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EUGENE SHECK

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by

Robert D. Farley

Henry Millington

FARLEY: Today is the 11th of August 1980. Our interviewee Mr. Eugene Sheck. Mr. Sheck was a Staff Officer in K Group in June of 1967 during the Israeli-Liberty confrontation in the Mediterranean. The interview is taking place in SAB 2, M62 area at NSA. Interviewers Mr. Henry Millington, Mr. Bill Gerhard, Bob Farley. Mr. Sheck will recount his experiences during this critical period in June of 1967. The classification of this tape is TOP SECRET (CODEWORD) HVCCO. This is NSA Oral History Number 31-80.

FARLEY: Gene, happy that you were able to come over here this afternoon. What we are trying to do is get as much information as we can on the Liberty. Bill Gerhard and Henry Millington are writing the SIGINT history of the Liberty. We have interviewed probably ten people already but there are still a lot of gaps on what actually went on. So what we are trying to do is get you to fill in those gaps for us, if you would.

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FARLEY: What was your position in June of 1967 on Staff?

SHECK: Yeah, I was Deputy Chief of K12, I guess we were then. K18, K12 I forget...our numbers changed so much in that particular time. But I think it was K12. Dick Harvey was the boss and I was the Deputy. And our job in that arena was the tasking of all mobile collection platforms, that included the TRSs, the ASRPs and so forth.

FARLEY: What were the considerations. Let's jump right into it, Gene. What were the considerations that led to the deployment of the Liberty into the Mediterranean?

SHECK: Well, first of all, there were a couple of things happening. We knew that there were a bunch of signals, and I say a bunch of signals. I'm talking about signals in the VHF/UHF range, straight radio-telephone, VHF kind of things and some microwave stuff that were not being intercepted. There were references in HF communications [redacted], and some other stations were collecting, that they were in fact using other modes of communications. So we said, we gotta find some way of getting in there. An airplane? While airplanes at that particular time were available and flying in the East Med, you only got a limited on-station time out of the airplane. I.e., an airplane could take off and fly for five hours on-station, six hours on-station and then have to terminate and go back and land, refuel, replenish, all that sort of thing.

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While getting a platform on-station allows you to have a full 24-hour a day line-of-sight capability within range of all the kinds of signals you were looking for, as long as you had some fairly decent idea of where the ship ought to be positioned, in relationship to where the transmitters were. So we decided we ought to try to get a surface platform. The Liberty itself just happened to be selected because the Liberty, I think, and boy my memory is a little hazy, but if my memory serves me correctly, it was operating on the West Coast of Africa and they moved it up into Rota as step number one in the event that we needed the ship, and then after Rota, somewhere around the third, fourth, or fifth of June, third, early June, end of May we decided we ought to move it down into the eastern end of the Mediterranean and we actually selected a latitude and longitude where we wanted the ship to operate. Does that answer your question?

GERHARD: May I interpose at this point?

SHECK: Please.

GERHARD: The ship itself approached to what was it? Ten or twelve miles from shore.

SHECK: Twelve miles, twelve miles.

GERHARD: Your line-of-sight communications would have given you perhaps thirty-five miles into the coast at most.

SHECK: Absolutely.

GERHARD:: The puzzle in my mind is, why was that such a desirable platform? You actually had two routes to go, if you are going to invest U.S. dollars. Your airplanes. You could have increased the ACRP and the Navy platforms.

SHECK: Yep. Oh.

GERHARD: That is some expense, but this would have given you a much wider reach, perhaps two to three hundred miles inland.

SHECK: Sure, yeah, yeah, the answer. By having a surface ship you limit your line-of-sight communications absolutely, and thirty-five miles is probably an exaggeration. I would say more like eighteen miles. Eighteen to twenty-five miles that's exactly right.

GERHARD: Because as the ship is sailing along in the water the antennaes...

SHECK: That's right. The CPA was dictated by the JCS/JRC. We had nothing to do with that. We were confined, of course, to putting the ship in a place where the best operating capability would be provided within the constraints of any operational considerations levied by the JCS/JRC. So they dictated the twelve mile CPA. I

guess going back to your question. The requirements for airplanes were so high, priorities were so high for using airplanes all over the world that you have to start balancing something out. You had a ship that was operating off the West Coast of Africa where the priorities were somewhat lesser than what the priority was in the Eastern Med at that time. And somebody says, you know, if I gotta balance priorities I'm gonna leave my airplanes operating against the Soviet Union primarily, which is where they were flying, and then give up some West African coverage which I consider to be secondary to the requirement in the Mid East. So that is kind of some of the driving factors. In addition to the VHF/UHF, the ship itself also had some twelve to fifteen positions of HF collection capability. So the positioning of the ship while important to VHF/UHF was not that germane, when it came to the HF communications. It increased our capability both HF/VHF/UHF wise across the board, which airplane-wise you don't get any HF. All HF coverage with airplanes is limited to advisory support within the airplane itself. So that's kind of some of the factors behind it. I think it was just a matter of priority.

FARLEY: Would you recall what the status of collection was against certain Middle East targets before June of '67? I know

that it probably wasn't your area.

SHECK: Oh boy, G Group probably answered that. I don't know what we had. All of Africa, we had some airplanes flying around the East, the western end of the Mediterranean some four times a month. We had tried to get daily flights to the eastern Med. I don't know whether we ever succeeded in getting daily flights at that time. My memory is kind of hazy and I think we increased the daily flights.

GERHARD: You were probably in competition with Southeast Asia.

SHECK: And Southeast Asia was up and that's exactly. We lost the Jamestown and the Oxford to Southeast Asia coverage. And they were used for plowing the waters around Africa. How much coverage they had, I really couldn't answer that.

FARLEY: I think you've answered this one partially, but are you aware of any intelligence requirements which would have necessitated the use of the floating platform rather than field sites?

SHECK: Oh, simply stated, it was the VHF/UHF. The lack of our ability to get that on a sustained basis. We, in K, were responsive to the analytic element. The analytic elements say we got all kinds of references to the VHF/UHF communications and have no way of collecting it. Now you guys are supposed to be the experts in

collection, tell us how we are going to find something to do it. So up pops the surface platform.

FARLEY: What was your involvement when the Liberty came up from the Ivory Coast to Rota? What sort of a support operation did you launch to help the people on board the Liberty before the Mediterranean?

SHECK: Well, from a standpoint of providing technical support, do you mean? Yeah. The analytical group itself were the primary suppliers of all the data. K12, of course, on the job we had. Our job was merely to assure that the analytical element was, in fact, supplying all the necessary Texta, tech support, case notations. Whatever they thought was appropriate for that end of the Mediterranean. We had some previous experience of operating a ship in that area when the Jamestown had cruised through the Suez Canal and we knew what a ship could do. We knew the kinds of communication the ship could collect. The analytical element had the benefit of all of that and so the tech support from that previous tour was available to the analytical element. We just made sure that all of that data related was packaged up and sent to the Navy station at Rota for subsequent transfer aboard the platform.

GERHARD: This is something we'll probably want to use. That trip through the Suez. For the record, I believe, it was the Valdez.

SHECK: Both the Valdez and the Jamestown went through.

GERHARD: Jamestown went through also?

SHECK: Yes, it did.

GERHARD: The materials on board these two ships pertinent to the Middle East they were off-loaded?

SHECK: No, no, don't misunderstand me. No sir, that didn't happen that way. What happened was the data that those ships forwarded back to NSA with regard to frequency usage all of that stuff was then packaged up back here into a tech support package, transferred to Rota and then Rota put it aboard the ship. Okay.

FARLEY: That is one of the gaps that we wanted filled in.

SHECK: Sure, absolutely. Nothing was physically off-loaded from a ship to another ship that I am aware of. I don't remember that happening.

FARLEY: Okay, let's get into the discussion, if there was a discussion at NSA before the Liberty was deployed. Was there an involved discussion about "yes" and "no", "we should, we shouldn't?"

SHECK: Oh no, oh no.

FARLEY: Who made the final decision?

