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INAME **HICKMAN, RICHARD** (b)(3)-P.L. 86-36
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IVIEWER WILLIAM GERHARD, R.D. FARLEY

FARLEY: Today is the 30th of April 1980. Our interviewee is Mr. Richard W. Hickman. Currently a member of the G09 staff, who served aboard the USS VALDEZ until May of 1967. Mr. Hickman almost signed up for a tour on the AGTR LIBERTY and could have been aboard during the Israeli attack on the ship in June of 1967. M62 representatives participating in this interview are Mr. Bill Gerhart, Mr. Henry Millington, Mr. Hank Schorreck and Bob Farley. Mr. Hickman will relate his experiences as a Hebrew linguist aboard the VALDEZ. The interview is taking place in Sab II, M62 area of NSA. The classification of the interview is Secret HVCCO.

FARLEY: Okay I think what we are trying to do is just to get any additional information on the Arab-Israeli LIBERTY crisis. Anything to supplement the existing reports, any retrospective studies, any postmortem reports, first hand knowledge of what might have happened. And anything you can give us, we'll be very much appreciative. Bill is tasked with coming up with the SIGINT History of the LIBERTY crisis, isn't that right Bill and he probably has a dozen questions.

GERHART: I would suggest, Dick, that you would be aware that the study itself will be a classified study, it will not be unclassified or find its way into the bookstalls.

FARLEY: So we can tell all, tell all. Have you had a chance to read the postmortem on the LIBERTY-Israeli report?

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HICKMAN: No.

FARLEY: Okay, good.

GERHART: And the RED BOOK?

HICKMAN: Right.

FARLEY: Okay, the first question Dick, during this critical period...this is 23 May thru early June...what was your assignment or what task did you have?

HICKMAN: I was in, what is today known as G62, which was the [redacted] I was a Hebrew linguist in the Naval Security Group at the time and my job at that time was transciber of [redacted] intercept communications.

FARLEY: So you were in the service?

HICKMAN: Right, I was in the Navy.

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FARLEY: Were you assigned at NSA, you said in G....?

HICKMAN: Yes, in G6.

FARLEY: Did you have anything to do with LIBERTY at all, were you aboard the LIBERTY?

HICKMAN: No, I was on the USNS JOSE VALDEZ, which was out before the LIBERTY and was coming back when the LIBERTY went out. And I got back off the VALDEZ in May of 67 and had about 6 weeks left in the Navy, and I was asked to go on to the LIBERTY and explain my situation, you know, getting out of the Navy, probably wouldn't have a lot of time to go out on the LIBERTY then come back. It wasn't that I...I wasn't keen on going or anything. It was just that I had a lot of personal commitments and so I wasn't tasked to go on the LIBERTY. When the incident happened on the 8th of June I was in the office, and a friend of mine was on LIBERTY that had just gotten back with me on the VALDEZ, AL BLUE, and consequently he was killed, the only civilian killed on the LIBERTY. My only real involvement with the LIBERTY incident was transcribing the intercept that VQ-2 picked up after the incident had actually happened, the attack itself, had happened. There were rescue helicopters that--Israeli helicopters--that had gone to the scene and they intercepted the comms of those helicopters and that tape was sent back to NSA for transciption and I transcribed that tape. The transcipts are available and are a part of the history, but that was really my only involvement.

GERHART: (5G) the transcripts (1G) tend to show that the Israelis were confused as to the nationality.

HICKMAN: That's right, that's right, and that is my only real access to information as to what was available, other than the readings of course but from the SIGINT picture that I witnessed, I would tend to say that the Israelis did not know that they had attacked a U.S. vessel and naturally that is up for grabs as to what other people think what happened. But granted that's my evidence that was available to me at the time, and that's probably a little bit of bias and prejudice on my part. I was partial to the Israelis as a nation having learned the Hebrew language. And you know, sort of learned to know the Israelis for what they were and what they were up against. But I just don't feel that they would have done that if they knew. But the SIGINT picture in my mind shows that they didn't know. They were confused as to whether they spoke Arabic or English, where to take them. They asked if the were flagged, whether there were bodies in the water? You know, things of that nature.

