

Interview with LTC Kenneth Hinkle, Interview 1  
Date of Interview: 28 February 2005; Jupiter, Florida  
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Begin Tape 1, Side 1

DT: Born in Warren, Pennsylvania in 1947, you were a successful student and graduated from Kiski Prep School in 1965 to start a college education at Washington and Jefferson in the fall of 1965. As a young man, did you ever consider joining the military?

LTC: My >log of life,= my mother in particular kept this >log of life=, I had three brothers. She kept a log of life and she would ask us to figure out Awell, what do you want to do?@ When I was in elementary school, I wanted to be a Navy pilot. That was six or seven years old we are talking about now. Of course, the time frame that I grew up in as a kid, in the 1950s, you didn=t have all the distractions now a days like computers and there were only three TV stations that you could get where I grew up. We played cowboys and Indians, we played soldier and all that kind of stuff, outside, with the neighbor=s kids. Later on, from junior high through high school, I had no intentions of being a career military person.

DT: You had mentioned that you considered attending the Air Force Academy but at the time you were not very military oriented, if that was the case, what was your motivation to join ROTC when you went to Washington and Jefferson?

LTC: I graduated from prep school in 1965. My girlfriend, who I grew up with, our families were very close. Her oldest brother, was a West Point graduate in 1962 and was killed in Vietnam in the summer of 1965. I started college a month after he was killed in Vietnam. At Washington and Jefferson you had to take either gym or ROTC, I had played on the

basketball team, and the track team in college. Plus, in 1965 the fifty dollars that I got for ROTC, that was big bucks in those days. I joined ROTC but still had no intentions of having a military career. The reason I was interested in the Air Force Academy at all was because they scouted me in high school. The basketball coach was very interested in having me go to the Air Force Academy, he treated me very well. Then I had to take some tests at Lockbourne Air Force Base in Ohio. They actually got me a nomination for the Air Force Academy from a congressman in Ohio, even though I was a Pennsylvania resident. After visiting and taking the exams for the Air Force Base, even though it was an A plus, I wouldn't have been able to fly because of my eyes and after I had gone in to the Air Force the only thing that I really wanted to do was fly.

DT: You still had that motivation to be a pilot?

LTC: Yes. I might have gone into the Air Force Academy and had a different military service career if I had been able to fly.

DT: At this point, what was your knowledge and opinion of Vietnam? Did you see yourself partaking in any part of this war?

LTC: I tell my classes (*he points to his adjacent and empty classroom*), you probably don't remember but I tell them when I discuss Vietnam that I can remember sitting in high school history classes. The history teacher talking about some place called Vietnam and I would think: what am I concerned with some soldiers half way around the world? In the early 1960s, it was mostly advisors over there, and the teachers were talking about current events we would talk about the domino theory. We were in the middle of the big-time Cold War with the Soviet Union, I grew up that way and air raids. In elementary

school we would have to get under our desks, you know air raid drills and things like that. In high school I didn't think that much about Vietnam until my wife's brother was killed in Vietnam and then it was a little more serious. I supported the war and I still think to this day, I think we were doing the right thing , we just didn't prosecute the war the way it should have been.

DT: They actually taught the domino theory in school?

LTC: Yes, they talked about the spread of communism, I don't remember it being called the domino theory, but basically the spread of communism.

DT: Did you know anyone personally in the military at the time and did they influence your decision to join?

LTC: My next older brother entered the marine corps in 1966, and he was wounded in Vietnam and he was a First Lieutenant wounded in 1967. Vietnam, between my wife's family and my family became personal, at that point, I felt like I had an obligation: number one to the country and number two to do my part for the family. I still was not career oriented, I just thought that we had a war going on and I was in ROTC. I felt I had to do my own part, not like a hero thing or anything like that, it was just in the back of my mind. Plus, when I graduated from college, I really wanted to go to law school, and continue on there and go in as a lawyer in the military and serve my requirement as a lawyer. I didn't have the money to go to law school so I decided I will go serve a few years and get my obligation over to the military and do my military thing and then go to law school, which I never did.

DT: What exactly motivated you to join the military? Was it your commitment to Army

ROTC that led you to join that branch?

LTC: I had an obligation, you can take two years, I took four years of ROTC, I could have quit after the first two years and not had any military obligation, but I continued. I felt I needed to do that, for my brother who was wounded my junior year in college. We visited him when he came back to the states, he was in Philadelphia Naval hospital. We visited him there, and just being around all the wounded soldiers and everything. I felt like I needed to do my fair share, plus we still had a draft going on then. People were being drafted and I grew up in a very conservative family, a very patriotic family and my parents never tried to talk me out of going into the military and never tried to talk me out of going to Vietnam, they were very supportive. There was no real I=m gung-ho or I=m going to go win the war or anything like that it was more like I am going to do my own part.

DT: You already said about how your family felt, they supported you when you joined, but how did your friends feel?

LTC: Most of the friends I had were, college friends in particular, were mostly athletes, and probably more conservative than the rest of the student body. We had anti-war protesters in our college, a very small college, but we had protesters. They were protesting the war itself, and really not the people involved in it. It is like now, there are a lot of people who don=t agree with the War in Iraq but they are going out of their way to support the troops. I think the country, during the Vietnam War, never stopped supporting the troops. You hear stories about people coming home and getting spit on, I never, I came home twice, and I never had any incident like that. Flying from San Francisco, I had to go

through Chicago to Pittsburgh and the stewardess, then we called them stewardesses, came, and I was in uniform and she asked me if I was just back from Vietnam, and I said yes and she told me they had an empty seat up in first class, so she invited me to go sit in first class, which I did. That was later in the war, when it was unpopular too. I think that it is an exaggeration to say that the soldiers were treated very badly because they had served in Vietnam, some may have, but I sure never experienced that and I don't know of any other people that served that experienced that.

It became very unpopular, it was very popular in 1965. The number one song in the country was the *Ballad of the Green Berets*. There was a lot of mystique around the Green Berets and all that. The country was very supportive, for the next few years it was less and less popular until finally it became a pretty unpopular war. I never felt like America didn't support me when I was over there. I always felt like I had their support even though they didn't support necessarily what I was doing over there.

DT: When you joined the military, what did your transition from civilian to military consist of?

LTC: The ROTC program in college was really poor. I never owned a set of fatigues back in those days, a field uniform. Never went to the field, we did drill on Fridays and that was it. We had classes on military history and tactics and map reading and things like that but the overall program itself was not very good. I never had real good military training until I went to ROTC summer camp at Indiantown Gap Military Reservation in Pennsylvania, that is where I went to summer camp. I thought the training there was pretty good, although at that time I had nothing to compare it to other than a poor ROTC

program. I thought it was pretty good.

Then graduating and heading off to Fort Benning, it was a culture shock. Going from civilian world to military world, it is a culture shock and coming back again after twenty- five years. It is kinda the reverse, but you adapt to it. A lot of moving around and things like that. How did I adapt to it? Well you really have no choice. I grew up in a small town, never traveled a whole lot before heading off to Fort Benning, Georgia for Officers Basic Course. You have no choice, as an officer you're a leader, so you have to be in charge and take charge and do what needs to be done.

DT: Do you think other people took it as well as you did?

LTC: Probably going away to a boarding school in high school had helped me also, because I left all my hometown friends and I was thrown in an environment that most high school kids aren't thrown into. Friends that I would have graduated with from public high school they are still back there, a lot of them, living there. There were thirty-two in my sophomore class in my public school when I left. It was a very small place, so going away to boarding school, even though it was a couple hours from home, just living in that environment and going on to college. Some people have adjustments going to college but prep school was a whole lot more restrictive. I think that helped me adjust to the regimentation. It might as well been a military academy. You had to wear a coat and tie instead of a uniform. You had to wear a coat and tie to all meals and to all classes. That kind of helped me for a regimented background. That was my preparation basically because I didn't know what to expect going into the military.

DT: After you were commissioned as a Second Lieutenant, you went to IOBC, jump school,

and Ranger school successively at Fort Benning. Why did you decide to go to Ranger school? Did you already plan on starting a career now? Did you have Special Forces in mind?

LTC: Special Forces, back in those days, there was a mystique about them because they were an elite group. They were the first ones in Vietnam. The only good part about the ROTC program in college is, my senior year we got two young Captains just back from Vietnam. They came into the program to be instructors. I had a lot of respect for them, they got me a little more interested when it came down to branch selection, I am an outdoor guy, I have never liked paperwork and things like that, so infantry was naturally what I wanted to do. They were both infantry officers and they said if you are gonna be infantry, you need to jump out of airplanes and you need to be Ranger qualified that way, if you are not, there are some infantry units that you would not be able to serve in . Units like the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne and the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne back in those days cause they were still jumping out of airplanes, and the Ranger units. They said it just opens up the infantry field a little bit more. My wife=s brother had been a Ranger and Airborne so I had to follow those footsteps too.

DT: Next you went to Fort Richardson Alaska for fifteen months and this is the last place you were stationed in the United States before you deployed to Vietnam, What are your overall feelings about the training you received so far?

LTC: Up to this point, Ranger school was excellent. The IOB training I received, it wasn=t terrible, but it wasn=t good. So I didn=t feel like I was a well trained Second Lieutenant. The training we did in Alaska, remember there was still a draft going on, we had our

share of unmotivated soldiers who didn't want to be there. It was a bad time in the army, some of the people they did draft, we called them category fours, which are, well they probably wouldn't have been able to come close to passing the ASVAB. Under the circumstances they needed warm bodies. There were also some good soldiers and some good sergeants, they were career oriented, it was a difficult period in the army, the early 1970s for the service.

Did I feel like I was well prepared? No. When I went to Alaska, the training we did up there, we did mountain climbing, glacier walking, skiing, more adventure type training than actual tactics and things like that. When I got ready to go to Vietnam, in my mind I wasn't prepared to be going to a combat zone, and leading soldiers and being responsible and making life and death decisions based on that. Ranger school was the only thing that came close to it. That was the best training I had. If it hadn't been for that I probably would have gone to Canada and not gone to Vietnam, I'm joking about that (*laughs*). If I hadn't had that experience then I would've been totally unprepared.

DT: Was that also the most challenging?

LTC: Physically because it just tears you down and you still have to function. Mentally it wasn't that challenging other than, your body is so worn down, your mind still has to react quickly with the same reflexes and the same decision making power. You learn a lot about yourself and a lot about other people under hardship situations. In that way it prepares you for what to expect under extreme situations, but that is the only thing that I had that even came close to preparing me for a combat environment.

DT: That is strictly volunteer too, so most soldiers don't experience it.

LTC: Yes. The first phase is at Fort Benning, I was ready to quit. I thought about faking an injury. I considered going AWOL. I was not ready, I had never experienced anybody getting in my face and yelling and screaming at me. They took all the rank off so I was with privates and other officers, it didn't matter. It was miserable, the first three weeks, all I wanted to do was get out and get out of the Army as fast as I could. Then we started doing patrols where people started getting raided and things like that. Then I started seeing some sense to it, I wasn't ready for the harassment part. Looking back, and having later been an instructor, they were trying to weed out those people who couldn't take it so fortunately, I hung around just long enough to get through that and then the harassment tapered off, and then you actually get into skills to make you a leader, and to be able to survive and to make those good combat decisions and I actually ended up finishing number one in my class, which is one of the achievements of my career that I look at anyhow.