SHECK: General Morrison. Absolutely. No the analytical group asked, if I remember correctly, the analytical group said, you know, in fairness to the analytical groups, you know, somebody walks up and says, "Have you guys thought

about using the Liberty?" I'm sure that we might have said that. I might have said that. Dick Harvey might have, somebody might have. Maybe they came down and said to us, "What is the possibility of getting the Liberty?" The answer that we would have given them was, "Why don't we try." Find out. And the way you do that, or the way we used to do that in those days was, if a ship was deployed to a particular area and a situation arose in which it looked for a period that we could get better results by moving a ship, we then prepared a message to the JCS/JRC or to the appropriate fleet commander and said, "We would like to move the ship for the following reasons-:---" We would give them these reasons, as in this case, the possibility of an outbreak of hostilities between the two countries. That message, of course, would never have gotten out of the building without going through General Morrison. We got the concurrence of the analytic elements involved, in that case it only happened to be one group. G Group was losing it from one area to another group. They didn't really, they wanted as much coverage as they could of the Arab-Israeli situation so they were all for it. We drafted the message, took it to General Morrison, and if my memory serves me correct, he never even hesitated, "Fine, let's

move the ship."

FARLEY: Have you read the book Assault on the Liberty?

SHECK: No, I heard about it today for the first time. I don't know where I've been but I just heard about it today. No.

FARLEY: There's a remark in there that Francis A. Raven was one of the prime dissenters on moving the Liberty into the Mediterranean?

SHECK: Raven was a dissenter about a lot of things. And I, he might have said, "That's a dumb thing to do." Okay, but I don't remember him ever saying it and I would not be surprised if somebody said, "Well, there's his words." Okay, it wouldn't surprise me a bit. I didn't hear him say that so I don't know.

FARLEY: Henry, do you have anything?

MILLINGTON: No.

SHECK: If there is anybody going around saying, "Boy I was a hundred percent against that," they are full of prunes, there was nobody in this building standing up saying, "That's a dumb thing to do." Nobody.

GERHARD: There was no war at this time.

SHECK: There was no war. That is exactly right. It was June the 1st or something. There was no war.

FARLEY: I think you've also, already stated this, the mission of the Liberty when it departed Rota. I think you put that

on tape for us.

SHECK: Yeah, Arab-Israeli communications. We did task them now, in fairness to anybody that might be involved. We did give them some North African literal county coverage as they were transiting through the Mediterranean. It took "X" number of days.

GERHARD: I don't recall from your tasking messages if there was [redacted] tasking.

SHECK: There was [redacted] tasking.

GERHARD: I'll have to go back and look.

SHECK: I don't know what. I know that there was some [redacted] tasking on that ship. And I don't know how it got out or whether it was in that overall tasking message, but I know they had [redacted] communications.

GERHARD: It might have been in the blocked frequency.

SHECK: It might have been. Could have been. I don't know.

GERHARD: I think that's what you're thinking of.

FARLEY: You asked my next question.

SHECK: Okay.

FARLEY: In preparing for the mission into the Mediterranean, was it deliberate that there were no Israeli-Hebrew linguists aboard? Or was it accidental or even considered?

SHECK: No, I can't truthfully answer. I don't know whether there was any effort not to put them on or to not. What happens is, and in those days for tasking the ships were, particularly when it came to the case of linguists. Whatever the tasking, whatever kind of tasking was levied upon the ship it was the Navy responsibility to provide the appropriate kinds of operators. Meaning, using a hypothetical situation, if we task them with Algerian coverage where the basic language would be French and some Arabic, then it was the Navy responsibility to see that they had a French and an Arabic linguist. If they didn't have the appropriate kind of linguist for the tasking levied by NSA they would come to NSA and say, "We don't have those kinds of people, therefore we have no way of covering that," so NSA would either provide the linguistic support, which they generally did through TDY, or delete the task. Other than that kind of an answer I don't know how it related to Hebrew. I still maintain that I remember seeing some [redacted] tasking, maybe you have the tasking document. I'd like to see it, sometime if I could. It seems to me that it's there, I may be wrong. Okay.

FARLEY: Did any of the SIGINTers come back to NSA before the voyage from Rota?

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SHCEK: Lewis was the CO, before they left Rota nobody came back. Lewis was the OPS Officer, I don't mean CO. Lewis was the OIC of the Naval Security Group of guys. He didn't come back. I don't remember anybody coming back when they left from Rota before they went to the East Med. I don't remember anybody coming back. It could happen, but I don't remember anybody coming back. They were not there that long, three or four days or something.

FARLEY: It was a very uneventful trip.

SHECK: Yeah, I know.

FARLEY: Henry, do you have anything?

MILLINGTON: No.

FARLEY: How closely was the Liberty's journey from Rota monitored by NSA?

SHECK: What do you mean by monitored?

FARLEY: Is there any way that we had a plot board or?

SHECK: Yeah, yes. We got daily positions. Everyday they put out a, like a SIGINT Summary and at the end of every SIGINT Summary it contained a position report, and we in K12 knew exactly where the ship was on the basis of where those position reports gave the listing.

FARLEY: That's what I wanted to know. Was the quote, this is sort of a tricky question. Was the "hazardous location" of the Liberty in a "war zone area"

ever considered or discussed? You've already answered this when you said there was no war on.

SHECK: Well, first of all, when we decided where the ship ought to go there was no war on, very emphatically. We asked for a position, and I guess my memory says, we asked for a position "somewhere off of Alexandria" or something in a tasking message.

GERHARD: Port Said.

SHECK: I forget, we named a particular spot and said, "Here's where we want you to be." We didn't give a latitude or longitude that I remember, nor did we prescribe a track, but we said that we wanted them to operate "in the general vicinity of"...okay, and not to exceed the CPA that was dictated by the JCS/JRC. Okay, so any concern at that time up, until June the 5th and that's, - - June the 5th was the day the war started, wasn't it?

GERHARD: Yes.

SHECK: And up until that day there was no concern for that ship. By June the 5th, everything changed that day, and I was involved in some of that. But up until that point, no, nobody was concerned about what are we going to do about that ship.

FARLEY: Would you recall what type reporting was done by the Liberty prior to June 5th?

SHECK: They had a daily report they had to put out, and spot reports. And that's all that I remember. Spot reports, Critic, and a daily summary and spot reports as required, and critic information as necessary, period.

FARLEY: Did you work pretty closely with G Group on getting copies of incoming reports, or was that your responsibility?

SHECK: We had them all. We always got a copy of the incoming reports. Now let me rephrase that, we got a copy of the daily summary. We in K12. We did not get copies of spot reports because the ollection element generally does not get that kind of information, where the analytic element would have. But we did get a copy of the daily because we asked to be on distribution.

FARLEY: That was the daily intelligence summary?

SHECK: The daily intelligence summary.

FARLEY: Not an OPs summary?

SHECK: It was a combination kind of thing, yeah, issued by USN855. Nothing from the U.S.S. Liberty. We didn't get summaries from them.

GERHARD: I think these were referred to as Technical Summaries.

SHECK: That's exactly, they were Tech Summaries. That's right.

FARLEY: What type intercept was being collected when the Israeli launched the attack against the Arab forces? The same one that was already tasked, I suppose.

SHECK: That's right.

FARLEY: Was there a direct channel of communication between NSA and the ship? A direct mode?

SHECK: Ops comm?

FARLEY: Yes, or some way that we at NSA could be in contact with the Liberty?

SHECK: I don't remember of one because there was a lot of confusion after the thing happened. I think, I think that if anybody had wanted to try to set up that kind of a thing they could have gone through Rota and the OPINTEL broadcast, or something. Somebody could have made that kind of an arrangement but to say was there a general kind of a link between us, NSA and they---USN855, no, because most of the stuff went through Rota, Spain or CINUSNAVEUR in London, but not directly.

FARLEY: Could you describe in some detail, if you would, our relationship with JCS/JRC, our channel of communications, liaison, whatever went on during this period?

