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~~Top Secret CW~~
~~Sensitive~~

Jack P.

Oral History Interview

NSA-OH-19-80

CDR "Bud C. Fossett

15 May 1980

Fort Meade

By: Robert D. Farley

INTRO: Today is 15 May 1980. Our interviewee, Commander Birchard C. Fossett, better known as Bud Fossett, who is currently assigned to G6. Commander Fossett was involved during the period of the Liberty-Israeli confrontation in 1967. He served as an operations or support officer in G Group during the crisis. The interview is being held in conference Room 9 of the Operations Building, NSA, Fort Meade. Interviewers, Mr. Bill Gerhard, Mr. Henry Millington, and Bob Farley. Commander Fossett will discuss or recall as best he can what happened during this critical period in 1967. This tape is Top Secret Codeword Sensitive as requested by Commander Fossett.

Farley: We appreciate you taking your time to come and talk to us. What we want to do is get all the information we can from you on your actions during the critical period of June 1967, the Liberty versus the Hebrews. So I've passed some questions and you can follow

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them generally. I know you can't answer all of them, but let's pick and choose.

Farley: During this period what was your job or your assignment?

Fossett: [redacted] In early June, I was sent on a special assignment down to the Pentagon, specifically down to NMCC, in an advisory capacity when, and I really forget whether that occurred. As I recall, it occurred somewhat before the Israeli attack and extended through the time that the Liberty was attacked on the 8th. And at that point I was brought back and designated to go on the ship the Belmont, which it was intended to send out to replace the Liberty. Initially that, in fact, never came to pass for a variety of reasons, including the fact that the damage. [redacted]

Farley: From your vantage point, could you tell who assigned the mission to the NSA SIGINT element aboard the Liberty?

Fossett: Well, I think maybe the question needs a little bit of clarifying.

Farley: Phrase it anyway you want.

Fossett: I don't think any of us viewed it as, as an NSA element. There were three linguists, Arabic linguists, which were provided from G6 who went over to augment the research department aboard the Liberty. But they were, for all intents and purposes, an integral part of that department; it wasn't a separate element or anything of that nature. In other words, our communications and so forth were with whatever the SIGAD for the Liberty was. There was no communications with any NSA element per se on the ship. That tasking would have been formulated with the G604 area and coordinated appropriately with various staff elements. I guess what would then have been the counterparts of what is now V (P04). Yeah, that's right. I don't remember precisely what the tasking was. In large measure it was developmental, particularly activity in the the higher frequencies VHF/UHF areas, there just was essentially no technical base for that. So as I say, it was in large measure developmental, search and that nature. I do recall one of the follow-on questions here. I do recall ELINT tasking being included within that package. The tasking from here was exclusively against Arabic targets and specifically the UAR. If, in fact, there was any tasking against Israeli elements it would have fallen within the area of direct support to the ship and I really have no knowledge of that. I don't know.

Gerhard: I wonder if we could just press that point down just a moment. The ship did have a VHF search position. One of the questions that Henry and I have had as we looked at some of this is if it had a VHF search position, VHF/UHF search position for developmental purposes and the assignment, as I think it is stated, was to develop any VHF/UHF communications in the area on the part of the belligerents. We've all wondered why there was no Hebrew linguist on board. That's the ont thing had we that in place, had they been using that UHF, VHF/UHF search and developmental position, they may have overheard some chatter between the pilots which would have raised the alarm on board the ship. That's the only thing.

Fossett: Yeah, I'm not sure explicitly what the reason may have been for that. The sequence of things may have played a role there. The operation in Athens which, well as over the years now I guess evolved into what is now [redacted] came along somewhat before, I would say probably in late May, we set that operation up at the Athens airport in effect. They were provided and did have a [redacted] and for all intents and purposes linguistically, at least as far as we were concerned here in NSA, that pretty much cleaned us out. You would go back to what was then the [redacted] and you would find one

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individual there, as I recall, and that was [redacted] who you may know was not, how shall I say this, eligible or prone to assignments of that nature.

Gerhard: (We simply didn't have the talent.)