They pair you up with somebody, your Ranger buddy, I graduated with my fifth Ranger buddy. So the attrition rate is pretty high. He was a Vietnam veteran, he was a Captain that just got back from Vietnam and why he wanted to go through Ranger school, I have no clue. There were times there would be some friction between somebody else in the units you were in, he would always take me under his wing and say calm down. He knew I was in the running for number one in the class and he wanted to do everything he could to help me. It was a surprise to me, I had no clue that I was even in the running. Last day down in Florida phase, we came in from the field all starving, I had lost forty-something pounds and all I wanted to do was just eat and get some sleep. We

came in from the field and what was left of the company. Then I heard, Ranger Hinkle so I go up to the front, you're the new company commander, congratulations. Now, *(laughs)* I had to be the last one to eat, I had to coordinate and make sure that everybody else was fed. They don't let you graduate for three days because they force you to get some sleep and some meals before they let you get in the car and go anywhere because of the nature of the school. I still was clueless, I had no clue, I all I knew was that I really wanted to do that. After we started sending people to the mess hall for chow. Everybody came over and started congratulating me and I said for what? and I was a dumb Second Lieutenant basically. One of the main reasons was that I played sports in college and physically I was in good shape, otherwise I wouldn't have made it through. So the fitness portion helped me out with that.

DT: In the first seven months you spent in South Vietnam you began as Team Leader of Mobile Advisory Team 86 and worked with the South Vietnamese Army. What were your feelings on the political and military situation at the time in Vietnam when you arrived?

LTC: As a lieutenant, I was a First Lieutenant then, I don't remember thinking about the political situation much while I was there because you have a job to do. You think more about the day to day job than about how is the war going overall? I think at my level, I don't know of anybody, we wouldn't sit with other Americans and discuss how the war was going overall and do you support this? You are there and you do your job and my job was to lead the Mobile Advisory Team and advise the South Vietnamese battalions that I was with and I really never thought that much about the politics at all while I was there.

DT: How did the South Vietnamese Army treat you?

LTC: Most of them were very good. South Vietnamese people are good people. The units, I was on a MAT team, I was with three different battalions, the first one that I was with was mediocre, the next one I was with, we couldn't trust them, and the third one I was with was on par with some American units. They would do their jobs. It all depended upon the unit commander. It is a different system than the American military because you could have a weak commander, but the other people are going to pick up the slack because of our system with subordinate leaders, and NCOs, and it was completely different than the Vietnamese Army was. If you had a strong leader, that was going to be a good unit, if you had a weak leader, then it was going to be a bad unit. Support wise, the people treated us good some of it was the fact that because my three man team was with them all the time, they knew that when stuff got bad as long as there was Americans on the ground with them they would get American air support, American artillery support. Where if we hadn't had been with them, they wouldn't have had the priority. That gave them a better priority for getting American tactical air strikes when we were in contact. Just the fact that they had us with them. There was a bit of patronizing going on looking back at it. Here I was a lieutenant who had been in the army all of three years and I am advising battalion commanders who had been fighting a war for a lot of their lives. At the time I would try to do the best at advising. They had been fighting a lot longer than I had. You did what you could do , you just fit in, you do the best you could. They wouldn't hesitate to look at you when rounds started flying. They knew we would be on the radio getting some air support, which was much better than the Vietnamese

support they wouldn't get through their own assets.

DT: So overall it was a pretty smooth relationship?

LTC: Yes it was. I didn't have any problems. There was this one unit that had just come back from Cambodia and they wanted to do anything except make contact with the enemy. There was an incident where they were sending in false reports and of course we were right there on the ground. They were sending in a false report. We had an outpost being attacked which was a couple of miles away and they wanted our battalion to go reinforce that outpost and drive the Vietcong that were attacking them off. It was towards the end of the day and by the time we had gotten there they had been there. The Vietnamese higher headquarters also had American advisors sitting right beside them on American radios. My higher headquarters is calling me saying your battalion's getting moved, so I talked to Battalion Commander and didn't understand exactly. I had to interpret but I didn't understand exactly. He said yeah they are gonna move I called back and told him we were gonna move to reinforce the battalion outpost some time went by and we didn't do anything so I talked to Battalion Commander he said, I finally figured out that he was reporting that we were moving. He had no intentions of going to reinforce because he said that we had to cross an open area which is not real great, a rice paddy area. Then there was a woodline and he said it was heavily mined with booby traps and it would've been dark when we went through there. Then the outpost was in another open area on the other side of that woodline, he said it wouldn't be a good situation. I said ok, I will call higher headquarters and tell them that we're not going. He wanted me to call them and tell them that we were going, to submit a false report. So, I called higher headquarters

and told them we weren't moving and finally I recognized the voice of one of the Majors that I worked for and he said your report conflicts with your counterparts report I said mine is the truth, we haven't moved one inch from a couple of hours ago when we got the frag order to go ahead and move to reinforce that outpost, this guy has no intentions of doing that even though he wanted me to report that we were. The next day there was a lot of friction, I could see that they must have gotten it from their headquarters, cause I busted them. There was a lot of tension. Besides they had stolen stuff from us when we were dealing with that battalion. I called my headquarters and told them that the situation is not good out here, I don't trust these guys and requested to send a helicopter to come and pick us up. My counterpart didn't know that, so the helicopter came in and I told him it was a resupply helicopter, re-supplying us with food and stuff like that. It landed and we got on and waved goodbye. The Province Senior Advisor, who was a Vietnamese Colonel, the Province Senior Advisor was my Full Colonel, the Province Chief was like a governor, except he was a military guy. The Province Senior Advisor picked me up at the helicopter pad and said you need to come brief the Colonel on what went on with that battalion. I did, and I told him what went on.

End Side One of Tape One/Begin Side Two of Tape One

DT: So you do not know what happened to him?

LTC: No. We were sent with another battalion, they rotated, we were the immediate response battalion and they would rotate that responsibility among the battalions. They pulled them off immediate response battalion and we moved to the next battalion and they had a strong commander.

DT: You then spent that last five months of your year in Vietnam on the staff of Advisory Team 55. What were your views on the progression of the war? Were there any significant events that occurred that altered your experience there?

LTC: Yes. The Eastern Offensive of 1972. I was on the staff then, and actually the Eastern Offensive of 1972 was a greater offensive than Tet, but there wasn't as many Americans in the country by then. It wasn't reported as heavily by American press. To think that after all these years they could mount an offensive like that.

I was down in the Mekong Delta. Where normally we didn't have to worry about NVA regulars, North Vietnamese Army regulars, it was Viet Cong or infiltration groups coming down to link up with the Viet Cong. A NVA regiment came out of Cambodia and took over a district town in our province. It had the largest cement plant in Vietnam. It was located in this district town. I was on the staff as an operations officer and I had a counterpart, a Vietnamese that I worked with and they requested an American helicopter to put Vietnamese troops in, to start carrying them in to re-take the district town. The Province Senior Advisor, my boss, says you have access to them, you see I am the go between, between the Vietnamese and the American helicopter unit that is gonna be doing it, I was coordinating with them and we were putting troops in all day and then the last one, they had set up a forward command post outside the district town. The District Senior Advisor had told me to drop off at that forward command post. All I had was one canteen and my pistol, I didn't even have an M-16. Cause I didn't think I was going to be staying out there. Nine days later, it took us nine days to re-take the district town. That was kind of an eye opener. After prosecuting a war for all those years, the North

Vietnamese still had the capability to launch an offensive like that.

Plus, I think by then, working staff, we had to do reports on Vietnamization of the war and what areas were controlled by the Viet Cong and what areas were controlled by us. There was subtle pressure to make the reports look good. My level, nobody at a higher level probably cared that much about reports I sent in. You don=t know because you are getting the information from your counterparts and of course they wanted to look good: yeah we are winning the war and we control all this area, when in fact they really probably didn=t control as much of the area as they reported.

DT: How did you feel about Vietnamization and with them taking over?

LTC: By then, it is hard thinking back that many years ago, I just wanted to go home. I made some good Vietnamese friends. We fought with them, lived with them, ate with them and all that kinda stuff, it was a bonding thing, going through experiences like that together. I still thought that there was a possibility of them winning the war, I had more doubts probably then when I arrived there because in the year that I was there I didn=t see much headway. We were just maintaining the status quo. I don=t think we thought that much about anything except how many more days do we have left until we get out of here especially because the withdrawal had already started with American forces. We could see some light at the end of the tunnel.

You are kinda isolated , even though it is not a huge country, I had no clue what was going on up in the North. Occasionally you would because there would be a major offensive with tanks rolling in, and then they would talk about issuing us anti-tank weapons. In the Mekong Delta, it was like no, there is no way they could have tanks in

the Mekong Delta if they have that kind of capability why are we here? As we found out later, they did. You just don't think that much about the overall situation. I did more on staff than I did on the field, you just worry about today and the operation that you are on and how that is going.

DT: Where and when was your first combat experience? What was it like?

LTC: You get processed in Saigon through the military advisor command compound, they issue you your uniform and your weapon, your rifle, and ammunition and they kinda give you a briefing about areas and then give you your assignment, mine was in Can Tho.

I went into Can Tho after a few days and had briefings there. They said ok you are going to go to Advisory Team 55 where you are going to be the leader of MAT 86. You go to Rach Gia, that is where headquarters is and that was it and I said well how do I get there? He said that is your problem. Being an advisor you didn't have all the American systems like transportation and supply. They had an Army Air Field there in Can Tho, so I went out and every time I saw a rotary blade start up I would run over and ask them where they were going until I found someone that was going to be passing through there. I got off at Rach Gia and there was a Major there, that I found out later was the S-3, the operations officer, I had my bags in my hands and he said who are you? and I said Lieutenant Hinkle I am going to be the leader of MAT 86 he said we don't have a MAT86. He didn't even know they were forming MAT 86. It wasn't real well coordinated.

One of the good things they did was use a different language, not the Vietnamese language but the American radio slang talk was a totally different language then

anything I have experienced. I had no clue what was being said on the radio so they would make you spend a week in the tactical operations center, they had a different officer there every night. Just to know what people were meaning, the slang was insane, like a different language.

We went out to the battalion we were assigned to, the three of us. The first night we were on the ground with them we had an attack. We were building a triangular outpost, dig and pile, that is what they did, dig and pile, one foot down in the Mekong Delta and you are at the water. They had one side of the triangular shaped berm built up about five feet high, so where they dug out there was water in there now, so now we had a little mote. We set up for the night and then I told the two sergeants, you always have a contingency plan, okay if get hit in this direction, we go over here (*makes a triangular formation on his desk and points*) get the radio, and if we get hit in this direction we go over there.

I had just started dozing off to get a little sleep and we were in mosquito nets and then I heard the big explosion. They were firing B-40 rocket launchers at us and they were aiming at these two big antennas we had set up, the Vietnamese called them two-niner tube antennas, positioned like a football goal. They were firing short fire rockets at the antennas, where the antennas were, that is where headquarters was. (*Minor interruption from the classroom*) It was the first time someone was trying to directly fire at me. We went across the mote and on the other side of the berm like our contingency plan

This went on all night and then by morning we had held off the Viet Cong. I

noticed all the Vietnamese started laughing. I asked the interpreter why they were laughing and he said they=re laughing at you. Because of the mud that had been piled on the berm, he said look at your uniform and there wasn=t a spot of mud on it. We had to clear the berm and I did it with room leftover without even hitting it because of the adrenaline was flowing. (*Laughs*) So that was a standing joke with the sergeants after that. They said I could do the Olympic high jump.

DT: When you returned to the United States, did you feel the experience of war changed you as a person?

LTC: I think so. I think that is true with anybody. My family was really concerned with the changes. My oldest brother had a friend from college that had come back and who was really a different person. To me it didn=t seem like I had changed, at the time. It did have an impact on me. I think anybody who spent a year in a combat zone is changed in some way.

DT: Did you experience a culture shock when you came back?

LTC: Yes. That always happens. It is like you lost a year of your life. I was married with two kids. I had a six month old and a two and a half year old when I left. The kids are now a year older and you missed a year of their lives. I was brought up to be in a very male oriented family, even though my mother was the honcho of our family and my dad was the teddy bear. If you had a problem, you deal with it and you solve it, don=t take your problems to other people. From the time we were married I was in charge and I would make the decisions. After a year I came home and my wife was a lot more independent, and that was kind of a shock to me. She said you leave me for a year and that=s what

happens (*laughs*) and that was a shock cause I was like hey, she really doesn't need me now. She knows how to do things on her own.