SHECK: The Joint Chiefs of Staff established the Joint Reconnaissance Center in 1961 as a result of the U2 incident, where they said that the President didn't want to be caught short again with some military operation that was being conducted without knowledge of or approval of some higher level authority within the government, other than within the Department of Defense. So they established a

JRC. And the JRC responsibility was to, at that particular time, was to do nothing more than to become the filter point for all proposals for reconnaissance activity, peripheral reconnaissance and other kinds of reconnaissance against other foreign government coastline overflights, or what have you, and to obtain the necessary approval through some higher people within the government. The higher people in the government included the Deputy Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of State, the Attorney General. It was about seven people. They started calling them the "Forty Committee," and they ended up being called something else, but a number of senior individuals who have to approve each of those things on a monthly basis. They publish a book. It is called "The Monthly Reconnaissance Book" proposals. That book has to be approved on a monthly basis. The head of the National Security Council in those days was McGeorge Bundy, and then it became Henry Kissinger, and so forth, and they have to approve it. NSA had in those days a representative to the JCS/JRC in the person of John Connell. John Connell was dual-hatted, he also worked as a DIA liaison officer and as a JRC liaison officer. As a result of a couple of incidents they made the guy a permanent JRC member and dropped his DIA relationship. He quit being a DIA/JCS kind of a person. NSA, of course,

by direction from General Morrison, put out a memorandum sometime that said there will be one single focal point within the building that will discuss matters with the Joint Reconnaissance Center and that focal point will be whatever we were then, K12, K18, now V5, which handles those kind of things for the building as it relates to the JCS/JRC. What we do is, that we make sure, that the Director of NSA has a vote in this Monthly Reconnaissance Book. He can agree to it, he can non-concur to it and all kinds of things, any one of the proposals made, the Director of NSA has a vote. He has to submit his vote in writing once a month. The responsibility of the K12 guys, and now the V5 guys, is merely to present to the Director on a monthly basis the proposal for all reconnaissance activities world-wide and ask the Director if he agrees with it, and if he agrees with it then we go downtown and say, "we concur." If we don't agree with it, we take exception and tell him why. If there is an exception made it goes to the tank where the Joint Chiefs themselves review it. If they overrule the guy who is non-concurring, then it will go to these higher authorities for approval.

GERHARD: The procedure you are describing right now, it did exist before the Liberty incident?

SHECK: It existed before the Liberty incident, yes. I don't think the Director of NSA then exercised as much of a role as he does now. I think the Pueblo stirred the Director up into getting more involved than he was pre-Liberty days, even post-Liberty days. I think the Pueblo probably stirred that up, but he was well aware of what was going on. We briefed him all of the time. But he didn't have the--whether he exercised his voting responsibilities, I don't really remember. It's all very hazy to me, but I do know now he does, but whether they did it then I don't know.

GERHARD: Would that vote that the Director had on a monthly basis, that including the considerations regarding the safety of a platform?

SHECK: No. All the Director of NSA's responsibility was to address it purely from a technical standpoint, that that was a good operation based upon technical considerations. And that was the only argument he could put forth. If he was concerned about the safety of something, and Admiral Inman, for example, has on occasion, has been that concerned on some of the things that have been proposed. He'll pick up the telephone and talk to somebody and say, "Gee, if I were you guys and I ain't," you know, one of those kind of things, but the answer to your question is "absolutely not." We were never allowed to discuss

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operational considerations.

GERHARD: Bob, I don't know whether I'm anticipating your question or not. One of the things Dick Harvey mentioned in passing was that after the Liberty incident NSA and the Intelligence Agencies did have a vote with respect to the safety of the platforms.

SHECK: I don't think it's a vote.

GERHARD: At that point Dick Harvey said something like, "you'd better get a hold of Gene Sheck."

SHECK:: It wasn't a vote, it wasn't a vote. We received a message from the JCS, that said very clearly, "Any information that you have on hand that would be directly or indirectly related to the safety of any airplane or ship that's involved in reconnaissance activities, it is your responsibility to notify the JCS at the earliest opportunity." That's what it said. Then we put out a memorandum to all of the elements saying, "If you have anything in your role," and this is what possessed the guy to write the message on the Pueblo. "If there is anything that you have that might be indicative of a threat against that platform that comes from SIGINT somewhere then we have the responsibility of advising the JCS." And the only instance where I remember mostly, is the one on the Pueblo where there was a lot of concern about the operating of that ship off

that area. While we never went out and said there were safety considerations we pointed out what the Koreans were doing with regard to reconnaissance activity.

GERHARD: The man who drafted the Pueblo message was?

SHECK: B Group.

GERHARD: It was B Group?

SHECK: Yes sir. The drafter was Dick Harvey. He didn't write the message.

GERHARD: Dick wrote the message.

SHECK: The kid brought down a message from B Group and said, "Here's the message." Well, the message was so poorly written. It says, "You're gonna get your ass shot." You know, that kind of a message. We said, "You'll never get that out of the building."
And so Dick Harvey helped them rewrite the message. Okay, and Dick Harvey, because of the K12 cite, Dick Harvey became the drafter and somebody released it.

GERHARD: Buffham.

SHECK: Was it Buffham? I forget. Yeah somebody.

FARLEY: John Connell's position...was he a gopher or liaison? Could he make any decisions on his own or any recommendations?

SHECK:: He might have. The answer is he probably did make some decisions on his own because he was there all of the time. He was representing NSA, and I think that if he was doing his job properly, there were lots of

questions. He said, "Sure," or "No," or "NSA would not like that." I think the ones that were, the ones that were politically sensitive or the ones where he thought he might get himself in a box, he always came to us. I guess I was on the phone with John Connell twenty times a day and I'm not exaggerating. Any number of times a day with John Connell. But that's not to say that he didn't from time to time exercise some responsibility and say "yes" or "no," or "what have you."

FARLEY: There is an item, an extract from a log there in which you communicated with John Connell. Can you give us a little background on that?

SHECK: Well, on the 5th of June when the war started, when we came to work, I guess eight o'clock. I forget what time the war started. We were at work when the war started, I remember that. The first thing that I had thought of was that when we had the Oxford operating off of Cuba in 1962 during the height of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the first thing somebody did, some Fleet Commander, is that he moved the Oxford almost a hundred miles away from Cuba. Not toward the United States but somewhere out in the ocean, to the point where the purpose of having the ship operating in close proximity of transmitters was negated because we weren't getting anything. Forget it, you might as well not have the ship. Don't move it a

hundred miles away, send it home if you're gonna do that. Well, when the war broke out, the first thing I thought of was, "Somebody is gonna move the Liberty!", and if somebody is going to move the Liberty, then we've got to take steps to do something about that collection that we have assigned to the Liberty. I called John Connell and I asked John Connell, "Is there any plans in the minds of any of those you speak to in the JCS to move the Liberty?" He turned to somebody in the office down there and asked them, "Is anybody contemplating moving the Liberty?", and he told me, "No, that there was no concern at that particular time about the safety of the Liberty, or anything else and that it was going to operate right where it was and they were not going to move the Liberty." And I said, "Thank you, very much." And that was that conversation that day. I never called, like somebody at one time said, "Oh, Gene Sheck told them to move the Liberty on the 5th of June." and words were put into my mouth. I never asked anybody to move anything. I was inquisitive, nothing more.

GERHARD: Was the safety of the ship any motivation at all?

SHECK: Absolutely not, the last thing from my mind was the safety. I never thought she would sink, you know, really. It was a technical consideration. What are we going to do if we lose the Liberty? Not

sinking it, I mean moving it away. I thought some Fleet Commander might just do that.

MILLINGTON: Speaking of Fleet Commander, I haven't run across anything that says directly this but, reading between the lines, in some instances I have reason to believe that perhaps the Sixth Fleet Commander really wasn't sure what the Liberty was doing.

SHECK: You're absolutely right. You're absolutely right. Those ships were operating under the control. NSA had what we call technical control. Of course, the operational control of the ship, as far as NSA was concerned, was never a consideration. We always felt that it belonged to the Fleet Commander, operational control, although we would ask for the ship to go places.

