

26 3 26 1540607
~~TOP SECRET TRINE~~

TO BE KEPT UNDER COMBINATION LOCK AND NEVER REMOVED FROM THE OFFICE UNLESS TRANSMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS.

Declassified by ASD - 10/2/2016
Information removed for
national security and/or
personal sensitivities

Transcript of tape from OC AUM352 to M18.
Received Oct 66.

Dear Sir,

Reference your signal 300045Z August 66. Taking your paragraph numbers and referring to them I will start off and say that para 1, I would myself definitely welcome a visit by both DSD and M18 at this stage as everything has got to a very interesting stage up here on the American side of the house as to exactly how everybody is going to be employed, and if you hadn't come in and suggested a visit I would have come back and suggested that somebody should come up and have a pretty close look as to what is going to happen up here.

First of all to answer your first questions. Paragraph two on security of material. What is happening up here at the moment is that due to a change over in intelligence staff the two intelligence staff officers up here Major Roman and Captain Kean.

so we have had a bit of hiatus up here as regards to continuity on the intelligence side. As a result of this I've been going direct to the Brigadier with my information and briefing him direct and converting it into military intelligence for him. This seems to have been working fairly well up until now and, as such, has obviated the need of having intelligence staff officers down here actually in our compound; it saves classified material being taken out of the areas except for a map trace which I go up and put on the Brigadier's map board, and everything that goes out of the cell and passed onto the Brigadier is purely verbal. So, as such on general security, we have had no particular problems except for that one bad security breach we had, which was due to Colonel Wall being briefed very very hastily after we had this big contact up here on the 18th August to start tracing up the 275th Regiment. As such the Brigadier called me in to give him a briefing on the spot and he was away and gone and none of us had any idea as to what he was going to do with this information, even though he had been warned that it was classified etc. etc. So, as such, that is the only problem we've had with action-on. Also along this line I had cleared with NSAPAC Rep that the way they handle action-on information up here is quite simple in that all ARDF fixes, on which nearly all American operations are based, are issued out over normal intelligence channels as SPARS as a special agent report. This SPAR is given a man's name for example Mike, Jim, John etc. All unidentified fixes are given a code name of Fred, these are passed over the normal intelligence channels to the normal intelligence staff, and, as such, nobody is to tie in the fact that, for example, Rob or Robby is the 274th Regiment. It's just the fact that a military unit called ROB is located at grid reference so and so. This wasn't entirely satisfactory, so I went back to NSAPAC REP to get this one sorted out on a visit, and they asked me there what my ideas were on action-on, and I just said straight out "well there are two ways out of it; one, due to the fact there is absolutely no collateral whatsoever up here really of any use whatsoever in passing on Sigint, to get your information out in a special case when an operation comes up, all you can do is to just baldly state the fact that the 275th Regiment was last located at such and such a grid reference without quoting any source whatsoever. Secondly if you do happen to be fortunate enough to have any form of collateral whatsoever, then you can up-grade this collateral, as most ARVN reports are graded F6, from F6 say up to a C3 or a B2 report" and this is the way it has been working and has been okayed by NSAPAC REP. This is the reason why in that intelligence summary, the Americans were not particularly perturbed about the actual information in the document, just the fact that the information appeared to be tied down to the fact that the words "VC transmissions" was used in the summary.

~~TOP SECRET TRINE~~

~~TOP SECRET TRINE~~

Declassified by ASD - 10/2/2016

TO BE KEPT UNDER COMBINATION LOCK AND NEVER REMOVED FROM THE
OFFICE UNLESS TRANSMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS.

-2-

Now, to get back to the question of storage of higher category material. Up until now, this station has been treated as a Secret Savin station. Our keylists for the KW7 are only graded secret, but if it is necessary for me to get higher category material, which I don't think is necessary at the moment, I can apply for and get Top Secret Keylists on SSO grounds for our circuit and as such get the SSO at 243 to pass Top Secret Trine material over this link. But as such, this hasn't been necessary which I will cover under the terms of end product.

Now the end-product itself. Your paragraph 3. The nature and type of Sigint end-product from U.S. sources. Well the predominant one is the series of ARDF fixes that are passed. Now, we get the tip off here. Well first of all, summarise ARDF. Every Monday I put in a request for ARDF, just nominating whether I want close tactical support or Comint development. Under close tactical support, I've got to quote the name of an operation, what area it is in, and then request that the following units be covered within that area. Those requests are coordinated from the 1st Division, 25th Division, 173rd Brigade, by II Force(V) and consolidated and passed onto MACV. MACV then allocate the aircraft for the week commencing the following Saturday. Now, so far we have been extremely fortunate in that every day we have had an aircraft over our area, and particularly when we had this big contact with the 275th Regiment and they then moved in the 173rd Brigade and a few other people to sort out PHUOC TUY Province. We had anything up to 3 or 4 aircraft over our area on one particular day. So from the point of view of getting a good continuous series of ARDF fixes, we have been extremely fortunate. Now, as you have probably seen from the report I've forwarded (and I will cover this a bit later with DF in general) it has been found that ARDF has been found wanting so far as its accuracy is concerned, and hence from the point of view of just using DF fixes as pure intelligence as a tactical aid it has been rather difficult, because, unless I get 2 or 3 fixes on successive days running, in the same area or if I am fortunate enough to get two aircraft in the area on the one day and they both fix the same transmitter at the same time and both put in the one area, well then I can cut down the radius of error which I would normally put on about 5 to 6 kilometres down to probably a more reasonable figure as quoted by the pilots. It has been found that some of their fixes are spot on, but some of them are way out, and this is obviously to do with their training scheme of trying to increase the number of pilots they've got and operators in this particular field. Hence when I am talking to the Brigadier when I get a flash tip-off from a aeroplane, the Brigadier says to me "Well is this on spot-on or is off" and I just don't know therefore you just have to assume it's an area fix of somewhere within a 5 or 6 kilometre area. Hence if we get a collection of transmitters which all appear to be in one area, the Brigadier has then been using this cluster of transmitters and watching which direction the general clutter of transmitters move, whether its down towards him or away. And using ARDF in this form as a positive dead-sure piece of intelligence, rather than individually trying to assess the value of a particular fix. As such has proved extremely valuable, because at the moment, we have all VC transmitters and so on well away from our TOR or the area of responsibility; and as such we can start to breathe slightly again. As a matter of interest, on this attack with the 275th Regiment, we did produce some useful intelligence through the ARDF fixes in that the Brigadier was warned that the 275th was moving towards our direction, and although we didn't know exactly where he was because the only transmitter we could fix on the whole Regiment was the rear-link working back to Division we then had no idea where the actual Headquarters itself was or the Battalions. Hence when the

~~TOP SECRET TRINE~~

~~TOP SECRET TRINE~~

Declassified by ASD - 10/2/2016

TO BE KEPT UNDER COMBINATION LOCK AND NEVER REMOVED FROM THE
OFFICE UNLESS TRANSMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS.

