiplash to keep looking for new plans--"How do you blow up this or blow up that, or cause some other problem?," and those were intrained all the time in terms of the guys on the PM staff. We had our own PM section working on plans for "what do we go for next?," "what are the targets?," and "how do you do it?" And that never stopped. We kept doing that all along.

MSM: What was the relationship between Lansdale and the Agency?

A SH: Let me put it in terms of a fighting relationship. How about that? That's a fair summation. Most of us thought that Ed was for the birds. I knew Ed from way back in ~~the~~^{his} early incarnation of the Philippines. When he made his name. He fell flat on his face in Vietnam because he and Diem never hit it off. With Diem, he pulled out, because Diem couldn't stand him any more. It was counterproductive to keep Ed in Vietnam. (This was in '54). He did very well with Magsaysay, no question about that. But we always thought he was kind of a kook. Most of the guys, in the old FE days, anyway. When he was put in charge of the Cuban thing, we thought he was even kookier. Even before it became MONGOOSE as MONGOOSE, when he came over for his first briefings in the old Quarters Eye Building (we were using the old Bay of Pigs war room, as a matter of fact, and they had a huge map of Cuba on the wall),

and he saw the Isle of Pines, and he said, "What's that?" So we told him--what little we knew. This was the blind leading the blind (I was just barely learning where Cuba was myself). So we had some other guys around from the old days that were still there from the Bay of Pigs, and he said, "What's on the island?" So we told him, including the Modela Prison and so on. And he said "Whoops, that's it." And I said, "Whoops, what's what, Ed?" He said, "We'll take the island, we'll make that our headquarters command post, and we'll operate off the island down to Cuba." I said, "Ed, are you serious? You've got to have rocks in your head. You couldn't get within miles of that place, let alone take the island." He said, "Oh, that's no problem. We'll just take it." I said, "Ed, you've got to get your feet on the ground. It won't work. You can't do it." He said, "Oh, we did worse things than that in Vietnam and the Philippines." I said, "Ed, I know about the Philippines, I know about Vietnam, I know what you did, and this isn't going to work." But that's how flakey he was. In addition to, I think you've seen the Church Committee Report--this business about the Jesus Christ superstar. That's Ed. So we had a fighting relationship, and everything was done at arm's length, and I think that's one of the reasons he used Frank Hand as a go-between--at least at my level and, to some extent, Bill Harvey's level. But Harvey wasn't going to take any crud from a guy like Ed. He'd call it like it was, and if he didn't like it, Ed ^{could} ~~can~~ go complain to the Director.

MSM: Were things getting particularly bad with Lansdale, relations with him, during the missile crisis? There appears to have been a major organizational disruption of some sort. I can't figure out what it was.

SH: I don't know just what you're referring to. I don't remember anything as such. Things were hot and heavy, and people's tempers during the missile crisis were very short, let me tell you that. Including mine being short with some of our own case officers, some of our own personnel in the Agency. I needed some money, for example--I needed cash one night at about one in the morning. I needed all the cash the Agency had in the building to send people out with neutron counters, to find out if the nuclear warheads were coming in. And some poor little guy, some finance officer, couldn't understand this at all. And he wouldn't do it. I called the Director of Finance and, with no by your leave, I said, "If you don't believe me, that I've got the authority to do this, then you call the Director. But I want that cash down here in jig time, now!" So people's tempers were short, very short, and nobody was being polite to anybody during those fourteen days, believe me. On any subject. And it was rough.

MSM: What about the end of MONGOOSE and the end of Special Group Augmented?

SH: It just disappeared. It died. Nothing special was said about it. It just--as if it never existed.

MSM: Both of them?

SH: Yes.

MSM: This was after the missile crisis?

SH: After the missile crisis. Everything just dead in the water. We continued to try to collect some intelligence, we weren't planning any sabotage operations, everybody knew that Bill was leaving, the new boss had not been appointed. You can get a much better feel by talking to Bruce Cheever on this than you can from me, because he was the guy who was really holding the fort together, and I was helping him. But it was Bruce who was in charge, technically. And things didn't start perking up until January of '63, when Des was appointed. And Des came down, and we went back into business. And all these stories that have appeared over and over again by the Kennedy clan--that CIA went off on its own after the Cuban missile crisis, and the Kennedys wanted to be friends with Castro and all that kind of nonsense--is nonsense. It is sheer, utter nonsense, because we started back up again under Des FitzGerald, because the Kennedys were saying, "What the hell," you know. "Castro is still there. Do something. Do something!" So that's when we started all over again.