All of our messages when we went out and asked a ship to move, were recommendations. We would recommend that the ship be operating at such and such a place. The JCS would take our message, or the Fleet Commander, whichever it was, and do the same thing to the subordinate commander and say, "Go ahead, NSA recommends, therefore go ahead. Take reference A for action within your capabilities." This is generally what they say. They didn't even quote the message, just take reference A for action within your capabilities. When the ship got to Rota it was in Navy terminology, "chopped" to Sixth Fleet. Sixth

Fleet, I don't think, even knew who the USS Liberty was or where the Liberty was, because subsequent events on the sixth or the seventh of June indicated that he didn't even think about the Liberty when he was talking about lots of things that were going on. And I guess you want to get to that, but there was some of that discussion later on. I don't think that THE guy who was supposed to be aware of what the Sixth Fleet was made up of really knew that the Liberty was part of his responsibilities. CINCUSNAVEUR dropped the ball as far as I'm concerned. CINCUSNAVEUR had no responsibility and didn't really shove it down Sixth Fleet's throat strong enough, I don't think. Hindsight, right? Nothing had happened, who would have given a rat's ass, but something happened. Now that doesn't happen anymore. When now, even subsequent to the Liberty, after the Liberty incident it was Fleet Commanders, man, knew exactly where those ships were and who had the responsibility. It all changed after the Liberty.

FARLEY: What would be the approximate time delay for a request from NSA to be received by the Liberty or for action? or movement?

SHECK: If it was a movement thing, a technical thing would get pretty quickly. You know it was strictly through CRITICOM channels and it got there, right. If it was a

movement thing, it had to go through the chain of command, sometimes, I would have to guess twelve, twenty-four hours if I was guessing twelve, twenty-four hours to get to the ship, to see the ship do the first thing as it related to the task. About that.

FARLEY: A considerable delay?

SHECK: Yes, yeah. But now the Liberty was usually an info addee on all of these messages, the USS Liberty or USN855. You know hindsight now says if we were doing it all over again when we were tasking messages, when we were using messages for requesting movements, we probably should have used the "USS Liberty" and sent things through GENSER (general service) channels instead of using "USN855" and going through CRITICOM channels. That was one of the lessons that came out of all that. We did use USN855, that went to the SECGRU department, and the SECGRU department would then bring it up and show it to the skipper. So he wasn't getting it from his GENSER, he was getting it from some guys down in the hold of the ship somewhere, which you know is not really the right way to do things.

FARLEY: Did you or your people sign off on the message on the 6th of June telling the ship to maintain a "high state of readiness because of the unpredictability of UAR actions and to report any unusual or threatening actions?"

SHECK: I don't remember the message.

FARLEY: You didn't see it?

SHECK: No.

GERHARD:: I think, Bob, that that might have been a...

SHECK: That sounds like, that's a SIGINT alert message or something.

GERHARD: A CINCNAVEUR message.

SHECK: I don't remember that.

GERHARD: A CINCNAVEUR message.

SHECK: It wasn't ours, at least I don't remember that at all. I would think a G Group message probably went out.

FARLEY: It was probably a G Group message.

SHECK: They might have done that.

FARLEY: You didn't see that one, Bill?

GERHARD: No.

FARLEY: Okay, I'll dig it out. But I'm surprised that you didn't get a chance to see that one.

SHECK: I don't even remember that.

FARLEY: Was it a case of the "left" and the "right hand"--G Group? and K Group?

SHECK: No, no, as long as we never had any objection to analytical elements sending out things to the ships as long as they never talked about changing the tasking or moving the ship. Emphasizing things, fine, if they want to emphasize

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[redacted] then go ahead and emphasize it, that is their responsibility, it wasn't mine. As long as it didn't change the basic tasking of the ship which changed the complement of the ship, or changed the location of the ship, we didn't really care.

FARLEY: Henry, don't you have anything before we get into the battle or the...

SHECK: The war.

MILLINGTON: Nothing.

FARLEY: When did you first hear about the Israeli attack against the Liberty?

SHECK: Well, I heard about an attack. I was on the phone with John Connell on June the 8th. Seemed like it was eight o'clock in the morning or around that time, whatever time it was, two o'clock over there, eight o'clock in the morning here. But I was on the phone with John Connell when and we were talking about everything reconnaissance-wise when he said to me, "The Liberty has been torpedoed." And I said, "What did you say?" and he says, "The USS Liberty has been torpedoed." And I said, "That's a fact?" and he says, "That's a fact, I'll call you back." He hung up and when he hung up I picked up the phone to call the Director's office. First I called ADP, they were all in a conference,

all the wheels, General Morrison and everybody. Then Jerry Burke was General Carter's D-1 or Executive Secretary, something, whatever his job was. I called the secretary and I asked her to pass a note in and I dictated the note: "Just say, 'Please inform the Director that the USS Liberty has been torpedoed'." And I signed my name or something, whatever it was. One, he didn't know what the USS Liberty was. Then the phone started ringing and the Secretary of Defense called General Carter and asked Carter, "What the hell is the USS Liberty?" So Carter calls us up and says, "Tell me what the Liberty was." We already had put a book together that talked all about what the Liberty was and what the complement was. So we just took him up the book and gave it to the Director. Okay. That's how it happened. That's how we found out about it and I told the guys upstairs.

FARLEY: How long before the NSOC, the Command Center, got word on it, any idea?

SHECK: No, I think it was all happening, you know, everything happened very fast after that, I say within a half hour everybody in the building knew about it. And we were trying to find out who did what to whom and who actually, you know, everybody assumed the Arabs or the Egyptians

attacked the ship. Nobody had the remotest thought that the Israelis would have done that. When the first report came in, and said it looked like the Israelis, we said, "You're full of s..t!" It was that sort of attitude, you know. Anything but that, so as it turned out, it was. Nobody believed that report at all, nobody. Didn't see very much GENSER in the case. I mean the skipper of the ship had sent in a couple of messages. He sent a message that we had seen, that said he was overflown by two jet airplanes or something that morning and that made him nervous. I had talked to him after that and those two airplanes made him very nervous. He said they were unmarked. And that he just didn't like the fact that unmarked airplanes were flying over the ship and it was some four or six or eight hours later that he was actually attacked after they flew over the ship. So he was very nervous then. I think if he had had the authority to make the decision, I think he would have left. He was that antsy about what was going to happen.

GERHARD: Are you talking about General Carter?

SHECK: No, I'm talking about Captain McGonagle. He was very nervous about the overflight because he had sent the message in saying, "I have been overflown and we're kind of watching things and all that...."

FARLEY: So did we give him the "Ho Hum" treatment?

SHECK: Oh, well, again, that's a case of, we talked to JCS about it and said, "You saw that?" "Yes we saw that." Those are things that, you know, it is not for us, it is not for NSA to send a message down there saying "Gee, on a basis of overflight you ought to move the ship." That's a military command decision, certainly not one of NSA's--unless NSA could have lent some information to it. We had no information to lend.

GERHARD: I've got to disagree.

SHECK: Yes, you have to disagree.

GERHARD: NSA lays on a mission.

SHECK: Yes.

GERHARD: Because of the need for collection. And when we lay on a mission we should think in terms of, I suppose, of the materials that may be subject to compromise if something goes wrong. We do it in other kinds of operations, as you know. At the time that the mission was laid on the Liberty, we were not at war and it was a perfectly logical step to take. The question that I have in the back of my mind and I haven't resolved it yet, is, "Why would not the Agency which laid on the mission in the first place exercise or have the right to

exercise an option of turning a mission off in view of changed circumstances?"

SHECK: I think that the Agency always has that option and had the option at that particular time. But I think that their concern then was, our collection is good, and we have no indication from SIGINT or anything else that we were going to be attacked or that they are even thinking about an attack, or that there is any threat to that platform whatsoever. Had that consideration popped up that there was a threat to--.

A good example would be our White Wolf, our White Wolf system for airplanes. When we detect the first reaction, we do things including aborting the mission and that's all based on SIGINT. That ship, if there had been anything, an intercept, SIGINT to indicate that there was a threat to that ship, I'm sure that somebody would have exercised that option saying, "In light of that material I think we ought to do something." There was nothing like that. An overflight by two jet airplanes, two jet fighters, albeit unmarked is not necessarily a threat against that ship. So you know the answer to your question is "Sure I think that the exercise, that option could have been exercised." Our Director, when we have a concern about a particular mission now that's going on a reconnaissance mission, will call the analytical element

from time to time and say, "I want you to assure me that the take you are going to get is worth the risk to that platform. Or the risk to all of our reconnaissance platforms, because one more incident and there ain't going to be no reconnaissance program." And they always give the assurance, "Yes, sir, we really have to have that collection." I don't really believe all of that, but...

