



# Australian War Memorial

## Sound Collection

### ORAL HISTORY RECORDING

TITLE: MAJOR J S ROWE, GSO2 (INT) HQ 1ATF  
INTERVIEWEE: MAJOR J S ROWE  
INTERVIEWER: DAVID CHINN  
SUMMARY: SVN 1966  
DATE RECORDED: 16 MARCH 1990  
RECORDING LOCATION: MANLY, NSW  
ACCESSION NUMBER: S00876  
TRANSCRIBER: S E SOAMES  
TRANSCRIPTION DATE: APRIL 1990

START OF TAPE ONE - SIDE A

Identification: This interview is with retired Major John Rowe who was the General Staff Officer Grade 2 Intelligence, Headquarters 1st Australian Task Force in Vietnam in 1966. His present address is 118 Bower Street, Manly. The interviewer is David Chinn, Research Officer, Official History Unit. The interview is taking place at Manly on 16th March 1990.

John, as we discussed earlier, could I confirm with you that you may if you wish place a security classification as we discussed on the interview, or any part of it, and that you acknowledge that the interview is for the Official History Unit only at this stage and that you are agreeable to the tape and transcript being deposited with the Australian War Memorial for use by general researchers after the publication of history?

Yes, sure.

You accept those conditions. Fine. It is proposed then that the questionnaire as issued be followed but as we discussed one category - one portion of the questioning - we'll deal with separately at the end. But I'll read each question out for the purpose of the people listening to the tapes in the future understanding what your answer relates to and also for the purpose of identification of your answer in the transcript. I may need to obviously ask additional questions if you care to suggest them. But the final point is that if you want to pause during the interview and switch off just raise your hand and we can switch off, and I'll probably do the same thing.

Well, John, to deal with the agenda - and we've agreed that we'll leave Questions 10, 14 and 17 to a separate segment at the end - I'll deal with Question 1 first in questioning you. Would you briefly outline the following personal background aspects, the first part being what previous postings or courses prepared you best for Vietnam?

I think firstly my posting to Malaya as a young platoon commander. At least as a result of that I understood what jungle patrolling and counterinsurgency operations were all about at the really important level of platoon commander because still, to a great degree, even Vietnam was a platoon commander's war mostly although, of course, on rare occasions it ended up as a company or a battalion commander's but most of the time it was a section commander, platoon commander's war.

The next one was probably India. I served there as the United Nations Military Observer and I suppose where it was especially useful was I saw very large armies deployed in both Pakistan and India and got some feeling for the ways around and the ways to operate within very large bureaucracies - military bureaucracies that is.

Then afterwards, after a brief spell back in Australia, I was appointed to the Headquarters of British Forces, Borneo in

Brunei under a General Walter Walker as a special advisor on Indonesian military intelligence and so that opportunity to work on a senior headquarters again gave me a good understanding of the sorts of political implications that were to play such a big part in Vietnam with the endless stream of VIP visitors. And so I was aware as a young officer just how critical that could be and how time consuming it was for a senior commander, and had to be for some members of his staff, to enable him to, in a sense, play that game.

Then the other thing that of course it was very useful; it was just a thing as simple as the normal promotion exam system, studying for Tac 3. I found that background in fact in detail useful for honing up the sort of military skills. I found it actually had application often.

Fine. And Subquestion (B), you served with 3RAR in Malaya and I think you've already answered this as part of (A), but with serving with 3RAR in Malaya in '59 did you find the experience useful for service in Vietnam and, if so, in what ways? What in your experience, for example, were the major similarities and differences between service in Malaya and Vietnam?

Yes. Well, recapitulating briefly, the patrolling was the main thing that was useful to have had experience with as a young platoon commander. The major similarities of course were that to a great degree the war in Vietnam was ambushing and patrolling and so, of course, that was useful. The big difference though was the scale of the threat. In Malaya you were unlikely ever to meet more than, I suppose, a squad-sized group and that was fairly improbable, whereas the scale of contact that you could come across in Vietnam obviously was going to range from anything from the single courier all the way up to possibly a regimental concentration. So that was an enormous difference.

I think the other thing was where in Malaya we felt very comfortable about small two- and three-man patrols when searching an area in detail, depending on the area - perhaps in the early days in Phuoc Tuy and later on in the years when there were operations outside of Phuoc Tuy like in 1968 - there was a major difference there where the two- and three-man patrol perhaps often wasn't enough or very wise. So that's another major dissimilarity, the larger patrols.

The other thing in Malaya, of course, was that there was no need for the artillery umbrella; in Vietnam, of course, it was vital. In Malaya air support was unheard of for practical purposes except occasionally when somebody got lost, the equivalent of a FAC - a forward air controller - would go out and help locate somebody, so that was an extraordinary new experience for people of only Malayan experience. I don't think there were any APCs, or I certainly never saw them involved in a real operational sense in Malaya, not with the battalion.

And the other comment would be just the colossal scale of the war with the US involvement. The colossal availability of endless logistic supplies; the vast logistic depots - just the

enormity of operating with the Americans was just so different.

That leads really into the third subquestion there: your posting with Headquarters 173rd Airborne Brigade prior to Headquarters Task Force.

That was invaluable. I had six months with 173rd Airborne as the GSO2 Intelligence and the Brigade Commander there, Brigadier Butch Williamson, he decided that because he had myself and then later on Dick Hannigan with Operations that we went from being a G-staff to a C-staff; C meaning for combined operations. And he loved to boast to his VIPs that he had the only C-staff in Vietnam. But that particular Brigade, 173rd, had arrived in Vietnam at the same time as the Marines arrived in the north and so for the first year of its operations, and of course 1RAR was part of that Brigade, it was used as a bushfire brigade going all around I suppose primarily III Corps area and in all sorts of new situations. So it was a colossal learning experience and seeing the American way of doing things. Also it exposed me, because one of my best friends happened to be the civil affairs/civic action officer - this was an American - I became very familiar with at least American doctrine and the way they were attempting to make it work. It also exposed me to the very first American attempts to do something about psyops. That was also useful later on with the Task Force.

The other thing was, I suppose, to realise - I made the point earlier - but the colossal demands on the commander and his senior staff of visiting VIPs. We had a range there in 173rd from Defence Secretary McNamara, I think although I'm not absolutely sure whether we actually had Linden Johnson there too. Maybe he didn't actually come to our Headquarters; I'm vague on that. But we certainly had an endless sequence of senior senators and congressmen and other VIP American generals. Westmoreland must have been about a fortnightly visitor and every time all these people had to be briefed and it could take up a morning briefing and answering their questions. And I saw times when literally there'd be a major battle that we were involved in and literally the Brigade Commander had to leave that to his senior staff officers because American military protocol was such that he was just expected to carry on with these briefings and leave these major battles to his senior staff officers. And at times, I think, it was very wrong. But anyway, so that was a very good preparation for me to be aware of how important that was going to be, added to the previous experience in Borneo.