MSM: Of course you were getting prisoners out during this time, too.

SH: Prisoners were in December. And the speech that Kennedy made down in Florida to the Brigade when they came out, you know--that this flag will be back in free Cuba, free Havana, and all that kind of stuff--there was no letdown by the Kennedys. Even though the Schlesingers of this world and the ~~Mankiewitzes~~ ^{Mankiewicz} of this world keep on making out that it was CIA that did it, and not the Kennedys. It was the Kennedys who put Des in charge of the next effort, and it was the Kennedys who pushed us again into the whole business. And we kept saying, you know, "This isn't going to work any better this time."

MSM: And then it ended, with the end of the Kennedy administration, with the assassination.

SH: With the assassination of the President. We continued for a ^{unsure about the effort. (?)} while, but Johnson felt.. We were arguing against running sabotage operations all along, but we had to do it. The Kennedys wanted boom and bang. After Kennedy died, we continued for a short while, because Rostow (Walt Rostow) wanted to continue the effort and got Johnson's OK on that. And we continued sabotage operations I think until '65. Despite the fact that we were arguing against them all along.

"Let's stop it, stop it, stop it. It's counterproductive. We're not getting anywhere." But we continued to follow orders. That's why it is so ironic to be called a rogue elephant by anybody, when all we were doing was trying to be good soldiers.

MSM: Well, I appreciate this very much. All the information you've given me here this morning. Anything else you think I should know?

SH: Depends on how much you want to know about MONGOOSE. There are a lot of gory details.

MSM: I'm not writing a history on MONGOOSE. This is really a history on McCone.

SH: He was a good boss. In retrospect, he was the best we ever had.

MSM: In retrospect, not at the time?

SH: Oh, at the time, if you were under his lash you would not have exactly felt right about it either. He was a very rough taskmaster. You were entitled to one mistake. Literally, one mistake. And then don't ever darken his eyes again. It was rough. I remember, for example, during one session of his

post-mortem on the missile crisis, poor Pat Carter, General Carter, was cut to ribbons by McCone. Literally cut to ribbons. You could almost feel the blood flow. The way McCone just tonguelashed him in front of the entire USIB and all of the hangers-on, including me.

MSM: For what?

SH: On the Cuban missile crisis, the beginnings of the Cuban missile Crisis. On the handling of the SNIE, that famous SNIE which said the Russians have never put missiles abroad, ^{therefore} they'll never do it in Cuba. And McCone, of course, sitting off in Nice knew goddamn right they will.

MSM: And he sent back honeymoon cables

SH: Yes, and Carter didn't buy them at all.

MSM: And that was what McCone was cutting Carter up for? I've never had any record of that, that's marvelous.

SH: You won't find any record. It was all oral. I don't think they taped it.

MSM: This was after the missile crisis?

SH: Oh yes. This was the post-mortem.

MSM: When would this have been? November, December?

SH: Yes. Something like that. And I was the DDP rep. Bill Harvey--let me give you a little bit on this...

MSM: Yes. I'm very interested.

SH: Jack Earman was IG. Ken Greer was one of his officers on the IG staff and Ken, I think, is living in Minnesota or something like that. Oh, there was another guy, a nice young fellow. I can't think of his name. Anyway, Jack and his staff were told to do, in effect, a post-mortem. And they started doing it. And Jack apparently called Bill Harvey and said (Bill was still sitting there in charge) to assign somebody to help him on this thing from the operator's point of view.

MSM: Harvey was still on Task Force W at this time?