It was a bad time for the army, and fortunately I went straight to being a Ranger instructor from Vietnam. It was a different environment from being in the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division. They had racial problems, it had gone to an all volunteer army, there were beer machines in the mess hall so the troops could have a beer at lunch time. They had to do things to make the army more attractive so that people would want to be in the army. They don't draft anymore. You are a changed person to a degree, it would affect some more than others. It would depend, I didn't have the experience of working with the U.S. Army infantry. I never watched anybody in my unit follow through, chances are if you lose anybody in an American unit you know them real well. I only got to know my immediate counterparts very well. I didn't know the Vietnamese because I didn't want to get to know them real well. You don't want to get attached because something might happen tomorrow. I think it is probably true in a lot of American units too to a certain extent. Except we had the language barrier, it helped me not get too connected with the Vietnamese. I had a soldier die in my arms one time because an American helicopter refused to med-evac him because he wasn't an American. That kind of stuff happens. Yes, I probably changed. A lot more confident I think, as far as being a leader in the military.

DT: You said you were treated very well when you returned...

LTC: People weren't applauding in the airport like they do now-a-days. I have seen it now-a-days. I had to go to Fort Benning and I saw troops coming in, wearing their desert BDUs,

and people were stopping, I get goose bumps just thinking about it right now. *(holds his arm up to display them)* I think to a degree they have been doing that for all generations for the military. Nobody applauded when I walked through the airport home from Vietnam but nobody spit on me, nobody called me a baby killer. I think some of those reports are exaggerated. They may have happened but I think those were probably isolated incidents that got a lot of press. To be quite honest with you.

DT: How did the anti-war protests make you feel?

LTC: I don't think it bothered me very much. It did initially, before I went to Vietnam when I was in college. I thought the anti-war protesters were a bunch of hippies and drug users. I couldn't imagine that someone would oppose something that our country, I was very naive and very idealistic, that our country would do something that wasn't in our best interest or wasn't right. There was the Soviet Union and the United States, you have wrong and you have right. I never questioned our government or anything like that. After Vietnam, I guess that opened my eyes some, but I still believe we were right to be there, I feel the right decisions were made in our being there and the wrong decisions were made on how to prosecute the war. I had a lot more patience with people after that, that didn't agree with my political leanings and I think that helped me be a better teacher because I still very strongly in our country. I have room to sometimes question maybe what our country is doing, whether it's right or wrong. I think my Vietnam experience helped me in having better respect for those who would question why are we doing this.

I do agree we should be in Iraq, I am disappointed in the way things are going with losing people and everything but I still think we are doing the right thing, but

I don't question anyone's patriotism and I would have in the past in college, and before Vietnam. You can be anti-war patriot, you're probably one of those. Right now we have a military where everybody has to be there. They have a job to do, so when your country decides we are going to do this, they have a job to do and you are part of a team. Every member on that team has a part, whether the decision is right or wrong, you perform your portion for the team, otherwise someone on that team may get killed as a result, or wounded badly. Looking out for each other, much like in Vietnam, I was more concerned with looking out for the guys, more so than the politics. You don't worry about the politics because you have more important things on your mind. You're there, it doesn't matter at that point, so you might as well get that out of your mind.

DT: As we discussed earlier, you then went to the 6<sup>th</sup> Ranger Training Brigade at Eglin Air Force Base, what exactly was your contribution there and what was your ultimate goal?

LTC: I had a whole lot of respect, from a guy who was ready to go AWOL from the army to somebody that ended up wanting to go back as an instructor. At that period in time I saw how important Ranger school was to me. If I could help other soldiers out as a Ranger instructor like I was helped by Ranger instructors. You feel like you are contributing something. I know I was a better soldier after having the Ranger school experience. I was a much better leader, much more confident in making decisions. I just wanted to impart that on other soldiers. I used to tell a story, if my mother was a squad leader and was making bad decisions, I would relieve her on the spot. You have to separate friends from people that are good decision makers to those who aren't. You want the person who is going to make the best decisions in combat as your leader and not necessarily the most

popular one. That was one of my favorite assignments too. Number one, there are three kinds of volunteers: those who volunteer for the Army, those who volunteer for jump school, and those who volunteer for Ranger school. The average Ranger student, I think, is an above average soldier, right off the bat. Each camp would have to provide one instructor to be a tactical officer to follow all the way through, from pre-ranger training to post-graduation, I did that for one class.

DT: Many people say that, that is the hardest phase of Ranger school, would you agree with that?

LTC: No one has ever asked me that question before, and looking back, for me, the hardest phase was the beginning because I wasn't ready for what boiled down to actually being harassment. You get very little sleep, someone is in your face, yelling and screaming at you, treating you like dirt. I never experienced, anything in my life, that came close to that. That was the hardest part for me, but physically the physical exhaustion and the mental exhaustion are the toughest in Florida, that is the last phase, and you are wiped out before it even starts down there. Then you have these extended operations for twelve days. I would say the Florida phase is the toughest because of that. It was the first part, getting through that was the hardest for me. It wasn't the physical part, because I was in great shape, it was the mental part, the harassment. They were trying to weed out the people who couldn't handle the harassment, that was part of it, putting you under stress and they did a good job of it too. There are people who fake injuries. We had hand to hand combat training too, so that was a good time to fake an injury. There was also some very legitimate ones, one of my ranger buddies I lost in the hand to hand combat and that

was a legitimate injury. Just by the nature of Ranger school, the attrition rate. Then you have people, they will try to drive on as long as they can, and you know your body is not able to heal, it won't let you heal. Sometimes you need to get out of there. You will actually start burning muscle, which happened to me towards the end, I was skinny back in those days. I ended up burning those muscles, you are a mess. I still have nightmares about going through Ranger school for a second time. There is no way I could right now.

Sergeant Major, one of the reasons I hired him (*Points to SGM Draughn teaching in adjacent classroom*) was that he had gone through Ranger school at thirty-five years old. I had my mind set on hiring another Sergeant Major but I had to give him the courtesy of an interview. Thirty-five years old, not real young to go through Ranger school, the principal had to ask me after the interview, what is this Ranger school all about, what do you get and I was wearing my BDUs and I said this twenty-five sent tab(*he points to where his Ranger tab would be on his shoulder*) That tab represents something, you have to understand, everything else being equal, you always pick the Ranger.

End Side Two of Tape One/Begin Side One of Tape Two

LTC: I didn't enjoy going through Ranger school but it really was good for me, in the military and even in my life.

DT: In 1975 you went through Special Forces training at Fort Bragg and then joined the 7<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group and became team leader of Special Forces ODA 735. What was Special Forces training like compared to the training you had already received?

LTC: Ranger training was more physical, there was more book work and regular classroom

work in special forces, a lot more. Special Forces training was a lot longer. The officers and the sergeants were separated, so I went through the officer course, and the way special forces is organized, the leaders aren't experts in anything but they have a good general knowledge.

The special forces A Team, the twelve man team is the nucleus of special forces. They do not operate in platoons or anything higher than that twelve man team. You have two experts in heavy weapons, blank weapons, two intelligence sergeants, two medics, two communications sergeants, two engineers or demolitions specialists, and that's what their jobs are and they are highly trained in those. They know more about any one of those specific ones than the leaders do. In order to employ them right and be a good decision maker, the captains have to be generally knowledgeable in all those things. We spent time in all those subjects and Rangers are more like commandos, they are trained to break things and kill people, that's how I like to describe them.

In Special Forces there is a lot of training involved like in Afghanistan, I think it is the classic Special Forces, where small teams go in and link up with the different tribes and organize them, equip them, and train them to fight against the Taliban and Al-Queda. It is a classic mission for the Special Forces. Number one, you need someone who is mature, that is why you can not apply to Special Forces training until you are at least a captain. All the people on the team are sergeants or above, so you don't have any privates, specialists or corporals, they are all sergeants. An officer is the leader and eventually, based on what Special Forces unit you are assigned to, they train you in the specific languages in that area. The 7<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group is oriented towards Central

and South America so that is where they do most of their operations. There are exceptions, when you have a large mission going on, you run out of A Teams, like in Afghanistan and Iraq, you may see some 7<sup>th</sup> Special Forces people there. They are Spanish linguists, Portuguese linguists, and some occasions Creole, French Creole. The nature of the training is different than Ranger training, you've already been there, you have already been an infantry officer or whatever branch you served in, so you don't need a whole lot of that training. More of how to establish rapport with the natives, you go in and organize a resistance movement.

One time in my career, we were training guerillas in Nicaragua to overthrow the government and at the same time training units from the El Salvador Army to overthrow their counter, the rebels who were trying to overthrow the government. People that are experts in guerilla warfare ought to be pretty good at counter-guerilla warfare also. Special Forces does a lot of that. I have trained both contras and the units of the El Salvador Army and contras of Nicaragua, both at the same time.

DT: What were some of the places and events you experienced during the three years you spent on the twelve man team?

LTC: Alaska, Panama, Puerto Rico, Korea, all over the United States. While I was an A Team leader that's probably where I spent most of my time. I had three different tours with the 7<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group, I spent a lot of time all throughout Central America.

DT: What do you feel was your contribution in this duration of time?

LTC: I was a good team leader for one thing, I think. There is a real bond, there are only twelve of you, you operate in isolated conditions to operate behind enemy lines, alone. Live off

the land if necessary, or a covert resupply drop occasionally. You work with other forces, and I had already got a bit of that working with the South Vietnamese Army. Being an advisor to them was good background experience for Special Forces because I was used to dealing with people that outrank me from other countries and how to establish rapport with them and maybe to get them to do things the way that you thought they ought to be done rather than the way they had been doing it forever. Those are some of the places, there was a lot of exercises, a lot of training exercises, some real world training. We trained with the Korean=s Special Forces, even though that wasn=t our area.

DT: After that you served with as Battalion S-3 for six months, what was the contrast like?

LTC: That is the operations officer. Instead of going out and doing things, planning and getting people ready to go over, and launching them. The operations officer is a good position and career enhancing. By then I was a career officer and that is what I wanted to do, there are certain things, in order to be promoted, that you need to do, you need staff time and one of the most lucrative is operational staff experience. You can=t stay on an A Team forever as a captain. They can get promoted and stay there but once you are promoted to major, you=re gone. You can=t be on an A-Team anymore, that=s a captain=s job. That was the best job I had in the military that I enjoyed the most. Because so much, not power, I wasn=t power hungry, but they will send you into a country, one A Team, as captain you may be dealing with the ambassador to that country and explain to them what you are doing. For a captain to be dealing with things at that level, with ambassadors or key people at the higher level of the country that you are in, it is kinda neat. It makes you feel important. Everybody likes to feel important. I guess that was one of the reasons, and

there is a bonding that goes on, on an A Team that is very hard to find.

DT: What did your two year duty as aide-de-camp for MG Jack Macmull consist of?

LTC: That was the most educational job that I ever had. As an aide-de-camp, I was a captain. For a while I was operations officer and we had to plan an exercise and it just happened to be, we ran this exercise and the headquarters was at a field at Eglin Air Force Base where I had been a Ranger instructor. As part of that exercise, the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne jumped into field six which was the Ranger camp. There is an airfield there and they secured that airfield. They wanted to test, they also had Air Force security people there. They wanted to test the security so they figured the best people to do that were special operations. I was the operations officer for the battalion, we planned this raid on field six and we were briefing this general whom I had never met before, General Macmull and he said >who is going to lead that? and my battalion commander hadn=t even decided yet and I said well the most qualified person to lead that would be me. He said why do you say that and I said because I know every inch of field six because I spent three years there as a Ranger instructor. It went very well and we made the 82<sup>nd</sup> look bad and the Air Force security look bad, and the Major General look good because he was the Commanding General of the Special Forces.