GERHART: Yeah.

HICKMAN: These were two helicopter pilots talking back and forth.

FARLEY: To get some clarification, what is VQ-2?

HICKMAN: VQ-2 is the Navy airborne squadron that flew out of Rota, Spain.

GERHART: That was the EC-121?

HICKMAN: 121 at the time, that's right. Now the EP-3. That was the platform that flew the mission that intercepted those communications.

GERHART: At that time, if I am not mistaken, all the [redacted] communications were being looked on back here at NSA.

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HICKMAN: That's correct.

GERHART: Not in the field.

HICKMAN: That's right. That's correct. The first intercept of the [redacted] communications was April of 1966, when they deployed some people out into Mediterranean Sea and they flew out of [redacted] And went out and just collected anything that was in the air and when we got back we didn't know what we had and we had whole a bunch of [redacted] communications and didn't have the neat military communications that we thought we had. And then they developed the airborne units in [redacted] And that is how this kicked off. That and the (1G) from tactical communications.

GERHART: Okay, was it HF, VHF?

HICKMAN: VHF. I can't remember specifics, but [redacted] I'm sure.

FARLEY: How about ELINT Bill, what are we talking about? The VALDEZ collection or the VQ-2 collection?

GERHART: VQ-2 collection. The VALDEZ had headed back to the States.

FARLEY: Was the VALDEZ ever in the Mediterranean?

HICKMAN: Yes it was. We came up, we were off the coast of Africa and then we transited north through the Suez Canal and went the whole length of the Mediterranean and we off-loaded at Barcelona, Spain. Then we flew back, that was the first part of May.

FARLEY: Dick, there were supposedly six linguists picked up at Rota aboard the LIBERTY? Did you know any of those people other than AL BLUE?

HICKMAN: I knew AL BLUE, BOB WILSON, DON BLALOCK. Those are the only three that I know of, those are Arabic linguists. The only Hebrew linguist that I know of, that was on there was Navy Chief BAKER, and his knowledge of Hebrew was suspect because he had taken the language some years back and hadn't been working with it and the whole Hebrew [redacted] language was something new in itself anyway so there weren't to many people who were up to speed on the Hebrew language [redacted] Mostly the people who were, were sitting back at NSA either in the Navy or having gotten out of the Navy and working in G group at the time.

FARLEY: Dick, was the make-up of the component, the Security Group component aboard the VALDEZ similar to the LIBERTY? Do you have any thoughts on that?

HICKMAN: The VALDEZ was more of a civilian ship than was the LIBERTY. And the entire crew was civilian on the VALDEZ the Security Group part of the ship was all Security Group personnel. I think there was a lot less idea of actually what we were doing onboard that ship than if I was on board the LIBERTY. The

LIBERTY was more of a naval vessel than was the VALDEZ.

FARLEY: One thing I noticed Bill about the people aboard the LIBERTY, there was an Army Warrant Officer supposedly in charge. And I was curious since it was a Navy Security Group, why was an Army Warrant Office put in charge?

HICKMAN: That was the first I heard of it, that surprises me also.

FARLEY: In the postmortem (1G).

GERHART: I was unaware of that.

HICKMAN: I didn't know that either, because usually they have a NAVSECGRU Operations Officer and a department head who is sort of the senior naval person onboard the vessel as well as in charge of the Security Group.

FARLEY: You talked to AL BLUE and company before they went aboard the LIBERTY?

HICKMAN: No I didn't. I talked to AL BLUE because we got back together and Al naturally wasn't keen on going out on the LIBERTY having just come back, but the only other person available to go at the time was [redacted] who's wife was expecting to have a baby any day and so he was excused from going and Al said, "Well, if I am the only one left I will go." So it was ironic that he was killed.

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FARLEY: Did you know BLALOCK?

HICKMAN: Very well, yeah.

FARLEY: Should we interview him?

HICKMAN: So long as you can access him. He is no longer with the Agency.

FARLEY: I know, but would he have..