SH: Yes. This is right after the missile crisis. He kept sitting there until he left, went off to Rome. As a matter of fact, when Des came down, he was still there in January of '63. He was sitting, not in the--we called this the bullpen, which was a big room across from the secretaries' rooms (I could sketch it out for you if you're interested sometime). He kept sitting

there anyway. As a place for quarters and rations until he went to the Italian desk. Jack wanted somebody (and Jack's dead also, unfortunately). He wanted somebody to represent the operators on this thing, because everybody was there, from the State Department, the DDI types, the Defense people from all the various services, etc. And I was detailed, and Bill, I remember, saying to Jack, "How long is this going to take?" And Jack said, "Oh, about a day or so." Well, it lasted a couple of weeks. But anyway, it was quite a session. And one of the sessions I'll never forget was when we got into this detail, and I was surprised at McCone doing this. It's one thing to whiplash your deputy or a subordinate in private. It's another thing to do it in what I call public, particularly when there are a bunch of junior officers around. And, hell, I was a 15 or 16 in those days, and that to me is a junior officer compared to the people sitting around the table. Roger Hilsman was there, Kirk was sitting there, and poor Pat Carter. Every time he opened his mouth he was browbeaten by McCone. Over and over again. In not polite

language, which I was surprised at from McCone. I never heard him use--it wasn't gutter language, it wasn't barracks-room language, but it wasn't polite, gentlemanly language. And I don't remember the exact words, but the feeling I had was, in effect, saying, "Well you dumb ninny, what the hell did you do that kind of thing for?," you know, and that kind of stuff. I cringed, literally cringed, sitting up there. Poor Pat Carter. I would have cringed for anybody being given that kind of treatment.

MSM: Do you think that was typical of the relationship between the two?

SH: I don't know. I have no idea. Walt Elder would give you a better feel for that than I can. Apparently, it wasn't good. No matter what it was. It couldn't have been good. Not to get that kind of a treatment. And this was only in one session, and we had numerous sessions. First we had our working group sessions, and those went on interminably. I remember Bill McAfee, the State Department representative from INR. Bill and I were old friends, and we got to be better friends as a result of being on this committee. Bill and I exchanged glances, I remember, at this particular session, and we wondered what the hell was going on. It is unlike senior officers to do that. So when you talk about relationships during the missile crisis, and even afterwards, it was touch and go for a lot of people.

MSM: What were the real sensitive issues you had to deal with during this post-mortem?

SH: In the post-mortem? The information that we collected--I mean that we, the operators, collected. The uses made of the information by the intelligence analysts. Not just CIA, but all the analysts. How they downgraded all the information that we provided. Some of it was our own fault, the operators' fault, because--let me give you an example of what I mean there. On some of the most significant (there were about eight, if I remember correctly--six or eight really significant reports) about missile sightings, which were downgraded by the entire community (the analytical side of the community), and on one or two of them (I'll never forget this, because it was our fault and I had to admit it at the meeting) the headquarters comment (we had headquarters comments in those days, I don't know if they still do), the report itself said that the agent reported to have seen something that was 30 meters long. Headquarters comment ^{said} ~~says~~ that the source probably meant 30 feet long. And I hadn't seen this. Jack King--John Kerry King--was the Chief of Reports for the Task Force, and he was the guy who saw it and OK'd it and put it out. I didn't see it until much later. That in effect cut the feet off of the report. So it was that kind of sensitive issue in terms of collection capability, the sourcing, the reports writing of it, the headquarters dissemination of it,

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and what was done with it by the analysts. And everybody was fighting for turf. And everybody was sensitive as to whether they did anything right or wrong. That was one of the issues. Another issue was the mechanics on handling overflight photos. The Navy took some pictures, for example, of one Soviet merchant ship at sea bringing stuff in with big holds, big hatch covers. It took ten days for those photos, ten days, to show up somewhere on the analyst's desk. What happened to the pictures for ten bloody days? And you're sitting on the Soviet side, you see the plane overhead coming down low in a swoop and taking a picture, Navy markings and all (it was a Navy plane), and you report back to Moscow, you know, "Plane overhead, I'm still heading for Havana." And nothing. The US government doesn't do a thing for ten whole days. So, if you're sitting in Moscow on their version of a National Security Council, you're thinking "Well, maybe they don't care. So, okay, we'll keep on going." That was a sensitive issue. What happened in those ten days. The Navy couldn't figure--I don't know to this day that they ever figured out what the hell happened to those bloody pictures for ten whole days. Whether they were sitting in some chief petty officer's in-basket or what, nobody knows. Sensitive issue #3 that I remember: NSA in summer of '62, July or August, I believe, put out an analysis (theoretically, they weren't supposed to, but they did) of what all these Soviet ships coming to Cuba and leaving Cuba--you know, we were