About two months after that I was up visiting the units, he told me he might have something for me. The next day battalion commander told me to go see the general, he asked me to be his aide and I told him that was one thing I never wanted to do was be a general=s aide, but that I would consider it. He said it was very career enhancing and it was terrific for your military education and I went back to battalion commander and

talked to him and he said you need to do that. There was a lot of things going on with special operations, Deltaforce was forming and that came under the general and there were a lot of VIPs visiting. They all wanted to know what the army's counter-terror capabilities were. There were a lot of demonstrations, and chatting with the CIA Director and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, director of the FBI, it was an interesting time.

I told the General I could do it for six months and then that I would go to the 82<sup>nd</sup> to be a company commander because back then special forces was not real career enhancing cause I was an officer. I was infantry, it wasn't it's own branch then, you needed what they called conventional time. The conventional guys still don't like unconventional units like special forces so I knew I had to go to the 82<sup>nd</sup> and command the company, it was one of those things I had to do to have career progression. He said okay just tell me when you want to go and I'll make it happen, so two years later I finally said boss, I think I need to go before I got promoted out of being company commander. He was a great guy and that job totally depends on who you work for. You have a lousy job if they treat you like dirt, which some of them did. General Macmull, he was a great guy, and he was not Special Forces so when he decided to use me as an aide-de-camp he decided to use me as an advisor also. When we were in meetings or briefings he would make sure that I was always in there and he would always ask my opinion on things. He was a great guy and Special Forces, people were trying to deactivate them at the time, he was working with the army along side trying to develop a counter-terror unit in the army and some interesting things going on. I learned a whole lot about the macro vision of the military, beyond the foxholes, terrorism beyond the range of an M-16.

*(Final school bell rings)*

Yesterday I was channel surfing, my wife is in San Francisco, I stumble on *Patton* the movie. Patton's aide, it is exactly like that, you do everything for that general, you never leave his side except when he is home on his own. You are kind of an advisor, I was the designated loser on the tennis court. He was a practical jokester, very popular with the staff. He would send me down from time to time to see my Special Forces A Team, he would say go see your buddies. It was to see what they were thinking because he would put out policies and it would get filtered through all of the communications levels, it would get down to the soldiers who actually needed them. They hated to see me coming all these full colonels, would see me and say what are you doing here? and I would say the general sent me to spy on you, sir(*laughs*) and then I would laugh like that.

When he would go make a visit, he would never let me call ahead, normally nobody likes to be surprised by generals popping in on their unit. Whenever we would go he would say don't call ahead, I want to see them like they are he said I don't think they are perfect like when they have announced visitors and I don't care because I want to see them how they are.

DT: What was your time as company commander in the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division like?

LTC: It was a little over a year and then I got promoted to major. Company commander in the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne is a captain so I got promoted on the job. The 82<sup>nd</sup> was totally different than special forces. You operate in higher units, more people basically. You deal with privates and different issues and different problems. The 82<sup>nd</sup> was a big unit. A lot of the problems in the army were starting to be solved now, this was late 1970s and 1980. The

82<sup>nd</sup> was one of the first, if anything goes on in the world, it usually starts at Ft. Bragg because those are the first units usually deployed. It was rewarding, I was an experienced captain, I had more experience than the other company commanders. There weren't any other combat veterans as company commanders and I had been to Vietnam. They were a little younger, it was a good unit, a great battalion commander.

There was a good 700 soldiers or whatever, we went on a major exercise to Germany, it was the first time the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne had been to Germany since World War II so that was a big deal in the press. It went very well. What was my contribution? I did a good job commanding the company, I don't think you could contribute much more. I had a good company, always did well, we never deployed to any combat zones or anything like that. My company always did well in training exercises. We always led the battalion in the number of combat infantry badges awarded, had a good group of lieutenants and a good group of sergeants.

DT: What was your goal for the future at this point?

LTC: My goal in the 82<sup>nd</sup> was just to continue my career and get back to special forces, that is where my heart was. After serving in special forces, I probably wouldn't have gone into the 82<sup>nd</sup> if it hadn't been necessary for my career. It is hard to explain but I was infantry with my branch and special forces wasn't a branch at the time so I had to do regular infantry things with regular infantry units in order to be competitive with my contemporaries who were not in special forces. I went special forces so I am out of mainstream infantry so I am not doing the things that these other infantry captains are doing. When it comes time for promotion they are looking at my record compared to

theirs and those guys have done all those infantry things and I have been out there doing those weird special forces things that regular infantry folks didn't like anyhow. I had to balance out but my ultimate goal was to end up serving back in special forces.

DT: Did you ever feel alienated in the army because of your special forces background?

LTC: Oh Yeah. I would like to tell you a story about that. Going into the 82<sup>nd</sup>, I was the general's aide and I knew the division commander's name from the 82<sup>nd</sup> was General Sandy Meloy and I knew General Meloy very well just being at all these conferences and meetings all the time our bosses were friends. So I called the general when it was time for me to go to the 82<sup>nd</sup> and he said well let me call Sandy and I said no, I really prefer not to get generals involved, let me call the aide and the aide was a good friend of mine and I said that I would just work through him. I called the aide, and General Meloy would always ask me when are you coming over to the division? pretty soon sir, pretty soon. I told the aide I was ready to make a move and he said ok, I will put you in contact with somebody and he did and it was all set. I was going to go over and work on the staff for a few months before I took over the company cause I wanted to see how it worked. He got me all set up and he was going to let General Meloy know as a courtesy to the general that I was coming. He called me about thirty minutes later and he said the general is going to handle your case personally. That is what I did not want because people don't like that. He put me in another unit, the day I came over, I took over the company, there was no waiting for a couple months or anything like that. It was my first meeting with the Battalion Commander, I was in his office reporting and he said let me tell you something captain, I didn't want you in my battalion, I was forced to take you, I

don't like the way this happened, I don't like special forces officers (*laughs*) so this is my greeting to the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division and I explained to him I said sir, I had no intentions of getting generals involved in my assignments, I was an aide for the past few years and I try to keep the generals out of it but it didn't happen that way and I apologize for that, I am sorry you don't like special forces officers and I hope to prove that your opinion of special forces officers might not be accurate and that was my welcome. We ended up and still are good friends to this day and I still mess with him. Sir, do you remember how you welcomed me to the 82<sup>nd</sup>? I was about ready to turn right around and leave.

Interview with LTC Kenneth Hinkle, Interview 2

Date of Interview: March 1, 2005

Interviewer: Danielle Truscio

Transcriber: Danielle Truscio

Continue Side One of Tape Two

DT: After more training consisting of Foreign Area Officer=s Course and Command and General Staff Course in 1982, you were assigned to the United Nations Supervisory Organization. What was it like working with the United Nations?

LTC: It was actually called the United Nations Truce Supervisory Organization, UNTSO, it was very frustrating working with the United Nations. We had a unit of plus seventy-five military observers from eighteen different countries. Some were very professional and some were not very professional and they were just there on a vacation. The week that I had arrived there, in June 1982 is the week that the Israelis invaded Lebanon to drive the PLO.

In southern Lebanon the PLO were firing rockets and little raids into Israel, so

Israel invaded and went North to push the PLO out of Lebanon and actually the Israelis went all the way to Beirut. We were unarmed military observers, kind of like referees in a war zone. UNTSO was about seventy-five unarmed military observers. We also had UNIFIL, United Nations Inner Force In Lebanon and they were armed units, they had nine different battalions and each one of them from a different country, in southern Lebanon. They were supposed to be keeping a buffer zone where the PLO weren't supposed to be coming in. A buffer zone to keep them out of rocket range to keep them from firing into Israel. Some of the units were pretty good and some were terrible. The Israelis in southern Lebanon also organized, equipped and trained a lot of the local militias from some of the towns in southern Lebanon. The Lebanese had no love for the PLO either, so a lot of them were very supportive of the Israelis. What it amounted to was armed gangs basically, running around and the rules were if you went to a UN checkpoint in a UN zone UN soldiers could search your car and confiscate any weapons.

There were always incidents going on, we were always out to see what the Israelis or the PLO were up to. We were kind of neutral, we were supposed to be neutral. I had contacts who were militia group leaders, these gang leaders, cause we wanted to get an idea of what they were up to so we could try to hit off any crisis or confrontations between those people, they called them armed elements, but they were thugs basically. They would have pick up trucks with machine guns in the back and sometimes there would be a conflict where they would be shooting at each other and we would go try to sort it out and try to get everyone to stop shooting and resolve the situation. Everyone realized that we were neutral because we were unarmed we were not a threat to anybody.

We drove around at night and had a blue UN flag and we had them put a big spotlight on us and the vehicles were all white with a big U-N on them. They have some observation posts along the border, that is called OP Duty for observation post duty and it was along the Lebanese and Israeli border. There would be two people on duty at a time and they would be there for a week and reporting border violations because the charter for UNTSO dated back to the late 1940s. We called it cooking and looking, one guy would be up in the observation tower, there was a little compound that would have a little generator that you would shut off at night but you would have electricity when the generator was running. No weapons so we weren't a threat but our job was to report border violations so anytime there was an overflight, when an Israeli plane flew over, we would have to log it. Every time an Israeli vehicle drove by, well there is a war going on so it was a waste of time, so I didn't want to be doing that for very long but normally that is what everybody would be doing. There was some special teams, they were the guys that would go out and work with UNIFIL and we were the go-betweens in a crisis situation. I only did OP duty twice and that was it and I was out of there. It wasn't rewarding at all, it was a waste of time.

End of Side One of Tape Two/Begin Side Two of Tape Two

LTC: On the special teams you didn't go by rank, you went by who had been on the team longest. We had a rotation and in about three weeks I was the team leader for Team Tyre and I had four guys assigned to my team and two would be on duty at any time. The two that were off duty could cross the border and go to Israel which was a little nicer than living in Lebanon. It would usually be a week on and a week off and I would usually

spend ten days on and usually three, four days off. Like I said we coordinate, drink coffee with the guys, and visit UN battalions and try to arrive at one of the decent battalions at dinner time. Then they would invite us to eat so we wouldn't have to cook dinner for ourselves. I was in Tyre Lebanon, and we were Team Tyre, we had our team house in an old Lebanese army compound and the UNIFIL would provide one platoon for security for us when we were in the compound. They would rotate that responsibility every month. Anytime the Israelis were ambushed, we would go out and try to check the site and find out exactly what happened. The Israelis hated us. They weren't cooperative at all, they tried to block us, they actually put me under arrest at one time, they threatened us from time to time.

We went to check an ambush site one night and they had a roadblock set up and they wouldn't let us get to the ambush site. I said this is UN zone you have to get us go through and they said no, you have to move your vehicle and by then traffic started to back up because there was only one main road, it was on the coast, a coastal road it went from Northern Israel to Beirut. I wouldn't move my jeep and by then my jeep was the key to unblocking the highway because they had Israeli troops coming in. An Israeli captain said you need to move that vehicle and I said no I don't, the only way I am moving is that way I pointed down the road because we had to get to that ambush site. Then there was a plain clothed guy, came and said you have to move that car and I said no, I am moving one direction and that is when you open the road and let me go down, well maybe we will shoot the tires on your vehicle, but then I won't be able to move it at all, well maybe we will shoot you and you were a UN patch with an American flag. I

pointed to the American flag and I said I don't think President Reagan would appreciate you shooting one of his soldiers. It was incidents like that.

A armed militia went into a Dutch checkpoint and they asked them to turn their weapons over and so they disarmed all the Dutch soldiers at the Dutch checkpoint. We got called to go and they said there had been a shooting and what happened was a lieutenant had gotten smart with one of the militia guys and he shot around at the ground in front of him and a stone and kicked up and hit him in the leg. The Dutch Captain was arrogant so when I started dealing with the militia he said you can't negotiate with them, this is my checkpoint, captain I said whose got the guns? Well they do, well then, it's their checkpoint so shut up and I will get your checkpoint back for you. We did.