I suppose that, in a way, relates the final part of that question, your posting with Headquarters 1ATF because perhaps you saw a small mirror image of the visiting profile at the Task Force level to accommodate Americans and later, I guess, Australian visitors.

Exactly.

Could you just talk about your posting with Headquarters 1ATF?

When I first went to Vietnam, of course, we hadn't made the

decision to send the Task Force although obviously it was in the back of, I suppose, people's minds like General Wilton and General Daley who were no doubt getting prepared to do so if it became necessary. And I think the major reason I was sent to 173rd Airborne was to ensure that we had - myself and later on Dick Hannigan - on the intelligence and operations staff to try and ensure that the operations that 1RAR would get involved with were operations that we felt comfortable about and weren't perhaps misguided, that is, in the Australian doctrinal sense.

And also it wasn't only an experience but it was a way too of making sure that Headquarters AFV was really fully informed of just why we were doing certain operations and what we were doing. It wasn't spying in any sense because it was all a friendly relationship and everybody recognised the need to all feel comfortable about the sorts of things that the Australians were used on because, after all, you have fairly bitter experiences from World War I too. So I think it was very sensible to put us in that sort of situation. I'm wandering a bit though.

Oh yes. As a result of that experience, as you said, lots of things that happened with 173rd were reflected in the experience with the Australians only we got an extra dose of VIPs as you rightly guessed. We got the Australians, we still got plenty of Americans who were curious what the Australians were doing.

The other thing I should say about that posting to Headquarters 1ATF, when it was decided that the Australian Task Force would come I discussed with Brigadier Jackson, when it was announced that he'd have the Task Force, that perhaps the normal Australian type of brigade intelligence structure would be quite inadequate especially in light of these colossal VIP briefing requirements and where normally you'd have a GS03 Intelligence on a Brigade Headquarters, in Vietnam it wasn't going to be adequate, especially given our Task Force would be independent and not operating under the umbrella of an Australian division. And so I recommended, and he concurred, without really much difference of opinion, that it should be a major job and it certainly suited me and it suited him to have somebody with experience to fill it first and I was just the logical choice of being already there. I don't think there was much debate or discussion that that would be the reality anyway and so that happened.

The other thing was that I pointed out to Brigadier Jackson that we really would have to do something about civil affairs and psychological operations, it was going to be a requirement and he no doubt realised it himself anyway. And I suggested it probably made sense for me to take it on as an extra responsibility rather than the GS02 OPS because I'd been there a bit longer and anyway there was a lot of operational stuff to be sorted out. So it devolved upon me. I think by that time too we might have been running some courses at the School of Intelligence in these areas. So that was just a logical growth. Later on, as you know, the civil affairs/civic action and psyops were later hived off to other people but that's how it started off.

Roughly, if you can imagine, what proportion of your time

would have been taken up in either doing or supervising, obviously as you mentioned, psyops, Civil Affairs, Combat INT and perhaps again the briefing aspect? What sort of proportion did those things evolve giving head of the intelligence staff?

I'd say probably the briefing was close to fifty per cent in one way or another, either preparing for it or doing it. Then I'd say probably something like twenty to thirty per cent on Battle INT and then something like - depending on how those figures add up - something like fifteen per cent on civil affairs/civic action, something like five per cent on psyops or even less. An American captain was posted to us for psyops and so it was just an occasional coordinating discussion with him.

It was such early days and in my limited time it was essentially a question of getting some sort of policy document written and working out what sort of staff we should have in due course and what sort of direction we should attempt to go; getting a doctrine promulgated.

Fortunately with civil affairs and civic action, fairly soon after we arrived I got the assistance of Captain Bob Rooney who spoke Vietnamese so he was very helpful and then not too long after an intelligence corps major called Major John Donohoe arrived and so I had their assistance to write the first sort of policy which was the major thing we were doing in my time was to try and decide just how we should attempt to do things and what staff would eventually be desirable and we started to build it up very rapidly in that time.

I suppose that really leads us almost to Question 2 then because we're looking at what was initially as you said an Australian establishment back home with the INT subordinate to OPS but then in Vietnam it developed really into almost the American staff system with operations being the three staff, intelligence being the two staff and so it went on. So perhaps Question 2 is a good lead-in at this point: Could you comment on the adequacy of Headquarters 1ATF INT staff in terms of establishment and appointees? How did such adequacies affect the working of the INT staff in the Headquarters and in very broad terms, how did you employ the INT staff assigned to you as GSO2 INT?

As a result of the signals backwards and forwards, the Intelligence staff that did arrive was adequate and the individual skill levels of people were adequate. I don't think they fully appreciated the nature of the new war they'd arrived in at first but that's only to be expected. I think the staff itself was adequate and after a few weeks it started to shake itself down and sort itself out.

How did I employ the Intelligence staff? Basically, the Battle INT staff I put under the GSO3 INT and that then became his problem. That was Captain Bob Keep and he handled that. Then we had a Photo INT section was a couple of pretty senior warrant officers as I recollect and they were very competent in their own right. Then we had an interrogation-linguist section - I can't remember the name of the officer now, I'll think of it later perhaps - anyway, again, he was a captain so it was a

fairly simple family tree structure and I just accepted essentially the structure I had. That was sensible. But it was one of those situations, landing in a province in a new country where we had to do a bit of 'Popsky's Private Army' empire building to meet the new problems and one of the first big problems was to try and provide some stock of linguists. So one of the things we did there was to try and run ... (phone rings) ... Resuming from the interruption. So we had to build up some sort of linguist capability especially for the infantrymen because otherwise it meant if they picked up peasants or possible suspects in their operations there was just absolutely no capability at all and so we deliberately organised a rudimentary language school where we were lent extra teachers by the local Vietnamese and we gave a very rudimentary language course. We arranged with the Province Chief that they would provide us some Vietnamese with a smattering of English and we would attempt to improve their English and we'd link them on a buddy system with somebody from each of the rifle platoons and that they'd work as pairs and we'd try and give them each a common vocabulary of a couple of hundred words. It was a limited aim but it was an attempt to achieve something. So that wasn't in the structure and that was something we had to do - a very mixed success of course. But that was something we had to attempt and did.