counting all these ships coming back and forth. It was a regular parade. And NSA put out an analysis saying the ships are there to remove from Cuba all of the excess military hardware the Soviets have put in! Well, obviously, at the time of the missile crisis, NSA immediately asked everybody to return this Top Secret COMINT-handled HVCCO and all that kind of stuff. And all copies being recalled. Well, as good officers, everybody always made copies of everything being recalled. But there was another issue. What the hell was NSA doing, doing analysis? And the question was whether they should be prohibited in the future from doing analysis. There were a lot of turf battles of this kind going on. I can go on in terms of what was being kicked around in terms of problems. You know, us operation guys, for example. Were we concentrating on the right targets in terms of getting our assets? The whole missile crisis began with a fluke, a pure and utter fluke. And again, it took time because of the method of getting the report. We had an agent in the ^{Pinar del} ~~Canal~~ ^{do?} Rio province ^{on one of the fincas?} and he reported that there was an area ^{which had been completely cleared of all living things, people and animals} and he couldn't explain exactly ^(names of) precisely where it was, so he gave us little towns. We plotted the towns, and it turned out to be a trapezoidal shape. But that report, which is the one which targetted the U-2 and led to the overflight (and we in ~~the~~ operations couldn't ask for the overflight. We had to ask our MONGOOSE compatriots in G-2 who were involved in this thing and cleared

would have to
hear the tape
to try to fill the
gap ~~for~~ sure

for MONGOOSE, they had to ask for the overflight. We couldn't. Don't ask me why, but those were the ground rules. We couldn't ask for it. So we had to ask them). They came over to our war room and I was in the room when they plotted the damn thing, and there was a trapezoid. But that report took ten days to get to us. It was ⁱⁿ~~an~~ SW, secret writing, I don't know what type of secret writing techniques he had--it could have been lemon juice for all I know. It took ten days for that to get to our chemists to develop the bloody paper. To get the report. Before we could even see it. Now, why did it take ten days? Well, international mail. I forget whether he was mailing it to Spain or mailing it to Mexico, or what have you, but anyway, that was the only route that we had out. Why didn't he have a radio? Big argument, you know. What about the size of the radios? You can't get the radios in, and etc. etc. etc. But those were big arguments that were going on. So there were those kinds of problems in terms of the operators. Were we doing our job properly? Why didn't we do it sooner, faster? Why didn't we learn about the missiles coming in before this particular report? Well, you had all kinds of reports about missiles. But where do you draw the line? And the analysts of course were defending themselves in terms of, "you cut off your own report by telling us it's 'feet' not 'meters,' so we couldn't take that on face value," etc., etc. So you keep on fighting about these things. The Defense Department guys were being slammed

around, the G-2 guys particularly, for not cooperating better with us in terms of combined assets on the island to find out about these military pieces of hardware, and so on and so forth. You name the problem and we were kicking it around. And each time it was related to the Cuban missile crisis itself. And it was a handy tool, if you wanted to hit somebody over the head, to hit them with, and it was hard to defend on a lot of things. And all you could end up with was saying, as I think the Senate Armed Services Committee ended up with its report saying, that in retrospect, the intelligence community as a community worked well, we discovered the bloody missiles beforehand, before they were ready to use, etc., etc. And the important thing about this--and people keep forgetting it--is the worldwide intelligence effort. It's not just on one island of Cuba. Even in the missile crisis. People forget about Penkovskiy. Without Penkovskiy's 5,000 ^{photograph} frames, we wouldn't have known what the hell they were doing on the island. And I remember talking to the photo man, and you can talk to--do you know Brugioni?

MSM: No, I do not.

SH: Well, talk to Dino. He's retired, and he's around here, and he's a great guy.

MSM: I've read his article on this.