GERHARD: One of the things that I have just gone over is the holdings of the Liberty.

SHECK: Yeah.

GERHARD: The holdings of the Liberty were of such magnitude.

SHECK: Yeah, that was all changed, that's right.

GERHARD: That the intercept mission at all ground stations in the world were included.

SHECK: Did you ever see what the Pueblo had? And that was two years later, a year and a half later.

GERHARD: That was just as bad.

SHECK: Maybe even worse. At least on the Liberty there was an accountability problem, there was accountability there on the Liberty. They could account for what they lost and for what they had, the Pueblo couldn't. So there was the big difference. But the answer is, Bill, absolutely, you know again, hindsight now after the incident played a big role. They don't do

that anymore. We went out and put things on water-soluable paper, we deleted tech support, we gave them only that necessary for that particular mission. We took off everything that was related to South America, Southeast Asia, etc.

GERHARD: One of the lessons in the back of a history you usually see what we learned from a certain act or something.

SHECK: Yes sir, yes sir.

GERHARD: Henry and I already have a small section on file reduction, whatever the title is.

SHECK: Yeah, right.

GERHARD: Could you say anything more about changes that were made as a result of the Liberty and even maybe the Pueblo?

SHECK: Oh, a lot. Sure, I don't know if this is the appropriate place or not.

GERHARD: Inasfar as file reduction is concerned.

SHECK: There was a major concern, particularly after the Pueblo, but even a concern after the Liberty, but more so after the Pueblo, about the holdings aboard those ships. We had very little to say about what they put aboard the Pueblo because that was strictly a US Navy kind of run thing. We had a lot to say about the holdings aboard the Liberty because we pretty much gave them everything they had aboard that ship. As a result of

those two incidents there was a big move made by the United States Navy to not only to reduce the files, which we did reduce. We went the water-soluble paper route on many instances. We reduced holdings. When a guy went out on a mission, we gave him only the data that was related to that particular mission and any historical data we took off the ship. You don't need, store it. The storage places became [redacted] That's the only place if you needed a ship-package for a particular cruise you went to the field station, you picked up that package for that particular cruise. The next step was to be able to destroy things rather quickly aboard ship in the event that you are in that kind of situation again. How do you get rid of all that stuff? And I was involved in a number of JCS studies where they actually got new detonation things and they wired the ships where they could sink them and destroy the files and get rid of all of the classified information, so a number of things in that vein were taken to reduce communications, in general, with the ship, and to limit tech support to a minimal necessary for the guys to do their job, period. And so those things were all done and any activity after the Liberty, and more so after the Pueblo. The ships had very, very little information aboard ship, very little. Okay?

GERHARD: This is information we can use in the book?

SHECK: Yeah.

FARLEY: Let me switch the tape please.

TAPE 1, SECOND SIDE

FARLEY: You talked about General Carter being made aware of the incident, the torpedoing of the Liberty...what action did he direct?

SHECK: Everything happened so fast that day. Of course, he wanted all of the information that he could get on the Liberty. He then formed a group of people and said, "I want you guys to gather all the facts",and that was headed by Walter Deeley, if I remember correctly, I think it was Walt. Yeah, it was Walter Deeley. I think Ed Peterson was involved in it and John Connell did some. He assisted in some fashion with Walter Deeley. And he had a couple of other people. There was a girl, I remember a girl being involved and they worked some twenty-four to forty-eight hours in the General's office putting information together. All the tasking messages, all the NSA involvement, talking to a whole bunch of people including me. And it was, the reason I remember Walter Deeley it was in that process of, "You told those guys downtown that they ought to move the ship didn't you, Gene?" kind of thing. And I

was saying, "No way, baby, I didn't tell them anything like that." And so it was that, it was that because that was for preparation for an investigative team that was put together by the JCS headed by some unknown Admiral, I don't know who he is. I met him because I went and talked to him.

FARLEY: Admiral Kidd?

SHECK: No, I don't know. Maybe it was Kidd, I don't remember.

GERHARD: General Russ was the man in charge.

SHECK: I know there was also a Navy Admiral.

GERHARD: Maybe a Navy Admiral was his assistant.

SHECK: And we met in Doctor Tordella's office.

GERHARD: Fitzpatrick.

SHECK: That's the name. Yeah that's the name, like that.

GERHARD: Fitzgerald or Fitzpatrick.

SHECK: Fitzgerald or Fitz...I went up to talk in Doctor Tordella's office, I remember that, and they wanted to know what my involvement was. I guess Dick Harvey didn't talk to them, but I know I did. Particularly about this phone call about on June the 5th when I called up and said, "Are you guys going to move the ship?" See, suddenly I became the smartest guy in the whole world and I wasn't trying to be smart at all. You know, why did you do that? How come you said you wanted to move the ship? I

said, "Gees I...."

FARLEY: Sorry about that.

SHECK: Yeah, that's right.

GERHARD: This is a rare instance of honesty in government.

SHECK: I think it was. Because they were all...I could have stood up and said, "You bet your ass I knew it was going to get torpedoed. We guys at NSA know all that stuff."

FARLEY: Get your promotion right there?

SHECK: I didn't know from nothing.

FARLEY: Before we get into the damage assessment, do you have any comments on the "Fiasco of the missent message," which contained all these instructions?

SHECK: I didn't know. That was the message, that the whole thing was precipitated, I guess, by a speech that somebody up in the United Nations made. Goldberg, I guess. Whatever his name was. Who said, "There's not a US Navy platform within one hundred nautical miles of the Egyptian coast or the area of hositilities", or whatever his phrase was. Somebody forgot the Liberty and the Liberty was there and the JCS, sometime during the course of that afternoon, suddenly remembered the Liberty. "By God, maybe there is no Sixth Fleet operating elements there, but the Liberty is." So he sent a message to the Liberty that says, "Withdraw one hundred nautical miles" from that point wherever they were. Whatever day that

was, the 7th of June, I guess, that was because it never got to the ship. My understanding of that message is that it just got misrouted all around the Goddamn world. And that it went, including the Philippine Islands and the Philippine Islands didn't know what to do with it. USN-27 had it for awhile. CINCUSNAVEUR got it and said they "could take care of that one in the morning" sort of attitude, and they didn't pass it on to the ship. And when they finally got up in the morning and passed it on, it was too late for the ship to react because of the time zone difference.

FARLEY: Was the Liberty info addee on this or were they an action addee?

SHECK: Yes, they were, they were an info addee. It never got there.

FARLEY: Bill, do you have anything else before we get into the damage assessment or the Russ report, Admiral Kidd's report.

GERHARD: Well, let's just start off very generally. What actions resulted, to your knowledge, as a result of what we call the JCS fact-finding report, Russ report?

SHECK: Nothing. What happened as a result of what they...? I think that they were looking to try to assign...? My impression of it was, they were trying to identify who might have been responsible for the positioning of the ship and if that positioning of that ship was intended just as a lark or was there some significant reason for putting the ship where it was put. Well, we, as a result

of that, we drew up, we drew up a number of charts, and they may still be available, for all I know, of where all the emitters were off the coast of Egypt and we showed how the line of sight communications from each of those emitters would have crossed pretty much in the area where the ship was located. And that now, that, believe me, that was not done before the ship was positioned. Our tasking message went out to show a general operating area some miles off the coast, in the area of Port Said or Alexandria. Alexandria is on my mind, I don't know why. But off of the coast of, whatever it was. When the Liberty was torpedoed we anticipated we're going to get killed with a lot of questions on why the ship was there, so we might as well do our homework and show them where all of these emitters are. So we just built a chart of all of the emitters, had line-of-sight and ran wave propagation studies on all of these kinds of things. And fortunately or unfortunately they pretty much came out in the general area of where the ship was operating and that seemed to satisfy the people with whom we were speaking on these investigative reports. They felt that there was a good technical reason for the ship to be where it was. We felt that all along, anyway, that there was a good technical reason to be there. Our responsibility---the kind of the finger pointing at NSA, at that particular

time I think, went away. You see, there was pretty good reason, they got good data for showing and they could support all of that stuff. Now let's find out why somebody let it stay there when they should have moved it. And that, of course, was out of our hands.