That's quite a commitment at that stage in the game.  
Perhaps on Question 3, if you're happy to go on ...

Yes.

How adequately prepared was Headquarters 1ATF INT staff for its commitments with the Task Force in Vietnam by prior training in Australia? Perhaps you've answered that to a degree in saying they were quite adequate.

I think I have. And individual skills were fine. It was then just a question of settling into the specific problems of Vietnam and we were commencing to do that. The main point is, in an area as complicated as Vietnam was, with the number of structures, or the complicated structures of the Vietnamese themselves and of the Americans, there's quite a learning process in just understanding your Allies and in understanding the regional forces and the popular forces and the Province Headquarters and all the odd headquarters down in Phuoc Tuy; all that took time. But they were settling in well when I finished my tour.

Fine. Question 4 then: How effectively did Headquarters 1ATF INT and OPS staffs work together initially and later, with experience?

Well, fortunately, Dick Hannigan the GSO2 OPS and myself had become close friends during our time together with 173rd Airborne so we mutually discussed both operations and intelligence problems. We shared the same tent; we spoke to all hours every night - one, two, three o'clock - talking about these things so we were very close and our junior officers were pretty close and I wasn't aware of any problems at all of any sort really of any substance other than the odd normal personality clash you might expect. But we were very close.

As you say, it starts with the two Grade 2 officers being close friends and working and sharing a tent; that's where it all starts from really. If that's works well it flows on.

Yes.

Question 5 then, and this obviously relates to the intelligence area but if there's anything else which you could highlight it would be worthwhile: Were there any difficulties experienced in working relationships with the three different headquarters - Headquarters 2nd Field Force, Headquarters Phuoc Tuy Sector, and any other relevant headquarters outside 1ATF?

There were no real problems it was just that there was such a, I suppose, plethora of other headquarters. It was hard in a sense to decide how much of an effort to make in terms of liaising with them. For example, to a great degree we really got very little intelligence 'downwards'. I suppose that was one of the features of the intelligence system through the war that to a great extent you were feeding a monstrous sort of corporate memory and you didn't really get much out of it on the way down. It wasn't that sort of a war and I think in the very nature of things it could never have developed that way either. So a lot of the reporting, I suppose, was just reporting up and you often wondered about the benefit or the usefulness of it and yet, clearly, an intelligent level of reporting had to go up for intelligence strategies to be developed. It had to be done taking the wiser, broader view of it.

Yes.

With Headquarters Phuoc Tuy we had very close working relationships. I used to see Colonel Dat with Brigadier Jackson a lot. I had quite close liaison with its intelligence staff. But, again, in the early days it was a question of building up confidence on our part to believe that there'd be any security if we told too much to them. I always had that reservation and I would imagine that future GS02 Intelligence had the same hesitation always in saying too much because we all knew that ARVN was so deeply penetrated. So, with that qualification, we worked well on the surface but there was always that great doubt about security.

And then the other relevant headquarters outside ATF. Well, there were other funny little headquarters and I personally went around and met them all and spoke to them but we didn't get anything particularly out of it but at least we made sure they knew we were there.

Fine. Question 6 then, it really gets to looking at the unit level: The relationships which existed between the Task Force Headquarters Intelligence and Unit Intelligence staffs? How effective was the working relationship with 1ATF Unit Intelligence staff and how well trained were they for the duty in Vietnam and how effective was the unit input to your intelligence process?



I suppose from the point of view of the units, they probably felt the same way that I did about the more senior headquarters. Because we started off in Phuoc Tuy with virtually no database, unlike, say, in Malaya where there was this marvellous order of battle where just about every terrorist was known and there was a magnificent chart and you ticked the names off as they were gradually eliminated, all we knew when we arrived was the broad order of battle. We knew the names of the units and the rough company and platoon structures underneath but at the Province level they probably had a few names but we were just so sceptical of almost everything we were told at that point. That was a continuing problem and it meant that to a great degree, intelligence in the day-to-day tactical sense could really only be gained by the battalions themselves and to a great extent I suppose our earlier operations were a mixture of clearing out initially to mortar range and then to battalion range a safe area and, at the same time, gathering the detailed topographical information and getting to know some sorts of patterns of what they were up to. But, really, you could almost view it as an intelligence gathering operation anyway. That meant though, I think, it's a philosophical or a training problem that at the more junior levels people would say, 'Oh, Intelligence can't tell us anything'; that's true. But then in the nature of the thing of course they couldn't and it was rather the function of the whole force to gradually build up an intelligence picture.

That would be in the nature of counterinsurgency really  
...

Exactly.

... as opposed to a sort of conventional war where it's going up and down.

Yes. And I'll comment in the separate section on some other areas of intelligence that I don't wish to cover here.

Sure.

That's the first part of the question. The second one is: How well trained were people? Well, initially I remember we had some problems with numbers in Intelligence at the Headquarters and then Captain Bob Keep became ill a couple of months after arrival and as a result I replaced him, when he had to be medically evacuated back to Australia, with one of the battalion IOs. Fortunately he was a close personal friend of mine, Donald Wilcox. That meant in turn he had to be replaced as Intelligence Officer in John Warr's battalion and we were very fortunate that John Warr's, one of his Company's 2ICs, was Bob O'Neill who by one of those flukes happened to be my Duntroon son in the 'son' system, his number being I suppose 1644 since mine was 1544, and of course Bob was a highly gifted, very intelligent individual and even though he had no specific intelligence background it was my suggestion - but I think one mutually arrived at by Brigadier Jackson and John Warr and myself - that he'd be a marvellous choice as the Intelligence Officer there. And so for that battalion he did an excellent job and had no trouble settling in. He contributed a great deal.

So I think at the battalion level the staffs they had were perfectly adequate and did well, given those early limitations I mentioned that really to a great degree they had to provide their own battlefield-type intelligence.

Fine. Question 7 then: How useful was intelligence supplied by GVN and US sources? What were its limitations? How effective was intelligence developed within the Task Force and how useful was it to GVN and US agencies?

Mostly the intelligence that came from GVN sources, firstly, you just always had to put a huge question mark against it. And the level of operatives that they had, the level of agents' reports or the reliability of what prisoners would say or 'chieu hoi' always had to be treated with great scepticism because for a start you had problems of translation; then you have problems of accuracy of map reading. If they were to say that there were many VC in a certain area. And then, of course, the VC could move so quickly. A report could be accurate about the location of the unit and it could be gone that same afternoon. So with all those limitations of the counterinsurgency campaign and the human problems and the security penetration of the ARVN Forces, you could never put too much reliance or credibility on any of them. That was the only intellectual approach to it. At times that might turn out to be wrong and it might be accurate but it would be a terrible mistake ever to assume it was correct. It had to be backed up by something else.