SH: Well, without that report, without first of all the trapezoidal report, we wouldn't have known where the hell to send the U-2. Because even with the report--I'll give you another example, part of the fight of the port-mortem. During the COMIREX approval, the overflights and all the flights had to be approved. At that time, in October of '62, the overflights were limited to four flights a month. By whose decree? State Department, I guess. But somebody had decreed four flights maximum. And if weather or mechanical failure, or what have you, canceled any one of the flights, you didn't save that flight for the next month. You had four a month, whether you flew them or not. And so, when the report of this trapezoid came in and the G-2 people at our instigation asked for an overflight of this particular spot on the western part of Cuba, I'm told it took more than 10 days to get that approved, to get the flight approved, because the State Department representative--I don't know who he was, and I never want to find out because I'd go shoot him--he said, "No. We've been flying that part of the island all the time. We haven't flown the eastern part for a long time. Let's fly the east." And it took 10 days for the bureaucracy to argue that out, so the flight could go where it's supposed to go. So all of this was being kicked around at the missile crisis post-mortem. I learned a lot sitting there. I was the junior

officer present. You learn a lot listening to all this stuff. As to what was going on in the bureaucracy, it was fierce. I hope they've made changes. But anyway, all of these things were surfaced on the table. Everybody was arguing pros and cons. Some things were done, and approvals and changes were made, stuff like that. One big change that was made after that had nothing to do with that particular committee. When Des took over from Harvey, because of this reporting problem and the headquarters comments that were on there and the fact that a lot of the reports that we had provided from human sources were downgraded by the analysts because a) it wasn't a picture, and b) it wasn't COMINT, so without the two nothing else matters. Des had, and over the objections of me, Bruce Cheever, and a hell of a lot of other officers in the Task Force (SAS by this time), asked for a senior officer from DDI (I forget his name now but I think you can find it in the record) to come down and Des would make available to him all-source information of each and every one of our sources. True names, true positions, the whole business. Never been done before. At least I'd never heard of it. And Des wanted this very senior, well respected officer, had been around years, to just sit and look at who our sources were. And to tell him frankly, are they worth anything or not? As I say, we fought it and we argued with Des and I think he didn't even ask--he was the kind of a guy who wouldn't even ask--he didn't even ask Helms' permission.

He told Helms he was doing it, period. Helms said, "Okay, give it a try." When this guy finished, he was amazed, and he said, "You're downgrading your own sources by not putting in better bylines to tell the analyst a little bit more if you can." He said, "You've got some wonderful sources." And he went back to his own people and told them that. And I must say, he never, never, never, never once divulged a source. So things like that came out of the missile crisis and came out of the post-mortem committee. Of course Des heard a lot of this stuff, he'd looked at a lot of this stuff, and he was flabbergasted. So I hope other things were done the same. The COMIREX thing got reorganized somewhat. And the State Department didn't have that final clobber on it any more. From four a month we went to practically four a day if we could fly. We flew as many missions as we could fly. And then of course the big fight between the CIA flying it and the Air Force flying it. And there was more sweat back and forth. All of which was kicked around. I don't think anybody kept any notes, I don't think anybody kept any minutes. A final report was written and had more bloody cryptonyms on that report than you can shake a stick at. I wasn't cleared for half of them at the time, and I said that to somebody. And they said, "Don't worry. At this stage of the game it doesn't matter." The bulk of that report was actually then sanitized and given to the Senate Committee--I think it was the Armed Services--and they used a good bit of that final report in their final paper.

MSM: That's the Earman report.

SH: No, it was after the Earman report. The Earman report was the first draft, kind of. And then we went to the USIB, the conference, the big conference where poor Pat Carter got clobbered. Then after that, we had to sit and make a final report that McCone could give to the President. And also a copy went to PFIAB. And that you ought to be able to find.

MSM: Yes.

SH: That was a good report, I thought. My blood's in that one. Sweat, tears. Every comma and semicolon. (Laughter)

MSM: This has just been fascinating. I really appreciate it.

SH: Well, it's history.

MSM: Yes, it is indeed. May I call upon you again to clarify any questions that I might have?

SH: Anytime, anytime.

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