FARLEY: Was the map drawn up by you or by the Navy?

SHECK:: I helped build the map.

FARLEY: Which broke it down into grids and they called it Grid Operation Alpha 3.

SHECK:: We did that. Again, the ship was giving us general operating areas, they moved in a track constantly. So in order for us to know where they were at one particular time, it was somewhat akin to when we broke up the Cuban area into blocks like that, and the guy would say that, "I'm in block 10 or block 6 or block 7," so we knew where they were. That's all it was for. It was a combination of NSA and Navy working out a thing. Nothing magic about it.

MILLINGTON: I have a question. I think within a few hours after the word was received, first, the Liberty was attacked, and second, that it was an Israeli attack. I think that there was immediate consideration given to sending a replacement. Who was it that originated that idea, specifically to divert the Belmont, which was going into Norfolk for some repairs that it was due?

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EO 3.3b(6)

SHECK: I guess I had better recreate my memory about that time. It seemed to me about that same time there was some problems [redacted] When the Liberty was torpedoed and the fear that maybe [redacted] was going to get caught up in the [redacted] kind of situation once again that we had better start doing something and doing it quickly. My memory of those discussions were not to put the Belmont in an area akin to where the Liberty was, but merely to put it somewhere [redacted] and act as a HF collection site. Not a VHF/UHF collection site because it did have the HF collection capability. So there was considerable discussion about getting a surface platform to do that but it was all related to replacing the ground site for HF collection and not the VHF/UHF.

FARLEY: Did you participate in or do you have knowledge of the damage assessment meetings in Malta or in Norfolk?

SHECK: I went to Malta with a bunch of contractors. The day, I got there the day the ship got into port. I left here like the 10th or the 11th of June and the ship got into Malta somewhere around the 15th. Again now, we are talking thirteen years ago and I don't know whether these days

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are all right, but around that time. It seemed like it took about eight days for the ship to get to Malta. It was listing very badly. They put the ship in dry dock and of course the thirty-two fellows who were killed aboard ship, some twenty-eight of them were trapped down in the SIGINT spaces themselves because the torpedo hit the SIGINT space and did considerable damage down there and flooded it. The skipper, in order to maintain sailability, if that is a good word, to make sure the ship, before it listed too far, had to seal off that area. He had some water tight integrity capability, so he sealed off that area after he assured himself that there was nobody still alive. He sent a couple of kids down, who volunteered to swim around the water, make sure everybody was dead and then he sealed off that area, and then started steaming for Malta, or started steaming away from the scene. He wasn't told to go to Malta for another day or so. He was then getting some assistance from the Sixth Fleet. As he was steaming away, papers, after the flood and the water pressure balanced itself out, papers started drifting out of the ship, so they put a net down over the side of the ship to catch some of the paper. It caught some. The ship trailed a destroyer, trailed a mine sweeper, I forget

which, but something trailed behind it and also picked up floating material that was coming out of this hole in the ship and so they managed to get some stuff. Undoubtedly lots of stuff floated away, I don't know that. The safes, all the classified material, you know, you've been in SIGINT sites, all SIGINT operators are the same. They have their position full of the paper and books and handbooks and all of that sort of stuff and charts. And all of that stuff just went away along with everything else. The safes were all very badly damaged. They put the ship in dry dock. They drained out the water and then they removed the bodies and then some people went aboard ship including an NSA representative from Europe. He was the Chief of Security up in Europe by the name of Clarence...?

FARLEY: Clumfoot.

SHECK: That's very good, Clarence Clumfoot. He was the guy who went in and assisted some of the people and what they did. Well, all they did was they took a bunch of like mail pouches, it appeared to me, like ARFCOS bags, and they took shovels and they shoveled debris into these bags and then, if memory serves me, I think they "deep-sixed" them out in the ocean, those bags, I'm ever sure. Of one incident I remember was that one of the days that I was on the Liberty after that happened, they threw a safe over on the dock, a damaged safe and when it popped open there

was classified material in it and that scared everybody then, so they then stopped throwing stuff overboard that way. It was our determination that all of the equipment was beyond salvage. If it wasn't literally blown to pieces it was so badly shock-damaged from the torpedo explosion that it was just rendered useless. That included all of the non-morse, morse collection, tapes, everything. I assume that Clumfoot gathered up some material, I don't know, some hard copy stuff, because I didn't see much of that kept in that one safe. It was our recommendation that after they got through patching the ship, that they sail home and then "deep six" all of the equipment, which they did, half way across the ocean. They found the deepest spot in the water and then just threw it all overboard. So they came back with nothing, the ship was literally stripped.

FARLEY: Was there any check list against an inventory? I know it's kind of ridiculous after that situation.

SHECK: No, the answer to that is "no."

FARLEY: So there was no security check at all?

SHECK: No, we knew what they had on board. We knew what kind of classified material they had on board. We didn't know the exact number of copies of things, but we knew what

they had. We don't know what happened to half of them or all of them. Some of them burned, there was a fire, some of it was blown up, some of it sunk, some had just disappeared.

FARLEY: What was your job, just to witness the recovery activity?

SHECK: No, Morrison, Morrison sent me over because he didn't want to be "taken" by the contractors. One of the concerns was, immediate concerns was, do we replace that ship? Do we spend the money necessary to build it, rebuild it and all of that, refit the inside? Was it salvageable? So he said the Navy wanted to send a whole big team out there and Morrison said that I'm not just going to let the Navy tell me that's a great idea. I want somebody from NSA to say that that's a good idea. You go along. So I went with some Navy representatives, an NSA engineer, and a bunch of civilian contractors from F&M Systems. They designed the system itself. We all went over there and said, "Forget it, it's no use."

FARLEY: Did you get a chance to talk to any of the survivors?

SHECK: I talked to Captain McGonagle.

FARLEY: Do you have any first-hand information that you would like to put on tape regarding the conversation?

SHECK: First of all, when I saw him it was like eight days later, he had never received any medical attention at all except somebody had bandaged up his leg.

He was wounded in his leg pretty badly. He was still limping around badly when we saw him. His uniform was pretty disheveled, he obviously had not had much sleep. He made it a point to tell me how proud he was of the security group people on board. He said that he didn't expect, when they got into the fight... they were hit by some nine hundred machine gun rounds, rockets. There were nine hundred shell marks on that ship in one place or another including two torpedo, one torpedo hit and missed and the executive officer killed and all of that. And he said that he expected his general service guys to man the appropriate spots and to fight and do their kinds of shipboard duties responsibly. He said he didn't expect the response that he got out of the CTs who leaped in, literally, and grabbed a gun if one was available, who helped wounded guys, who did tremendous things, as far as he was concerned. He said that it was his opinion that the survivability rests with those young kids who came out of those radio shacks, out of that hold down there and did their thing. And he made it a point to tell me that and I relayed that on to General Carter when I came back. Whether he passed it on or not I don't really know. But other than that he was not bitter at anyone...McGonagle. He wasn't one of these guys who said, "You bastards from NSA did it to us."

None of that. He had a job to do, he was antsy about it, he talked about the overflight. Told us how he was antsy about staying there that day but he knew what his job was and he stayed. And then when the attack occurred he was as shocked as anybody else. He took down his normal colors, put up holiday colors and they still kept shooting. And then they asked him if he wanted assistance and he said, "No." In fact, he told them to go screw themselves, or something,--words to that effect. Then he steamed on to Malta. By that afternoon he had gotten some help from Sixth Fleet. They sent over a couple of fighters and then they sent a destroyer out and a mine sweeper to escort him back to Malta.

FARLEY: He wasn't bitter at all?

SHECK: Absolutely not.

FARLEY: About the Sixth Fleet cutting down the flight of the Sky Hawks that were supposed to...?

SHECK: No, sir. His only concern, when I was there, and that was, of course, the day he got in. He got on the phone to CINCUSNAVEUR, I want you CINCUSNAVEUR to arrange for liberty for my people. If necessary you send a plane down here and fly them to London, but I want them off the ship and I want them to have some relaxation. They need it because it was a long eight days, I guess, coming back from where they got torpedoed. Very impressive

personality, very impressive personality. I talked to the assistant NAVSECGRU guy who used to be here in the building, Lieutenant Commander Bennett. Maury Bennett was still on ship. Maury was the only SECGRU guy around when I got there. The other guys had scattered or were ashore getting new uniforms or wherever they were, but he was aboard ship. And I talked to Bennett, and Bennett was telling me about some mutual acquaintances that we had that were either killed or wounded or something, aboard ship. But even Bennett had nothing but complimentary remarks about the whole crew's reaction. There was no bitterness at all that I could detect.