The US sources. In Phuoc Tuy, for practical purposes, there was very little US-type intelligence. There was one area that was useful though, that was where they used low-flying aircraft with an infra-red photographic capability and they would give, I think it was a report called a SLAR - that's an acronym SLAR - and that would allegedly show if there were hotter than the surroundings in the jungle concentrations on the ground, that might be human, it might be a herd of buffalos or elephants, or it might be vehicles - I'm not sure if I mentioned a concentration of troops. It was of interest that in those early days it really didn't amount to much because our operational pattern or strategy was to develop outwards clearing firstly out to mortar range then out to artillery range then in deliberate battalion areas of operations and so it was just a little bit that might make an area worthwhile investigating further. That's about all I can say. But I'd put it a very marginal usefulness in those days of SLAR.

Then there was another area which I'll cover later. I think I've answered that. How effective was intelligence developed within ATF in those days? I think we quite rapidly started to develop and confirm our own views on what the general strength and capability of the Viet Cong was in our area and so in broad terms it just enabled the US higher headquarters to firm up their order of battle - not in detail but in a general sense.

Fine. Question 8 then: In what ways did your experience with 173rd Airborne Brigade influence your direction of 1ATF INT?

I think I've answer that to a large degree already but to recapitulate, I was very aware of the fact that there was a sort of VIP/public relations effort required constantly by the brigade commander and he had to devote sufficient staff to meeting that requirement because of the visiting politicians and VIPs and then, in addition though, the war still had to be continued. And, I suppose, the main way in which that experience with the Americans influenced me was to make sure that we had those two capabilities running concurrently.

Fine. Question 9 then: What was your general appreciation of the enemy in Phuoc Tuy? It's only a short question but perhaps a difficult one to answer.

Yes. Without going back through detailed notes, but I'm sure you have this information elsewhere, we had the general order of battle - forgive me for my memory - but I think it was 274 and 275 Main Force Regiments.

That's right.

We had that, I think, on arrival. We'd been told that by the Americans and we were aware that they were operating in the general border area of the Province with a capability of crossing into the Province and assembling at short notice and massing for a target of opportunity or a target that they had decided in advance to attack. And we had to accept that we wouldn't necessarily get any advanced warning of a decision that they might make to attack a particular target. So, I think, really we were aware of that from the very beginning that we had at least two regiments that were capable of operating in our area, that could be expected to operate in our area. In addition, we knew from the very beginning that there were other main force units that operated in that sort of jungly, multi-border area to the north of us that could also, very rapidly, move into the Province. So one had to accept that the order of the threat was fluid but at least a couple of regiments could always be assembled against us, plus, in addition, I think there was ... not a main force but rather a local battalion, D445.

That's right, D445. And I think it there was a D440 but it was of no great strength. But, certainly, I think in my time there was a D445 which was the Provincial Mobile Battalion.

Right.

Then I think, as you would have had in the district companies, Chau Duc and so on.

Yes. So we were aware of this. I don't think D440 was there at the beginning, or if it was, it was very ineffective. I don't remember any reports on it in my time. So, in addition to the two regiments, we had that battalion plus these other companies. So in our earliest intelligence reports that was the general threat that we were faced with all the time and it was because of that that Brigadier Jackson's strategy was developed that we would first secure a Task Force Headquarters

at Nui Dat and then expand, as I've said earlier, to mortar and then to artillery range and then beyond that in sort of specific areas for specific operations. Unfortunately, it could only be one battalion at a time - that's a question we'll address later as well - but it meant from the very beginning the order of the threat was as such that you had to accept it could be several thousand at any time and you couldn't expect great advance warning. There were the advantages of the jungle and the fact that the Viet Cong and the main forces were capable of moving distances of twenty to thirty miles on foot a day and when you started drawing some radiuses with you compass you realised that meant virtually anywhere. They could assemble very quickly. So I think that was pretty much a constant in my time there. However, it was of concern that to a degree a lot of people didn't quite believe that, not really in their bones. Too many people had perhaps ... their recent experience had been, say, Malaya or some of the older ones of Korea where the threat was just - take the Korean people - the threat was obvious because it was just across no-man's land and like World War I, just beyond the wire. Here mostly the war seemed like Malaya but there was this larger threat that was just always hovering like a dark shadow in the background.

The other comment appropriate to make now is too, we realised - when I say 'we', I mean myself and Dick Hannigan as the GS02 OPS and Brigadier Jackson and the battalion commanders - that obviously the insertion of this major allied unit into the middle of the Province was very much a gauntlet thrown down and that we had to anticipate some sort of an early response and we were like cats on hot bricks in the early days when we first established Nui Dat. I can't recollect the exact casualties the American Brigade had before. 173rd Brigade cleared the Nui Dat area generally in a clearing operation before we moved the Task Force Headquarters in there and established ourselves.

They took quite heavy casualties: thirty, forty, fifty dead and as many or more wounded. So it was obvious that there were plenty of local-type forces around with a capacity to hurt. Anyway, we were very concerned, especially in those early days of trying to get some barbed wire down and trying to get local minefields and Claymores and things out on the chance that the Headquarters could be attacked. So I give that as the general overall feeling and in my time, the remaining five or six months I was there, that picture essentially didn't change, we just got to know a bit more about it and a bit more about areas of operations and probable headquarters and started to work out normal courier and supply routes and so forth and we started to clear local villages. But we knew before we went in there that most of the villages were deeply penetrated and were being used for supplies and for couriers and for porters. We had that sense that the population was deeply penetrated and deeply afraid.

That's probably a very good lead-in to Question 11 which we pose as: Did it ever seem to you that civil support for the VC was so high that our efforts were futile?

Well, yes, it did in the sense that unless we were going to be there for twenty or thirty years, I personally always had an awful sense, 'Hey, what's going to happen when we leave?' but still we were there for twelve months and it really wasn't our

concern or there's nothing we could do about it; we were there doing a job.

Question 12 then really follows: To what extent did it seem that the enemy gained support through coercion? Do you recall any examples of this?

