OHNR: 880719 **1988-09 DOI:**

P.L. 86-36

TRSID:ragentiDTR: 971117
QCSID:
INAME: Lang, Delmar C.
IPLACE: Lang residence, Wheaton, Maryland
IVIEWER: Farley, R.D.

NSA25X3

Farley
Today is 19 July 1988. Our interviewee: Mr. Delmar C. Lang. Mr. Lang is a former United States Air Force officer, who later became a civilian employee of the NSA. Early in his career--in the late 1940's--Mr. Lang studied Chinese at the Army Language School and eventually joined the United States Air Force Security Service. He had an overseas tour with the Security Service and later, with NSA in [redacted] Korea, Taiwan and Vietnam. He served as Chief of NCR [redacted] and NCR [redacted] in later years. The bulk of Mr. Lang's career was in the Far East target area in operational, staff, and management positions. He was assigned to staff officer in the Office of [redacted] for the Far East intelligence target. Mr. Lang discusses at length his experiences during his military and civilian career. He retired from the Agency in 1980. This interview is taking place at Mr. Lang's residence in Wheaton, Maryland. Interviewer: Bob Farley. Mr. Lang desires that the classification of these four cassettes be SECRET HANDLE VIA COMINT CHANNELS ONLY. And this is NSA Oral History # 9-88.

(TR NOTE: After approximately 30 seconds of silence on tape, interview begins as follows:)

Farley
...check it out and see. Yeah, it looks good. The level is fine. Del, thanks very much. What I'll do is put a heading on this and explain who you are and all of that. And, then it'll be complete. I'll assign a number.

Lang
O.K. (pauses) Go ahead.

Farley
And, as I say, we can talk as much as you like and as long as you like.

Lang
All right.

Farley
First of all, thanks a lot for your time.

Declassified and approved for release by NSA on 01-19-2006 pursuant to E.O. 12958, as amended

Farley Did we have SIGINT units in Vietnam at that time? South Vietnam?

Lang Yes.

Farley Security Service and Army? In Saigon or thereabouts?

Lang The Army was there.

Farley I think so.

Lang I don't think, Bob, that the Air Force Security Service had gone in quite that early.

Farley Probably not.

Lang When they did, of course, they went in at Da Nang. I think it came a little after.

Farley But they had the platforms, too. They were flying the platforms, weren't they?

Lang Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. They were...Was that [redacted] NSA25X3

Farley Yeah. There were so many other bloody things. Yeah.

Lang I think they were called [redacted] in those days. Well, anyhow. The first big crisis that hit us, of course, was the Gulf of Tonkin. The Tonkin hootenanny. And as the 05 for Milt Zaslow in B3, I just kind of became...I don't remember anybody telling me to. I just did. Zaslow, of course, was backing me. We set up a little crisis management shop in the B3 conference room. And worked that thing. I think I spent at least five days in the building without ever going home. But that's all right. I was having a ball.

Farley Right.

Lang And we put out messages with regards to the imminence...what appeared to be the imminence of an attack--at flash precedence--that certainly must have alerted Naval authorities down to the vessels themselves. I don't think that the alerts ever probably got out to the boats that we had in the Gulf...the ships we had in the Gulf of Tonkin.

Farley The *Turner Joy* and...

Lang
Yeah.

Farley
...the other one.

Lang
Yeah. And so, we reported the living "be-jesus" out of that. And then a couple of days later, there was a second attack. And there was another flap. In the initial go-around, we did put out some messages that cautioned against precipitous action. Because, you know, the evidence was suggestive, but it wasn't firm. And I had--me and the guys had--some reservations at the time about whether that attack had really occurred. And then there was no question that the second attack a couple of days later was not an attack. But, anyhow. As you know, General...President Johnson chose to retaliate with air strikes. And Congress gave him the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which said, "Hey, man! Run!" And away we went in what turned out, of course, to be probably the biggest tragedy of our country ever got involved in.

Farley
Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Lang
Needlessly involved in.

NSA25X3

Farley
Yeah.