HICKMAN: He is very, very bitter about the whole incident. Let's put it that way.

FARLEY: Did he contribute anything useful, anything positive?

HICKMAN: I think he would have, absolutely. Sure. Yeah. He doesn't open up often and willingly discuss the situation but..

GERHART: He may not be bitter to a...

HICKMAN: Toward the interview..

GERHART: Exchange of information along his lines..

HICKMAN: No, he is bitter in terms of who's responsible for what happened. He is convinced in his mind that the Israelis knew that the flag was waving and things of this nature, so that's why he was bitter and was very anti-any compensation from the Israeli Government and so forth.

FARLEY: Did you talk to him after the incident?

HICKMAN: Yes.

FARLEY: You mentioned the flag waving...was the American flag flying?

(TR NOTE: One transmission missed)

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FARLEY: They would come on the LIBERTY?

HICKMAN: According to witnesses that I talked to, yes.

FARLEY: Okay.

HICKMAN: I have no knowledge of it flying.

FARLEY: So, it should be an international signal, this is a U.S vessel?

HICKMAN: A U.S. vessel, now there is nothing to say that an Egyptian combatant couldn't fly an American flag.

FARLEY: Yeah.

GERHART: You know, that's war. They don't know the game up front. Saying the truth.

HICKMAN: But DON BLALOCK and BOB OLSEN would be super candidates to interview. They were both there and have a lot of eyewitness accounts as what actually happened and the torpedo attack. And you know Don saw AL BLUE, you know seconds before the ...

FARLEY: Dick, later on did you continue to work the [redacted] problem?

HICKMAN: Yes I did.

FARLEY: Was there any information [redacted] that they goofed up and
made a mistake or it was a deliberate action?

HICKMAN: No, none. None that I was ever aware of [redacted]

GERHART: So, [redacted]

FARLEY: So [redacted] they could have said anything they wished to?

HICKMAN: They could have [redacted]

GERHART: At the..

HICKMAN: [redacted]

GERHART: We're just getting started on this study. Will you suggest any documentation that might be useful. For example, there was a classified Israeli court of inquiry that looked into the LIBERTY situation. The American attache in Tel Aviv managed to get a gist of the result. I was wondering whether or not anything like that would have been exchanged with the U.S. Government?

HICKMAN: No, I have no idea. I don't know.

GERHART: One of the intelligence requirements that we were probably working under called for needless, kind of personal interests, more than anything else. But it called for information that we wanted to gain And I was just wondering whether you were aware of that?

HICKMAN:

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GERHART: Both!

FARLEY: That's all the matters isn't it?

GERHART:

FARLEY: Literally, all that matters.

HICKMAN: Yeah.

GERHART: The intell requirement probably working on it was a requirement or one of the requirements, that called for (B% deflection) that I'm looking at a requirement's list...

HICKMAN: Sure, I understand.

GERHART: Trying to reconstruct the rationale for our requirements in the first place. And it must be a stack of requirements that high. But most of the requirements were just for HF communications.

HICKMAN: Uh, huh.

GERHART: Communications that would not have required the closest intercept.

HICKMAN: Right.

GERHART: and that sort of thing.

HICKMAN:

FARLEY: Yes, that's right.

GERHART:

HICKMAN: Right, yeah. So that was the, apparently the reason they went....

GERHART: One of the questions in my mind is, I hope I can resolve it, and still retain my patriotism, somehow or another it doesn't add up, the ship never got close. (TR NOTE: Sound as if recorder is stopped and started, or tape has been edited). In terms of what we were hoping to get back. But enough. Considering that there should have been an American decision somewhere here earlier than there was one.

HICKMAN: No, it is a stupid area to be in. I mean my god, in the middle of a fighting war and there you are in the thick of it.

GERHART: We might as well have sent the ship right up the Nile itself.

HICKMAN: Sure, yeah. That was mind boggling as to...

FARLEY: Dick, again you said you were at NSA when the attack occurred?

HICKMAN: Right.

FARLEY: Were you involved at all in getting the word from the LIBERTY that they were under attack or did you see any of the traffic?