-3-

actual contact came, the Brigadier called me up and said "well, who is it?" and quite obviously it was the 275th Regiment. So although we couldn't - and it has been impossible up to now to pin down to battalion level where each of the battalions and various regiment are at - at least we have been able to give him indicators as to the fact that a Regiment is coming towards us or going away from us. As such the Commander has found this valuable, or so he has stated. These fixes are produced in the time frame to make it valuable. Now end-product itself - there is very very little of it. The only other form of end-product put out are actual translations of messages. These come off the low grade intelligence nets, and, up until just recently, there was very very little of it. There were only two notations in the whole of the PHUOC TUY province area which were readable, and the amount of information off this was generally stereotyped in that they were all convoy reports etc. etc. But the fact that these intelligence stations were just passing convoy reports indicated their interest in a certain highway, as such, they weren't interested in e.g. our western flank of our brigade. Hence if the Brigadier wanted to deploy a couple of companies from another battalion he could do this to make a battalion and a half operation and get away with it by just leaving out an SAS screen of a few patrols on his other flank. As such we have been able to, although not give him positive intelligence on which to base operations, at least through negative inference of the intelligence nets we've been able to allow him to take forces away from one flank to put in an operation on another, with a fair degree of safety in that he is not going to be caught off balance. We found that the American reporting system on end-product, or messages as such, is nowhere near the standards laid down by DSD. We translate a lot of these, we translate in fact all these messages now on the notations that we can read, and we found that our translation varies quite considerably from a translation put out officially. We are in the process of querying these at the moment, and still awaiting an answer, and although I know the Vietnamese language is wide open to various interpretations when put into English, these are just too far way out to have this as the answer to the problem. So there appears to be a lot that needs answering on the end-product reporting side put out by the Americans as to the degree of faith we can put into the actual translation and compared to what our linguists can produce. At the present moment, on end-product, we have found that there are only two systems readable. One of them is the military intelligence link connected with the 274th Regiment, which is RAD 137 or VINGB J0131. Now we have found over the last couple of weeks due to a captured document by the 173rd Brigade, that we can now read this system. The VC are still using it and we are finding now that the 274th Regiment is passing operational orders over this network. When I say operational orders, I mean passing messages of an operational nature, and it's from commander to battalion commanders, and although there is not very much in it at the moment, at least it is possible after receiving a series of these messages to start pinning down roughly where the various battalions are. This has proved invaluable, and is really the first really positive piece of intelligence we have had to indicate where the actual VC forces are, for that is about the only one. So from the point of view serialised end-product there is very little at all. Periodically DIRNSA will publish, on approximately a monthly basis, a wrap-up on the various Provinces. As such they just put a generalised summary of all the bits and pieces associated with PHUOC TUY Province. It is not really of much use; it is to somebody who hasn't been studying the Province at all. On top of this, when the CGS was up here, the Brigadier asked me to come in and give him a briefing on the intelligence side, which I did. The Brigadier stated to the CGS that we were producing the only intelligence at all that was of any use to him up here in this area. So, as such, we are starting to prove ourselves of value to the Brigadier, and the Brigadier is behind us 100% in anything we are trying to do and takes anything we give him with open arms. The CGS was very interested. The actual briefing only took 10 minutes.

~~TOP SECRET TRINE~~

~~TOP SECRET TRINE~~

Declassified by ASD - 10/2/2016

TO BE KEPT UNDER COMBINATION LOCK AND NEVER REMOVED FROM THE OFFICE UNLESS TRANSMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS.

-4-

We then spent another half an hour on discussing ARDF, SRDF, and so on, and his questions got rather detailed, and, in fact, I've got a funny feeling that perhaps he got briefed rather well before he left Australia or else the Americans had been saying quite a bit to him since he arrived in the country.

Now your next question on paragraph 3B is what we can produce from our own sources. We can now produce everything that is possible to produce on PHUOC TUY Province at the moment. As such, we will get a message which is readable, and Corporal Rogers is extremely valuable in this regard, we then pass off the original text plus our translation underneath Ops. Immediate back to USM 626 who then publish it as formal serialised end-product. As a result of what we have been able to achieve over the last three months, the two positions at USM 626 that the Americans have allocated at PHUOC TUY Province have now been cut back to one, and they are still keeping the one on there simply because I asked them to do so until we get some more experience in what's going on up here, to see if they can rely completely on our complete take. The other problem, too, was that at the time we were having trouble with the radio sets, power fluctuations, and I thought it was worth the while to have the extra back-up if they could afford to do it, and which they are doing.