Fossett: That would be certainly one explanation that I would have for that. At least here, the resources were not available and the first one to dip into that pool was the airborne collection mission, which actually was processing mission on the ground in Athens, and so, there just wasn't anyone left. It was certainly a practical manner involved in that.

Farley: One of the interviewers suggested that the Israelis were friends, therefore we didn't need the Hebrew linguist.

Fossett: Well, I think that was a prevalent opinion.

Gerhard: That was a fair assumption, wasn't it, and a valid assumption.

Farley: It just didn't work out that way. I think we can skip these questions relating to being aboard the Liberty. May I ask you, did you know any of the Navy linguists who embarked in Rota?

Fossett: The Arabic linguists? Yes, I knew Allen Blue. And I knew Bob Wilson. The other individual, I may have known in passing, but did not know him well.

Farley: The Liberty was designated the technical processing center and with your experience on other ships, could you explain briefly what the technical processing

center does?

Fossett: Yeah, I guess I would have characterized that as, in my recollection, be a technical research department. I have not had any experience per se aboard a TRS, but their mission would be comparable; their SIGINT mission would be comparable to that in effect in any field site. There would probably be additional responsibilities involved insofar as providing direct support to the commanding officer of that ship, but essentially they would have been tasked very similarly to the way that we would task a field site.

Farley: What type reporting did they do? Did they put out "spots?" Did they put out TACREPS, summaries?

Fossett: I don't think we had TACREPS at the time. Their reporting mission, would have been what we would have called at the time a decentralized reporting mission, and they were, as I recall, authorized to issue end product directly to consumers and, essentially, probably anything that they could process on the ship, they could go ahead and report on.

Farley: Did they provide any raw material back to NSA or other field sites for further processing?

Fossett: Not that I recall, Not on Middle Eastern targets and certainly no on UAR targets, not that I'm aware of.

Gerhard: I believe there would be a few exceptions, Bob. One

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would be [redacted] which only G Group would issue probably. Secondly, Israeli communications, had they intercepted them, it is an open question, could they have issued them right then and there?

Fossett: Yes, in those days, of course you wouldn't have expected them to have the capability to exploit plain language, I mean, [redacted] but in those days authorizations were given to report directly on plain text [redacted] So that wouldn't have been an overriding.....

Farley: So their processing routine was to intercept, to translate and report?

Fossett: Yes.

Farley: You briefly touched on this, the makeup of the group aboard the Liberty, the SIGINT, or the technical research division. Can you tell me in numbers of people approximately what it was?

Farley: Oh gee, I would guess probably something in the neighborhood of forty to fifty. When you consider that, you know, thta gets involved in more disciplines than simply processing and reporting. You get the organization, as I understand it, would have had, you know, separate dedicated communications. You would have had people handling that, the CRITICOM or SI communications. You would have had people within that department handling maintenance functions on SI

peculiar equipment. They would have had some dedicated administrative support. So it encompasses more than just a P&R effort, but I would guess that it would probably came to some where in the neighborhood of fifty people.

Farley: What type of support did NSA provide the Liberty?

Fossett: We gave them all the technical data that we had in regard to the line-ofsight communications, and that sort of thing, which I suggested earlier, was not very much. The situation that one would get into where you would see things coming in, they would have questions and so forth relating to the UAR and Middle Eastern targets. Of course really didn't have much time to develop. In other words, about the time that they got, ... they were not on station that long, so you didn't have that sort of exchange developing which you would normally have in a situation like that where you would attempt to provide, essentially, daily feedback with anything they came in with and questions and so forth. That sort of exchange just didn't have the opportunity to materialize under these circumstances.

Farley: Would you know whether the ship kept all of the documentation that they had during their cruise around the Ivory Coast before they stopped at Rota and thence to the Mediterranean?

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Fossett: I don't know. I'm sure that would have been an opportunity for them to have couriered a lot of material [redacted] and I would think that that would be the thing one would expect them to do, to have done. But I, I don't know in fact that that happened.

Farley: Do you have any idea what the three civilian linguists brought with them when they boarded the ship [redacted] TEXTA and what else?