HICKMAN: No, we just saw the OPSCOMMS that were coming in and the messages that involved in alerting anybody or having first knowledge, no.

FARLEY: Did the OPSCOMM that you are talking about, would that have been between NSA and maybe Rota?

HICKMAN: I believe it was Rota, I think so, yeah. Because we were working 24 hours a day in G6 spaces at the time because of the war. Because the war started three days before the attack on the LIBERTY so we were geared up and we were doing a lot of work. It was during the evening shift that the word came in down in the DDP room and somebody said AL BLUE was killed.

GERHART: Did you ever have a chance to read the (B% RUSK) report? The JCS study of what took place?

HICKMAN: I believe I did, yes.

GERHART: The study in which all these communication follow-ups took place.

HICKMAN: Right. On the U.S. side.

GERHART: One of the problems we had apparently, was in our own communications. TRSSCOMM was out and unfortunately, there were very few ways in which NSA could have reached the ship itself. If we wanted to go direct.

HICKMAN: Yes.

GERHART: I had wished that NSA had gone direct at one point.

HICKMAN: Yea, I'm not sure what the communications lash-up was between NSA and

the vessel.

GERHART: It would have had to go to the CRS in Morocco or the CRS, there is another CRS what..

HICKMAN: Relay station, yeah.

GERHART: It would have been to have gone out over the fleet teletype broadcast. Which was monitored pretty close by the LIBERTY. It could have been done. But we had no way of knowing that the command communications were fouled up.

HICKMAN: We also had no way of knowing that the vessel was going to be attacked to warn it anyway.

GERHART: But there were a number of people trying to get the word out to the ship to back it out 100 miles. And after the roll, you can play the guessing game, if you would have not had those delays, you gotta go with her steaming out of there, especially if there was an attack. We have got, pretty well, we got the documentation to prove it.

FARLEY: We looked pretty good, really NSA looks pretty good, reading a message in the report that Bill has, we told them to be vigilant and to be aware of any possible actions. Primarily on the part of the UAR, to simply report any indication of that surveillance or imminent operation.

FARLEY: In the NSA message that went out, was the day before the attack. After the JCS moved the ship back to about 20 miles off shore, they were moving it to a different operational area. The JCS message would have asked the ship to move back 100 miles. And it seems to me somehow or other, but that was fine, we got to take a major part of the picture and we have to develop it. One of the messages that could have warned the ship, went in unbelievable directions all over the world. And ended up in NSA, as an info copy. The NSA people looked at it and said, well this is..LIBERTY's info on this, out of itself. So they dead-ended the message. But there was an opportunity there, ever so slight, for NSA to try it again, to reach the CRS Morocco and get on the fleet broadcasts. We would have been out of bounds.

HICKMAN: Yea.

FARLEY: Dick were you aware of any messages that might have been passed from NSA to the LIBERTY during the attack?

HICKMAN: None, I wasn't at any level to see that, I was a funky E-5 in the Navy and was told to sit there with headphones on and transcribe. So I really wasn't involved in any of the policy at all.

FARLEY: On the VALDEZ, was it required reading to read the MUSSO documents for your respective, though it was [redacted] I know the LIBERTY was 855, what was it USN-855?

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HICKMAN: Uh, huh. It was.

FARLEY: Was it required reading for the..(interupted)

HICKMAN: Right, it was.

FARLEY: What was the VALDEZ?

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HICKMAN: The SIGAD?

FARLEY: Yea.

HICKMAN: No I don't.

GERHARt: [redacted]

FARLEY: Was it [redacted]

HICKMAN: It rings a bell. That may or may not be right, I am not sure.

FARLEY: So it was required reading?

HICKMAN: Yes.

FARLEY: What about the relationship again, between the VALDEZ and the ship's party? What was the relationship between those two groups?