Lang
And then the next big event that occurred in May of '65: the U.S.S *Ranger* was out there south of Hainan Island. And one day, they sent a flight up to Haiphong. It was to go to Haiphong. Flight of four aircraft. And they took off from the *Ranger* and headed north...northwest toward Haiphong. And they overflew Hainan Island. And of course, the Chinese didn't like that. [redacted] And the airborne collector--and I'm almost certain it was called [redacted] n those days...Oh no. Wait a minute. Will this (microphone wire) carry me over that far?

Farley
No. Let me just...Let me pull that...(TR NOTE: Farley can be heard removing the microphone attached to Lang's shirt.) I don't want to ruin your shirt. O.K. (TR NOTE: Lang apparently rises and walks across the room to place a phone call. Farley resumes speaking:) (Are you going to) check it out and...?

Lang
(TR NOTE: Lang is apparently speaking from across the room. His voice sounds distant.) I called Doyle Larson. It wasn't the [redacted] He said it was called [redacted]

Farley
O.K.

Lang
(TR NOTE: Lang apparently returns to where Farley is located. His voice becomes louder.) I'm sorry. You got it? Right?

Farley
Yep [redacted]

Lang
See? I questioned... about that [redacted]

NSA25X3

Farley
O.K.

Lang
And...

Farley
There were so many of those bloody things. It's hard to keep them in sequence.

Lang
Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I forget when we had [redacted] But it was obviously before...But, anyhow. They had done their orbit over the gulf. And they were heading back up to [redacted] They were going past Hainan Island when the senior sergeant aboard the aircraft recognized that there was something unusual happening. And he told the pilot to go into orbit off the east coast of Hainan. And they collected everything. The whole nine yards. And it was, of course, beautiful intercept because they were right there. And the Chinese scrambled aircraft in reaction to these U.S. Navy aircraft coming over the island. [redacted] Well, one of those four aircraft got shot down. And it was evident from what we had--and we had it all--that another...He had been shot down by one of his own aircraft.

Farley

Oh.

Lang
There was a mistake. A hassle. And he got shot down. Well of course, the roof came off the Pentagon and the White House and every place in the world. And I had worked the night all night long, using the Opscomm circuit. And gathering in all the information. And by the next morning--around eight o'clock--I had a pretty full story that I could tell to the Director. And of course, I was required to come up and do that.

Farley
Right.

Lang
So, while I was doing that-- guess maybe it was after I had finished and we were just kind of getting ready to break up--he (TR NOTE: i.e., the Director) got a phone call from General (B% Buzz) Wheeler, who was the Chairman of the JCS at the time. And General Blake--who was standing there--he said, "Yes. Yes, Sir." He said, "I have a lieutenant colonel standing here right now that can tell you 'book, chapter and verse'." So, he (TR NOTE: i.e., the Director) tried to get a helicopter to take me down. Because we were wanted NOW, of course. But he couldn't pry a helicopter out of the Army there at Fort Meade. So, he sent me down in his staff car. And I was ushered into General Wheeler's office. Well, the walls...The two side walls and the wall behind General Wheeler's desk were lined with generals, admirals...I mean, boy, there was a mess of them. And you could have cut the hostility that was evident with a knife. I mean, boy! They were some kind of unhappy...Not the Army guys. The Navy guys. And there were a bunch of them. So, I had my little flip chart. And we put that up. And I took them through what had happened as we saw it. And...There was no way you could question, since that was what, indeed, had happened. But the Navy wasn't about to accept that. I mean, (according to them,) we were lying. The [redacted] were lying. Somebody was lying. But that never happened. They never could have overflown Hainan Island. It just was impossible. Let alone shoot down one of their own airplanes. So, after I had finished making my presentation, why, there were a lot of questions coming from these admirals and one thing or another. And they were vicious. Oh, they were vicious. And General Wheeler listened to it for longer than I would have thought he would have put up with that. Longer than I would have wished that he put up with that. And finally he said, "Now, wait a minute." He said, "I happen to believe what Colonel Lang is telling us. You guys get off his back." That took care of that. Well...

NSA25X3

Farley
They never quizzed any of the pilots, themselves, to ask whether they were overflying or not?

Lang
Oh, I suppose they did. But I don't know if the pilots told them the truth or not.