Fossett: I wouldn't have seen a need for them to bring too much TEXTA, or I would have expected that anything they brought would have been pretty minimal. Maybe personal aids an things and things that they

Gerhard: Like dictionaries.

Farley: Analysts' aids and manuals that they have been compiling. Henry, do you have a question?

Millington: I have a question. Do you know or have any idea why the linguists selected happened to be Blalock, Blue and Wilson? Did they have distinct, unique and exceptional qualifications? Were they the only ones available, and was this in any way a volunteer sort of thing?

Fossett: I don't know the answer to any of those questions. I believe they were all civilians, were they not?

Millington: Yes.

Fossett I'm sure that they would have had, had the opportunity to opt not to go, but I just don't remember that specifically coming up. Allen Blue, for example,

I, you know, obviously an Arabic linguist and had been in the Navy, his experience with the language had been primarily on [redacted] during the time that he was there was not involved in [redacted] they were involved in [redacted] targets. Once he came back here, the situation, as I recall it, was really one of sort of a voice linguist pool within G6 and, presumably, individuals within that pool get exposed to different dialects and different languages. I don't remember their being selected because they had any special expertise in the UAR.

Gerhard: Did NAVSECGRU have any linguists on board? That you know of? We haven't seen any references on this. I presume they did.

Fossett: They had at least one or two nominal linguists. For example, Maury Bennett had been through Arabic language scchool, and had, in fact, had an assignment in a G6 predecessor organization as a voice linguist, and then had gone to [redacted] while I was there, and was involved in translating and so forth.

Gerhard: You say you were the G604 in May 1967?

Fossett: That's correct. Yes.

Gerhard: Would this have been about the time that G6 was planning on the cruise of the Liberty?

Fossett: Yes.

Gerhard: As a 604 you must have had a hand in laying out the tasking?

Fossett: That's right.

Gerhard: Or at least walking the tasking messages around the various divisions. Henry and I, I know, would be very interested in what the G Group attitude was at the time with respect to sending an intelligence ship, if you will, close into an area which was obviously very, very tense. An area in which they even expected to lose their [redacted] and everything else because of the hostility in the area. So there was a two-pronged ulterior reason inside that.

Fossett: I understand the question, I think. A sort of aside and I don't really remember how this fitted into the sequence.

Gerhard: You can start off by saying who was the chief of G Group at the time?

Fossett: The Chief of G Group at the time was Mr. Frank Raven. As I say, I don't remember how this fitted into the sequence of things, but it may have been just about concurrent. The word, and I'd say I'm not sure to what extent this really influenced us one way or the other. But the word came back from DIA of a comment by their director, and this would have been in early June. And it went something like this, and I am obviously not quoting verbatim, but it said something to the effect that everyone seems to know that something is going to happen between the UAR

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and Israel except NSA, because they are not making any provisions, for example, to collect any of the line-of-sight communications during nighttime hours. That sort of fitted into the equation a little bit. I would say secondly, and perhaps be more responsive to your question, that it was almost a reflex action during those times.

Gerhard: This was, I think, the first time TRS had been sent into the Med that close to the shore line. I'm unaware of any previous cruises.

Millington: The Valdez.

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Farley: Did General Morrison overrule Frank Raven's recommendation?

Obviously not, and I'm not sure that Mr. Raven made that recommendation to anyone. It was sor of an

observation in a decision-making meeting. Hey, this is one thing that perhaps we should consider. I have no reason to think that Mr. Raven went banging on General Morrison's desk and saying that the Liberty should not be sent out, I'd be very surprised in fact if anything like that happened.

Farley: So General Morrison said go ahead and send it out?

Fossett: I'm not personally aware of that.

Gerhard: That's what happened. There was a meeting in Morrison's office, a decision taken. This was just carrying through on the response you mentioned earlier.

Fossett: Yeah, I was not a party of that meeting.

Gerhard: I guess everybody has to realize that this was long before the war had broken out. It was just a tensee, one more tense situation in the Middle East.

Millington: Did Jane Brewer approve of the deployment of the Liberty? Or did she share Mr. Raven's view?