Well, they gained great support through coercion. The Vietnamese villages with any sense of history clearly thought back all the way to the French time and they'd seen the powerful French Army eventually pack up, turn tail and leave and I guess the wiser ones, the shrewder ones were always very sceptical of how long we would be there. There were frequent examples of village chiefs or village headmen being executed or members of their family being kidnapped. I can't give you names and villages any longer; I'm afraid it's too long ago but that was nationwide and it happened in our area too and one was always, I suppose, in a human sense, terribly concerned about the absolute isolation of these village chiefs and of these small popular force units and just how exposed they were. The truth was we really couldn't guarantee them security at that individual level of isolated villages.

That's right. A change in direction of questioning perhaps then, Question 13, what were your views at the time - realising that you wouldn't have been directly involved I guess - on the problems of integration and employment of the RAAF 9 Squadron, the Iroquois helicopters?

It wasn't a direct responsibility of mine but I was terribly aware of it because of my time with 173rd Airborne and my awareness of how marvellous the cooperation was with the American helicopter units and because of my closeness with Dick Hannigan and the Brigadier I was very conscious of how that integration started to develop. At first it wasn't particularly happy. The problem was that we had become accustomed - and when I say 'we', you know, those Australians who'd already served closely with the Americans or had American helicopter support - we were used to immediate availability and extraordinary levels of 'derring-do', and dare-devilry and a preparedness to take risks which wasn't in any way initially the attitude of our own air force people. I think they were very professional in that they were very thorough but in comparison with the Americans they seemed to be excessively bureaucratic and hidebound in their procedures and in their reluctance to do the things that we felt, or we'd seen American helicopter support do without question. So there was a mixture of ill-feeling, disappointment and annoyance in the early period. Later on relationships did improve; there's no question later on they were to be very competent. But the main criticism would be an early - and to us compared to the Americans - excessive bureaucratic caution about what they would do.

That's interesting because it confirms in another slightly different perspective the view we've had from a number of other people. That's good, John. Perhaps another one or two short questions. Fifteen, if it's reasonably short: In terms of the fence and minefield placed after your time

by the Task Force from the Horseshoe to Lang Phuoc Hai, perhaps in hindsight, what was your appreciation of the need for the barrier, it's likely effectiveness and it's long term impact on the VC?

Yes, of course, I have the great advantage of hindsight so everything I say should be qualified on that basis; it's easy to be clever after the event. But I think, yes, such a barrier was a nice thing in an academic sense and it would be very desirable if such a barrier truly could have been effective; it would have blocked off a large area as a natural route for the VC but I think I've indicated my scepticism already that the local ARVN forces and Headquarters were penetrated and also their level of low-level infantry patrolling was appalling and the likelihood of them really actually patrolling that barrier minefield consistently and rigorously and vigorously for the number of years that it would have to be in, it all seemed highly improbable to me, looking back on it. So it's something I hope I would never have recommended. That's not to say I mightn't have. I think it's long term impact on the VC was to provide them with a marvellous arsenal of readily-available mines to use as booby traps.

Fine. Perhaps Question 16 we might fit on the tape: In terms of the 1ATF capability to perform it's mission in Phuoc Tuy Province, bearing in mind the likely objectives developed by INT staff, how valuable would a third infantry battalion have been during your tour of duty as GSO2 INT?

It would have been very useful. The problem with a two-battalion Task Force and with such a large Task Force Headquarters area to fit people in and to allow for future expansion was that the Task Force Headquarters was very vulnerable to attack and so we needed the better part of an infantry battalion around the place to give security which meant that we therefore rarely had more than one manoeuvre battalion. So it meant that all sorts of objectives and operations simply had to be postponed.

Fine. Perhaps Question 18 - has a fairly lengthy preamble, I don't know how long the answers would be to that but I will deal with it. If we need to carry on we can to another tape. According to the Australian Army publication, Division in Battle Pamphlet 11, Counter-Revolutionary Warfare: 'SAS squadrons are particularly suited, trained and equipped, inter alia, for the collection of intelligence on the location and movement of enemy forces, reconnaissance based on the employment of small self-contained patrols and ambushing and harassing strong enemy forces'. It appears that the SAS Squadron was initially employed primarily on the first two types of tasks but later when kill ratios receive emphasis, they were employed primarily on ambushing and harassing VC parties of any size. The first part of that question: Did this variation in employment occur during a tour of duty, and if so, at whose instigation?

No, it didn't occur in my time.

Fine. Question (B): In terms of overall contribution of SAS to the Task Force mission, which was the most effective employment?

I suppose because intelligence was so tactical and so short-term in terms of being useful I'm not convinced that the intelligence that they gathered was of huge benefit in the sense that probably other regular infantry units could have done the same thing just about as well. However, I have to qualify that, they could go out much further and patrol in areas beyond where otherwise you would have the normal infantry battalions. But I suppose my question is more a strategic intelligence one but so what! We knew that well beyond our area there were major Viet Cong units moving; that there were supply route; courier routes, but unless we were going to do something about them so what! Was it really worthwhile risking their lives or anything unless we were going to use them as hit squads. So I'm still torn about whether the intelligence in counterinsurgency was that useful finally to us, whether you could really respond to it.

Fine. At this stage I think we'll terminate the tape with 18 subquestions (A) and (B) and go to the next tape for 18 subquestions (C), (D) and (E). This ends tape one and we'll pass now to tape two.

END OF TAPE ONE - SIDE A

START OF TAPE ONE - SIDE B

Identification: This is Tape 2 of the interview with retired Major John Rowe, General Staff Officer Grade 2 Intelligence, 1st Australian Task Force in 1966.

To continue the interview and we were dealing with Question 18 which was related to the SAS and we'd taken it to subquestion (C): If the ambushing-harassing task was the more effective in contributing to the 1ATF mission could more SAS troops be employed?

Yes they could have been. Although I think I'd have probably preferred to have seen an extra infantry battalion rather than extra SAS troops. However, if I could have had both, that would have been good. As I was saying earlier, the difficulty in employing the SAS troops was that if they were just used on those intelligence gathering roles, the intelligence was too often too dated before there could really be anything done with it. So there's a good argument that the ambushing-harassing task was a more useful function for them for most of the time.

So, I suppose, it would always be useful to have people doing that ambushing-harassing especially if they're being effective.

So there's the answer: an extra battalion and perhaps an extra company of SAS troops would have been nice.

Subquestion (D): Did the employment of SAS, primarily in ambushing-harassing, if so, have an adverse effect on intelligence gathering and thus major unit operations?

Well, as I say, they weren't really primarily involved in ambushing-harassing so there's the answer to that.

I think with Subquestion (E), I think you've already dealt with that quite early in the answer to the question: What are your views on the cost-effectiveness of SAS in your time? Could well-trained rifle sections have carried out the task?