HICKMAN: Almost none really. Except for maybe an occasional card game or something after work hours. We usually did our thing on LIBERTY when we hit port, went our way. They went their way and they, I am sure they were given some sort of indoctrination as to what we were about. But, probably given a hands off type thing, leave them alone and don't ask silly questions and things like that. I had that experience on other vessels before. There is a certain way you could explain. I mean because, their whole mission was because of us. They were taking us around to the various spots of opportunity, they were making a lot of money so they couldn't care less really. There really wasn't much of relationship between the ship's crew and us.

GERHART: One of the ironies of the LIBERTY, that comes to light as I go through the documents, was that NSA was responding to written requirements, intelligence requirements. How these intelligence requirements came from the SIXTHFLEET...they came from CINCNAVEUR...the ship commander, the commander of the SIXTHFLEET didn't really know why the LIBERTY was out there. The only thing that he knew was that LIBERTY was out there because JCS directed it to be out there. So the Commander really didn't need the commander of SIXTHFLEET, didn't really know why it was out there, and it was really to satisfy his own requirements.

HICKMAN: Yea.

GERHART: If he'd known a little bit more, the question always arises, would he have been a little more careful.

HICKMAN: At the time they made the decision locally without a JCS blessing probably because it belonged to him and it was in his theatre of operation.

GERHART: It was really his responsibility to protect.

HICKMAN: Sure, yeah.

GERHART: It was several hundred miles, or 150 miles away, his major concern all during that period of time when they were trying to get a message to him from CINCNAVEUR. Was (xg/name) was aboard the large of press that was converging on the USS America, one of his flag ships. He was really worried about getting the press conference ready for all these visiting newsmen. The press conference, of course, had nothing to do with LIBERTY. So that was another part that was low priority all the way around. It may not have been low priority, if the commander of SIXFLEET known a little more about it.

HICKMAN: Known what it was all about, that's right. These days anyway.

FARLEY: Dick a hypothetical situation... If the VALDEZ, the people, the SIGINT people aboard the VALDEZ, through their many sources, intercepted information regarding an imminent attack against the vessel, could the SIGINT group have provided that information to the ship driver?

HICKMAN: Sure. Sure.

FARLEY: Do you think that could have happened or could not have happened on the
LIBERTY if...?

HICKMAN: Yes, I think it could have happened. I think if they had a couple of sharp linguists onboard that they could have, because those attacking vessels and aircraft would be communicating and taking off from airfields and we could have monitored. And I think if we had the vessel properly manned with the right people we could have prevented the whole thing. That is personal feeling.

FARLEY: That's fine, that's what I wanted to hear. Ships captain was cleared? He had access to your spaces if he wanted to or he was briefed by the intelligence officer?

HICKMAN: No, I don't believe so.

GERHART: I don't think he had a clearance.

HICKMAN: He didn't. He wasn't. He didn't have access to our area. He may have had a SECRET level clearance but probably not SI. But the SECGRU Commander could have easily told him that we have intelligence that indicates we are going to come under attack shortly. Now let's get out of here and I think he would have gotten out of there. And I think he would have gotten outta there, he couldn't have questioned it, he wouldn't have been in a position, you know he wasn't making any extra money sitting there. Yeah, I think the whole thing may have been prevented. You never know they may not have been communicating when they said "we are gonna go out and attack that vessel that is sitting out there" or they may have encoded it to a degree that we couldn't have understood exactly what they were saying. But, had they mentioned an attack against that vessel and the right guy was sitting on the right frequency

monitoring it, it could have been prevented. So it would depend on the situation really.

GERHART: I'll have to review this but I think the SIGINT target, target of the LIBERTY at this point was almost exclusively the UAR.....

HICKMAN: Egyptian, yeah right.

GERHART: I don't believe they had any Israeli cases at all..

FARLEY: By virtue of the location.

HICKMAN: Yes, that's right. There would have been a problem just from the geographical standpoint where they were. But as the Israeli aircraft approached, if they had a Hebrew linguist sitting on a position searching just for Hebrew. Because they had a number of positions that were just search.

FARLEY: I think there too, that they had a tertiary task against the [redacted]

HICKMAN: Sure, that's right.

FARLEY: If they ran out of all their other targets, then they would listen to the [redacted] But it was primarily the UAR, wasn't it?