Fossett: I don't remember specifically whether she was at that meeting or not. I know that Terry McTighe was there and I don't remember this individual's name. A lieutenant colonel as I recall, who was on the G04 staff. Terry McTighe was on the G04 staff as well, and Mr. Raven. It would have been unusual if Mrs. Brewer had not been there. If in fact she were there, I don't remember her sharing or supporting Mr. Raven's view on that. And I would have remember that, I think.

Millington: I have a question that gets back to provision that NSA supplied and it also relates to this question of Israeli targeting and Israeli linguists. Yesterday I was reviewing the logs of the Senior Operations Officer in the 'then' NSA command center and there is an entry in there about June the 5th. Now in that point in time, of course, the Liberty was on her way. She was somewhere off the North African coast, on her way to her ultimate position. And this log note said they had a communication from USN-855 and, I think it had been forwarded by NSAEUR, for Hebrew dictionaries and the watch officer, was trying to find out how they could go about providing these. Now to make a long story short, the problem ended up as being one that they realized that they wouldn't be able to get any dictionaries to the Liberty, that the initial request that perhaps been erroneously envisioned, the Liberty putting in at some port in Greece and they might be able to put to get them there. But the whole thing was kind of scrubbed, but the question in my mind was why was the Liberty requesting Israeli dictionaries when there was no (Hebrew dictionaries) I'm sorry, Hebrew dictionaries when there was no qualified Hebrew linguist on board?

Fossett: My understanding after the fact and this was certainly through nothing that was done here, but it may have

been and, as I recall, as it was told, a Marine perhaps with a coincidental Hebrew capability. I could not verify that, but I know that that was mentioned. As a matter of fact, it was almost mentioned in the sense that if it hadn't been for such and such or so and so, we wouldn't have had any Hebrew capability at all. And that capability was just an accident, a coincidence.

Farley: Anything more on the planning operation that you would like to put on tape?

Fossett: No, I don't think so.

Gerhard: What you're saying is that one of the primary reasons was the VHF/UHF communications on which we had very little information, the need for close-in intercept.

Fossett: Oh yes, and then of course that provides the basis. One of the considerations, one of the plausible eventualities here, was that the US might have to go in in an evacuation mode or something of that nature. So there was certainly some purpose to be served in terms of developing a technical base so that any operation of that nature could be adequately supported from a SIGINT standpoint. I guess I would reflect back on that and say that it seemed like the obvious and expected thing to do, and Mr. Raven's observation was really one that took me, at least, by surprise. I had not expected, and I don't think that his

reservation was really a serious one. I think it was more a matter of examining all the possibilities and that sort of thing.

Gerhard: He wanted the subject discussed after he left at least.

Fossett: Oh, is that right? It was discussed subsequently?

Gerhard: No no. I'm saying that Frank Raven probably wanted to have subject aired, at least.

Fossett: Yes, as an example, in the area of eventualities

Millington: Perhaps he was playing the devil's advocate.

Fossett: Yeah, that would be one of the modes that I would have seen him operating in in that meeting.

Farley: In retrospect he looks pretty good. Shall we pass on to something else then? Bill, do you have any more questions, or Henry?

Gerhard: I have one that I'd like to test Bud out on his military feelings or instincts. Question would be about the physical security in the ship. NSA normally would look to the military services to protect any platform and once or twice during the tragic cruise of the Liberty, we gently qeustioned JCS saying in effect... "Dear sir, we noticed that there is a war on and that our ship is up next to the shore, and is there any change in your plans on the scheduling of the Liberty? Using the full advantage of my hindsight, and everything else, I can see now that we should have

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been somewhat more forceful, We should have said, "Seriously question the desirability of the at this time.

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Gerhard: And yet you know some of the information seems to suggest that the Commander of the Sixth Fleet did not know why that ship was really out there, although some of its own intelligence requirements were being answered by the presence of that very ship.

(gap)

Farley: Okay, that was one of the messages on file. When did the Liberty get orders to move further away from its earlier location near the coast? Would you remember that?

Fossett: No, I don't. But when did they receive the message?

Farley: Either end.

Fossett: No, I don't know.