DT: Did you have a lot of cooperation within the UN?

LTC: Depended on the unit, some of the battalions were cooperative. We got to know all of the battalion commanders, some better than others. The Dutch had been given their orders which were to do anything but take any casualties, there were peace keeping forces basically, like we were. Some of them are not very good soldiers. We had some trouble with the Irish, good people, but not very good soldiers. It was the first time I had worked with the Irish. It depended on the units, different countries trained differently.

DT: You were peace keeping troops, but when the Israelis invaded, did your prerogatives change?

LTC: We did a lot of coordination with humanitarian organizations. Our compound was about 400 meters from the International Community Red Cross and we did a lot for them. We held weekly meetings in our house. We would organize agencies and there were the

World Refugee Association, United Nations Organizations, ICRC, so that they wouldn't be duplicating efforts. We had Palestinian Refugees there also. Then there was a massacre Lebanese Christian militia that went into Sabra and Chatila Refugee camps in Beirut and massacred a bunch of people up there. A lot of their refugees came down to our refugee camps, very scared. They came to us and asked us if we could do anything and I said all we could do was patrol throughout the night but we are not even armed. Our presence there might have been a deterrent. We started patrol schedules and the Palestinian refugee camps around our area did too.

DT: Were you unarmed the entire time you were there?

LTC: Yes. By our UN charter, the only time we were allowed to have a weapon is if someone wanted to turn one in, so only a couple times did we ever have a weapon. It was our best offense, the fact that we didn't have a weapon because it was understood. The difference between UNTSO and UNIFIL was that we were military observers.

We were in downtown Tyre and with an American Lieutenant Colonel who had just taken over Observer Group Lebanon. That was the subunit, the UNTSO has observer groups all round. We were Observer Group Lebanon and they had a new American come in to takeover as commander and spend a week with each unit so he would know each different special team so he would know what we did. We were at the downtown grocery store and that was the local hangout for the southern Lebanese people that we knew and I was introducing him to some of them I was getting back into the jeep and we pulled out and I was driving and we were turning left and a guy with an AK was sitting at an old gas station on the corner and I saw him, he was sitting in a chair, leaning

back with his AK-47 against the wall, but that isn't uncommon. When we turned the corner there was a guy peeking around the corner and I knew that guy was going to be shooting at that guy and here we were in the middle. *(Laughs)* That's exactly what happened, I slammed on the brakes and got down on the street and I yelled at the Colonel to get down. When they shoot, they just spray bullets, the Arabs and the Israelis, they do the same thing, they just shoot in every direction right in the middle of town. When the shooting quit, there was some screaming over in a building, there was a lady hit through the arm, hit the bone and shattered the bone. I was running, I had a walkie talkie, like the old ones, they were bigger because the technology wasn't as advanced then. I was running carrying only this thing, cause we always had to carry those with us and the next day some of the locals said we didn't think you were allowed to carry weapons and I said I don't and they said well you were carrying a sub-machine gun last night and I said no, the only thing you saw me carrying was a walkie talkie. Of course I was carrying it like this with the antenna sticking out. *(mocks holding the walkie talkie as if it were a gun)* They were surprised because they knew we couldn't carry weapons. Actually that was probably the safest thing, probably for us, the fact that we were unarmed.

DT: Can you draw any parallels between Lebanon and Vietnam, as far as the people you worked with, how the Lebanese treated you?

LTC: The mission was different of course. The Foreign Area Officers Course was a lot like international relations, it is a six month course. That is all I did, for six months I went to school and then I went to Command and General Staff for a year and that is like going to college everyday. You have a planned out schedule. The Foreign Area Officer Course,

you would specialize in a certain area, and mine was the middle east, I was up on the history and on the current events that were going on when I went there.

Plus briefings, you go to Washington before they would send you over and that brought you up to speed. I was looking from a totally different perspective at what was going on in Lebanon then what was going on in Vietnam. Vietnam was day to day and not really looking at the big picture as in what are we doing , are we winning the war and that kind of stuff. Lebanon was completely different, didn=t worry about, you did, but that wasn=t our job, to go after people. Trying to understand the problems and the issues, very frustrating in the middle east. I used to say if there is one Arab and one Israeli left alive the two of them would fight.*(laughs)* They have come farther right now then I thought they ever would when I was there but that was twenty something years ago.

DT: What about the people, did the people like seeing you and working with you?

LTC: They did because I was continuity. Normally it was policy to rotate you out after six months, I was there eighteen months. I was the only UN observer there that continually, so they got to know me. They would come to us with the word, don=t travel such and such a road on Tuesday and we find out later there was an ambush with the Israelis on that road we were told not to travel on. The Israelis didn=t like us, didn=t like the United Nations, it was more the United Nations than individually. If they were ambushed near a village they would take in as prisoners, all the males in that community until someone would talk. We were always trying to check for violations of the laws of warfare. The Israelis didn=t want us looking and trying to find out what they were doing with the prisoners, they didn=t readily except us. They did have a point of contact, a major I

would talk with occasionally and sometimes it was necessary to deal with them to defeat a situation.

We had a Fijian soldier killed by a militia group and that group was held up in a house and we knew the militia group. We got a call and we had to go check it out. The militia guys were up on the balcony of this house and we knew them and we had an Australian team at this time, and I was driving and he waved. They didn't wave and they all had rifles so we knew it wasn't good. When we went down over the hill, there were some Fijian vehicles parked out of sight from the house. The Fijian soldiers were deployed everywhere and their battalion commander said that the militia group had shot one of his soldiers and that the soldier had died. The battalion commander basically wanted us to level the house, but there were families in there still and elderly and the grandparents of this militia guy. We tried to get them to resolve this thing. Every village has someone who acts as a mayor, he is called a muktar and I asked the locals to get the muktar to come. Then I talked to him and said will you go talk to them and tell them the Fijian battalion wants to arrest whoever shot their soldier? He did, he went and talked to them and came back and said they want to talk to you, so I was supposed to go back in with him. I called the Company commander and said they wanted me to go back with him into the house and he said if there was one more shot coming out of that house he was going to level the house. They had shoulder fire rocket launchers, so he could've leveled the house, so I decided discretion was the better part of valor in that case and I got hold of the Israelis because they armed the militia and would keep them in check sometimes. Eventually the Israelis came and took all their weapons, but I didn't go in

that house. It was a crazy place. I am sure it still is, and the UN is still there doing the same thing.

DT: Did you choose to stay longer then?

LTC: I did, I volunteered to stay with Observer Group Lebanon for another six months and then I extended for six more months, only if they kept me Lebanon, if they rotated me to another area that I didn't want to do that, in some outpost where there was nothing going on. It was interesting work, but it was frustrating, but you couldn't see an end in sight at all.

DT: What exactly was your motivation to stay there?

LTC: I was interested in the area. I had a friend that was over there, he left about a week after I had arrived and he said don't get wrapped up in what's going on here, don't let it get to you well it did. It has to, you go through these Palestinian refugee camps, they flag you down, it could be two o'clock in the morning, and they will flag you down and have a coffee with you. The arabic coffee, has a thick syrup on the bottom, cause there is so much caffeine in it.

We changed out times because we didn't want to set patterns because we were unarmed to begin with, just our presence made the people feel better. In fact a lot of them didn't even know we were unarmed, we just carried a spotlight so we would shine that around so if there was anybody thinking of evil things to do to refugees they might have thought twice. We got to know a lot of the people, when VIPs from the UN would come I would take them to the people that I knew in the refugee camps and would let them tell their stories to the UN officials. We had congressman, we had senators coming through,

so we got to brief them. So I got wrapped up in the whole thing that was going on and didn't want to leave basically, thought I was doing some good. It was different for me, to help people not kill other people. You train to keep people from killing each other, it was a good feeling in that respect but it was also very frustrating.

DT: When you left, at that point, would ever consider working with the UN again?

LTC: The leaders we had were more politicians than military leaders. The general in charge was an Irish general and the only reason that they had him as the general were for political reasons. There were too much politics in the employment of UN forces. There was no backing from higher levels if you needed an exact job. Some of the units did, the Fijians and the Fins, they didn't mess around in their areas, the militia didn't mess around in their areas because they knew that these battalions meant business and that they wouldn't let them through.

There were nine different sections with responsibilities with the different country's battalions, some places they could roll through with pick up trucks with machine guns mounted on the back, and they would just wave to them as they went through and some would do their jobs. I asked the Finnish battalion commander one time why there was never any problems at his checkpoints and he said >my soldiers only know one word in English, they only know :no. (*laughs*) I always remembered that but it was true. The battalion was hardcore and went by the rules and the certain folks knew not to mess with them. They also knew where they could get away with it so they could still travel through, they just went around them.

DT: While you were in Lebanon, Operation Urgent Fury, the invasion of Grenada took place,

and our troops were there until 1985. Did the 7<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group have an active part in the invasion? What was your opinion of it?

LTC: I think a lot of it, and this is just my speculation, I think a lot of it was a response to the marine barracks being bombed in Beirut because after that, it was the next month. The marines lost 250 something killed in Beirut and I think the president had to do something forcefully somewhere. I think that the Cubans in Grenada were just the excuse. If we hadn't had the marine barracks bombed I am not sure we would have done Urgent Fury and that is just my own personal opinion. It just followed the marine barracks bombing too closely.

DT: When you returned you became company commander of the 7<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group how did this compare to your previous position of company commander at the 82<sup>nd</sup> ?

LTC: I returned in December of 1984 and we had a change of command ceremony. The only ones there were my sergeant major and a couple other guys from the company staff. I had six A teams on six different islands in the Caribbean training these little islands nation=s defense forces as a follow on to Grenada. So one of the first things I did was go make a command visit to all of my teams because I hadn't even met them yet and I was their commander. It was more like a staff job. It is the company commanders job to make sure that those teams are ready for deployment to whatever they are going, to accomplish whatever mission, and to give them guidance. Your job is to provide that special forces A Team with anything to accomplish the mission. I wouldn't go down and take over and tell them what I wanted to do. Once they launch, they are on their own basically. You would be in a headquarters somewhere talking to them basically. Company commander

in the 82<sup>nd</sup> you are on the ground, you are maneuvering units, you are moving platoons here to there, whatever the mission might be.

DT: You liked commanding the special forces better?

LTC: Yes. I like working with sergeants, I liked working with the 82<sup>nd</sup> too, but it was in my blood to do special operations. These captains who were going out and dealing with ambassadors, it was just what I enjoyed doing, like I explained yesterday. It was my job to make sure these captains were ready to take their A Team to accomplish the mission, but when it came to actually doing it, they were the ones on the ground, I wasn't on the ground. I would pay a short visit depending on where it was, what mission it was.

DT: If you can, describe your responsibilities as Special Operations Controller for Brave Shield.

LTC: Brave Shield was a major training exercise, the exercise actually kicked off in May, June time frame, we started planning in January. You write the script on how it is going to happen. I was the special ops guy. I had the Navy Seals working for me, the Air Force Special Forces working for me, and my own SF guys working with me and Psy Ops guys, civil affairs guys. I was the leader of the special ops control group staff. We worked for a one star general and it was my job to plan and coordinate all aspects of the special ops portion of that training exercise that was coming up. It was a test basically that included the whole East coast, I had the Navy, amphibious landings that go on by the Marines, all airfields around the east coast. Units actually deploy, if you had a unit actually involved in the exercise, I had to go find a controller for that unit. If they did something, but didn't do it right, they would take casualties, and he would be the one designating

casualties to the unit and wounded.