The next question paragraph 3C is to what extent is the Intelligence Staff able to use our material. With the new personalities I've got up here, they prefer just to cope with what's on the "open" side, and, due to the fact that the new G2 INT up here Major Povor, who has just arrived over from II Force (V), I think we will gradually see a change in this, in that he will act as a coordinator between what I produce, what is produced on the open side, interrogation reports and so on, and actually start trying to collate intelligence which hasn't been done up till now, and tie the whole lot up into one bundle to form a composite picture. As such, the direct contact with the Brigadier might probably decrease as time goes by, and the INT staff will then start to function in the way it should. As such I hope they will ultimately come down here and open up a cell in the compound and take away a lot of what I have been forced to do up until now, simply because it has been so time consuming. But to try and extract the last ounce of intelligence as to what is going on; a lot of straight TA we have found very useful. For example over certain links to say certain numbers of messages have been passed, or the fact that a station has not been for 15 or 20 days, this could mean that he has either got a power failure, or he is moving, and as such over a period of time we are now starting to get various indicators on nets and to what it could possibly mean, with a fair degree of accuracy. Another typical example was a certain military intelligence station. On two occasions now that he turned up he was first of all involved in a big operation with the 274th Regiment, he turned up a day before our big contact with the 275th Regiment on a ARDF fix; as such he started to prove an indicator that now where he turns up we can expect trouble. These are just a whole series of possibilities, probabilities, and so on, and we are watching them extremely carefully as to how we frame ourselves when briefing the Brigadier on this, but so far we haven't overstepped the mark of just using (you might say) just straight TA material in the form of end-product. And as such this is one reason why I have gone to great lengths to make sure that it has been me myself who has done the actual briefing rather than have intelligence officers coming down here, and when trying to extract the last amount of information, getting stuck into our TA section, or trying to get stuck into our TA section, and questioning Irwin and

~~TOP SECRET TRINE~~

~~TOP SECRET TRINE~~

Declassified by ASD - 10/2/2016

TO BE KEPT UNDER COMBINATION LOCK AND NEVER REMOVED FROM THE
OFFICE UNLESS TRANSMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS.

- 5 -

Rogers, and generally trying to, ultimately what they would do, is to start trying to tell us how to do our job. So there is a fine dividing line between this, which I am well aware of, and I hope we are keeping on the right side of it at the moment, but this is probably one of the things which you can assess when you come up here. That I think explains the rest of your questions. "Do they main continuation pattern of Sigint material in my cell", the answer is no; "what sort of requests were you given by them for Sigint material?" well none at all, simply in that the fact that we are covering everything in PHUOC TUY Province that is identified and which has a notation. And as such we give him every last ounce of information that was possible to get. The Brigadier speaks to me direct and says "I am putting in an operation or planning an operation here in a months time, I am interested in so and so. What can you do to help?" "I can then give him a rough idea of what we can possibly produce with what we know at the moment, and secondly, all we may do is just alter our priorities here. But we found that there is really no need to do this even as, simply because we are able to cover everything that is up on the air. "To what extent is Sigint accepted on face value or do you have to sell it?" Initially, for about the first month or so after we got into operations, it was a question of proving ourselves to the Brigadier as to what we can produce, and as such now from what I have said previously, you can see that General Jackson will take everything at all that we can produce. "Has any Sigint proven false?" The answer is yes. You have now seen this report, I hope, on the PRD-1 Operation on taking that particular radio station (and this ties in on the previous comments on ARDF as to how accurate it is) was the fact that we actually proved that ARDF was out by 6 to 8 kilometers on a particular station on 3 successive fixes, when compared with the results produced by the PRD-1 confirmed on the ground by SAS and then reflected in traffic the next day.

~~TOP SECRET TRINE~~

~~TOP SECRET TRINE~~

TO BE KEPT UNDER COMBINATION LOCK AND NEVER REMOVED FROM THE
OFFICE UNLESS TRANSMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS.

- 6 -

The answer to your next question on paragraph 4. "Based on your previous report on ARDF to what extent would the commander now rely on information provided by ARDF?" He does rely on this information so long as I can give him the worst possible radius of area associated with ARDF. So, as I say, we have proved this out by 6 to 8 kilometers; hence when I just get one fix on a station that hasn't been heard for some time, I tell him about this but I say "it is ARDF, hence, Sir, I would leave it in a 5 kilometer area for the time being, in case we get or until we get another fix tomorrow". If we get another fix the next day and it is still in the same area, we then start cutting down the margin of error, for generally the Commander just uses it as background material because the VC are now well outside our TAOR, and generally he just wants to make sure in what general area the Province are in and the fact that they are not, or do not appear to be, planning to create trouble for him through a current operation which may last for the next two to three weeks. Hence ARDF has been found to be quite good from this point of view, and as such the Brigadier has found it pretty well invaluable. The main thing about ARDF which I will emphasise is that at the moment until the system is perfected, ARDF is not and I repeat not a tactical aid, in that the claimed radius of error has been found to be wanting in many occasions, although in two or three occasions it has been proved quite accurate. Now, for example, after the contact with the 275th Regiment, they were located by ARDF from about 22nd August to about four days later. An SAS patrol was put in to confirm it on the ground, and they found a group of ten people approximately 100 paces from the centre of the fix. They couldn't actually work out whether this group of eight to ten people had a radio station with them, but this is the normal size of a radio detachment whether it is a command transmitter or is an intelligence transmitter. As such it was a rather large coincidence if they weren't the particular people in question. So I still feel that ARDF is quite accurate in some circumstances, but in others, it can be quite wrong, and as such it is difficult to know when you get this fix whether it is right or on the Knocker or whether it is out by a certain error greater than what they claim.

Now coming on to our own ARDF resources, the main reason behind a request for this is the fact that under the centralised tasking system that the Americans use at the moment, I've got absolutely no access at all to the pilots or to the operators. And the way that the Americans operate is that initially, from what I can gather, they were given a little bit of tasking, but it wasn't strictly controlled; working through the 17th RR Battalion or 303rd Radio Research Battalion as they are now starting to call themselves again, at LONG BINH, USM 614, they now task the aircraft strictly everyday. And as such the system is now starting to improve in that the number of unidentified fixes is now starting to cut down quite considerably, and are starting to produce a lot more fixes. The big problem is, though, is that in the aircraft, once the operator picks up the signal he then pipes it down to the pilot. The pilot gets the signal in his earphones, he then goes ahead and takes the fix without any further help whatsoever from the operator. Now I am positive this is (although I have got no proof of this and I haven't been up in an ARDF aircraft), due to the cluttering of the band up here, we have proved time and time again that there is quite often a powerful, more powerful, transmitter sitting on top of the one you want to fix; this has proved a problem with trying to get fixes with the PRD-1, and as such it could be extremely difficult for the operator to give the pilot a very clear signal. And I think from time to time the pilot may fall into the error of fixing the wrong signal. Once

~~TOP SECRET TRINE~~

~~TOP SECRET TRINE~~

TO BE KEPT UNDER COMBINATION LOCK AND NEVER REMOVED FROM THE OFFICE UNLESS TRANSMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS.