I think most of the task, yes. The longer-range patrols with just three or four people or half a dozen involved, I suppose, no. But then again, I'm questioning the use of a lot of the longer range patrolling we did anyway, if we didn't immediately follow up with it.

Question 19 then: Did you receive any useful intelligence from AATTV personnel in Phuoc Tuy?

We didn't really. But we put them in location, not so much for true intelligence on the enemy, but rather to get a better working knowledge of the local forces, the popular forces, the regional forces and personalities and they were beginning to be useful in that area. But it was one of the major efforts I made was to encourage Brigadier Jackson to try and apply as much pressure as he could to get more AATTV personnel in Phuoc Tuy because naturally there was reluctance by the AATTV commander to apply too many because he felt then his force would then be absorbed into the Task Force. So, there was one of those natural bureaucratic struggles that was going on and it was self-evident to me, and I think to everybody, that they wanted to keep a separate identity up in I Corps. But really from a task force and from a larger Australian point of view it made sense to have as many Australians as we could in Phuoc Tuy Province at the District and Provincial Headquarters because there's such a difference. You can then talk shorthand. If you were at Duntroon with a guy, you'd served with him before; it was a telephone call, you didn't need to persuade him of personality, likes, dislikes, and so it was often a problem dealing with the Americans in that sense. You know, the amount of reporting, type of reporting they did and in the same way they were often jealous of national rivalries and national structures. I think I've probably gone a bit beyond the actual question.

Fine. Perhaps I'll just mention these last two questions which are more in terms of the procedure we follow with this interview and deal with these now rather than after the separate segment. Question 20 was: Are there any observations you'd like to make for the historical record - and I say this in very general terms - some of these observations will of course be in this next section and, of course, Ian asks if there are any reasons for any observations or assessments? Any general points you'd like to make other than what we'll cover shortly?

I think there's one large issue; it's just of academic historic interest I suppose, but I felt there was a good argument given that we were only initially going to be allowed to operate as a task force with two battalions - there was a good argument for not taking the whole Task Force into Nui Dat. Certainly there are good arguments for doing it because it meant then that we had inserted a presence right in the heart



of the Province. But once we put a Headquarters into Nui Dat it had to be secured. Long Tan could have gone further and it could have been the Task Force Headquarters that was under attack. Anyway, because of that recognition it meant that we never had more than one manoeuvre battalion until a third battalion arrived. I think an alternate strategy which would have given a much larger manoeuvre force would have been to have left the Task Force Headquarters down on the beach with 1ALSG where then there would have been adequate administrative people who could have operated from within a very tight perimeter providing their own security with the sea on one side giving security. So it would have needed less troops, that would have liberated a lot more people for active patrolling.

To me, not only with hindsight, this was my suggestion which was overruled and I can understand the reasons for it being overruled, but I still think even now we would have been able to have accomplished a lot more had we not been saddled with that large, rambling, ramshackle 'having-to-be-always-defend' Headquarters in the middle of the Province. There are other arguments that from that Headquarters you could expand outwards and it was a major presence in the centre of the Province.

Mortar range, gun range which you could then deal with, support perhaps the local forces if that practicable.

All that. But my feeling would have been that we might have been better off just having a much smaller Fire Support Base with maybe purely the artillery attached to a battalion or whatever artillery was necessary to both battalions. But there would have been a bit difference. We could have operated two battalions as manoeuvre forces and probably scraped up the equivalent almost of at least another half battalion from the Rear Headquarters area.

That's a good point. On that very point Dick Hannigan remarked on the initial appreciation that I think he did - it may have been you and he together did - for the deployment to Nui Dat or where the deployment should take place. As he said, unfortunately where those notes went he doesn't know; they've disappeared. That perhaps he felt for security reasons they were destroyed at the time when the Task Force deployed. But it's just a pity that those notes, as he said, disappeared and we can't locate them. But they've been spelt out I suppose in fairly general terms in various writings. I think John Warr's writing on the siting of the Task Force base and a lot of other papers I think it brought out all the points and no doubt many of those were made by reference to Dick and yourself in terms why and why not things were done in that area.

Yes.

That's a very interesting observation though. The only other question in this line really is the question we've already asked in the letter: Do you have any letters, diaries or photographs you'd be prepared to donate to the War Memorial or make available for copying?

I would be but I don't have any.

No, not to worry. That's fine. Perhaps we'll draw a line at that stage in the questionnaire - I'll take a break in the tape - and then we'll deal with Questions 10, 14 and 17 which we reserved because of the nature of the material involved in them.

[Short break]

This portion of the interview deals with several questions - 10, 14 and 17 - which maybe or should be subject to assessment by the Ground Operations Historian as to whether they should be maintained in this tape and in the transcript or separated for reasons which may become obvious as we go through them. The interview continues of course with retired Major John Rowe who was the General Staff Officer Grade 2 Intelligence, 1st Australian Task Force in Vietnam in 1966. Interviewer: David Chinn.

Question 10: John, would you comment on the intelligence problem generally as applied to 1ATF? Can you give an example of a memorable intelligence success and failure?

Yes. I've commented generally on the intelligence problem already in that we had very little data to start off with. We didn't have a solid database. We did know the general order of battle of the enemy. We knew they had approximately two regiments in the Province, that they had a main force battalion and they had a series of regional force companies and local force guerillas and then an extensive supply network and courier network.

We were also aware that they had nearby main force units that could readily come into the Province. We knew that from the very beginning. What we couldn't know in the nature of things was where any of those units were for very long because they had their capability of upping sticks and moving out of a headquarters in literally a number of hours if they so chose. We knew the major areas in which they were probably concentrated. We knew that in the border area to the north these main force regiments were normally in that area, in that major concentration of hills to the right-hand side as I'm looking at the map in the mind's eye - I suppose that would be to the north-east.

The Nui May Tao. Nui Be.

The May Tao, yes. We knew that probably there was some so-called divisional headquarters up in that area. We were aware of that. And we had strong evidence, not only from captured documents, but also from Signals Intelligence. I believe the Signals Intelligence, which was essentially just of a fairly low level, tactical capability is not so sensitive now from an intelligence point of view and I really don't see any problem in talking, at least in general terms, about the fact we had that capability. But it was that sort of intelligence that could confirm to us the general order of battle in the Province.

But coming back to the intelligence problem itself, it's one thing to know that those units are there but it's not very useful often in terms of planning operations because those units had a capacity to move so quickly; it was very difficult to design intelligent operations that really had any high likelihood of success in terms of, say, cordoning an area off. And the problem went beyond just intelligence, it became, in the simple sense, it was a broad security problem. For example, if we were going to have any involvement with the local ARVN authorities there was no question that advance warning would leak out. After all, these people could move in in hours.