They tested all aspects of the units, taking casualties, whether they could accomplish their mission. The different leaders at different levels were making decisions based on the things that the controllers are throwing at them, the situation. It was interesting, but for six months it was too long.

DT: Was this the first time that you worked with special operations from all the different branches of the military?

LTC: You work pretty closely, from the time you start special operation, with the other branches.

DT: Did you have a favorite of the other branches to work with?

LTC: I have never been crazy about Navy Seals. The Air Force special ops Aviation guys are, they are pretty good. The Seals are good, very physical but they love notoriety, they have to be involved even if it isn't a pure Seal mission. That happened later in Panama, but we will talk about that. There are politics involved, anytime we have an action, like in Panama, or Grenada, all the services want to play. They all want a part of the action and sometimes to the detriment of the overall operation. In Urgent Fury in Grenada, there was a lot of problems working with the other services, sometimes the radios weren't compatible, the Seals wouldn't know what the Army guys were doing and the Rangers, the Rangers are some of my favorites, and I am not prejudice because they are an army force or because I was a Ranger instructor. They are very good at what they are supposed to be and when they were formed, they were formed to be the most elite infantry battalions in the world, and that is what they are. As a result, they are more like

commandos, very different from Army Special Forces. Army Special Forces conduct small raids, we are talking only twelve guys, so there isn't a lot of fire power. They do it more by stealth, using beacon bombings, you can go in and put a beacon down, now you have laser target detonators and stuff like that.

End Side Two Of Tape Two/Begin Side One of Tape Three

LTC: I don't want to give the impression that I dislike Seals, I am just not crazy about them.

DT: In the next few years you went from Chief of current operations for the Army Special Operations command to Chief of G-3 Operations, I wanted to ask, how does a G-3 and an S-3 differ?

LTC: G-3 is at a higher level, S-3 is at the battalion or brigade level and as soon as you have a general officer as a commander. The general officer's staff would be G-1, G-2.., that was a very good question. It does the same as an S-3 but at a higher level.

DT: Then you went to Deputy commanding officer of the 7<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group to Inspector General of the U.S. Army Special Operations command, and this was from 1985 to 1991. If you are allowed to comment, what were your contributions to Operation Just Cause in Panama?

LTC: I think I told you yesterday that I was one of the original eight planners, I was Deputy Commanding Officer of the 7<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group at the time. We were on a annual training and evaluation exercise and our headquarters was set up in the panhandle of Florida. My boss who was also my best friend at the time, told me to come to his office, and I did and he gave me some top secret special category messages and he said >you leave tomorrow, go back to Fort Bragg and pick up some civilian clothes. You are going

to go to MacDill Air Force Base and brief the commander and general= who is a four star, on what is going on in Panama. We did and we got to MacDill Air Force Base at Special Operations Command and about ten o'clock at night we were briefing him in his briefing room. There were eight of us flying down to Panama to plan the invasion of Panama, to begin planning. There was a one star general, Joe Stringham was his name, in charge. I was the second in command and then we had a couple Navy Seals, a couple Air Force special ops guys, a guy from Task Force 160, which is the Army Special Operations Aviation unit, Psy ops civil affairs representative, a Ranger, the planner from the Ranger regiment, and myself. We flew down the next day and began, basically, coordinating and writing the operations order for the invasion of Panama, and we wrote the 105 page operations order with an operational checklist in about three days and then flew back and briefed the general. There has been a coup attempt from one of the commandancia in downtown Panama City that one of the units tried to take over the government while we were down there planning. I went back to Fort Bragg when we had briefed everybody and by then the 7<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group had deployed back to Fort Bragg.

They had put two battalions and the 7<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group into isolation. There was an isolation area there and that is where you plan a mission and then wait until you are deployed. You are not allowed to talk to family, they don=t know what you are doing or where you are. You had to go through pre-deployment training for all the soldiers and make sure all their shots are current. Different areas of the world require different shots and it is the medics= job to check those medical records. The lawyers are there so you

can update your will. We were getting imagery in from satellite photos of different target areas and up to date specialized equipment, sniper rifles, whatever the guys decided they needed for the mission, we would put in a request. This is like a year and a half before it actually happened. We were in isolation, we stood down, we were in isolation for three weeks before they finally said stand down. We released everybody to go home and of course on a string. I can't exactly remember what alert phase we were on when they let us go out of there.

After a period of time I went on to another job to become Inspector General. That is what I was when the invasion actually occurred. I was out of the plan, although I did make several trips down. There is a white side to Special Operations and a black side, at this point I was in the white, or soft side. White means the unit exists, everyone knows it exists, but what that unit does is also some black ops. You do some ops that are not classified and then you do some that are black ops. Then you have the black units, everything they do is black ops. We were switching from white side special ops being in charge, turning the responsibility over to the other guys. So we made some trips down together with their staff, going over what we had done. They continued to plan until it actually went down and that was a year and a half after we had originally started planning it. I was an IG when it actually happened, for the eight months prior to that I was in planning. My wife was over in the hospital at Pope, Fort Bragg and Pope Air Force Base are the same, there is only a fence separating the two, she was over at the hospital one day and she said, something weird is going on there was no doctors in the hospital. I knew something was going on somewhere. They were getting ready to deploy. My son

came up at one o'clock in the morning and said Dad, Dad, we just invaded Panama.

There were some incidents that had gone on that had prompted it. My best friend who had been commander of the 7<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group, he was now down in Panama. He was the head Army Special Forces guy down there, actually he was head of all special operations. His family was down there too, our kids had grown up with his kids. They still had one daughter that was married and she was at Fort Bragg in Fayetteville, North Carolina. I called her and said : there was a war going on, and I told her not to be upset and to go ahead and give her mom a call, and she got through. Her mother lived in Fort Amador where Panamanian defense forces were also stationed there and now we're fighting them and the only thing separating them was a golf course. The 82<sup>nd</sup> had moved in to protect the houses, they had already landed. They were firing across, they were going around to the American people that lived in the quarters to get down on the floor, don't go outside the house. That was an interesting time for that family.

DT: So even though a lot of time had elapsed you said yesterday that the invasion had gone unchanged and as you planned it.

LTC: Not much had changed at all, it was interesting. We sent A Teams to make sure the Panamanian forces didn't come across some bridges and they did exactly that. Even to the point they called the garrison David, which is in northern Panama, told them to have formation outside and to stack their arms, otherwise AC-130 gun ships and a Ranger battalion would be coming down right on top of them, and they did. They made the phone call, and they surrendered with a phone call. We were going to do that with loudspeakers, try and get them to surrender cause we worked a lot with units, there were

a lot of units trained by American forces down there. Noriega tied his hitches to other folks in the drug cartels.

DT: I know you worked mostly in South America, but what was your contribution to Operation Desert Storm?

LTC: I was an IG at the time and the only thing we did was mobilize one of the Army National Guard Special Forces Groups and they had to get up to date with training. When they are on active duty, I was their IG also. If they had problems of any type that couldn't be resolved through their chain of command, they would come to my office and my guys depending on what the issue was. We also had a responsibility to check what was going on in the battalions, like morale and all that and report back to the general. It was very limited, as far as what I did for Desert Storm, it wasn't much.

DT: How did you feel about the outcome of Desert Storm?

LTC: I was concerned because everybody was talking about the possibility of 100,00 casualties and chemical and germ warfare. That is nasty business. I was extremely relieved to see how quickly they surrendered. I think that the air war was what really softened them up, any resolve they did have went down the tubes. Please they weren't defending their own country, they had invaded Kuwait. I know as a soldier they are not going to fight the same. If we had gone into Iraq at the time they would have fought a little better.

DT: Throughout your time in the army what were some of the things you noticed changing?  
The troops? The public?

LTC: We had evolved from a drafted army to a volunteer army. There were problems with the volunteer army when it first started. By then the bugs had been ironed out, the

technological advances were just unbelievable. Better soldiers, recruiting standards were high so the quality of the soldiers that were coming into the military at that time were high. Smart guys and girls, and that was another transition, women were starting to be accepted and they still are not in every unit. I was one of the worst, I never served with a female because of the units I served in, until I went to Command and General Staff school.

We had one female in our group of sixty and four study groups. We had like a fifteen person study group where you would do a lot of book work and paper exercises together. She got stuck in our group, all the infantry guys and combat arms men were like we got this girl. Pretty soon we found out she was worth her weight in gold because she understood stuff that we didn't like logistics and administration and stuff like that, but she didn't know tactics like we did. We would help her with those and she would help us with the other stuff. It was really an eye-opener for me because up to that point I didn't think women should be in the military to be honest with you. Then you realize, not only are they good at what they do, but in a lot of cases they are better than any guy. They are in combat, there have been a lot more females killed in Iraq than what people realize, there are getting killed, they are getting wounded. That would really upset me, I am still the guy who would not want a woman with me in combat, because I think in the back of my mind I would going to be more concerned about her than I would be about another guy. I think it is just natural. You won't find them in tanks or anything, but they are getting killed.

DT: How about the troops since the beginning of your career until now?

LTC: I think it was largely a draft army when I first served. There was some college kids that were privates and stuff like that too, that would get drafted directly out of college.

DT: Did the morale change too?

LTC: Yes. A lot of those draftees didn't want to be there so a lot of the attitude and morale wasn't that great. If you raise your hand and say hey, I want to volunteer to be in the army, I don't want to hear any whining and sniffing. You have to be here, you are expected to do your job. The professionalism, a huge increase in professionalism in the military. When I left the 82<sup>nd</sup> and went to the six month Foreign Area Officer's course, a year at Command and General Staff school and then a year and a half in Lebanon serving for the United Nations and other than one of those Motorola radios, that was it. I went back to special forces and my company communications guys started in on tactical satellite radios, with a little cork screw antennas that you carry on your back. We used to use morse code, I remember in Korea, we had guys who were trying to send a message a thousand miles or something like that and we had guys take these long wires out in each direction and my communications guy would sit down and >dit dit didot dit= (*mocking a morse code tap with his finger*) Now you have the burst device, that was the one thing you never wanted your enemy to be able to pinpoint where you are, so you had to keep your transmissions as quick as possible. You type in your message, it would encode it for you, so you didn't have to take the time to code it. It would crunch it, and send a burst and at the other end it would be received by the radio receivers and uncoded and there is the message. If you wanted to talk to someone at the other end. The first time I went to Honduras, I picked up the radio and was talking back to Fort Bragg I was in the middle of

the woods on the side of a mountain. It is just like a telephone talking to someone down the street. *(A student interrupts to say >goodbye= to LTC Hinkle)*

DT: Would you say technology was the best contribution?

LTC: That and the professionalism of the soldiers. Those were the two biggest advances. We weren't a terrible army when I first went in but we are so much better. Looking back on my early years and my retirement years, we have only progressed beyond that. I have been retired for about ten years now.

DT: Did you notice a change as far as public opinion of the military?

LTC: Yes. If you looked at polls which rank order of professions in the 1970s the military would have been way down, I would say one out of ten, a nine. Now-a-days if you had ten, and had them rank order, you would find it pretty close to the top and it has been that way since I retired. That is a nice feeling. I remember the first time I saw that oh my gosh, people respect the military. I was shocked, it was always down in the polls and then I didn't pay that much attention and then I saw another poll and it was number two or three above a lot of the professions and I thought, we must be doing something right. I think it is that way today. Did you see the commercial during the Superbowl, it was a Budweiser commercial, it showed a bunch of guys coming home in an airport, walking through the airport. I will get emotional if I talk about it. There was no talking and these soldiers were walking along and one person started clapping *(claps his hands)*.

DT: Then you had a change of pace, in 1991 you began your service as the Chief of counter-narcotics division for the 6<sup>th</sup> Army.