Farley: Do you recall any information that would relate to the "two-day delay" in moving the ship by CINCUSNAVEUR

Deputy Chief of Staff?

Fossett: No, I have no knowledge of that.

Farley: Do you remember what I am talking about, where he was supposed to have threw the message aside and said whatever he said?

Fossett: From reading the Ennes book, but I have no knowledge of that.

Gerhard: That's in the JCS report.

Farley: Do you have any comments on the "critical message?" This is the one that directed the move? The one we just talked about? This was erroneously routed to the Liberty, eventually ended up at NSA where it was allegedly filed without action?

Fossett: I have no knowledge of that.

Farley: Again you were downtown at the NMCC. This was probably 6 June?

Fossett: And it would have, if that fact happened that probably would have been an evolution which anyone outside of TCOM wouldn't have been aware of.

Gerhard: The famous message the test message in all of this was 6 June 0110 Zulu. Dozens of studies made of that.

Fossett: I've run into individuals subsequently. One individual who claimed that he spent a good deal of time running through the Med and around every place else trying to track down the path that one of those messages took. You probably don't have any more knowledge than we do,

although it was mentioned in Ennes' book about "During the voyage from Rota and during Mediterranean operations, did you ever hear any reference to a "Contact X?" Contact "A" was the Valdez, Contact "X" was the mysterious contact that was noted on the status board, but later erased.

Fossett: Not any Contact X per se, there was a 900 series collector in the area. Do you know what I mean by a ? And going back to your earlier question, the discussion on what role NSA should play in regard to the positions of military assets with SIGINT capabilities, I was very much concerned.

Gerhard: If I'm not mistaken the TRS came under NSA's tasking.

Fossett: SIGINT tasking?

Gerhard: SIGINT tasking, yes. Now there are other kinds of SIGINT assets on board ships which obviously do not come under NSA tasking. So in the case that we are talking about, the Liberty, were talking about an area in which NSA could have exercised more authority perhaps than it did, and now this other item that Bob brings up would fall into the other area in which NSA would be.

Farley: That's Navy.

Fossett: But in a military sense, in a Navy sense that ships' commanding officer. I think that the distinction here is USN 855 versus tht commanding officer of the

USS Liberty. USN-855 in their mission in very large measure was controlled and directed by NSA. The CO of th USS Liberty was in no way controlled or directed by NSA.

Gerhard: That's right, he was the bus driver and he worked for the Sixth Fleet. I understand that.

Fossett: UNS-855 is not going to move the ship.

Farley: Okay, that was a question, too. Would the captain of the ship move his ship if the commander of USN-855 gave him a piece of information indicating imminent danger to his vessel?

Fossett: Oh, I suspect that would probably be the case, but would not be .....

Gerhard: He had the authority to move that ship anytime he wanted to.

Fossett: Surely, that would be his decision based on that input just as if, well if he were to get information from another sensor, or another HUMINT source or visual observation from a flight: yeah, that would be information that certainly could influence him to move that ship, but it would be his decision.

Farley: Where were you or how were you made aware of the attack by Israeli military forces on the Liberty?

Fossett: Let me go back for just a minute, I'm sorry about that. The 900 series mission, now I'm not sure what the name of the vessel involved was, I suspect there

may be a correlation here though. The officer that I dealt with in NFOIO. I became quite concerned about the safety of that submarine. And I went to him and expressed that concern and his retort was "You guys just keep the information flowing, we'll take care of that."

Gerhard: That must have been back in Quesenberry's time with Bob Filbish.

Fossett: Is this the Marine Quesenberry or Colonel?

? A Navy captain.

Fossett: I don't think so.

Gerhard: It might have been before Quensenberry.

Fossett: And I don't remember who the...I don't remember who the NFOIO was.

Farley: Was that a code name applied to the Andrew Jackson or did they refer to it as the Andrew Jackson?

Fossett: I don't remember it as being referred to as the Andrew Jackson and we ...no, we would not have used that in any of our correspondence or support, or what have you.

Gerhard: Did you ever get technical support for it?

Fossett: Yes.

Gerhard: They would have to come to us for technical support.

Farley: Henry, you had a question on that, didn't you, the sub?