The next thing was, in the nature of the type of operations if we were to coordinate with the Americans in, say, in terms of a cordon and search operation an area such as the May Tao hills or those other nearby hills - the names escape me for the moment - but in any of those operations the hill areas were so extensive there's no way a one-battalion operation, which was our manoeuvre force, could ever possibly cordon and secure such a large area. Therefore, you had to have joint operations. You would have to involve American units. But the normal American way for airborne operations was major fire preparation beforehand and you only need to start putting in air strikes for a few minutes and then the whole thing's blown and so the bird has flown the coop. So I suppose what I'm talking of here - this isn't so sensitive, the only sensitive part of this question is just our use of Signals Intelligence - but it was our knowledge in an operational intelligence sense that unless you could design an operation that could capitalise on the intelligence you had, it wasn't very likely to be successful. So we really had to cloth to fit and about the most we could really expect to surround successfully was something like a village, which you could do with a battalion.

Now, the nature of Signals Intelligence was such that it doesn't reveal the name of couriers, it doesn't reveal - not usually - the names of all the people who can be suborned into acting as supply porters and labourers and it's not the sort of thing where the Viet Cong would normally waste valuable signals time on giving such names. Rather the sort of thing that Signals Intelligence would provide would be a general location, a reasonably accurate one, of a headquarters radio not necessarily even of the headquarters, that was another thing that had to be borne in mind. It might be just a reconnaissance element of a headquarters moving around and, again, because by then the B-52 strikes were in operation, sometimes they would deliberately have false radio stations - that is, to confuse us using the same signals procedures which they'd locate somewhere else. So if a B-52 strike was called in it didn't hurt anybody. Or, additionally, they just made sure that the radios operated from nice secure bunkers well aware from the rest of the headquarters or the rest of the unit. So it meant that in terms of the usefulness of this radio intelligence, we had to accept that just because you had located a radio station you didn't necessarily have the whole unit or even the headquarters. And it was naive on the part of some analysts in their early stages, you know, to think that the two were necessarily the same thing.

So that was a major intelligence problem that, yes, you knew the order of the threat but in terms of the spelling the 'Is' and dotting the 'Ts' and locating the enemy, that could really only be done by infantrymen on the ground and either in meeting contacts, in harassing and ambushing operations on probable lines of supply, on probable courier routes. You could always expect success in those sorts of operations with enough small patrols around any of the villages because of the number of meetings that were taking place still on R&R-type visits, informal family visits, cheating-on-the-system type visits. So in that sense we had enough general intelligence to know to style of operations that we should plan to match with all the limitations of the intelligence we had and that was why the early cordon and search operations were carried out by both 5RAR and 6RAR. I think at some levels some of the junior commanders just expected intelligence to give them more details. I'm trying to spell out for the record that in the nature of counterinsurgency operations you don't have that sort of information and you're only going to build it up over a long period and the nature of the enemy beast in this case is that even if you do get such information it's likely to be swiftly dated. So rather you have to design your operations accepting those fundamental limitations of the type of intelligence you can expect.

Fine.

Let me just have another look at the question to see if I've made my major points. Oh, there are two questions here: one was can I give a memorable intelligence success and a failure?

On the Signals Intelligence point I remember we were getting consistent - using directional finding equipment - reports of what was obviously an observation post probably reporting on what the Task Force Headquarters was doing. We knew generally where this thing was, on the hills overlooking us to the west from memory. Anyway, we put in a number of patrols to try and find it and had great difficulty in finding it. Anyway, eventually an SAS patrol did actually find this radio station.

So that was a good example of Signals Intelligence working very well with the SAS. Otherwise, though, generally intelligence was just a hard grind and to a great extent the information was coming up and helping us to establish and understand a pattern of enemy operations but there weren't many occasions on which the intelligence we were assembling could be used in an immediate tactical sense. It was rather used to be able to sensibly design a pattern of operations rather than a specific operation. It meant that it was rather a matter of a combined intelligence commonsense thing to just select those villages nearby and have an intelligence strategy based on all the limitations we have.

I'd like to comment briefly now about the Battle of Long Tan because later on I suppose it comes into the next question. Perhaps it might be better if you ask the next question and then I'll comment there.

I'll go to Question 14 then: As GSO2 INT Headquarters, 1ATF at the time of the Battle of Long Tan you may have some views on the following and there are four subquestions here. In the Soldier's Story by Terry

Burstall who was a member of D Company 6RAR, he claims that an intelligence report of 1 June '66, that 5,000 enemy were moving to the Task Force area for offensive action, was disregarded. What are your views on this statement and your general perception of the threat to the Task Force base?

I haven't read his book and I naturally don't remember the specific report he refers to. However I can comment in general on the observation. We received lots of what you would call low grade intelligence reports of all sorts of horrific numbers of enemy advancing upon us and all of these had to be treated with great caution and scepticism otherwise you'd just be in a permanent state of terrified paralysis. The point is though that as I said before we knew that the overall threat was that there were two main force regiments to the north; there was a capability to move in more at very short notice and so this doesn't mean that a report like this was disregarded. It was rather part of the background of the permanent threat we were confronted with. The whole reason why battalions were always to operate within an artillery umbrella was because this sort of thing was just there in the background like swimming or skin-diving in the ocean that you always know that beyond the dark blue shadow there are sharks. You never know when they're going to come in but you know they're there. So you take precautions in not swimming too far from your boat. And in the same way the wise infantry battalion commander made sure he operated in that infantry umbrella. We certainly did have reports in the period before Long Tan. We had a lot of Signals Intelligence of a number of headquarters being located in a confusing pattern quite close to the Task Force Headquarters but we accepted this as the Task Force commander, GS02 OPS and really battalion commander level, that this was again just part of the nature of the beast. These could be reconnaissance operations by Regimental Headquarters; it could be just a facade, a sort of a confusing trick but we really had to expect, since we'd just moved in there, that there was highly likely to be some sort of a major effort to, not only embarrass us, but to remove us if possible. It was very much a pattern of expectations at the command level in the early days that a big battle could well be on.