- 7 -

again I have no proof of this, this is just my own private opinion. What I would like to do, if given the chance of having my own ARDF resources, is the fact that I know Army Design Establishment has been working (not Army Design Establishment, WRE) have been working on an airborne DF system, would be to get this up here for a year's trial period, if it is at a users trial stage, to see if we can produce a system which is more accurate than the American one. I do not wish to say at all that it is time to give the American system away because I think ultimately it will be perfected, but if at least we could get our own up here we could compare two, and the Americans may get some benefit out of seeing what results we can get with our system, and we can see if we can contribute towards theirs in any way. If it was under my control, it would have to be placed at VUNG TAU where you have got the resources to repair aircraft. Now there are two ways of doing this - one, is to attach it to the RAAF if it is a big piece of equipment and must go into an aircraft say the size of the Caribou or something like that. As such, I dare say, operators have to be supplied I could use one of my operators from here, could train a RAAF pilot and over perhaps a period of two months user trials it should be possible to evaluate by the end of six to eight weeks, with by that time a well trained pilot and operator, as to just how good an Australian system could be. The other alternative, if it fits into a light aircraft, is to fit it into the current range of equipment that the 161 Independent Recce Flight has, which are Cessnas. This is a much smaller aircraft and as such the aircraft would have to be specially fitted etc. etc. but Major Doyle who runs the Recce Flight, and whom I indoctrinated the day before yesterday, is all for anybody at all that can contribute to him keeping fixed wing aircraft. This is now getting into the light aircraft politics, but apparently is a great move to go all for helicopters and get rid of all fixed wing aircraft. He is very anti against this, and as such by helping me out with either a VHF platform for voice or for airborne DF, he is all for this. One final thing, 161 Recce Flight have put back a request to Australia, which has been approved by Task Force is to have their Cessnas withdrawn because of maintenance problems, and to be issued with the American Bird-Dog which is called the L17, which is a smaller aircraft and may or may not be suitable for an Airborne DF system. The Americans use the Beaver, which is a much bigger aircraft, simply in order to get all their equipment into it.

Now your next question on paragraph 4C is "Do I consider provision of ground based DF net desirable or essential for Task Force purposes?" I say neither, for the following reasons. First of all, the PRD-1 is extremely limited in its employment in PHUOC TUY Province, at the moment to three sites. There is one at BARIA, one at the Task Force area, and one about 6 Kms north of BARIA at BINH BA. Each of these stations form a base line running north and south, approximately 7 Kilometers between each equipment. As such you can get a fix in a triangle going out from the base line to an apex of approximately ten Kms. Now anything within that area, you can get quite good fixes on. But to get fixes on anything else in the Province, the PRD-1's have to be redeployed to form a new base line. The number of sites which are technically suitable on to which to put the PRD-1 are extremely limited. Secondly you have to put out a protective force to protect them, and the Brigadier says that the minimum force he would put out or allow me to put out with a PRD-1 would be a company and he is not prepared to let a company go just to protect one PRD-1 site. Thirdly, the PRD-1's would have to be flown into their sites, which means the use of helicopters, and would require one helicopter for each team. So all told, it is not a very economical proposition

~~TOP SECRET TRINE~~

~~TOP SECRET TRINE~~

TO BE KEPT UNDER COMBINATION LOCK AND NEVER REMOVED FROM THE OFFICE UNLESS TRANSMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS.

- 8 -

from the point of view of resources in order to deploy these things. The next one is the fact that you have to have one well qualified CW operator with each PRD-1. You also need a second man to operate the tip-off. Due to lack of sensitivity with the PRD-1 and selectivity, it is essential that you have steerage to pick up the required target in this kind of HF band that we have got at the moment. Now over here, we have been the only people who have had any success at all with the PRD-1s. They have been on issue to all other DSUs or Radio Research Companies in the Corps III area, but none of them have been able to produce results and there was a tremendous discussion yesterday, across at the 17th at this DSU commanders conference, that I went to on the PRD-1. Everyone of them was shooting the PRD-1 down in flames, simply because they were not employing it correctly and were trying to work it over ranges greater than it was suitable to employ them - in other words outside its capabilities.

Now after this first report, that you have received, was put in, and based on this General McChristian, J2 MACV, formed an air mobile or flyaway PRD-1 team. This is the team I have had with me now for the last four weeks. They consist of an officer, a sergeant and twelve men and three men to each team. Consists of four teams all told. They have a VRC47 for communications between teams, with a KY8 voice cyphony equipment on which to have voice encryption. As such we sited the fourth team right alongside our set room, and when our operator here on the set actually picks up the target we then immediately flashed out the actual signal itself to the three PRD-1 teams. The three PRD-1 teams were strictly tasked; they were all given a tasking list, they knew what times they had to come up, what call signs to go for each, and then with the tip-off we were able to produce results, even though the standard of their operating was absolutely shocking, and as such most of them were DF operators, not even CW operators. I will cover this one later on. As such, if ever I do want PRD-1 teams I can apply for this air mobile or air flyaway team to come down to my area again. I am sending them back in the next couple of days simply because all VC targets have moved outside the range of the PRD-1, there is nothing left here for them to do, and although they have been allocated to me for a total of 45 days, which is still another two to three weeks, I have no further use for them so they are going back. Hence there is no requirement at all for me to have my own PRD-1 team, organic to my unit in any way, shape or form. Finally on the short range DF, reference the request I sent back to Australia on using the SAS for getting fixes on units up to the last mile. What finally had turned out was the fact that the opinion from the Americans was the complete opposite to the signal you sent up here, and the fact that they do have a number of Special Forces personnel specially indoctrinated and trained for this sort of work, so I ended up getting two Special Forces Sergeants down here, who had been trained in the use of the Telefunken and the URR10, and I sent them out on one patrol with the SAS; by having them sleep with the SAS, briefing them at a separate part as suggested in your signal and getting them to memorise the targets. But unfortunately by the time I got them out here, the targets I could possibly use them against (or the Brigadier, I am sorry, could use them against) had gone well outside our TAOR, and hence apart from the one operation we did it has been impossible to use them, so I am sending them back tomorrow. Tomorrow being the 14th September. Now I think though that this aid of using the short range DF is going to be extremely valuable, and once again this is one point I forgot to mention earlier on, the SAS have proven invaluable in producing open collateral for our material so far as action-on Sigint is concerned, in that having Major Murphy indoctrinated

~~TOP SECRET TRINE~~

~~TOP SECRET TRINE~~

TO BE KEPT UNDER COMBINATION LOCK AND NEVER REMOVED FROM THE OFFICE UNLESS TRANSMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS.