Millington: I think you just covered it.

Farley: Okay, that's great. That's one of the ones that we wanted.

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Farley: Getting back to the time when the attack took place. Were you at the command at the NMCC or wre you on duty?

Fossett: I had stood a mid down there and had come home and gone to bed, and Mrs. Brewer called me. That was the way I found out about it.

Farley: What do you remember about that period, was it pretty hectic, what did NMCC people do, or what liaison did you have with NSA regarding the attack, anything at all?

Fossett: No, I was, as it turned out, that did not become known until after I had left that mid at NMCC. And then I did not go back to NMCC again. I was pulled back here once that happened, so I was not in a position, I wasn't privy to the actions at NMCC which the attack on the Liberty prompted.

Farley: Bill, do you have any questions on that? I have a long list of questions that pertain only to the activity aboard the Liberty during the attack. I'm just trying to get any information.

Gerhard: I'm not sure Bud would want to try to answer those.

Farley: No, he would be second guessing, I would guess. Can he answer this one? Was the entire intercept capability aboard the Liberty wiped out, do you know anything about that?

Fossett: I really don't. Certainly to the best of my knowledge we never did hear anything, never did receive anything that would have reflected an intercept capability existing after the attack.

Farley: Were you around when there was a report that JCS directed the cancellation and recall of an air strike from the Sixth Fleet? When NSA allegedly received an apology from the Israelis after the attack. There were apparently six Skyhawks en route to find out who attacked the ship, and McNamara and JCS supposedly were told that the Israelis said that they made a mistake and McNamara cancelled this.

Fossett: No, I'm not aware of that at all. That was not an apology to NSA?

Gerhard: That was covered in the Ennes book.

Farley: An apology to the US government.

Gerhard: The apology was probably to the US Department of State or somebody like that.

Farley: Yeah, that's right. Did you ever hear that a submarine had recorded on film that entire attack on the Liberty?

Fossett: No, I did not. I have not heard that.

Farley: Do you want to comment on that one, Bill?

Gerhard: I would like to have the film.

Farley: I think I have already stated this, would you care to add anything you might know about the activities of the US Submarine Andrew Jackson? I think you covered

all of that.

Fossett: Yes, I .

Farley: Are you aware when NSA was made known of the attack on the Liberty?

Fossett: No, I was not.

Farley: Would you have any ideas as to how and why a "Pinnacle" message would end up at NSA without action and not be received by the Liberty?

Fossett: No, I would not. I wouldn't have no information on that.

Farley: Okay, let's see. Anything else we want to cover on the...

Gerhard: Well, let's concentrate on Bud's job as G064. Can you think of anything else on you job that would relate to the Liberty, such as the, perhaps, the drafting of a SIGINT support plan or JCS OP plan or anything like that? In other words, did the Liberty figure into any of the SIGINT support plans for the Mediterranean area?

Fossett: In other words, SIGINT support planning which would have been in place well before this incident occurred. I don't .....

Gerhard: I doubt seriously that any of the plans envisioned the loss of the Liberty or anything like that.

Fossett: Most SIGINT support plans, however, during that time did place reliance on TRSs. Certainly that would be true for SIGINT support plans or SIGINT redeployment plans,

a station forced to be abandoned for one reason or another, more often than not, the interim period before other more permanent collection arrangements could be made called for a TRS to fill that gap. As I would recall, why TRSs would also have figured prominently in support to military operations. The planning that was done in that regard. As far as any other plan existing for Mid East hostilities and the involvement of a TRS in that, I just don't recall that specifically. There were mechanisms set up obviously for SIGINT support in the event that the US got involved militarily.

Gerhard: Primarily, the loss of [redacted]

Fossett: But I'm sure there were not plans for a Mid East hostilities, short of US involvement, where a TRS would have been identified to come in and do something. No, I don't think that sort of plan existed.

Gerhard: A TRS did figure in the contingency planning.

Fossett: Yes, not necessarily the Liberty, ...a TRS.

Farley: Henry, do you have something else?