LTC: I promised my wife, remember my wife's brother was killed in Vietnam, we decided to

make it a career, and that was a we decision. Military wives are special, especially in Special Forces, it used to be an ongoing joke that you=re not truly special forces qualified unless you have at least one divorce. The family life isn=t the best because of the constant deployments. I was stationed at Fort Bragg fifteen of my twenty-five years, but if I counted up all the time I was actually there, it was good for my wife and family. It gave them some stability while I was gone a lot.

I promised my wife twenty years, so at the twenty year mark the army offered me like five different things, one was Hawaii with a job I really didn=t want to do , one was in Korea, one in Germany, one was in San Francisco. My wife loved San Francisco, she loves big cities, it was the Chief of the 6<sup>TH</sup> Army counter-narcotics division. I found it kind of interesting. I asked her if she wanted to go, and if not I could get out, I promised her twenty and then I would get out, and she said no, let=s go to San Francisco. We went to San Francisco and my job was to coordinate military or Department of Defense, across the board all the services. To coordinate Department of Defense support for federal, state and local law enforcement agencies involved in counter-narcotics operations. Normally they would come to us and say we need this I would say no, tell what you=re going to do and I will tell you what you need from the military to help you and be specific. We got the Navy to provide a ship that has a diving platform for navy divers to install underwater radar at the Astoria River bridge in the Columbia River because we had big ships going through there. Drug smugglers would attach parasitic containers underneath the waterline on ships. This was no cost to those agencies that wanted to do that, so they asked a lot.

The fence they have along the southern border, that started in our office, they are

still working on that. You see doors cut through, it is never ending, that mess. That was specifically a counter-narcotics mission and some of the politicians accuse the people of doing that, that it is anti-illegal immigrant, but it was using counter-narcotics money. You can't do that, if it is a counter-narcotics mission, or if it is a mission where it is really designed for illegal immigration, to stop that, they wouldn't be able to use counter-narcotics money for that, they got around it somehow. That was a six month project back in 1991 and they are still doing that today. We provided translators to some of the law enforcement folks to translate Japanese, Chinese, tapes of recorded drug deals and stuff like that. We trained troops on how to spot marijuana from helicopters, marijuana crops, groves is what they called them. Actually provided helicopters with the spotters to go over Yosemite park and other federal land.

We put troops on the ground one year and they found a couple marijuana gardens on federal land and we spent a lot of manpower on that, and the troops trained. They get training out of it, besides looking for marijuana they would write a scenario that they were looking through the terrain, looking for bad guys. They would make through they swept through an area they suspected to find marijuana. Then we got smart, we decided to bring in some military intelligence guys and have them do an analysis on these areas and have them study up on to grow marijuana. That is what they did, we brought in two guys, and that was all they did. They went over maps in several areas and studied marijuana, does it need shade? And they would look on shaded sides of mountains. Then they would eliminate areas so we wouldn't have to put units in to sweep entire areas. You have to have access cause when they cultivate the marijuana they have to have a

truck to transport. They have to have water, so they have to have an irrigation source.

Once they spotted them, we would put the special forces teams on the ground with video cameras in hindsight observing them. Because of the *Passe Comitatus* law, the military can't surveil individuals but they can surveil areas. If an individual came, they would come in and water the plants, maybe cultivate and then leave. Special forces guys were not allowed to follow them but they were allowed to call the local law enforcement and tell them that the guy was there and left.

There are some amusing stories. One team had a video, you see the guys come in, he is looking all around and he has a dog with him. He makes sure there is no one around and then he starts working on his plants. The dog got wind of the special forces guys and the dog starts working it's way through the trees and they are videoing this dog coming at them and this dog comes right up to the camera and puts his nose on the camera, not barking or anything. The tail is wagging and you hear the guys snickering and trying not to laugh out loud so that the guy doesn't hear them (*laughs*). Then we also had a sergeant shot. It was interesting, but it was frustrating. We worked with DEA, FBI, Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms, Border Patrol, Customs folks, Royal Canadian Mountain Police, Canada Customs, cause we worked the Northern borders. I had the eleven western states from north border to south border. That was my job, coordinating with all those agencies that needed anything. We would have drug conferences, we would set them up. All these different agencies would come in and discuss, we would brief: here is what we can offer you, you need to let us know what the mission is and not just ask for this, this and this cause we are going to come back at you and say no tell us what you are trying to

accomplish.

The frustrating part was that I never met a person from any of these agencies that wasn't a good person, but trying to get them to work together was impossible. They would all have a piece of the puzzle, to get them to sit down and put the puzzle together was so frustrating. If they made a bust where there was money involved, they got to keep a portion of that and they didn't like to split it with other agencies. *(A noisy classroom briefly interrupts)*

DT: Where was the biggest problem, as far as narcotics? Was there a specific country that was the worst?

LTC: There are so many cargo containers that come into the United States that you can't keep track of them all.

End Side One of Tape Three/Begin Side Two of Tape Three

LTC: We trained National Guard guys to search containers on ships and they made some big discoveries on that. A lot comes across the Mexican border, some comes down through Canada and vice versa, it comes the other way too. As far as where it comes in, I would say more came in through the cargo containers than any other way.

DT: Was the problem worse than what you thought it was?

LTC: Yes. It opened my eyes. In the military you don't see drug use and if you do the individual is gone immediately. My time frame in college, I remember as a senior going into my fraternity house and I went to see one of my buddies and the door was locked to the fraternity house so I knocked on the door, when they opened up there was like three or four of them smoking marijuana and that was my first time I had seen anyone smoking

marijuana and that was my senior year in college, I was very isolated from that. In Vietnam I know there was some drug use in the American units but I only had two other guys that I worked with basically but they were sergeants and senior NCOs . I would see some Vietnamese using their drugs, but not much, Until I started working there it opened my eyes to some of the problems in our country.

I went to the National Inter Agency Counter-Narcotics Institute for courses down in San Louis Obispo, CA. They had a lot of narcs , we stayed at the Quality Suites and we were down in the lounge and my wife came down and said these people are really sleazy here, I want to leave, so we left. They turned out to be my classmates. (*Laughs*) I was telling them that story and I said >you ran my wife out of the lounge the first day we were here, she didn=t want to be associated with all y=all. They were all cracking up, I guess they looked the part. I have so much respect for all of them but the inter-agency battles were just insane, very frustrating. That was a joint assignment which means you work with all the services and Congress made that because of the problems we had in Grenada, we were working with inter-agents and inter-service stuff. If you are in a job where it is a joint job they lock you in for three years and I was locked in for three years and I was not enjoying it. Then I got a call from Fort Bragg from a priority unit and asked me to come interview and I said I=m locked in and he said we=ll take care of that. I went back to Fort Bragg.

DT: I wanted to ask, if you can discuss it, your involvement in Somalia.

LTC: I got beeped on my beeper on a Sunday and called out to, you know where I worked, the unit doesn=t exist. Everyone knows about it, we will neither confirm nor deny the

existence. My job wasn't one of the guys to go do that. I have to figure out how to say this. It was a higher headquarters but not exactly and I was the operations officer on that and we had our own separate little staff and we worked directly for a one star general. I knew a lot of the guys who were there, I knew the general in charge who was there very well, he was my neighbor that I also knew from the unit.

One of the things we did, they took some hmwvs with them, which they normally didn't train with, they didn't use for normal operations, but they didn't want anyone to know who was actually there. Taskforce Ranger, the Rangers were involved also, I think they called all of the participants Rangers. They had the hardened hmwvs but they didn't have the hardened doors and the only people that had hardened doors were the marine corps. So I called the marines and told them we needed hardened doors and I remember this colonel telling me the only way you are going to get our doors is if the commandante of the Marine corps says so. He was basically telling me to go pound sand but we got the doors.*(laughs)*

A lot of politics got involved in that operation that I think got us into situations. The unit, when they were training for the mission, they only trained a certain number of people with certain assets and when they deployed they could only take a limited number and they were not allowed to have AC-130 gun ships. There was politics involved in that operation and the Secretary of Defense ended up resigning as a result of that action in Somalia, the Secretary of Defense for President Clinton. That was not a real great time for us.

DT: In 1994 you retired and moved to sunny Florida and substituted at Jupiter Community

High School. What contributed to your decision to finally retire? Why did you decide to go into the direction of teaching?

LTC: It was time. Somalia left me with a bad taste. The other jobs they were going to give me weren't going to be as interesting. The higher you, to me, the higher I went the less fun the jobs were. I am a doer, I like to be one of the guys on the ground that does things. I was never really happy as a staff guy, getting other people ready and then watching them launch. I had some problems mentally because I wanted to be going with them. It was time to retire, almost twenty-five years, that was enough.

When I was out in San Francisco on the counter-narcotics division, there was a friend of mine retired, he was a full colonel, John Gritz, and going into JROTC in Minnesota and he gave me a packet of information about junior ROTC. He told me what he was doing and he said it was a good deal so he made me a copy of the packet and I threw it in my desk. I had an old friend from the 7<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group, from way back, Colonel Jim Schmidt, who is at Dwyer now. Some months later he decides to retire and I asked him where he was going and he said West Palm Beach, Florida area. He knows my wife, I told him we were thinking of moving to that area, my brother had a place in Jupiter and we liked the area. I asked him what he was going to do and he said real estate and he knew this other guy, cause he was a special forces guy too. I told him John Gritz left me a packet on junior ROTC and I haven't even had a chance to look at it, and he said it was a good deal, if you want to make a copy go ahead and so he did. The next thing I know I get a letter from him saying he is the Senior Army Instructor at William T. Dwyer high school. He told me it was a good deal and that he was enjoying it

and I said I'm heading back to Fort Bragg but keep me posted on what's going on.

I went back to Fort Bragg for that job and then Somalia happened fairly soon after I got back to Fort Bragg but when I first got back, he told me that the Colonel at Jupiter high school was supposed to be retiring soon and I told him to keep me posted. After Somalia, the first of the year, I think Somalia happened in October, November, something like that, but the first of the year he called me and told me the Colonel was going to retire that school year so in May I came down and interviewed with Mr Picklesimer. He and I hit it off right away and he took me on a tour of the old school for about an hour. When we got back to his office he told me you know, the Colonel isn't going to retire until Christmas and I said yes, I realize that and he said well what would you do? I said If you are telling me I have the job I will just find something part time to do. He said would you consider coming in as a daily sub? and I said sure and then he asked would you be interested in coaching? I said sure and he said I noticed on your resume that you played college basketball, would you be interested in coaching basketball? and I said yeah I would love to coach and then he said yeah we are looking for a girls= coach. (*Laughs*) I was trying to figure out how to keep smiling and he asked can you do that? and I said yeah, I can do that. When I went home and told my wife, cause I grew up with three brothers and no sisters, and when I told her I got the job and I'm coaching basketball, girls basketball and she laughed and asked are you serious? and I said yes I'm serious. When you are interviewed for a job and the guy asks you if you can coach for girls basketball, but I told people later, I would not have traded that girls team for a boys team, no way.

That=s how I got started, I got the exact school I wanted, didn=t know much about Jupiter high school, I just fell into to through good old word of mouth through the army. Years later I am still here and still enjoying it.

DT: What was your transition like from military back to civilian?

LTC: It was. My first six months at school was tough. I had sixty-eight kids in the program and I had maybe ten out of sixty-eight of what I call quality cadets. The rest were dumped into ROTC to babysit. Troublemakers, the program was on probation because we were under 100 cadets. If you maintain those numbers the army will pull the plug because it is not a cost effective program, and they won=t put anymore money into it. Good thing, I became good friends with the principal, we were golfing buddies. It was to the point I could go to him and say hey, I need help.

Mr. Hurley took me under his wing, he was the girls varsity coach and I was the JV coach for two years and then I took over varsity. He has been and still is my mentor. I would go over there everyday and stop in guidance and he said, I will never forget those words to this day you gotta remember, those are kids, they are not soldiers, they are high school kids and they are going to act like high school kids, they are going to disappoint you like kids do and they are also going to make you feel good also like kids do from time to time. Remembering that they were kids and not soldiers, it took me about six months because I was a type A personality, a controller, and in charge, and decision maker. In my second year when we were learning personality types the kids asked me what are you LTC? I=m type A of course= but I took a self test again and it turned out I was more sensitive, more into emotions than before. By that point I had learned patience.