- 9 -

we get a series of ARDF fixes or SRDF fix, SAS patrol is put out to confirm this on the ground and they will bring back all necessary collateral. When I say collateral it need not necessarily be the actual contact with forces but it can be use of trails, water points, bunkers that have been used in the last 24 hours and things of this nature. This information has then become open and the Brigadier uses it as positive intelligence for the planning of operations. As such anything that we have given SAS to check out has proven positive and Major Murphy, as OC of the SAS Squadron, is very happy with this and he is all for closer collaboration between what we produce and then what he can do on the ground. So this looks like a further use of the SAS and a very practical way of using their abilities to the ultimate.

Your next question is paragraph 5 on technical facilities. "Was I aware that the Chief of Staff?" Yes I was. Quite often, or not quite often, but once or twice we have uncovered cases with PRC9, 10 sets and 25 sets. We know they are being used. My progress at the moment on VHF is that I have had the two linguists over staggered hours over the 24 hour period mixing it up on the top of NUI DAT with an RC292 antenna. If anybody comes up on the air at all or breathes across the ether, I have got a darn good chance of picking them up within about a fifteen Kilometer radius, but so far there has been absolutely nothing on the air. I think, and this is only just my opinion, is that virtually the only time the VC use VHF is when they actually carry out an operation. As such, our best chance of VHF intercept is the next time we get a contact, like we did with the 275th Regiment, instead of being on the ground or putting men out with the Battalion, the best way to do it is to actually use a VHF platform. Tomorrow I am taking down the equipment, which will be a 744 receiver plus a tape-recorder, to fit into a Cessna which should be quite a simple operation simply because the power supply can be taken off through the cigarette lighter on the dash board, and it is simple to plug into the VHF aeriels on the Cessna. To tie this in with the homing device available on the Cessna, it is possible to pick up a message, tape it, and also to get a homing fix in on the station to get a rough idea where it is on the ground. Once again I think the only chance we are going to have of picking up any VHF at all is when the actual VC put in an operation on some area. Hence I am making this installation as easy as I possibly can, so that at a moments notice we can ring up VUNG TAU, the aircraft can meet us at an aircraft strip available at BARIA, and within half an hour of an operation starting we should have the linguist up in the air with his equipment searching for VHF voice. Ultimately the Light Aircraft Squadron is moving from VUNG TAU up to the Task Force, in that a strip is to be built up here - it is partly built at the moment and when this is done, it will become a much faster reaction when VHF can be used. But throughout the country there has been very very little success at all against VHF and if we can just get one VHF intercept, put it on tape, it will be quite feathers in the caps of the Australians so far as the Americans Sigint effort is concerned.

"Can I carry out VHF search both on the ground and in the air at the same time?" Once again, I don't think this will ever be required, simply because we found that with the Battalions going on a search-and-destroy operation the VC keep well out of their way. The only time that the VC will take on a target is when they outnumber the target by anything up to between 4 and 6 to 1, which is what happened when we had this big brush with the 275th Regiment. They thought they were just taking on a company which they were, they had at least three Battalions there, and hence it was a reasonable target and they took them on straight away. But where our battalions actually go

~~TOP SECRET TRINE~~

TOP SECRET TRINE

TO BE KEPT UNDER COMBINATION LOCK AND NEVER REMOVED FROM THE OFFICE UNLESS TRANSMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS.

- 10 -

searching for trouble, up until now it has been proven that the VC keep well out of their way. As they go through an area they find evidence that the VC have left the area within the last 24 hours and the enemy just refuses to fight under these grounds. In other words it is just not going to pay to put out a VHF intercept operator with a Battalion actually on the ground. On top of this if he is out on foot or in a vehicle, it is extremely difficult to get up a good aerial simply because, the country these people go through, you can not take vehicles; the operator must take it on his flat feet hence all he can have is just a short whip aerial. The range of this country would be extremely limited on picking up anything with a PRC 9 or 10 and virtually you would only pick it up if we had a contact, and, as I have pointed out, that is not very likely. So I think the final answer will be VHF search on an aerial platform, particularly at the time of a VC contact.

"What progress has been made of moving the installation to other accommodation?" The big problem here of course is to get things done; everything is on a self-help basis, we will have to build our accommodation ourselves. At the moment this is still not in site simply because the small king strand, or tullock as it is called which is a 30 by 20 hut, is still not available in the country. When they become available I am top on the priority to get these things built. But when this will be I do not know. From the point of view of accommodation I will speak on this a little bit later.