Millington: Yes, when you were recalled here following Mrs. Brewer's notifying you of the incident, was the concern in G6 then, focusing primarily on minimizing any compromise of the Liberty's technical mission and the loss of technical support material that was bound to have occurred with the actual damage to the ship,

or was the focus on trying to determine what alternative coverage might be provided in the absence of that platform?

Fossett: My viewon that was that probably more to the effect that "Hey we're going to have some busy times and I think that you are probably needed here more than you would be needed down there." The collection strategies because of ... really in this situation...the signals had been so clear for so long that one of these days there were going to be hostilities. Unlike many other crisis, why we at least in our view, we were able by June, to be in very good shape...to...

Gerhard: You wre ahead of the drummer on that.

Fossett: Yes, and as a consequence whe the rrequirement came up for the NMCC position why it was, as I would interpret it. I was probably more available than, say for example, someone on the 05 staff would have been. Their work was just going to be beginning.

Gerhard: They also wanted a Mid East man. Was there a Mid East billet in the NMCC?

Fossett: Well, there was a temporary augmentation thing, but obviously, yes, they would have appreciated having someone with at least some familiarity with the Middle East. So the collection aspects of the thing were...we were pretty much on top of that, and that had benn done simply because we had had the amount of warning that we had had. We had taken a number of major

actions which were behind us at that time, setting up the special operations in Athens for example.

Gerhard: Cart before the horse?

Fossett: That's right. So I was expendable. When the Liberty incident happened, why then of course, there was some work to be done and as I would view it, that was the way that she probably approached it. I don't think it was to get me out of NMCC for any knowledge that I might have had in regard to what was aboard the Liberty. I would not read it that way. I would just simply read it as...that my services could be better utilized here than they could be there. There was also talk, as I mentioned at the outset, of sending another TRS out to replace the Liberty, and it was intended that I would go on that TRS.

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Farley: Bill, do you have any more questions before we get into the post mortem on this? We've discussed the planning, the attack, and the subsequent acitivity.

Gerhard: Only to compliment Bud on his memory.

Farley: Beautiful, yes that's tremendous, tremendous. Shall we get into the investigative group? Two or three questions on this. This is a brutal one, Bud.

Fossett: Yeah, I know.

Farley: When was this quote "investigation group" at NSA formed and who, under whose authority or under whose directive was it formed?

Fossett: I don't know the specific answers to those questions. Jim Ennes provides a postscript note in his book in which he says that for his own protection and for those individuals still on active duty who he had discussed this matter with, hefound it prudent, or words to that effect, not to let them know he was writing a book. To some extent I'm the victim of that and the incident regarding the investigation and being questioned by Mr. Deeley. I'm the only source that could have, as far as I know, from whom Jim could have gotten that information. Contrary to the way that it was stated in the book, and this may have

been stated this way simply because he wanted to protect me. I don't know, but I was in the building, in the G6 spaces, and got a call saying that they needed someone on the ninth floor who could shed some light on why the Liberty was deployed off Gasa, off the UAR. And I went up to the ninth floor. I was the only one there at that time that would have ben in a position to be in any way responsive to those questions or to that concern. And Mr. Deeley and a woman were there. There were no other people, as Jim says in his book. Mrs. Brewer was not there, Terry McTighe was not there. It was a weekend day, and I was the only one there. And indeed Mr. Deeley was there and one bow of his glasses was off, and his glasses were askew. And I walked in the door and he looked up at me and he said "You're from G6?" And I said, "Yes sir." And he said, "Can you write?" And I sort of dodged that question, but then we got to discussing some of the reasons why the Liberty, ...why NSA had recommended that the Liberty be deployed to that area, and I wrote a few brief paragraphs for him and I had no further association with that evolution.

Farley: You never did find out who established this group?

Gerhard: General Carter.

Fossett: I would havae thought so.

Farley: I was just trying to find out whether Bud knew. So you

did participate in the preparation of the post mortem report?..to a degree.

Fossett: Yes, I did. Yes. There was some and I forget whether that summons occurred on a Saturday or a Sunday, but there was a ...well, I won't ...it's probably a little strong to say even mildly rebuked. But there was not pleasure within G6 that I had gotten involved in that.