FARLEY: Is Bennett out of the service?

SHECK: No, Bennett went to, gee I don't know. He is a Navy Commander and he is still around somewhere because he just did a tour at NSA just recently.

FARLEY: We were trying to find out where he is located.

SHECK:: Nebraska Avenue can tell you. He's still around and Dave Lewis. I guess he's retired by now.

GERHARD: Yes, he's out.

FARLEY: One thing I forgot to mention was there was a report that there was a submarine associated with or in the same location as the Liberty during this critical period.

EO 3.3b(1)

SHECK: A US submarine?

FARLEY: Yes. Do you have any knowledge of that?

SHECK: No, no I don't know that. [redacted] There might have been, I am not aware of it.

FARLEY: There are two references, one in the book by Pearson, an Englishman, and one by Ennes, said that there was a submarine there too, that photographed the whole incident on movie film.

SHECK: No, I'm not aware, that is the first that I've ever heard of that. If they had photographed that whole incident I'm sure that would have come up in all of my involvement with the JCS because I was living in the JCS spaces for months after this all happened and they couldn't keep something like that tightly held. I don't believe that at all.

GERHARD: [redacted]

SHECK:

GERHARD: So that would have been no bar at all.

SHECK: Absolutely not.

FARLEY: And this is a good point, too.

SHECK: Yes sir.

FARLEY: Because we are so bloody confused, I'm asking.

SHECK: Yes, that's a figment of someone's imagination, as far as I'm concerned.

FARLEY: Makes a good story.

SHECK: Yeah, it sure does.

FARLEY: Did you get to Norfolk at all when they brought the Liberty back?

SHECK: No.

FARLEY: Is there...?

SHECK:: I guess I did, I went down to see one of the other ships. Oh, I know, I was down there when they were doing this demolition thing about how are we going to blow these ships up when they sink. The JCS conducted a study and I was the NSA member on the study group that says here's how we are going to blow these ships up and they were giving them a scuttling capability. While we were down there they went out and showed us the USS Liberty because they were trying to show us the big patch on the side of the ship and they put it in the drydock and that's where it stayed. And I guess it might even still be down there for all I know, but it wasn't in use.

FARLEY: You didn't see them hauling out any garbage that could be burned.

SHECK: No, nothing. I never saw them haul anything out.

FARLEY: Anything, Henry?

MILLINGTON: No.

FARLEY: Talk about the Russ report. Did you see the Russ report?

SHECK: No, I never saw any of those reports. The only thing I ever saw was, sometime after, after the incident happened, there was a report and they discussed words in this report because somebody had excerpts. They had taken a page of this report and showed it to me. The page they showed to me had said "Two NSA analysts talked to the JCS on the 5th of June." I assumed that was talking about Dick Harvey and I. And that's why the guy burned a page and showed it to me. But that's the only thing I ever saw about it and I don't even remember exactly what it had said, other than it did say "two NSA analysts."

GERHARD: That's in the Russ report.

SHECK: Okay, that's all I saw is that page of the report. Didn't see the rest of the report.

FARLEY: So you wouldn't know what recommendations were made by Carter?

SHECK: No, no.

FARLEY: To respond to...

SHECK: No.

FARLEY: Or counter the report?

SHECK: No.

MILLINGTON: To the best of your knowledge the NSG itself never conducted any investigations, did they?

SHECK: Not to my knowledge.

FARLEY: You have said you did not participate in any investigation at all?

SHECK: Except as a day or the two days, whatever it was, after the incident when I was called up to Dr. Tordella's office and this General, I guess it was Russ, I don't know who it was, and an Admiral, and a couple of other individuals in the room and Dr. Tordella, and they said to me, "Tell us about your involvement with the Liberty. Tell us about, one, your call on the 5th of June, and then your call on the 8th of June, about one, are you going to move the ship? and secondly, what I knew about the torpedoing and what I heard on the telephone that morning." I made particular reference in my conversation to the JCS/JRC and Tordella interrupted me twice and said to these people, "See he keeps telling you about that JRC and you fellows want to remember that." Now he wanted to make sure that they were aware that there was an ultimate approving authority in this whole process and that was the JRC. And he wanted them to get that in there because he twice, "See listen to what he's saying about the JRC." I remember that part of the conversation, like I said to myself, "Gee, I said something good because he must like that." You know.

FARLEY: Your participation in the preparation of the post mortem report? This is the Deeley report.

SHECK: My participation in that was coming out here in the middle of the night for about sixteen hours and helping somebody, look and pour over these papers and putting things in date-time-group order, and then arguing with Walter Deeley most of the night. Then using General Carter's kitchen. He had a pan that he boiled potatoes or something in and we fried hamburgers in this pot. All I did was remember walking out of that place very angry with Walter Deeley. Now that's a fact, and I would say it to Walter Deeley, personally. It was not one of my better nights. I don't know what he was doing, and they kept asking a lot of dumb questions that we seemed to be just wasting a lot of time. And I remember clipping papers together and putting things in date-time-group order and then when I got it all done I did not help write the report although, I did sit in. I think it was Ed Peterson. Was Peterson's name on that?

GERHARD: Karl Kim was on it.

SHECK: Yeah, I remember Karl being there, but Ed Peterson, was he?

GERHARD: Ed Peterson was.

SHECK: Well, then Ed Peterson was doing some writing because I remember going to Ed Peterson and changing some times or

saying "No, that's not quite accurate" and doing a little bit of that kind of correcting. That was about it, and then I went home because I was tired.

MILLINGTON: You mentioned a woman there, could it have been Flossie Senger?

SHECK: It could have been Flossie Senger, there was a woman in the room, it could have been Flossie Senger.

FARLEY: I don't know whether you can answer this or not, but while on station in the Med in an operational status, do you think that the Liberty provided some useful intelligence before the critical day?

SHECK: I don't know. We've often talked about that. Maury Bennett told me when I saw him aboard ship they were getting good collection the day of the torpedo attack. And, of course, that was when the war was at its peak. The collection that they might have been getting may have been directly related to what was happening to them or what was about to happen to them. I don't really know. But he did say that they were very busy that morning, that they were getting good kinds of stuff and that it was all on those tapes. They were getting lots [redacted] They had not had an opportunity, as far as I could determine, to get at the stuff to see

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what they had really had gotten because it was all "collect it! collect it! we'll look at it later," sort of thing. He did say that. "Boy, we had a good day that day, and whoppo everything went down the drain." So, but before that, the reports that we got before the 8th of June were not that significant.

FARLEY: Do you want to ask your question, Henry, about the moon bounce equipment?

SHECK:: Oh, the new TRS relay, what about it?

FARLEY: Can you give us some comments on how good it was?

SHECK: Well, it depends upon where you were in the world and whether you could see the moon. You know, literally.

MILLINGTON: About four hours out of the day.

SHECK: Yeah, four hours out of the day and you know it's nothing more than a satellite relay, that's what it was. You know you bounce a signal off the moon. If the moon was in a position for the ship to transmit and for Cheltenham to hear and which came to about four hours a day, it worked pretty well. It worked very well when a ship was operating off the coast of South America. We had great success coming across the equator to the moon and back to Cheltenham. Sometimes they got twelve hours of good communications at Cheltenham directly, and they were able to pass all kinds of good stuff. But it was such a problem of setting it up, getting it going and then

relaying the information. I guess guys were hesitant to use it as much as they could have. There was a big Navy push. The Navy was a prime mover behind TRSS Moon Relay communications.

MILLINGTON: Well, I gather from what you've said, plus the fact that they've been having apparently trouble with the hydraulic. The dish.

SHECK: Yeah, the antenna.

MILLINGTON: That really when you couple these things together, the maximum available time during any twenty-four hour period, plus the fact that they were having trouble aboard the ship orienting the antenna, the dish correctly that it wasn't really very practical.