Your paragraph 6 on manning. "The way personnel are presently employed?" What I have done and found is that one TA man can cope with what we are producing at the moment. This is Irwin. As such I then use Rodgers as virtually a troop commander in that he supervises all the work in TA and sort of generally ties together all the work of the troop, and organises work parties and everything like that. I handle everything outside the Troop; in other words dealing with the staff on requiring defence stores or timber, working as SSO or as Australian Intelligence Officer briefing the Brigadier, working in with the 17th RR Battalion etc. etc. As far as the operators are concerned - you have probably got my previous note by now. What we have done over the past 15 days, is we now have four positions going during the day. Four positions are set up, two of them are used for normal tasking as two eighteen hour positions and the other two positions are used as eight hour positions by using two extra operators. These are used for general search and development. Once again, the reason for this I will come onto this again in a moment. The two extra operators are one, Lever, from cypher and the other one Day, is the ARDF operator. I found that Rainer can cope with all the administration for the Troop so far as working with 103 Sig Squadron is concerned, operate the ARDF receiver and also keep all the plots up-to-date on the map on which I brief the Brigadier. Communications - I can cope by using two operators only. I had a lot of trouble initially with communications due to the volume of flash messages I was getting in, in that every time an ARDF tip-off anywhere was received over the Corps III area was immediately flashed to every other station. Now I hit this on the head in that I told all other stations that Brigadier Jackson was only interested in grid references or fixes in the PHUOC TUY Province area and immediately 75% of my traffic disappeared and we are now on a basis whereby the two of them can cope quite adequately by keeping communications open between eight o'clock in the morning when the cards or the plugs are changed for setting up a cypher, up until approximately 11 o'clock at night which is the time the last day ARDF fixes come in. We close down for an hour at lunch time and it is possible to shut down for anything up to two to three hours round about tea time so those

TOP SECRET TRINE

~~TOP SECRET TRINE~~TO BE KEPT UNDER COMBINATION LOCK AND NEVER REMOVED FROM THE
OFFICE UNLESS TRANSMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS.

- 11 -

two can cope with it quite well and, to give them a day off from time to time normally on the basis of once a month, I use either Lever or Aird to fill in for them, to keep continuity in the communications. On the TA side it is run by Irwin. On the off-duty hours on the VHF side I have been using both Rodgers and Ennis in the TA section; for two reasons one to do all translations. Corporal Rodgers is an extremely good crypt-linguist and his work has been invaluable so far as cracking at messages is concerned. Once he actually has a matrix, and the basic ground work for all our crypt work has been done by the Americans but Rodgers has been able to improve on it. Using this information Innis has also been trained to translate messages as they come in they also give Staff Sergeant Irwin a hand on a lot of the routine work in TA. For such, a team of three men can cope quite adequately as well as keeping up with, as we have been lately, a fourteen hour VHF position up on the top of NUI DAT. On ARDF side, I have remoted an RC292 antenna to the top of NUI DAT, approximately three quarters of a mile away, it is working and efficiently well with a PRC25 set. From the top of that hill, I have got a range and can make reliable contact over a range of 5 1/2 miles. On the operator side, Warrant Officer Grates copes with this quite well, with his five operator force, his standard two positions plus the extra two for development. My biggest weakness I think at the moment, is I need a general purpose storeman-cum-administrative man-cum-clerk to help out with preparing stuff for the Brigadier, and generally just a general purpose man all told. I don't like using Rodgers in the role he is now employed in, in that he really does not have that much technical work to do. As such a man with his abilities, he should be employed full time on TA duties. I am coming onto this again in a minute. As such, if I can employ him in what I am going to suggest later on, I think what I could well do with is a junior officer, say a Second Lieutenant. He can be trained in this business and actually do a lot of the routine work round the Troop, of putting in all the various returns required for 103 Sig squadron for our administration keeping up with the Q, generally getting done all the bits and pieces around the place keeping a check on the fellows, their dress, Canteen and generally as a Troop Commander. This would then give me more time to work in on the intelligence side as this is so, it was in the Int staff, also a bit of time to sit down and think, work in with the Americans and develop a few more ideas I have been putting across to them, which I will also come onto in a minute. So to sum it up, if Rodgers can be employed outside the Troop, which I will come onto in a minute, it would then be ideal to have a Second Lieutenant plus a general purpose storeman-cum-clerk-cum-general duties man.

~~TOP SECRET TRINE~~

~~TOP SECRET TRINE~~

TO BE KEPT UNDER COMBINATION LOCK AND NEVER REMOVED FROM THE
OFFICE UNLESS TRANSMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS.

-12-

Now additional points I may have, your paragraph 7. Nearly everything I am going to say now is going to appear to be highly derogatory on the American system. I am going to appear to be pulling it to pieces right, left and centre. So if you would please note that I am aware of this, and I will try and make what I hope is constructive criticism compared with the lines along which I have been taught anyway since I have been in the Sigint organisation.

Now first of all the complete American system is in a shocking mess, to put it bluntly. Just to briefly cover what appear to be the major faults. Firstly, the staff has too much influence over the organisation as a whole, this is the intelligence staff and secondly, the standard of training is just too poor to be believed in all fields, thirdly their standards so far as reporting are concerned are nowhere as strict as ours, fourthly there is just no such thing as steerage. They have no GS or development of any shape or form within the country; and lastly, as point for the time being, their efforts are so frittered away in little penny packets all over the country (coming back once again on the point of centralisation), they are achieving very little at all with the 4000 men they have in the country.

First of all the effect of the staff and I think this is probably the most important factor of all. The intelligence staff of the various divisions, brigades and so on, all for want of a better term commander/intelligence staff. The staff and commanders have got so far into the system that we are now at the stage where instead of just the commander and staff laying down his military requirements as to what he in the way of intelligence, he is now telling the DSUs exactly how they will use their equipment, how they will be employed. If a DSU wants to send away one or two of its men to another station as operators for some particular reason, he will not allow this, and ASA is letting the commanders and staff get away with it. This is due mainly to the American command approach in that all commanders and staff are extremely jealous of their empires, and this also applies to the DSU Commanders in that they also tend to go along with this because they don't want to lose any part of their empire at all, so it is each man jealously looking after his command and not really looking forward or trying to work out how to get the job done in the most effective way possible. At the top of the tree we have got J2 MACV who is Brigadier General MacChristian, and he virtually has got to the stage of telling ASA that they will form, for example, the team we have down here at the moment, the fly-away team. ASA said "yes sir" and they formed a team and he said "give them to Australia for 45 days", so I have got the team for 45 days. Because I have got no use for them after 30 days they are now going back whether the staff at MACV like it or not, because I have got no further use for them at the moment. But this is the stage it has got to, and virtually the commanders are operationally not running their own units, and this I think is the biggest problem of the lot.