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HICKMAN: Right.

FARLEY: That's interesting.

HICKMAN: The Israelis were good guys.

FARLEY: I never considered that one. Dick, do you have anything that you'd like on tape about what happened? About what had happened during the last two or three days that you were working the 24 hour shift.

HICKMAN: Do I have anything?

FARLEY: Put on tape, your personal opinions?

HICKMAN: No. Not really.

GERHART: How about the way G group geared up for a crisis situation?

HICKMAN: They were geared up. They were ready. Nobody believed.

GERHART: 24 hour coverage on all Middle East targets?

HICKMAN: Right. The whole fourth floor was 24 hours a day.

FARLEY: This is just about the time that the LIBERTY went out or while the VALDEZ was out there or..?

HICKMAN: No it was between, the VALDEZ, I am not quite sure, on the transit. We left Spain and that was the VALDEZ's last cruise. We left Spain the first

part of May and the VALDEZ was heading for New York from there and the LIBERTY was going into Spain. They may have passed in the Atlantic, because we didn't stay aboard. We flew back to the States. So there really wasn't any VALDEZ-LIBERTY relationship, during the Middle East War itself.

FARLEY: After the LIBERTY was out of commission, who picked up the tasking on the targets that the LIBERTY had been covering?

HICKMAN: There was a gap before, before we had that picked up at all.

FARLEY: Did another ship, another AGTR go out to replace the LIBERTY?

HICKMAN: No.

GERHART: There was consideration about sending another one out..

HICKMAN: There wasn't..

GERHART: There wasn't much stomach for it.

FARLEY: So there was a gap, as you say, in the intercept and the collection and the reporting?

HICKMAN: But we had the airborne collection out of [redacted] The Air Force was flying C-130s and the Navy had the EC-121s.

FARLEY: What was their channel from the airborne, would they publish SPOT reports or summaries or just relay up to a...?

HICKMAN: They relayed up to [redacted]

FARLEY: [redacted]

HICKMAN: [redacted]

FARLEY: And they published?

HICKMAN: And [redacted] published them. Or when they got back, when we, as soon as I got out of the navy I went to [redacted] and so we were out there, the tape that comes back from the mission, those items that weren't down-linked to [redacted] and published we would go over tapes. Then we would publish from [redacted] anything else.

FARLEY: So you did first review?

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HICKMAN: Right.

FARLEY: Or, initial review?

HICKMAN: Right.

GERHART: I saw a reference to the [redacted] flights in the area, reconnaissance flights. Did we ever get their tapes?

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HICKMAN: Not to my knowledge. No.

GERHART: We probably got the product?

HICKMAN: We might have gotten the transcripts or the product, probably just the product. I think it has only been recently that we've actually gotten their raw data at all. In terms of, they would STRUM in the actual tape. The tapes themselves, I don't think we had access to.

GERHART: The only actual SIGINT scene that relates at all to the LIBERTY is the item that you mentioned.

HICKMAN: The helicopter activity, that was all there was.

GERHART: The instruction to the helicopter pilots. The only other possible SIGINT that might have existed would have been that the GCHQ might have produced.

HICKMAN: I am sure they would have suppressed anything like that relative to the situation. I didn't know at the time, transcribing the only SIGINT, for whole nation, the whole incident, I figured well there will other bits and pieces and this will be just part of an overall SIGINT story. At the time you don't think about those things. General CARTER was on the phone every two minutes asking, what we had then, what we had next, what did they say now, he never saw the half of it. Your mind wonders, when that pressure is thrown on your shoulders and you know, and two or three stars are wondering what the hell you are hearing.

GERHART: I have worked all night in G Group a few times.

HICKMAN: Nobody else could confirm or deny what you were doing, because you were the so called the best Hebrew [redacted] transcriber there is and if you make a mistake, you make a mistake. Then you go back over a word you didn't hear very well and nobody else can figure it out either. Any sort of a linguist whoever was any sort of a linguist has listened to that tape to try to dig out anything that's....

GERHART: Where was [redacted] at this time, was he working with you?