Gerhard: Who was the chief of G6 then?

Fossett: It was the same chief that, oh the chief of G6, well, I should say the chief of G and G6 although this was conveyed to me by Mrs. Brewer who was the ...Chief of G6. It was almost the idea of, well, they opted to doit, they've chosen not to give us a role in it so let 'em do it. They were not happy to find out that I'd been drawn into it.

Farley: So Deeley didn't ask G Group to come up with an appreication of the situation?

Fossett: To my knowledge and I think that I would have knownit that was not the case.

Farley: Did you read the final report? The three-inch, red-covered report?

Fossett: I remember being aware of generally what was presented in that report. I don't remember ever sitting down and methodically going through it.

Gerhard: The report says that there were two or three real reasons

why the Liberty was sent. One was UHF/VHF communications, the second was the consumer customer requirements at the time, some of which could only be answered by UHF/VHF. You have corroborated some of that. The third reason is the expection tht the US would lose some of the [redacted] elsewhere. Do you recall that as having been a factor in the deployment?

Fossett: Yes, that certainly would have been.

Gerhard: The expectation actually, of course, proved correct. We lost the very sites we expected to lose. NSA foresight looks very good in some of this.

Millington: They also mentioned in their report that though the Valdez was in the area the Liberty was chosen because they thought that she had far better intercept capabilities than the Valdez, plus the fact that the Valdez was long overdue for refitting and was already on her way home at the time.

Fossett: Yeah, I remember being aware of the fact that the Valdez was in desparate need of an overhaul of that kind. One thing that I should point out I think in regard to the post mortem. There was absolutely no idication that I had of anything tht smacked, even in the slightest degree of any attempt to cover anything up. The thrust of that investigation, as I would gather it, was to very firmly lay out the record and address

the question that you have addressed previously. That the fact that the Liberty was in that position was a military decision, and that NSA really had a very peripheral input or in terms of making any determination as whether the Liberty would or would not be deployed, and how close to shore, and those sorts of questions.

Farley: In Ennes' book he talks about "much confusion and much chaos" during the court of inquiry sessions. Were you involved in any of those that Admiral Kidd was presiding over?

Fossett: No, I was not.

Farley: You weren't questioned by the Navy or anybody?

Fossett: No, not at all.

Farley: That's interesting. Bill, do you have any questions on that?

Gerhard: No, no I don't, unless Henry does.

Farley: Okay, let me just ask, Henry? While in an operational status, do you believe that the Liberty produced some useful intelligence? Any outstanding examples that you might cite?

Fossett: I'm not aware of anything that was produced. Certainly against Middle East or North African targets of use by the Liberty.

Farley: Of any individuals aboard the Liberty or involved in this incident still around the local area, what names

could you give us, people who would be knowledgeable and who would be willing to talk? We do have some.

Fossett: Well, I am aware that you have talked with Bob Wilson.

Farley: And Jim O'Conner is scheduled next week.

Fossett: The individual who actually did the tasking and drew up the messages for the Liberty was a Naval officer by the name of [redacted] As far as I know he is not in the area any longer. Has been out of the Navy for some time.

Farley: How about the Ops officer who was aboard the Liberty, is he still around?

Fossett: Dave Lewis. I'm pretty sure he's out of the Navy now. Up until fairly recently he was assigned here at NSA.

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Farley: That's what I thought.

Millington: What about Bennett, Maurice Bennett?

Fossett: He is out of the Navy, too, and I'm not sure where he is located. I rather think it is on the West Coast, though. I don't know that for sure.

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[redacted]

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Gerhard: The Air Force security service, or the ESC as they are called now, in one of their historical papers that they wrote after the Liberty, say that the only SIGINT involved, the only SIGINT produced on the attack on the Liberty was that one transcription of Israeli voice communications.

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Farley: Helicopters?

Gerhard: Does that comform with your impression of that event? I don't know of any other.

Fossett: No, no the question was tactical communications. No, I'm not aware of anything else.

Gerhard: Casual mention in [redacted]

Fossett: Yes, in [redacted] No, the only tactical reference was that transcript that youmentioned.

[redacted]

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