SHECK: It wasn't practical, and again we are talking about hindsight. The appearance of that antenna alone would make somebody suspect of what that ship was out there really doing. They didn't think that would be...it could be a receiving antenna getting all kinds of good microwaves. All kinds of things a person could imagine by looking at that rather large dish that was in the back of that platform. That might have made other people antsy about, what is that ship really doing, not knowing it wasn't even collecting, and it wasn't.

GERHARD: It was general service.

SHECK: Well, no it wasn't. It was for NAVSECGRU communications purposes. It was not general service.

GERHARD: It was not general service?

SHECK: It was not general service. It was programmed through the CCP, it was in Subelement 44 and then subsequently to the Communications Subelement. But it started in 44, because we tried to keep everything in those days that was related to mobile collection in one Subelement.

GERHARD: Was it ever classified under CRITICOM?

SHECK: Yes.

GERHARD: It was?

SHECK: Yes, absolutely. And it went to Cheltenham because Cheltenham had a CRITICOM terminal right with NSA. That's Cheltenham, Maryland now that we are talking about.

FARLEY: Just general comments on the contributions that you think that the ships, the SIGINT ships made?

SHECK: Oh I'm very prejudiced. I happen to think that in this day and age had they had a ship you wouldn't...anywhere would be a haven. Iran is a good example. The problems in the Indian Ocean area are good examples. The lack of a facility, Diego Garcia being so far from anybody with an airplane. Like trying to get places over in Mogadiscio to put airplanes so that you can do some collection as close to the Near East as you

can. All of that. Surface platforms properly configured, properly manned can have a great role and can still have a great role to play, if you could surmount the political problems of having the ship. The Russians have thirty-seven trawlers, thirtyseven of them doing collection. Most of the time they are out to sea. They must be doing something, because they have them out there all of the time, and they do well, apparently. Our ships, when they were out there, did very, very well, as far as I am concerned, but it became a very expensive proposition, and the reason it got so expensive is because we got involved in parochialism. The Navy saying they have to be US Navy ships, manned by US Navy personnel and they are going to fly the US Navy flag, they gotta have X number of hours of liberty, they gotta go to X number of ports, they got to have so much time at sea, so much time at port. When you could have taken all of that money that it cost to do that and paid a few people, literally, to do the same kind of a job. Or to get a bunch of union members, if necessary, to go out there to sail the ship around, to do that kind of collection with a complete understanding that if you got caught you're on your own. In my own mind, I feel very strongly, that there are ways of doing that and that the lack of those ships was a tremendous loss to NSA.

We lost those, not because NSA wasn't fighting for them, when the Navy went through a real economic problem they were having in 1969-70. They asked the fleet commanders, "What kind of ships would you want to give up from your fleet?" Every fleet commander nominated the TRSs because he had no control over those ships in the pure sense. He controlled them by saying go where NSA tells you to go, but he couldn't say, go sit off of Cuba for fourteen days, or he couldn't say, go sit off of Cyprus for one hundred and fifty days or, go and get a missile shot from over here. He couldn't do that so therefore he didn't have control. Fleet commanders don't like to operate that way, and we lost the ships, though unfortunately. I know if you go over to the building right now, and I haven't been there for a year, but when I left they would still have memorandums coming, "What useful purpose would one get out of a surface platform?" All of those kind. "Is this an economically feasible thing to do?" And everybody in the building, all of these engineers keep saying, "Oh, it's not economically feasible." I just think it is stupid. I happen to think that they serve a great purpose, they served well in Southeast Asia, as far as I was concerned.

GERHARD: And Africa.

SHECK: And Africa, they did all kinds of things off the coast of Africa at the time that they really needed them. And off of South America, the only collection that we had in those days was the ship steaming around South America. And missile shoots, the Dominican Republic, the Cuban crisis. Although a very sad situation, if Israelis hadn't attacked the ship they would have done all kinds of good things over there in the Mid East. It's a shame that we've lost them. I feel very strongly that's one of the dumbest things that we ever let happen. But I think that we contributed to a lot of it by allowing the things to become tagged as "spy ships." And we contributed to some of them.

FARLEY: Was the use of civilian linguists aboard the Liberty the first time that we had done that?

SHECK: No, no there was one of the first ships that we had in the old days was a ship [redacted] which operated off of the east coast of Africa for some [redacted] or something was going on in the early sixties. From time to time they would put a civilian linguist aboard that. It was just a case of getting someone to accept the presence of a civilian aboard the ship. And in those kinds of times nobody hesitates, "Fine, bring them aboard." Now they prefer

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Pueblo. When they were attacked he had his shirt off. He had to put on his khaki pants and skivvy shirt, and so when they captured the ship he still had that same skivvy shirt and khaki pants on. There was not a semblance of uniform. Therefore, he was immediately identified as a CIA agent by the Koreans. He had a hard time explaining that he wasn't. So that's part of the problem being a civilian, more or less, that you are really tagged then if something should happen.

FARLEY: I think we've covered everything and you've probably

talked about lessons learned. Is there anything more that you want to add about lessons learned from both?

SHECK: Well, I think a lot of lessons were learned, I think the Navy did a lot of cleaning up of their command and control functions as a result of the Liberty, i.e., your comment about COMSECFLEET not being sure about who was there. I don't think you will ever see that happen again. That was a good lesson learned. The status of files and the maintenance of all those records aboard ship we realize that that was a dumb thing to do and we started, although it never really got caught up to the Pueblo situation. Again, that was a command and control problem, too, because the Navy was operating the ship for themselves, therefore, the Navy had the responsibility of putting the thing, the things on the ship and they had become very complicated. The fact that someone outside of NSA has the responsibility for determining safety and operational feasibility should always remain. NSA should never get involved in making those kind of considerations. I don't think they are qualified to make them and would be remiss if they even tried to do it, except that NSA should always pass on any information that they have relative to the safety of the platform immediately to the JCS. And that is one lesson that NSA should remember, that is something that if there

is any doubt in that building that says Kadafi is going to shoot down the next C135 that flies off the ~~Liberty~~ LIBNA (?) then they ought to get it down the JCS so that somebody knows about it. But other than that I don't have much more to contribute.

FARLEY: Is there anything else that we have overlooked or any areas that you would like to explore?

SHECK: No, you've pretty well covered it. You've brought back a lot of memories. I didn't think that I would remember all that time.

GERHARD: We're very sorry that we can't autograph a copy of the book.

SHECK: That would be nice. It was fun. Thanks for the opportunity. I've enjoyed it.

FARLEY: We want to get you back for the EC121, the Pueblo and Cuba crises.

SHECK: Sure, I'm around anytime, call, write.

FARLEY: What classification do you think we should put on this? TOP SECRET CODEWORD?

SHECK: Yeah, I would. While lots of the things that we're saying have been published in lots of places, I don't think lots of people accept it as valid information. I think it ought to stay classified. I really do.

GERHARD: You don't have to give it Codeword.

SHECK: You can go COMINT channels, TOP SECRET COMINT CHANNELS.

FARLEY: I'll just change it to HVCCO. Thank you very much for stopping by, appreciate it, and we'll be in touch on the other items.

GERHARD: Is that all he gets for this, is a cup of coffee?

SHECK: What should I get?

GERHARD: You're in charge of oral history.

FARLEY: I wasn't going to tell him about the rest until he finished the other three items.

GERHARD: Don't we have a special pin?

SHECK: No, I look forward to coming back and talking about the other ones, the Pueblo particularly. The Pueblo has got to be the greatest experience of my whole life. I mean not, the capture of the Pueblo, the fact that I was involved in the debriefing of that crew was one of the greatest experiences I ever had. It really was and I'll gladly sit down and talk about it. That's pretty classical, lots of that stuff even yet.

FARLEY: Why don't you stop by and look at Henry's and Bill's report. The Deeley report if you want to just scan through that.

SHECK:: Oh do you have the Deeley report?

MILLINGTON: We have it, but we're not calling it the "Deeley Report".

SHECK: That's the only, he was the only one, I remember being very angry at him and that's about all I remember being except that I was upset with him. Of course that's easy to understand, we all know Walter.

Reviewed by Eugene Sheck, 24 Jan 86.