HICKMAN: He was on before, I can't recall what his actual position was, he may have been the Deputy Chief of G, whatever the element was at that time. I am not sure. [redacted]
All old timers.

FARLEY: Dick, you say many, not many but some, [redacted] linguists listened to the tapes over and over and they've squeezed out just every word and cough and...

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HICKMAN: Every word, that's right.

FARLEY: Yeah, okay.

HICKMAN: The one time through. You wanted to get right at the meat and find out if there was evidence that it was intentional or not intentional, so there

were certain places where you didn't understand what it was saying but you could tell from the context that it wasn't relevant to what happened. And then we would go back over it with a fine toothed comb. Sometimes it would be comms chatter between the helicopters and stuff. 810 and 815, I remember the callsigns to this day. They were static. Ground Control.

FARLEY: You will never forget?

HICKMAN: Nah, never will, no, not at all.

FARLEY: Dick were you involved at all in a preparation of a report that maybe was put out by G group? The wrap up of the crisis.

HICKMAN: The entire war, not a daily basis, we put out summaries.

FARLEY: So it was part of the 6 day, 7 day, 5 day War whatever it was. How about the postmortem that was published, were you asked to see that before it was published?

HICKMAN: Just the transcript.

FARLEY: To see if it was accurate?

HICKMAN: Right, I kept a copy of it with me.

GERHART: Right now, Dick, you may be interested. We have took (sic) possession of requests from the Agency for records relating to the LIBERTY. One from a Congressman in California and another from SENATOR GOLDWATER. So that the records that we were working on are now up in the Freedom of Information Office. We're hoping that when G group gets it's records back, we get our records back. Check the two records together and end up with a complete record. We may have records that G group doesn't have, we picked up most of the records from the records staff.

HICKMAN: We provided some information recently. There was a request down from the Freedom of Information Office because we had a bibliography down there called, the relevant documents that contain information on the incident.

FARLEY: You should have that copy too, Bill. The bibliography.

GERHART: I think we do have it somewhere.

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FARLEY: Prepared by (B% [redacted] (XG)

HICKMAN: Same one right. She updated one that [redacted] down at M-5 staff.

GERHART: I think Henry has it somewhere.

FARLEY: Dick, do you have any personal files that we can duplicate. Other than a copy of the transcript?

HICKMAN: No, other than the copy of the transcript, which you have, no. I sure don't. I just bought the latest book on the LIBERTY.

GERHART: (XG) at Baltimore.

(TR NOTE: Unknown number of words missed).

GERHART: In making that transcript you were in [redacted] at the time?

HICKMAN: No I was in G6.

GERHART: You were here?

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(b)(3)-P.L. 86-36

HICKMAN: Right, at NSA.

GERHART: You went to [redacted] afterwards?

HICKMAN: Right.

GERHART: There you worked for the Air Force and ...

HICKMAN: Right, the Air Force And Navy both.

GERHART: Both?

HICKMAN: As a civilian then, right yeah.

GERHART: Now the tapes from the VQ-2, were they brought to [redacted]

HICKMAN: Initially, right then flown back to here.

GERHART: Then flown back here? So, that's how it worked? Because the C-130s brought their tapes back?

HICKMAN: [redacted] as well, right.

GERHART: You did the initial scan there?

HICKMAN: Right there, in [redacted]

GERHART: So the initial reporting was done there, correct?

HICKMAN: Right.

GERHART: Then the tapes all came back here?

HICKMAN: It was ironic because the guy who was sitting the position on the EC-121 intercepting this activity was in my Hebrew class. We were classmates and he was a Navy chief [redacted] (1G). He is retired now and living in Illinois. It was just ironic because when the tape came back I saw his "op sign" on it. I said "well, leave it to MARV to be on the right freq.

FARLEY: Bill what do you think? Anymore?

GERHART: I think this..

FARLEY: Pumped him pretty well.

GERHART: We would like to keep the door open. If we can bribe you to come back if we have follow up plans, we are just getting started. I would like to offer you a cup of coffee.

HICKMAN: No, No, that's fine. I will head on back now.