Did I ever show you this before? *(Pulls out a three ring binder from a bookshelf filled with notes)* This is my feel good book, and when I am frustrated with kids I take it out and look at it. When someone asks me why I do this, I pull out this book. It is very rewarding, particularly when you start to get some quality kids in the program. I told Mr. Picklesimer I need some help, I don't mind the challenge but I need some role models, some challengers. He had a meeting in guidance and next thing I know ROTC was top priority for good kids and it snowballed from there. Friends and brothers and sisters all started coming too. We don't nearly have as many challenges now and we have 260 cadets now. If a kid is disruptive, we can't keep him around but having good kids around to show what good conduct and respect is. *(A student knocks on the door to LTC Hinkle's office)*

DT: Was there anything throughout your entire military career that you regretted?

LTC: That is a tough question. Yes. Family wise, being gone so much. I think the things that I was involved in really made a difference and I think everybody would like to think that. Somalia happened not because of decisions we made but political decisions and bad luck. When you see friends killed it is never a good thing. I regret not having the time watching my kids grow up. I think that is one of the reasons I like doing this.

DT: On the contrast, what do you feel was your proudest moment?

LTC: I think that would be more of an individual thing and that was when I was the Distinguished Honor Graduate of my Ranger class. At the time it didn't seem like a big deal to me, but going back as an instructor and realizing how tough the course really was. Everybody has made a big deal of it but I didn't think it was a big deal at the time.

*(Sergeant Major Draughn interrupts)* Surviving Ranger School at age thirty-five is a bigger accomplishment than that. *(LTC and SGM laugh)* There were other things, projects that we can't get into, that I was one of the key planners, when I was on the staff but I wasn't one of these doers. I would much rather have been one of the doers but some of the things were important and made the difference in those circumstances. It is hard to know what is classified and what isn't.

We had an experience with Afghans many years ago. Do you remember when the Soviet Union was in Afghanistan? We were helping those guys, not necessarily in Afghanistan but we trained some of those leaders. We probably ended up fighting them *(laughs)* they probably became Taliban. That is another thing, growing up during the Cold War, I never thought I would see in my time the disintegration of the Soviet Union in my lifetime. You're not brainwashed, but everywhere in the barracks it would say know your enemy and it would have soviet equipment, tanks and airplanes. The enemy is listening and the enemy would be the Soviets. We had a Russian general visit Fort Bragg one time when I was an aide to the general and we were escorting him around he couldn't believe how everything was oriented to the Soviets being the enemy. It was the Soviet Union still. Relations were getting a little better, they were sending generals to visit and vice versa. He was shocked that they were the bad guys and we were trained that way.

DT: What do you think was the most difficult thing you had to accomplish?

LTC: There were a lot of frustrating things like the Lebanon situation. I looked at myself like the Lawrence of Arabia only I was the Hinkle of Lebanon. Thinking it made a difference,

it made no more or no less of an impact, the situation hasn't changed. If I had to do it over again I probably wouldn't have extended that six months. If I had things to do over again I probably still would have done special forces, that is where my heart is. I probably wouldn't have accepted certain jobs that kept me gone a lot.

DT: I believe you said yesterday that your most enjoyable period was when you were on you're a Team.

LTC: That was and Ranger instructor was also a great area.

End Side Two of Tape Three/Begin Side One of Tape Four

LTC: If I had to go back to a job in the army, I would go back to being an A Team leader. I like teaching, I liked being a Ranger Instructor, you're on the ground but in training mode but you are not doing anything what we call real world. When I was an A Team leader we did real world missions even though, maybe not war time missions, but we would go train other units from other armies and we were fighting wars. I would go back to that one job every time.

DT: What about your least favorite?

LTC: Least favorite is easy: inspector general. *(SGM Draughn briefly interrupts)*

DT: Out of the seven presidents you served under, which was your favorite?

LTC: Reagan.

DT: Why is that?

LTC: We started getting some pride in our country after the Vietnam days. He beefed up the military and the military guys, I liked that. Special Forces and operations were reorganized and a lot more priority given to special operations. He was a great

communicator. He had a way of inspiring people whether Democrat or Republican. I remember when the shuttle disaster happened, he got on the TV that night, talking to the country. He knew exactly what to say, he knew how to deliver a speech. When we had a plane come back from Sinai, a multi-national force and multi-national force observers, the peace keepers in the Sinai desert between Egypt and Israel, not part of the U.S. The plane though was coming back with the 101<sup>st</sup> and crashed, everyone was killed. He went to a memorial service in Fort Campbell and he and his wife hugged every family member. Like all presidents, you never agree with them 100 percent of the time. He was my favorite president.

DT: And the contrary, who was your least favorite?

LTC: He wins hands down also, Bill Clinton. Reagan wins hands up and Clinton wins hands down. It would have to do with my politics of course. I would have to admit I am a pretty strong Republican. I hope to think I am an open minded Republican. I have been accused of not being open minded.

DT: I must say, you are very objective as a teacher.

LTC: I try to be and I think that is important. Just to get kids involved and to care. I don=t care if they lean democrat, usually I can tell the politics of the parents by how their children talk. If the parents aren=t interested in politics, the student is not going to be interested in politics, if they are conservative, it comes across in the child. In my case, my mother was a Democrat and my father was a Republican. My mother and I used to get into some good family arguments. I will play the devil=s advocate in a lot of cases because I don=t want the conservative kids pounding on president Clinton or whatever. I always say there are

two sides to every story and that somewhere in the middle, lies the truth.

DT: Who was your favorite commander that you served under?

LTC: When I was Chief of the 6<sup>th</sup> Army Counter-narcotics Division, I came under forces command, the commanding general was a guy named Colin Powell. I never briefed him or anything like that, but I always admired him. As a army officer, later on as Secretary of State and I think he is a good role model, not just for minorities but for everyone. A decent person, a good commander. I have worked for commanders that I thought were great, directly, where I would brief them one on one, but as far as admiring someone, I would say Colin Powell. I didn't know him.

DT: How did your relations with NCOs and officers change as you were promoted?

LTC: I think you mature, you get better as an officer. When I was a brand new Second Lieutenant, I went for my training in Fort Benning and then I went to Alaska. We talked about, six months into the program as platoon leader, I said SGT Riley, you are pretty slick= he said what do you mean sir? and I said, For the last six months I though I was leading this platoon, I haven't been leading this platoon, you have. He said Sir, you=re learning. That was the first step because he realized that I knew he was manipulating, in a good sense, cause as a second lieutenant, you don't know much. You listen to the experienced NCOs for advice and I happened to have a good platoon sergeant which is important the first time around. It was his job to train me and to look out for me. He was actually the one leading the platoon and I was just a figurehead. I was learning. He had a big grin on his face that day. There comes a point where that happens and it comes with experience. One of the reasons I stayed in special forces is because in Alaska I was in a

regular unit with privates and stuff. In Vietnam I worked with sergeants. When I came back as an instructor in Ranger school, I worked with sergeants and other officers. When I went to Fort Bragg by then I had decided that I liked working with sergeants and the mystique about special forces go to me. Working with professionals, you don't have to tell them exactly what to do and how to do it. When you would say >This needs to be done= they would say Sir, we did that yesterday. It is a good feeling, privates won't take the initiative to do something unless they are told to do it. NCOs and officers take a lot of pride in themselves. The special forces motto is a >quiet professional,= they don't like to talk about themselves a lot. Seals like the notoriety which is why you see more stuff on TV with the Seals in it. The Seals are very good at what they do but what happens when you take a fish out of water? (*Laughs*)

DT: Would you like to comment on the morale, patriotism, and courage that you have seen in your time with troops you've worked with at home or abroad?

LTC: It went from Vietnam, which is where there was a lot of anti-war, anti-government times, it was the hippie generation, the drug generation. Every generation now is a drug generation but that is when it became a big problem. Back then we had a lot of army draftees that didn't want to be there. In the late 1960s it started, there was a big divide in the country. I interpreted that as unpatriotic. Since then I realized you can be anti-war and patriotic, back then, I would've argued that. It was my country, right or wrong, and I don't want to hear this wrong stuff. Now it is ok to question as long as we support the troops, which is being done. The only problem with the anti-war movement is that it prolongs the war. The North Vietnamese leaders said that, they could see the public

opinion in the United States was going down the tubes. They knew if they could fight a protracted war, eventually we would be forced to remove their troops. You know where they learned that? The Revolutionary War. The same philosophy, we didn't beat the Brits, the British public got tired of the war. They studied history. I was hoping something like that won't happen in Iraq. A good thing we did learn, if we are going to do something it can't be for ten years. The public is not going to put up with a protracted war, and now our enemies know that.

DT: In your personal opinion, what do you think of the current war?

LTC: I support it. I think what we did in Iraq was the right thing. I am not sure I agree with President Bush to call it the counter war on terror. Although terrorists are being trained in Iraq, it may have been related to the war on Iraq but I think it is not exactly the war on terror if you know what I am trying to say. We put a lot of assets over there, I think the right thing we have done maybe not exactly at the right time, but I am not privy to the classified briefings. Then we find out that a lot of the classified briefings are not always on target. Like the weapons of mass destruction. I was convinced that they were trying to have their weapons of mass destruction also. I told people that Osama Bin Laden would disappear and that no one would ever hear from him again. That we would either capture him or kill him and it would be in our best interests not to announce it. When he becomes a martyr things become much worse. There have been videos since then, so my theory was totally wrong.*(Laughs)*

DT: How do people generally treat you when they see you in your uniform, outside of school?

LTC: People are very respectful. No one has ever put me down because of being in the military

or serving in Vietnam, even when I came back from Vietnam at the height of the anti-war movement. I never experienced any bad comments as a result of me being in the military. I never had that experience, then again no one was clapping or coming up to shake my hand when I walked through an airport coming home from Vietnam.

DT: What do you feel is the most important thing someone could learn from your experience?

LTC: I have been in tears with my kids talking about not being there while they were growing up. Having grandchildren and wanting to do things with them that I couldn't with them. I caution them about family. If you are going to be military, and now it is harder than ever. There are so many deployments now and it is a smaller military. I was very fortunate to have a strong wife who could raise the kids while I was gone. They need to spend more time at home.

I remember going to my wife one time, when I was home and if it was a tough one she would say go ask your dad. So I was the no guy. One day I told my wife, you need to send me some easy ones, when it is a tough question, I would get those and then I would be the bad guys, so I asked her to send me some easy ones I could say yes to. She said I never realized that. I said you know when I will say yes, so you say yes for the both of us but then mor times than not I would have to say no. I was not there enough as it is. As far as military goes, the family is important.

DT: Is there anything else you would like to add that we haven't covered already?

LTC: I think we covered everything. My kids have been trying to get me to write down my experiences, they even bought me a father=s legacy book. They don't know because I never talked about it while they were growing up. We never talked military. My son went

to basic training and when he came back he said Dad, I never realized what a colonel was. We had a captain, and he was god. (*Laughs*) He grew up on a military base and he was always surrounded by colonels and stuff. So I said why don=t you start treating me like a god. (*Laughs*) It was a good career, I don=t have too many regrets. I had jobs I wasn=t crazy about. The only reason I became an IG was because they were going to send me to Washington D.C. to the Pentagon, where I did not want to go. The IG has enough priority to keep me there, I said I sold my soul to the Inspector General corps. I was an IG for three years, that is usually how it was. They were bound and determined to get me there but they were overruled. I didn=t like that job, the rest were pretty good. There were a lot of frustrations. If I had to do it over again I would=ve done everything the same as I did.