Now the second one is the standard of training. I gave a brief run-down in the letter I wrote to you, but just to expand on it a little bit further. The operators that come into the country have undergone approximately a fifteen-week course in the States whereby they have got to the standard of receiving 18 words a minute and sending 15, and then just rush straight out here and they receive what is called OJT (On the Job Training). They are then start to be taught something about notations and what to cover; they then start learning how to take code, start learning about the various procedures etc. etc. The TA staff are in the same boat; quite a few of

~~TOP SECRET TRINE~~

~~TOP SECRET TRINE~~

TO BE KEPT UNDER COMBINATION LOCK AND NEVER REMOVED FROM THE OFFICE UNLESS TRANSMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS.

-13-

the DSUs and 1 or 2 of the senior NCOs are highly qualified men and highly proficient, but once again they are being employed as just say one TA man at one DSU. He is getting no support back further up the chain, and as such he is not being made use of. If he comes forward with any ideas at all which varies from the party line, he more often than not ends by getting sacked and shoved off to some other unit. Besides operators this applies to communications personnel. Now at the moment our communications link between here and the 303rd is the circuit with the highest amount of circuit time of any of the 16 circuits emanating from the 303rd in that last month we had 93% effective time. My two cypher operators have run into two tremendous problems due mainly to the lack of training on the Americans' cypher operators part. The majority of them can't type, it is normally one fingered jobs, they have no idea of procedures or precedences or passing traffic or anything at all. We are gradually starting to get this straightened out as politely and tactfully as we can, but it is going to be a long slow business.

Now the third point was standards of reporting. I know the Vietnamese language is extremely difficult to translate into English to get the correct interpretation but we have had so few pieces of end-product since we have been here, I think all told I have had something in the vicinity of 15 pieces of what we would call T reports. The last few in particular where we have now been translating the messages ourselves, we send these off (and by the way I am going to show these to the staff until I get the serialised end-product back though I will go up and see the Brigadier and give him a general gist of what was in the message), we get the end-product back, and in a number of cases has had a lot added in and we just can't work out for the life of us where they got this from. It just appears to be made up and this has me extremely worried at the moment, anyway. So either their standard of linguists is very poor or their standards of reporting need a very good look at, but some of the information getting past out as serialised end-product as authentic first class intelligence has got me extremely worried at the moment, particularly when we have had our own fellows here translating it and they get a completely different translation.

The next point is there is absolutely no steerage. As I have said we have had or to go back, as at the 31st August we have suddenly started losing notations; we have now only got about 2 or 3 effective notations on the whole of the province and some of our productive notations in the past have now just disappeared off the band. So we created two general search positions and we started virtually directed search based on the following things - unidentified callsigns and freqs which had been fixed by ARDF in the general area of PHUOC TUY Province, we are putting these on cover; secondly, going across the band in directed search, any notations that we picked up that sounded close we got the PRD-1s on to it; if they could get a null on it or fix we took this as a general indicator, although there was a danger in this because quite often we get skywave transmissions from hundreds of miles away and, when bounced off mountains and so on in our area, appears as a groundwave transmission on which you get a null. But even taking this into account it was a worthwhile procedure. So out of the last 15 days we have produced somewhere in the vicinity 3 to 4 hundred VNGB dev items. Of these a total of 5 have been identified. So as a rough assessment, I would say that we have less than half the known VC transmissions in our area. Hence with a drop in cover and the fact that I have got the necessary slack to cover more stuff, my aim was to start trying to develop some of this stuff that is around. I was talking to the OC of the 175th Company (this is the USM 626 which is the company in SAIGON which has about

~~TOP SECRET TRINE~~

~~TOP SECRET TRINE~~

TO BE KEPT UNDER COMBINATION LOCK AND NEVER REMOVED FROM THE OFFICE UNLESS TRANSMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS.

-14-

26 positions and the bulk of the TA staff, analytical staff, crypt staff, and the reporting authority on translations in, as far as I am concerned anyway,) I was speaking to him and I asked him about the reason why we hadn't any idents at all and it turns out that they have no section in their TA set up which is capable of doing developmental work. This is just matching up callsigns, freqs, generally handling GS or developmental work. They spend all their time allocating all their resources to a blanket cover on every known notation. If a notation is not productive in that (a) you can't crack cypher and (b) you just want continuation of it say to get a series of ARDF fixes, and also the fact that you know that its [1 group garbled] don't change I suggested to him why don't you put it on rotational cover and cover it say once a fortnight or once a month just to make sure he is still there so that you have still got standard information for ARDF then drop him from cover and allocate an extra position for GS or developmental work seeing as there is so much on the air that we just haven't identified. This to them was a completely new thought - to them as everything comes up, they cover it and if they can't cover everything they just produce more operators and by hook or by crook they just blanket cover the whole darn lot. They don't appear to have any system of allocating definite priorities and trying to put three or four positions together and getting the maximum out of each position; and hence the reason why we have been getting no steerage is that they are just not capable of doing this. So I was talking to the officer concerned in charge of this TA section at USM 626 (he has got one good analyst who we know very well from the 303rd RR Battalion and I also pointed out to him that I have an analyst who is virtually unemployed at the moment on actual desk duties who could be employed on this); I said we just can't do much GS or developmental work simply because we haven't got the resources behind us in the way of records and all the rest of it in which to do work of this sort. I said what say you use him; well he agreed with this. I then brought this up with Colonel Masters, the CO the battalion, and he backed up my request to the effect that we should have access to USM 626 and although I don't know what the answer is, as this only came up yesterday, but we are working on the lines of getting permission first to enter USM 626 and, secondly, they are going to try and set up a GS or DS or developmental section of some sort where new notations can be developed and allocated, and as such I think if Doug Rodgers could be sent down there - Warrant Officer Rodgers could be sent down there - say for 1, 2 or 3 months at a time, then rotate with Irwin, we have got a man right in on the ground floor to let us know what is going on at USM 626, and which we haven't got much idea at the moment simply because we are never allowed in there, and secondly we have got a pretty good change of developing a GS or developmental effort, and I think the operators we have got up here are the only operators in the country that are capable of doing any sort of GS or developmental work at all.