The very fact that we were mortared the day or two days before the Battle of Long Tan was an indication that these sorts of things could happen and the very company that went out to look was on an intelligence gathering mission essentially if you look at it in the correct broad tactical perspective, to see what had happened, and with the constant background of that threat of a couple of regiments capable of assembling at any time there's just ... I don't see the problem. I always knew that those sorts of numbers could be assembled against them at any time. That's why they had the artillery umbrella; that's why we had the air support capabilities that we had all the time because of this. So I can understand at the private soldier level feeling that; I can understand the sort of rumours; I can understand the resentment, feeling that '*intelligence*' - in italics - '*they*' didn't tell us. But at a more senior level the commanders knew perfectly well it was a continuing threat and problem, enemy of that sort of order and that sort of number capable of assembling quickly.

I preface the question by saying: As GSO2 INT, Headquarters 1ATF at the time of the Battle of Long Tan, were you present at the time? Dick Hannigan is quite sure you were. He remembers some conversation with you following a general remark made by Brigadier Jackson because he was coming back during the rocketing and mortaring but for some reason or other, I think it might have been somebody - I think it might have been Alec Piper - thought that perhaps you may not have been present at that time. Not that it's relevant to the question.

No, in fact I'd gone to hospital with hepatitis about the day before, or that day. You might say there the prescience of a real intelligence officer.

It doesn't affect the questions we're asking. Subquestion (B), an impression has been given that aggressive follow-up by 1ATF on the morning after the Battle of Long Tan was inhibited by concern that the enemy force was too large and that the action at Long Tan was only a diversion preceding a major attack on the Task Force base. What are your views on this?

I wasn't there and I suppose therefore I just can't comment. I think Dick Hannigan and Brigadier Jackson themselves are better ones to answer that.

Again, I guess, the following two questions may be in the same category. Do you know if any political direction had been issued from Australia not to undertake a 'hot' pursuit for fear of increased casualties and the turning of a victory into a defeat for the Task Force?

I don't know of any such direction.

No. The fourth subquestion was really offered by Colin Townsend. A theory has been offered on the lines that the enemy force encountered at Long Tan was in fact en route to carry out possibly a large raid or incursion into Ba Ria with a view to showing that the VC/NVA could still conduct operations in the Province regardless of the Task Force presence. More importantly such would show that 1ATF could not effectively protect the provincial capital, and in effect cause a loss of face to 1ATF. What are your views on this theory?

I think it's perfectly plausible and I think that whether the target would necessarily have been Ba Ria or one of the District Headquarters or the target could even have been the Task Force Headquarters itself. I think all those are equally plausible unless since my time there, captured documents became available but you had to assume as we did from the very beginning that there would be some such major effort to discredit us and for psychological operations to show some sort of victory or defeat against us. And so I accept that as one of a number of plausible alternatives.

Fine. There's an additional question that's come to mind since this questionnaire was raised, it's really based on

the book by David Horner, SAS Phantoms of the Jungle. I took the trouble, because this was related to Long Tan, to plot the task areas for the SAS patrols in that, I guess, seven or eight days prior to Long Tan and it's quite interesting that the pattern of SAS patrols almost totally ignores the north-east quadrant. If you look at Nui Dat, that's the north-east quadrant, there's almost no SAS patrols in the area. There's one further north up towards Binh Gia but the SAS patrols that are deployed across the north-western part of the Province to Hat Dich through the Nui Dinh, Nui Thi Vais and on the south-east but none in that north-east quadrant. It's quite possible and one hasn't had the time to check the battalion patrolling activity in the War Diaries to see whether in fact it may well have been covered by 5RAR or 6RAR depending whose area it was in. But it seemed quite interesting that SAS patrols are going into three of the four quadrants - why, particularly if there was some suspicion that there may have been enemy positions or enemy radio stations anyway in that north-east quadrant, why any SAS patrols weren't put in there. Do you have any reason or any background as to why SAS patrols might not have been put into that area?

It's a level of detail that I can't comment in detail on any more. I think though that we probably would have had a policy of putting the SAS in the general areas where there were those concentrations. I don't recollect whether the concentrations of SIG INT reports were actually in that sort of general quadrant that you're talking of or quite where they were. I mean, they moved all the time and you would get shifting patterns and the level of accuracy varied of course depending on all the normal things with resections and so forth. No, I'm afraid that sort of detail I just can't comment on now.

Sure. The last question in this segment is Question 17: Did 1ATF derive much benefit from the Phoenix program?

It's a very interesting question. When the Task Force first arrived in Phuoc Tuy it was hard to find out much about what the Phoenix program was and whether it was being carried out or what was happening but there was a CIA operative in the Province and I made contact with him and he was a very clandestine and cautious about what he was really up to but it turned out that he had something like 120 semi-trained irregulars under his command. The Phoenix program was of course supposed to be executed with a very small team of highly-trained assassins essentially. Certainly, that's not the way he was operating. He'd developed this 'Popsky's Private Army' and he didn't know quite what to do with it but he used to love wearing his camouflaged fatigues uniform and carrying all sorts of elaborate and clever equipment and occasionally drilling these people and showing them off.

Now I suggested that perhaps since he had so many soldiers a useful function would be for them to become a part of the intelligence gathering capability of 1ATF and that he should come loosely under my, let's say, directional control rather than command. And since he didn't really quite know what to do with all of them he rather liked that and since the Australians were now effectively taking over the Province he thought that

was a good idea and so we worked out some operational tasks which were mixed 'intelligence-gathering-cum-defensive' tasks which he was happy to cooperate with. Then this was going very well and I enjoyed it because it meant I'd considerably extended my command and then down came from Saigon Headquarters, possibly directly from the United States, a character really out of a CIA spy novel, a fellow in his late thirties with fair hair - the normal crew cut - and the wonderful cold slaty-blue professional-killer eyes who never smiled. And he introduced himself to me and he asked what was happening with this large task force, or this large 'Popsky's Private Army' that I had under my general operational control and coordination. I explained how very useful they were and how we'd like to have them because it meant that they could be used on protecting bridges and things and villages and it was a useful add-on. I explained all the excellent reasons why he should leave well alone but he, of course, had a very strict brief to carry out and that was to get the program back on the road and in very short order the whole 'Popsky's Private Army' was disbanded and the former commander of it, the American, he vanished - I assume to some other headquarters somewhere else, I hope not terminated with extreme prejudice - and that was the end of the Phoenix program as I knew it. And when and how long it took them to redevelop and what shape, I don't know.

Fine. That's all we'll cover by way of question, John.  
Is there anything else you want to add?

No, I think that's it, David.

That concludes the interview with John Rowe. This is the end of tape two in an area especially categorised for review by the Ground Operations Historian. Thanks indeed John.

Pleasure.

END OF TAPE ONE - SIDE B - END OF INTERVIEW