GERHART: I didn't think, or we could have done this earlier.

HICKMAN: No problem.

GERHART: Dick, we're going to interview [redacted]

FARELY: And we will try to get in touch with BLALOCK. Can you thing of any other people who would have some information we could use?

GERHART: Later on (2G), he is the guy that (XG).

FARLEY: Is he the one that wrote that postmortem which you have?

GERHART: No, he was the fellow that...

FARLEY: WALT DEELY? (b)(3)-P.L. 86-36

SHORRECK: WALT DEELY, he assembled it I guess.

FARLEY: Tom, he was the task group commander.

HICKMAN: Oh, is that right? I didn't even know that.

FARLEY: Directed by GENERAL CARTER to prepare a postmortem.

SCHORRECK: Can you think of other names?

HICKMAN: Not really. Those were the key ones that I could think of right off hand. TONY was my boss. At the time [redacted] was in the reporting shop. Other than BOB and DON no one else would have a more intimate knowledge of the events.

FARLEY: [redacted] mentioned some commander, some Navy commander..(interupted)

HICKMAN: FAWCETT, [redacted] yeah, okay.

FARLEY: Is he in G6 now?

HICKMAN: He was Chief of G63.

FARLEY: [redacted]

HICKMAN: Yea, he was on the vessel, that's right. I forgot all about [redacted]

FARLEY: He would be a good one.

HICKMAN: I don't know him personally, but I know I only found out recently that he was, wait a minute, I am not sure whether he was on it, or whether he was in Washington at NAVSECGRU Headquarters at Nebraska Avenue. Maybe directing some of the message traffic. So, he could be a key person. Cause he is mentioned in this latest book.

FARLEY: Oh, is that right.

(b)(3)-P.L. 86-36

HICKMAN: Along with [redacted]

GERHART: [redacted]

FARLEY: It mentioned a [redacted] are you familiar with that name?

HICKMAN: In the recent book, "Assault on the LIBERTY."

FARLEY: Yeah.

GERHART: Do you have a copy of the book?

HICKMAN: I have it in my desk, yeah.

GERHART: That is why I couldn't get it out of the library.

HICKMAN: I bought it from Crown Books actually.

GERHART: Crown?

HICKMAN: Yea, in Laurel, at the Laurel Center. I searched about four or five book stores before I found it.

FARLEY: But [redacted] doesn't ring...

HICKMAN: $12.95

GERHART: (XG) not joking.

HICKMAN: Not in paperback yet.

FARLEY: It will be out.

HICKMAN: There are a lot, and the guy who wrote it was in there, ENNES, and he had a couple of blatant errors in there about some of the facts. AL BLUE as saying his wife delivered a baby while he was gone and he never got to see the baby and his wife never had a baby, ever.

FARLEY: That sells more books though.

HICKMAN: It's bad, just throws it in, as a tear-jerker.

GERHART: Well it is not that good a book, do you think so?

HICKMAN: No, it really isn't. No I don't.

FARLEY: What position did he have, I haven't read the book either?

HICKMAN: I'm not sure.

GERHART: He does keep NSA out of the picture pretty much.

HICKMAN: Pretty much he does.

GERHART: I respect him for that. His fight is mostly with the Navy. I guess the main points of his book are, that the very extensive of reconnaissance prior to the attack.

HICKMAN: Yea, the Foxfires coming out and coming and coming out.

GERHART: Sure would have loved to have an investigation in itself.

HICKMAN: Those Foxfires recc'ing the aircraft, I mean the vessel also would have been talking so, there again would have been a place for a good linguist.

FARLEY: Dick we are coming to the end of one side of the tape. It is a good time to quit. I want to thank you much for taking your time for a good talk.

HICKMAN: Sure no problem, as I said, I didn't know what I would be able to provide.

FARLEY: I am sure you did a lot. Like Bill says we will get back to ya.

HICKMAN: Sure. Glad to help in any way I can.

FARLEY: And muchos gracias, or however you say "thank you" in Hebrew.

HICKMAN: Mazeltov.

//END OF INTERVIEW//