This then ties in with the next point I made of centralisation. Now, the Americans have what they, at the moment, have centralised to this extent, in that at in a division, the platoons at brigade level, the HF component has been pulled out and centralised back at divisional headquarters to give them bank of or team of six receivers. But at any stage they may pull these operators away for sentry duty or KP duty; if they required a man at PRD-1 team they just pull them off the sets and put them on PRD-1 team, no matter what the reason happens to be, whether it is valid or not, and as such they lack of tremendous amount of continuity in their effort. In fact, I was told yesterday that the volume of work we produce here from our two positions is more than the rest of the three [1 word garbled] put together. How true that is I just don't know, but with the standard of operators they have got they have got no supervision in DSUs, the whole

~~TOP SECRET TRINE~~

~~TOP SECRET TRINE~~

TO BE KEPT UNDER COMBINATION LOCK AND NEVER REMOVED FROM THE OFFICE UNLESS TRANSMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS.

-15-

system of control in the set room seems to be completely foreign to them as we know it, and generally they are not producing very much at all from their positions. So this problem of centralisation. In the next couple of months the 11th Cavalry Regiment is moving into a position just south of XUAN LOC which is about 15 to 20 kilometres north of our location. They have a completely track unit in APC and their DS unit (DSU) is also mounted in APCs. The regiment consists of three squadrons, so they have three APCs, one allocated to each squadron, each one set up with one double position morse, and when a squadron goes out on operations the APC goes out with them and as they are trundling along the road, so the HF position and the APC picks up stuff off the air and so on. Now this is completely wrong, and Colonel Masters agrees with this and said that they are just going to have to pull this stuff out and centralise it, at least at regimental level. I then got onto him about all these points that I have been speaking about, and mainly on the lines of centralisation of effort so that you can pool all your linguists, pool all your experience of TA people, and virtually set up a similar organisation to what we had in Singapore and Borneo. He pointed out it would be extremely difficult simply because the staff and commanders would never allow it even though we could produce better results for them. But he does agree that with Cavalry unit moving in with three HF positions, that the 173rd Brigade who are operating in our area almost continuously and they have another 2 HF positions with their brigade at BINH HOA, that is five extra positions that want a cut at what we are covering at the moment; now at the moment we can completely cover this quite adequately with two positions. Therefore if we give away some of our cover, this is less for us to do, and it just doesn't go round. I said "Why not as an experiment try centralisation of the DSUs just in the PHUOC TUY Province?" I said "The Regimental staff and the commander as yet have had very little experience with Sigint, now is the time to strike while the irons are hot before they start getting any fixed ideas of their own." He has agreed with this in principle and he has okayed my going back to Australia (I am suggesting this to you) and he going up to the 509th Group to sound out Colonel that the fact that the three HF positions from the Cavalry unit should be amalgamated with our two to four positions to form one central set room. Also to bring down the TA staff to make a bigger TA section, at least between the two of us. He suggested that they should be centralised at my location here, rather than us upstages and move up to the position of 15 to 20 kilometres north around XUAN LOC with the Cavalry Regiment. At the moment this is just an idea in principle; I realise there are thousands of problems associated with this from a point of view of stores, maintenance, equipment, manning (all the problems in fact of a mixed station), but this I think could be a step forward in the right direction. If we are stuck in manpower and decide that this detachment cannot be increased, well, then this seems a ready way out of it. If, coupled with this, 626 can set up a GS or developmental section and if I can get Doug Rodgers in there, we have then got a reasonable chance of starting to produce something really effective down here in this province. So that is the way the cookie crumbles, so the expression goes, at the moment. But I think as a final comment that the major scope for us in the Vietnamese theatre to prove our worth as Australians is the fact that all our operators and nearly all our TA staff have tremendous background experience and the best way this could be put would be in the form of general search. So even if this idea of centralising the DSU from the 11th Cavalry Regiment with us doesn't come off for various reasons, I still think then that this DSU could then take over, say, the regular cover of PHUOC TUY Province and then we could devote ourselves whole-heartedly to development, so long as we got end-product and so on in time the way we are getting or the little we are getting at

~~TOP SECRET TRINE~~

~~TOP SECRET TRINE~~

TO BE KEPT UNDER COMBINATION LOCK AND NEVER REMOVED FROM THE OFFICE UNLESS TRANSMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS.

Declassified by ASD - 10/2/2016
Information removed for
national security and/or
personal sensitivities

-16-

the moment. I wouldn't like to go to this extreme; what I would like to do is still to continue everything in our area of interest, but also develop the extra developmental banks - and I think the best compromise would be to keep two positions going on the cover as we know it. The extra two positions should be used for developmental work and preferably this should be brought up to four because, ultimately, with the increase in notations that we are going to get through development we are going to need extra positions to cope with the normal fixed cover; hence we will ultimately end up with say four or five positions covering the extra stuff that we have picked up, which then leaves you with your last position as a supervisor's position or as a general search position. I think with six positions we could then cope quite adequately with everything that is on the air in PHUOC TUY Province. The increase in manpower required to cope with this working on a 45 hour week per operator (which when taking into account time off, R and R and a few other things which would then up the hours per operator to the vicinity of over 50) I would require an additional 12 operators giving a total up here of 17. Now with the way things are being employed at the moment Corporal Day not really being required on ARDF plus LEVER not being required, this gives me a total of here on the spot at the moment, requiring a total of 17 which means that ten additional operators would be required, but of course getting up to the stage of having seventeen operators is getting pretty more near the full entitlement for 547 Sig Troop. Hence one can't expect, with manpower coming along these lines to a Troop strength of 25 expecting other people here in the Task Force to support us, so in effect what I would be asking for in effect is that the full Troop should be deployed with our own mechanics, cooks, bottlewashers, clerks and so on; in fact everybody that is required to run this as a full Troop. In conclusion, I would just like to point out that we have had a tremendously successful run after our first month or six weeks up here with problems with no communications etc., with our equipment is now standing up very well and I think this is due to the fact that it has been extremely cool over the last six to eight weeks due to the monsoon. We have had a surprising lack of sickness

So all told we are a fairly happy bunch and no complaints at all on which to report. Hoping this be to your requirements as laid down in your signal sir and we are looking forward very much indeed to your troop up here in October, Goodnight.

~~TOP SECRET TRINE~~